

Week Four Article Reviews

Richard B. Goldsmith

Trevecca Nazarene University

IDT 5110: Project Management in Instructional Design

Professor Ty Tabernik

June 12, 2023

The journal article "*The Experience of Using the Scrum Process in the Production of Learning Objects for Blended Learning*" was written by R. W. Bettio, D. A. Pereira, R. X. Martins, T. Heimfarth and published by the Informatics in Education, Volume 12(1) in 2013. This research article provided several new insights by incorporating the strategy for selecting course content, using the Scrum method to develop Learning Objects (LOs), and a set of best practices inspired by agile software development. Further, the research in this article was based on a blended learning (or hybrid learning) setting when "...face-to-face courses are combined with distance learning technology" that reached a total of 33 courses and included about 1,200 students in nine university departments (Bettio et al., 2013, p. 29).

The article provided excellent substance and significant details to help those interested in pursuing the ideas presented in the piece. Specifically, the introduction to this research article furnished thorough overviews of educational technology research studies applied in higher education courses. This paper delivered ample knowledge regarding the selection of courses and contents used during the research. A motivational and innovative process was adopted by the researchers that involved professors of undergraduate courses, including "the strategy of publishing every semester announcement call for proposals for development learning material in order to encourage the permanent incorporation of the use of the technological resources and to diversify its use in different courses" (Bettio et al., 2013, p. 32). The organization of the learning objects product process was robust. This section provided an overview of several technologies that could produce LOs, which helped make this journal article relevant, practical, and beneficial to those planning to follow the ideas presented.

The journal article "*The Experience of Using the Scrum Process in the Production of Learning Objects for Blended Learning*" was directly related to topics covered in the assigned readings for week four. For instance, the Scrum method was chosen due to "...the similarity between the construction of software and learning objects" (Bettio et al., 2013, p. 33). Also, this research article incorporated and comprehensively presented several components of the agile methodology, such as a development cycle or sprint, product backlog, planning poker, task boards, and retrospectives. This author especially valued the ingenious technique of using a wiki-like tool to manage several complex tasks such as production history, meeting schedule, external scheduling, history of contacts, and resources. Our class would benefit greatly from this article's usefulness as it thoroughly presented practical uses of the Scrum method, agile best practices, and learning object production in an extensive research study of higher education courses.

The journal article "*Reflections on the Use of Iterative, Agile and Collaborative Approaches for Blended Flipped Learning Development*" was written by Hazel Owen and Nicola Dunham and published in the *Education Sciences Journal*, Volume 5 (2), in 2015. This paper provided several unique insights and approaches. Further, this piece presented discussions that drew on the personal reflections linked to three perspectives involved with many roles within the article. The overall goal of this article offers numerous insights as it highlights the authors' "...contextualized experiences, to add to the knowledge base on blended learning, and to provide some general, practical recommendations" (Owen & Dunham, 2015, p.85). This paper provided practical and significant substance during the literature review and recommendations sections. The method section overviewed the ten key roles the authors played during the project presented in this paper, which greatly impacted the discussion section. Further, the discussion section was a lengthy part of this article that was "organized around emerging categories" and included

narratives, which this author found interesting; however, applying these narrative themes in a different blended flipped learning setting might prove difficult.

The literature review section of this piece offers significant detail that could benefit those interested in pursuing the ideas presented in this article. First, the concept of identity and openness to change are essential components involving stakeholders' notions of "fixed mindsets" and "growth mindsets," as presented in the research of Carol Dweck. Next, incorporating an iterative approach compared to a monolithic approach involves crucial considerations in e-learning projects, which can be more chaotic. As the authors commented, "A release-based, iterative approach can help address some of the issues that arise from the chaos, especially when underpinned by being agile" (Owen & Dunham, 2015, pp. 88-89). Blended and flipped learning can involve a range of considerations, with the authors of this article aligning with Heinze and Proctor's view of blended learning. This section could have benefitted the reader with a more extensive elaboration of collaborative processes, project discussion, professional development, course design, and facilitation processes of blended learning (Owen & Dunham, 2015).

The recommendation section of the Owen and Dunham piece comments, "The general guidelines that do exist should be taken into consideration at the planning, implementation and subsequent stages," which relates to our course topics (Owen & Dunham, 2015, p. 84). This section directly connects with our course readings as it overviews concepts such as the iterative approach, project management aspects, design, development, and professional development. The class can learn some important concepts in the recommendation section; however, this author often wanted more details in this section. For instance, Owen & Dunham state, "Project management is an essential aspect of an iterative, large-scale eLearning project—and something that is sometimes overlooked or not appropriately resourced" (Owen & Dunham, 2015, p. 98).

Next, Owen & Dunham present a bulleted list with eight "essential aspects" of project management, but without further attributes. This same vague procedure occurs in section 6.4 of the "Design and Development" section with the following statement, "For eLearning initiatives to be effective, they need to include access to examples and models that are pedagogically sound, and that draw on effective practices" (Owen & Dunham, 2015, p. 98). However, no examples or models that are pedagogically sound are presented or discussed in detail.

A contrast between the two articles appears in the presentation of concepts related to agile methodologies and blended learning. As I read and reread the Bettio et al. article, I found the descriptions and thoroughness of the content to be robust. For instance, each section in this piece is described with at least two to three paragraphs of elaborative details. Conversely, in the Owen & Dunham article, specific sections are offered with multiple paragraphs of content, while others seem not fully developed. Further, Owen & Dunham devote approximately seven pages of article content to the narrative discussion organized emerging categories, which correlates with the "Reflections" concept in the article title. While I found this discussion section fascinating, as the authors' commented on specific vignettes of their project, I discovered myself perplexed about the purpose of reading such information. Perhaps, this narrative writing style appeals to some readers as they might glean the information they can apply to their projects involving agile and blended learning.

The Bettio et al. and Owen & Dunham's articles offer abundant content related to agile methodologies that are practical and substantive to readers. The Bettio et al. paper provided rich details on learning objects and practically applying the Scrum process to producing learning objects, which would greatly help those pursuing these ideas. Further, this piece provided valuable information on developing time estimates, task boards, and management tools.

Similarly, the Owen & Dunham article delivered solid content in the literature review and recommendation sections. Also, this same paper provides rich narrative writing as Owen & Dunham reflect on their use of iterative, agile, and collaborative approaches to their blended learning project, which could greatly benefit readers interested in these topics. Overall, both articles offered exceptional content related to our course topics of agile methodology, iterative processes, and course development.

References

- Bettio, R. W., Pereira, D. A., Martins, R. X., & Heimfarth, T. (2013). The experience of using the scrum process in the production of learning objects for blended learning. *Informatics in Education*, 12(1), 29–41. <https://doi.org/10.15388/infedu.2013.03>
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