



## ANALYSIS OF ONLINE PLATFORMS AND TOOLS TO GET STARTED WITH DISTANCE AND BLENDED LEARNING

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**ABSTRACT:** - Nowadays, the demand for distance and blended learning is increasing, and this leads to the problem of choosing the right platform for launching this approach in education. This article aims to analyze the existing platforms and identify the strengths and weaknesses of each system. It also provides an analysis of all existing systems to identify the most convenient among all platforms.

**KEYWORDS:** Distance learning, blended learning, platforms, tools, LMS.

### INTRODUCTION

The development of information and communication technologies has led to the introduction of e-learning into the educational process. Information and communication technologies provide education with the opportunity to meet global development trends and adapt to the rapidly changing conditions of the modern

world. Modern information technologies make the educational process more dynamic and interactive. Every year more and more software is created for use in education. All these tools allow not only to optimize teachers' lesson time, but also to partially automate the review of work and the preparation of teaching materials.

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Due to the fact that blended learning involves a combination of the work of the classroom teacher and the use of information technology to organize online learning both in and out of the classroom, the teacher must have a wide range of tools to make this form as possible effective implementation of learning.

Firstly, a more appropriate model should be chosen. After selecting a model, it must be determined which tools, educational platforms and services will be used to implement blended learning technology. Various types of LMS and online services can be used when implementing blended learning models:

- learning management systems (e.g., Edmodo, Moodle, Google Class, etc.);
- digital collections of educational objects
- online training courses
- tools for creating and publishing content and learning objects
- tools for communication and feedback (e.g., Skype, Google chat, social networks, etc.);
- collaborative tools (e.g., Google Docs, Word Online, etc.);
- tools for planning educational activities (electronic journals, organizers) [1]

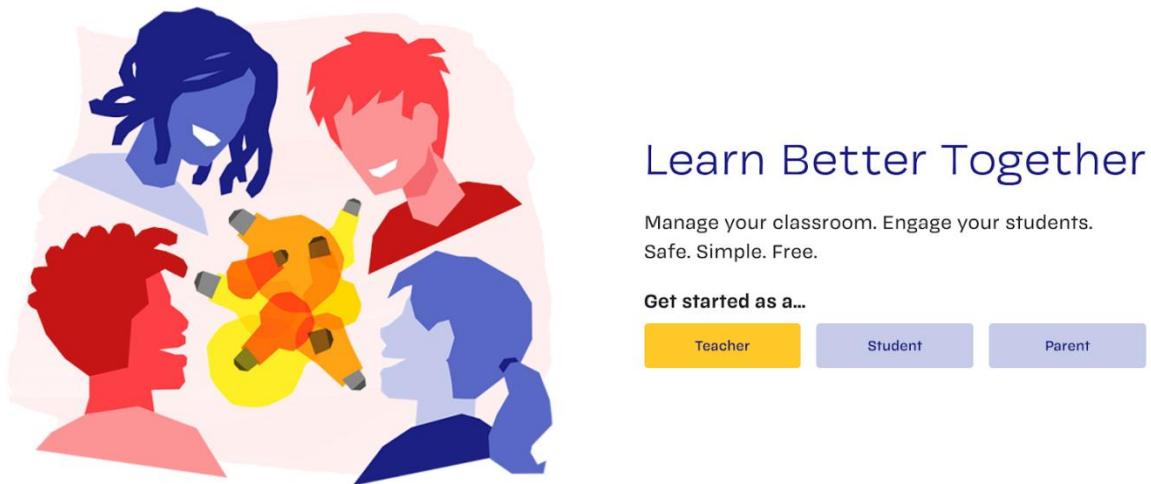
When designing blended learning content, it is possible to use ready-made digital resources as well as independently created ones. However, it is preferable to choose complex resources that combine educational

content and tools for organizing educational activities.

It is worth considering which educational platform to use, since there are now a large number of them. Choosing the most convenient and technically suitable platform for one's course is quite simple. Each platform is accompanied by a description of features and capabilities. Let's analyze some of the most popular online platforms and tools suitable for teaching English in vocational education institutions.

Let's start the analysis with the educational online platform Edmodo (Figure 1), which is an educational and social network for teachers, schoolchildren and their parents. Edmodo allows teachers to create groups where they can share materials, distribute assignments, conduct tests, and manage communication with students, colleagues, and parents. Edmodo has a user-friendly interface with lots of interactive services and a wide range of third-party apps like Google Drive and Microsoft Office. The program is free, requires only registration, but it also offers premium services. Al-Kathiri (2015) indicated that a combination of traditional teaching and Edmodo online classroom is a significantly effective factor toward English learning.[2] A teacher can monitor students' activities in Edmodo. This means that teachers can check how much time is spent on the learning process, how often a student visits the platform, what they are interested in and what comments or questions they post.[3]

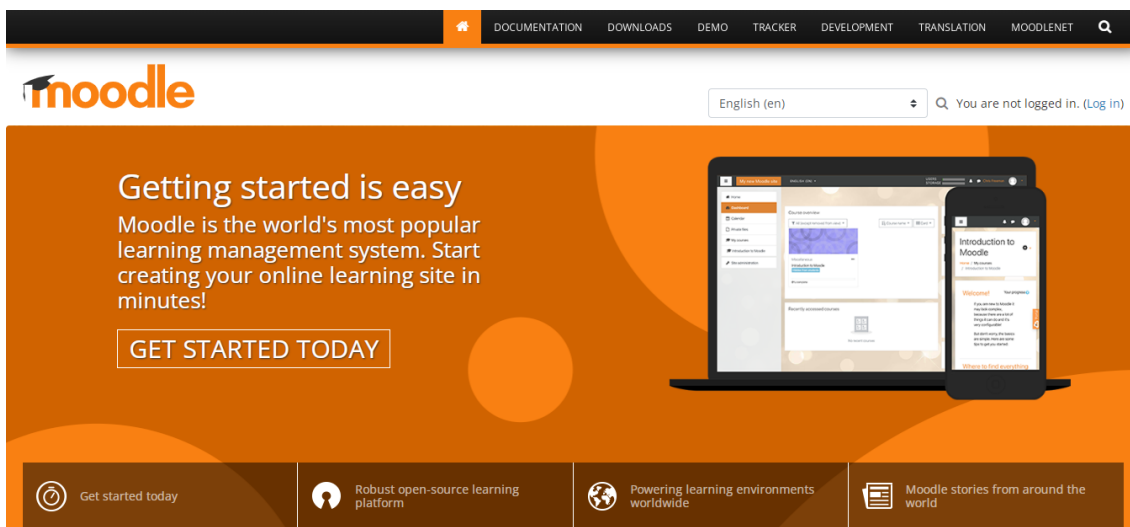
Figure 1. Edmodo homepage



The online platform Moodle (Figure 2) is one of the most popular educational platforms for creating online courses. To start using it, a teacher needs to register and customize the course: set the duration and access to the course. In this system it is allowed to provide educational material in various formats: video lectures, audio, text documents, images. Additionally, surveys, tests, glossaries, questionnaires and small databases can be

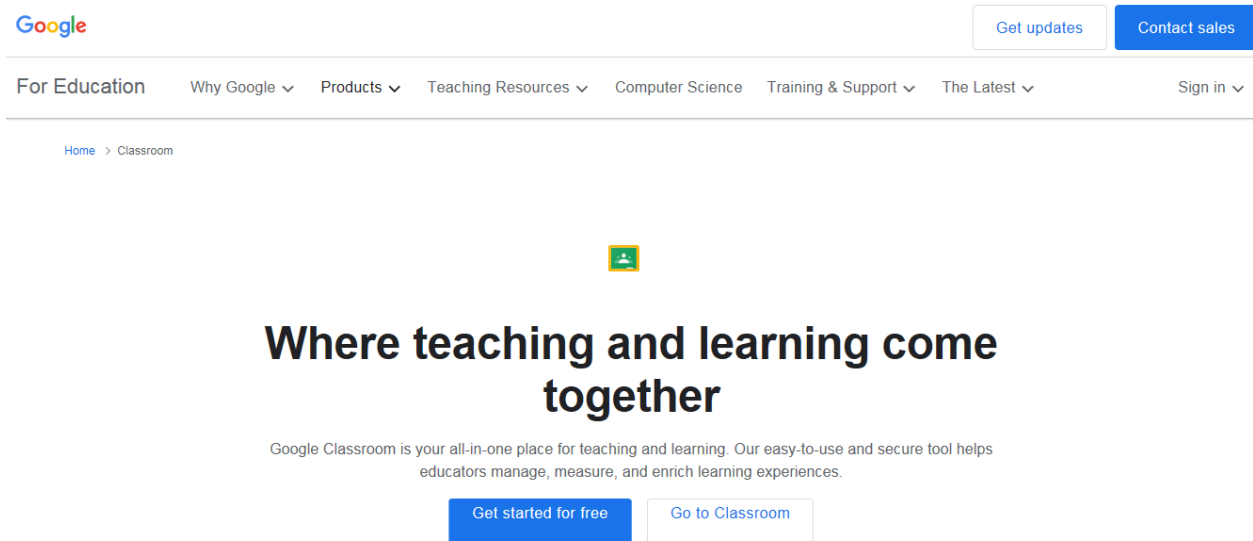
created in Moodle. The time spent on completing the tasks by students is taken into account. The teacher has the opportunity to comment on the results and leave feedback. Su (2006) concludes that Moodle is a free online course management system (CMS) that is particularly well suited for language teaching. It contains many useful and user-friendly tools for creating and running the courses. [4]

Figure 2. Moodle homepage



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**Figure 3. Google Classroom homepage**



The Google Classroom learning platform (Figure 3) plays an important role in managing the learning process. The classroom's electronic capabilities complement traditional study sessions and encourage blended learning. The class makes learning more productive: a teacher can conveniently publish and evaluate tasks, organize collaboration and effective interaction of everyone involved in the process.

Students with personal Google accounts can use the classroom for free. They can log in from a computer, a smartphone or a tablet. This greatly simplifies access to the platform.

A teacher sends an invitation to students so that they can join the online course. A teacher can create courses, distribute tasks and comment on students' works. A teacher and students can also use Classroom to work with other Google tools like Drive, Docs, Calendar, Forms, and Gmail. With the help of the calendar, one can structure events and keep up to date with events. It is possible to take online tests that will help track students' progress, focus on mistakes and correct the course when needed. Figure 4 looks at opportunities that the platform provides for teachers, students and parents.

**Figure 4. Google platform's opportunities**

Teachers can	Students can	Parents can
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create and manage courses, assignments, marking.</li> <li>• Grade and comment on works in real time.</li> <li>• Co-teach with other teachers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Track assignments and course materials.</li> <li>• Share information and communicate in the course feed or via e-mail.</li> <li>• Submit completed assignments.</li> <li>• Receive grades and comments.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Receive emails informing about their child's progress, overdue tasks and assignments to be completed soon.</li> </ul>

Other educational apps also integrate with Google Classroom. For example, Explain Everything is a digital interactive whiteboard. This app can be used during a webinar to spark your thinking and create visual stories and presentations, which in turn helps strengthen student-teacher collaboration skills.

To summarize, the Google Classroom platform meets the needs of most teachers. It has a simple and user-friendly interface, allows communication between the teacher, students and their parents. It is completely free, easy to manage, control and use. In addition, the class has a wide range of tools that enable the teacher to successfully use blended learning in English classes.

LearningApps.org is an app to support learning and teaching through multimedia interactive exercises. This service enables the creation of 18 types of interactive tasks. Tasks can be created independently or one can choose ready-made ones from the catalog of subjects.

The Quizizz service is aimed at teachers. It is convenient to create educational quizzes, tests and surveys. With the help of this tool, a teacher can organize competitions, track each

student's results and organize competitions between students.

Kahoot is an interactive platform. Its playful way of assessing knowledge is fun and engaging. The interface is easy to use and allows teachers and students to receive instant feedback.

Puzzlecup.com is a crossword factory. With the help of this site, you can quickly compose or choose a ready-made online crossword for study. The service is completely free and requires no registration.

All of the above-reviewed platforms and tools are unique in their own way. The choice of platform depends on the goals and skills. The next step is the creation of an online environment and its verification. For this, it is necessary to upload all the prepared materials on the platform, sort them into categories and test the system. And after that, one can start using this technology in the educational process.

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