

Chapter 3

Blended Learning Compared to Online Learning in Business, Management, and Accounting Education: A Bibliometric Analysis and Literature Review

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ABSTRACT

The journey of business, management, and accounting education over the past decades included several teaching methods which may nowadays be considered outdated for the modern students who live, learn, and connect through technology. This study clusters the academic literature addressing online learning and b-learning applied to educational and training in the business, management, and accounting. Through the collection of all the relevant publications in Scopus, this study uses automated text mining techniques in VOSviewer software for comparing the evolution overtime of the online and blended methods in the context of scientific knowledge production. The results unveil that online-learning-related literature is grouped in nine clusters, instead of the seven clusters in case of blended learning, meaning that the first is more disperse in terms of topics. An in-depth analysis of the studies most closely related to each cluster's terms allow the authors to provide critical reflections that help professionals when choosing the accurate method and also the academics in identifying future research agendas.

INTRODUCTION

The journey of business, management and accounting education over the past decades included several teaching methods which may nowadays be considered outdated for the modern students who live, learn,

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and connect at technologies. Academics have already revealed that the way educators teach in this field can contribute for increasing the value of the students and mitigate possible enrolment declines (Maher, 2000). One of the variety of ways of including technologies in teaching is using technology for providing Online Learning or a mix between on-line and on-class education (Blended-Learning or B-Learning) (Martín et al., 2008).

During COVID-19 pandemic both Online Learning and B-Learning were used massively by educators. Nonetheless, those teaching methods have been applied by business, management and accounting educators prior this pandemic. In both periods (before and after COVID-19), (Parte & Herrador-Alcaide, 2021) revealed that those methods create, in both periods, the sense of belonging of the teaching community is high.

Despite the efforts that researchers have made for contributing for this field of knowledge during COVID-19 pandemic, the volume of literature published in past decades indicates that academics have been along the years contributing for creating knowledge around Online Learning and B-Learning methods which could be placed at the service of those who teach in the entire educational system.

In this sense, the present study aims to unveil the research trends exploring Online Learning and B-Learning methods for application in educational and training in the business, management and accounting disciplines. A comparative analysis of the results in each method is conducted, which can help professionals when choosing the accurate method and also the academics in identifying future research agendas.

BACKGROUND

The learning methods changed radically when technology started to be incorporated in education. The concept of distance learning gained force as a “*system design that are effectively incorporated in delivering education to student teacher and student may communicate asynchronously and synchronously*” (Al-Arimi, 2014). The literature describes a journey in which E-learning appeared as a way of offer tools to both students and teachers for running remote training and online courses. It includes for instance the use of wiki and blogs, chats, e-mail, and multimedia CD-ROMs (Martín et al., 2008). The B-Learning method allowed to combine the distance, online and on-class education which depends on the availability of resources, which were scarce in COVID-19 pandemic (Santos et al., 2021). The term hybrid learning and B-Learning are used interchangeably, but they mean the same in literature (Hrastinski, 2019). This concept refers to a training or teaching environment combining face-to-face education with access to online learning tools (Hall & Davison, 2007). The role of B-Learning is especially relevant in the post lockdown period, in supporting the flexible learning expected in transitioning between fully online and blended (Nerantzi, 2020).

When social media become a reality, their impact was studied in order to understand how could it provoke a positive disruption in education, E-Learning and B-Learning. (King, 2012) actually confirmed that critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity and innovation applied to social media tools could positively impact in educational and professional settings. E-learning tools were particularly relevant for mitigating constraints in educational sectors during the first lockdown period of COVID-19 pandemic, in which schools were closed and the contact between trainers/professors and trainees/students was exclusively online. Recent studies revealed the contribution of e-learning resources

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