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HyFlex Learning, what is it and what are the advantages?

Discover how to combine the hybrid and flexible characteristics of training, providing an advantageous and useful learning model for every type of student.

In recent years, the **eLearning** panorama has seen the spread of **blended** training methods which are based on the use, within the same learning programme, of online and in-person training methods. Among these models, **HyFlex Learning** combines the hybrid and flexible characteristics of training, guaranteeing an inclusive learning mode that is adaptable to different needs, such as to be extremely useful in eLearning training projects.

What is HyFlex Learning?

HyFlex Learning is short for **Hybrid-Flexible Learning**. The term and concept of HyFlex Learning was first introduced in 2006 by Dr. Brian Beatty of San Francisco State University, to address the need for **more flexible training**. Beatty writes that he began developing the project in 2005 after noticing enrollment problems during a department meeting, and that the intent was to "attract more students and provide more participation options for current students."

Thus, a useful approach was developed for students who wanted to follow lessons completely online, without losing attention to the students who were attending the course in **person**, in class. To implement this modality, Beatty added a simple **online path** to one of his traditional courses, thus starting to build a new learning modality that used hybrid classes (both online and in person) to provide flexible training paths and give students autonomy of choice on the best path to follow.

This approach has been given the name HyFlex, "a **combination of hybrid and flexible**". The hybrid aspect refers to the union of complementary face-to-face and synchronous learning experiences, and online and asynchronous training experiences. Flexibility, on the other hand, concerns the ability of students to choose how to participate in the course or how to interact with the materials provided, depending on their needs.

HyFlex Learning, therefore, is a learning approach that is based on offering students different learning options, combining online and in-person learning, asynchronous and synchronous lessons.

Over the years, the hybrid-flexible model has been used in various fields, proving effective in training and eLearning courses.

The values ??of HyFlex Learning

This learning method is therefore based on three main elements:

1. **Hybrid education** that allows students to participate in person or online, supporting them in both choices.
2. **Involvement** of students, who can independently choose how to participate in the course, guaranteeing them flexibility based on their needs and requirements.
3. **Combination** of multiple learning opportunities, to allow a wide range of possibilities and ways of participation.

Beatty also indicated the **four values ??to follow when designing a HyFlex course**. These are principles considered fundamental that designers and instructors must keep in mind when creating a course in hybrid-flexible mode. The four "pillars" are the following:

1. **Choice by the student**: providing the student with a wide range of participation methods allows him to independently choose the method of participation in the course.
2. **Equivalence**: all methods of participation proposed to the student must lead to equivalent learning. Equivalence, however, is not synonymous with equality. In fact, to be effective, an online learning experience cannot be the same in

every way as an in-person training experience. By using different methods, however, students should be guided and encouraged to reflect on the contents learned, so that both learning methods lead to the achievement of the same objectives.
3. **Reusability** of the various learning contents in each participation mode. Although they require adaptation depending on the method of use, the different contents developed by the trainers can be used both in classroom and online learning. Texts, videos, notes, podcasts and images can be useful both for students who decide to participate in the online course and for those who attend lessons in class.
4. **Accessibility**: to be a valid alternative, the digital participation method must be easily accessible to all, so as to allow students to freely choose how to participate in the course, without being held back by any access difficulties.

The advantages of HyFlex Learning

In addition to greater flexibility and increased student engagement, using the HyFlex methodology also results in:

- **Reduction of barriers**: HyFlex breaks down the physical obstacles typical of simply participating in the classroom, which students with disabilities could encounter. Online, on the contrary, guarantees anyone access to training.
- **Personalization** of the learning experience: HyFlex, allowing students to choose their own path, guarantees personal and customizable experiences, depending on user needs.

The steps to create a HyFlex course

By analyzing the different advantages of hybrid-flexible learning, it is clear that using the HyFlex method in an eLearning course can be very effective. To create a learning course in HyFlex mode, follow the steps below:

1. **Build a community**: in an in-person lesson, students have the opportunity to spend time with the trainer and other classmates, which fosters the creation of a community climate. For a HyFlex Learning course to be successful, this same climate must also be characteristic of online lessons. To achieve this objective, the trainer can create short videos, so as not to convey information only through face-to-face lessons, then giving space to answer any questions or for discussions on the material provided. Students who choose the online mode can participate through chats and discussion forums, while for those who choose asynchronous participation it is possible to provide messaging systems, which allow exchange between teacher and students and between classmates.
2. **Modify the activities based on the students**: HyFlex courses, in fact, must take into account three participatory methods, according to which tasks and activities must be adapted. In fact, students can decide to participate in person, asynchronously and in mixed mode. For this reason, when creating the course it is necessary to foresee activities that can be carried out in all three modes of participation.
3. **Adjust assessments** to be fair to students, regardless of their choice. It is better to use intermediate and frequent evaluations, perhaps proposed in the form of quizzes, games or projects. This allows the trainer to obtain continuous feedback from his students and possibly take action by revisiting an unclear topic from previous lessons. Furthermore, an evaluation of this type, which can replace exams and summative assessments, allows participants to reduce their anxiety.
4. **Make sure the course is fair** across all modes: Regardless of the mode of participation students choose, each user should have the opportunity to ask questions about lessons or unclear concepts, provide and receive feedback, participate in discussions and comparisons with other classmates and with the trainer, carry out self-assessments to test your learning level, access all the course materials.

The combination of hybrid and flexible learning characteristics gives students the opportunity to choose a tailor-made training path, accessible and designed for every need or need. For this reason, HyFlex can become an important ally in an eLearning course.