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## **THE QUALITY OF COURSES IN OPEN LEARNING**

The term “open learning” is closely related to other terms such as e-Learning, online learning, technology enhanced learning, flexible learning, and distance learning. In general, nowadays universities are developing a large number of open learning projects based on information and communication technology (ICT), such as e-learning courses (or online learning) to support their students in teaching and learning. To assess the quality of open learning, foreign researchers have developed several variants of models, while many of them cannot be adapted to national characteristics or subjects, are not structured, are incomplete or do not contain a formal description.

What is the difference between the following terms: “open learning”, “e-learning” and “blended learning”. We can find elaborate information about these concepts in the works by prominent authors such as Itiel E. Dror, E. Duval, M. Sharples, St. Ludvigsen, A.W. (Tony) Bates and others.

“Open learning” is a term used to describe a flexible learning experience in which students can choose time, place, learning methods, access methods, and other factors related to their learning. A.W. Bates [1] believes that open learning is, first of all, a goal or an educational policy, the essential characteristic of which is the removal of barriers for learning. At the same time, it should be considered that the concepts of open learning, distance learning, flexible learning and e-learning are related and often considered to be equivalent, although researchers in the scientific literature state different nuances of the types. A.W. Bates [1] argues that distance learning is not so much a philosophy as a method, according to which students can study in their free time, in a convenient place of their choice (at home, at work or in a training center) and without personal contact with the teacher. Considering the flexibility of learning, A.W. Bates [1] considers it more of a method than a philosophy, but they pay attention to flexibility in such aspects as geographical, social and temporal restrictions of individual students, rather than educational organization. Flexible learning may include distance learning, which may include face-to-face on-the-job training, opening campus for extended face-to-face classes, or hosting summer schools, weekend schools. Open learning, distance learning, and flexible learning may differ slightly, but they have one thing in common: they provide alternative means of high-quality education for those who are either unable to participate in traditional face-to-face programs or, for personal reasons, choose not to.

The term “e-learning” has given rise to other related terms such as mobile learning (m-Learning), ubiquitous learning (u-Learning) and blended learning (b-Learning). Blended learning is a way of learning that combines classroom learning with distance technology [3]. A blended learning course includes methods and resources from both classroom and distance learning, giving students greater responsibility in their individual learning, providing them with skills for research.

One of the advantages of blended learning is introducing information technology to the teaching staff, contributing to innovative processes and improving the quality of teaching. The philosophy of open learning has given rise to derivative terms. The term “open” has been used recently as a synonym for freely available or open source technology. This approach has manifested itself in various initiatives, in particular, open educational resources (OER), open courses ware (OCW), massive open online course (MOOC). Despite the variety of these concepts, tools and arguments for or against each of them, all of them have a common goal: to improve the quality of the way in which knowledge is presented and delivered to students.

J. Vagarinho and M. Llamas-Nistal [2] found that the quality of e-learning is understood as the adequate fulfillment of the goals and needs of the involved participants as a result of a transparent negotiation process within the organizational structure. In the field of e-learning, quality is related to the processes, products and services of training, education and training, supported by the use of ICTs.

Many scientists (E. Martínez-Caro, J. G. Cegarra-Navarro and G. Cepeda-Carrión [4]) assent to the main factors which can influence the quality of e-learning such as the design and management

of the learning environment and interaction. Interaction between the students and the lecture, assessment and collaboration can contribute to creating an environment that motivates students to understand the contents better.

As a result of the analysis of foreign publications in the field of assessing the quality of open education systems, it can be noted that additional data on this topic are needed and that current research should be focused on five main aspects: technology, instructional design, learning resources, training and services and support.

### **References**

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