From blended learning
to learning onlife
-ICTs, time and access in higher education

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Akademisk avhandling

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Title
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Abstract
Information and Communication Technologies, ICTs, has now for decades being increasingly taken into use for higher education, enabling distance learning, e-learning and online learning, mainly in parallel to mainstream educational practise. The concept Blended learning (BL) aims at the integration of ICTs with these existing educational practices. The term is frequently used, but there is no agreed-upon definition. The general aim of this dissertation is to identify new possible perspectives on ICTs and access to higher education, for negotiating the dichotomy between campus-based and ICT-enabled education. The access options of BL are in focus for this dissertation, although BL is generally seen as a campus phenomenon, and shares a place perspective. The main research questions in the dissertation are 1) how BL can be understood in the context of increased access to education, moreover, (2) how time can be work as a more constructive perspective for designing ICTs in education, compared to place. The dissertation comprises five articles. The first is conceptual and concentrates on place and time in blended learning, and forms a time-based model and perspective, drawing on the tension between synchronous and asynchronous modalities instead of a place-based center-periphery model. The following article examines the differences between North American and European use of the term BL, in education and research, and finds that BL is not much used by European researchers, although the term is frequently used in educational environments. Two design and intervention studies, articles 3 and 4, make experiments using the BL time-based model. In article 3, a group of untraditional learners at a learning centre in Arvidsjaur attends a synchronous co-located study circle group and participates in an asynchronous and global Massive Open Online Course (MOOC). In article 4, nine students in a preparatory year for entering engineering studies volunteer and participate in a pilot distance course experiment, where prevention of procrastination is a high priority. For this, agile framework theory, constructivist learning theory and the time-based model are used in design and analysis. The last article (5) reconnects learning to place by discussing and adapting Triple- and Quadruple Helix theory for regional development in the knowledge society to four regional European cases. At the end of the synthesis, an outline of the access affordances with the time-based model is given, drawing on Adam's timescape theory. The discussion of ICT integration into education is made drawing on Floridi's Philosophy of Information, which provides many tools to view discourses of ICTs in education critically, and also envisions the concept of e-ducation in the infosphere, where other blend issues appear connected to weak artificial intelligence and the pervasive power of ICTs.

Keywords