

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL SCIENCES

# EXPLORING THE POTENTIAL OF A BLENDED STRATEGY FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGED LEARNING IN AN ACADEMIC CONTEXT

## ABSTRACT

This practice-oriented research aims to explore the impact of a blended learning format on a Community Engaged Learning (CEL) environment, with a focus on how students themselves experience the impact of the format on their learning process. Specifically, students from two universities in Flanders (Belgium) worked on a CEL group assignment with strong links in the educational practice through an structured online e-portfolio environment called 'Pebblepad', while also receiving lectures and feedback in a face-to-face environment. To gain insight into the perceptions of the students, five focus group discussions were conducted and analyzed with a main focus on the experience of students regarding this blended approach to Community Engaged Learning.

Findings indicate that while a blended format does indeed have an impact on the learning process according to students, also several themes arise that can be viewed as tension fields regarding autonomy, authenticity, creativity, uniformity and vulnerability.

## PARTICIPANTS

Two groups of Bachelor students in Educational Sciences were involved in a course called 'Educational Design' that is given in two different Universities in Flanders, Ghent University and Vrije Universiteit Brussels. In total 25 students participated for one semester during the academic year 2018 – 2019.

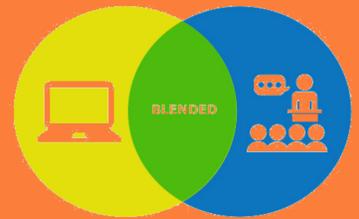
## MATERIALS & METHOD

During this process, we used an action research design (Mills, 2000) to gain insight in the impact of using a blended format within Community Engaged Learning. We used the ePortfolio tool 'Pebblepad' that allows online 'scaffolding', formative and summative feedback and tools for collaboration. At the end of the semester, we conducted five focus groups among the participating students to gain in depth information about the personal experiences of the involved respondents towards this blended approach.

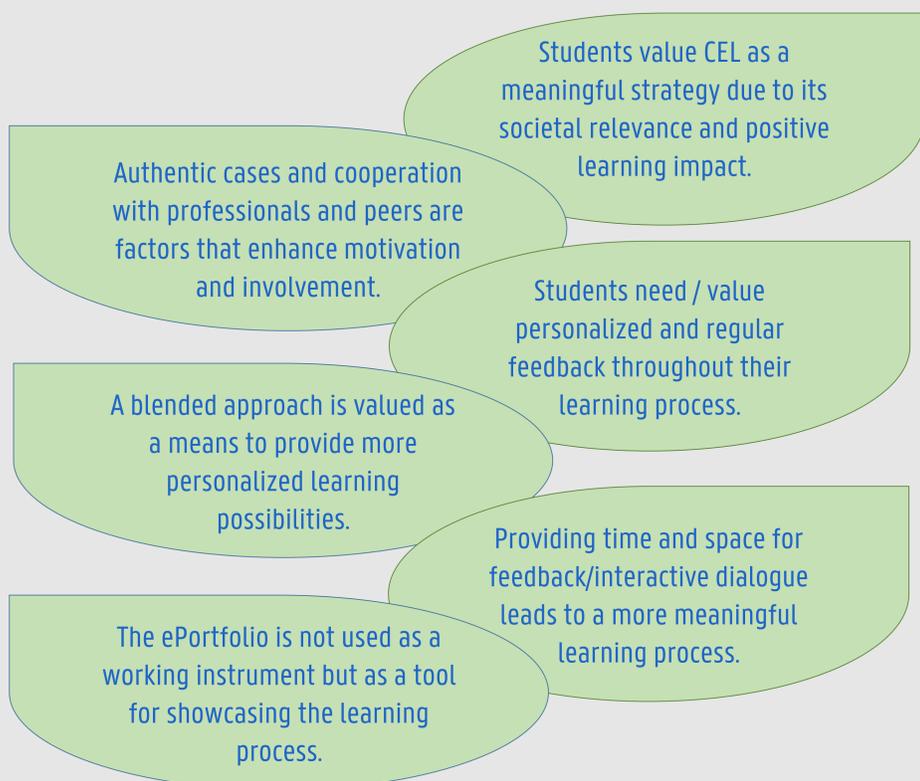
## RESEARCH QUESTIONS



1. What is the perceived impact of a blended approach to CEL on the learning process of students?
2. What do students identify as success factors for implementing a blended format in CEL?
3. What do students identify as challenges in implementing a blended format in CEL?



## RESULTS



## DISCUSSION - TENSION FIELDS

