Chapter 1
Cooperative Learning as a Strategy for Self-Directed Learning in Blended-Distance Learning Environments: A Systematic Literature Review

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ABSTRACT

Self-directed learning (SDL) is an essential component for the success of distance learning students. Technology serves as a suitable tool to enable cooperative learning (CL), a strategy that can be used to enhance SDL. The aim of this chapter is to report on literature relating to CL as a strategy for SDL in a blended-distance environment. The research question is: How does cooperative learning as an SDL strategy feature in a blended-distance learning context? A systematic literature review was performed using suitably selected key words in various databases. The selection criteria included academic publications in the last decade, relating to higher education, various research methods, and in any content area. This chapter concludes that studies involving the use of CL to promote SDL particularly in a blended-distance environment feature sparsely in the literature. Conflicting ideas on the use of terminology is problematic and further research is suggested.

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INTRODUCTION

The focus of higher education is rapidly shifting to a greater online and distance component and researchers are obliged to challenge existing assumptions regarding teaching theories and strategies in higher education. Blended-distance learning environments incorporate the accessibility and flexibility that distance learning offers students, by integrating educational technologies with a distance mode of delivery. In a distance learning environment, students need to identify their educational needs and take responsibility for their own learning. There are different learning approaches that can possibly address this issue, of which self-directed learning and cooperative learning will be the focus in this chapter. Self-directed learning (SDL) is an approach to education where the student takes responsibility for their own learning process (Knowles, 1975). Cooperative learning (CL) is a powerful teaching strategy that can promote SDL (Johnson & Johnson, 1994; Korkmaz, 2012). However, recent research has focused on CL in face-to-face environments and relatively few studies have investigated the use of CL in blended-distance environments.

The four main themes mentioned above, namely distance learning, SDL, CL and technology formed the basis of this review and has directed the study. As lecturers and researchers who are experienced in the field of distance learning (especially distance learning offered via a paper-based model with limited technology integration), and who have worked extensively with SDL, CL and blended learning, our assumption is that there is limited literature about CL as an SDL strategy within the blended-distance context. This assumption has led us to investigate the combined occurrence of these aspects in the literature and has given rise to the research question given below. We believe that these themes are of utmost importance not only in isolation, but also in unison, and should therefore be researched.

The aim of this chapter is to report on literature relating to the use of CL as a strategy for SDL in a blended-distance environment. The following research question will be addressed: How does cooperative learning as a self-directed learning strategy feature in a blended-distance learning environment?
Blended Assessment Methods in Online Educational Programs in Turkey: Issues and Strategies
Erman Yukselturk and Orhan Curaoglu (2010). *Cases on Transnational Learning and Technologically Enabled Environments* (pp. 327-343).
[www.igi-global.com/chapter/blended-assessment-methods-online-educational/42174?camid=4v1a](www.igi-global.com/chapter/blended-assessment-methods-online-educational/42174?camid=4v1a)

Homo Virtualis: Virtual Worlds, Learning, and an Ecology of Embodied Interaction
[www.igi-global.com/article/homo-virtualis-virtual-worlds-learning/39129?camid=4v1a](www.igi-global.com/article/homo-virtualis-virtual-worlds-learning/39129?camid=4v1a)