



FACULTY OF PSYCHOLOGY AND EDUCATIONAL SCIENCES

The social outcomes of adult learning: Understanding the role of individual and instructional factors in online and blended learning

Public defense to obtain the degree of
DOCTOR OF EDUCATIONAL SCIENCES
of

Céline Cocquyt

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Brussels Humanities, Sciences & Engineering Campus (Etterbeek)

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Summary

This dissertation was set out against the background of innovative practices in adult education such as online and blended learning (OBL). Adult education and OBL are assumed to be vehicles to tackle social and digital exclusion by equipping adults with updated (digital) competences and empowering them. Hence, the current dissertation aimed to uncover the social contribution of OBL in adult education. Theoretically, the social outcomes were conceptualized by social participation, social connectedness, and social capital. In specific, five research foci (i.e. non-traditional learners, social outcomes, individual characteristics, instructional elements and longitudinal perspective) gave direction to address the overarching research aim.

The results indicated that not all immediately perceived social outcomes are positive (e.g. decreased social participation) and that interactive learner-centred blended learning formats show great potential to positively contribute to the social outcomes. In specific, transfer support, peer support, process guidance and meeting individual learners' personal needs were found to be positively related to either social participation, social connectedness and/or social capital. Additionally, native language seemed to be a crucial factor in relationship with the perceived social outcomes.

By answering the four general research questions, the current dissertation contributed to the empirical knowledge about the (long-term) social outcomes perceived by adult learners in the context of OBL, as well as the individual and instructional characteristics which are related to those outcomes. These results gave rise to several theoretical, practical and policy recommendations.

Curriculum Vitae

Céline Cocquyt was born in Zottegem on July 11, 1990. She obtained the degree of Master of Science in Educational Sciences at Ghent University in 2013, after which she completed the specific teacher training program and a postgraduate in social profit and public management in 2014, also at Ghent University.

Afterwards, Céline started her PhD research in the summer of 2014, as member of the VUB SRP "Socially-inclusive ICT-based adult learning". Her research focus is situated at the intersection of adult learning and education, online and blended learning, and the social outcomes attributed to these learning processes.

In the past four years, Céline presented her research at practice-oriented workshops and international conferences, contributed as a stakeholder in European projects, and published her work in international peer-reviewed scientific journals. She was also involved in the IWT-SBO-project, Adult Learners Online!, as member of the coordination team.

Currently, Céline is coordinator of the VUB ASP-project "Blend the Future" and responsible for developing innovative professional development initiatives, among other about blended learning.