

A Study on Blended Mode of Learning Approach of Education in Recent Time

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Abstract

In the modern society when intelligent mobile devices become popular, the Internet breaks through the restrictions on time and space and becomes a ubiquitous learning tool. Technology is driving factor of Fourth Industrial Revolution in which digital automation, artificial intelligence, mobile supercomputing, intelligent robots are at its momentum. International competitiveness and global challenges demands highly innovative and competent school environment. Digital era and globalization has led to a new trend in education. One such trend is Blended Learning. The objective of the present paper is to analyse the concept of blended learning and to review the evolution of blended learning. Further, the paper discusses the intricacies and technical complications involved during implementation of blended learning in Indian context. In addition, the paper also critically analyse the competencies needed for handling blended learning along with benefits and challenges of blended learning.

Keywords- Technology, Blended Learning, Globalization, Digital Era

Defining Blended Learning

Blended learning is not doing online worksheets, reading digital materials any technology related activity unless it allow student some control over the pace and content of the instruction. Bates (2015) suggested that blended learning has wide variety of designs:

- Technology used as classroom aids (e.g. PowerPoint slides, clickers);
- Using learning management system to support classroom teaching (e.g. for storing learning materials or for online discussions);
- Using lecture capture for flipped classrooms;
- Short periods on campus for hands-on experience or training followed by concentrated time studying online;
- Hybrid or flexible learning requiring the redesign of teaching to enable students to do majority of their learning online, coming to campus only for specific in-person sessions (e.g. laboratories).

The Evolution of Blended Learning

Though the term Blended Learning gained momentum in 2000 with the US report in which the Interactive Learning Centers, an Atlanta-based education business, announced a change of name to EPIC Learning. The release mentioned that, “The Company currently operates 220 on-line courses, but will begin offering its Internet course ware using the company’s Blended Learning methodology.”

In 2006, the term became more concrete with the publication of the first Handbook of blended Learning by Bonk and Graham. Graham defined “blended learning systems” as learning systems that “combine face-to-face instruction with computer mediated instruction”. Report titled “Defining Blended Learning”, researcher Norm Friesen suggested “It designated the range of possibilities presented by combining Internet and digital media with established classroom forms that require the physical co-presence of teacher and students”. Blended environment focuses on the student-teacher relationship. Patrick (2007) most students and teachers still prefer real, live interaction over completely online learning.

Steps to design Blended Learning Courses:

- Define the Outcomes of the Course.
- Create an Outline for the Blended Learning Course.
- Determine the Level of Interactivity.
- Integrate Group Collaboration Activities.
- Facilitate Communication.
- Compile a List of Resources to Support Learning.
- Create an Assessment Plan.

Why blend? - examine reason for blending

Blended learning strategies vary according to the discipline, the year level, student characteristics and learning outcomes, and have a student-centred approach.

Benefits of Blended Learning

- Different people learn different things in different ways. ...
- Using multiple modalities dramatically reinforces engagement, learning and retention. ...
- Learners can control the pace of their learning. ...
- Blended learning saves money. ...
- Blended learning is modular and scalable.

What could a ‘blend’ look like?

- A blend might include:
 - Face-to-face and online learning activities and formats.
 - Traditional timetabled classes with different modes, such as weekend, intensive, external, trimester.
- Well established technologies such as lecture capture, with social media and emerging technologies
- Simulations, group activities, site-based learning, practicals

Competency required for handling blended learning

- Teachers need to be expert in subject area as well as in handling technology of 21st century in order to succeed in face-to-face and online learning.
- High expectations from teachers to have Transformational Potential.
- Teachers need to have competency in live interaction vs. computer-mediated communication with students.

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Challenges to Blended Mode Of Education-

- Challenge 1: Buying the Right Classroom Technology. ...
- Challenge 2: Many Think Blended Learning Is Not Effective. ...
- Challenge 3: Maintaining Class and Student Progress. ...
- Challenge 4: Participation and Attendance. ...
- Challenge 5: The Digital Gap.

Blended Learning And Teachers Perception

In 21st Century where digital platform has played a great role, teachers have breathed in a new breath of life in the teaching-learning processes by designing adequate learning strategies to suit the needs of the learners. As a result, it has provided students an opportunity to continue their learning uninterrupted in ways, more than one. In addition to the benefits felt by the students, virtual learning has provided teachers an opportunity to up-skill and re-skill themselves to become relevant to the new generation students. Virtual learning thus offers significant benefits even for educators and enables them to rethink pedagogy and holistic development. One of the biggest advantages of remote teaching is flexibility in timings. Teachers now can devise and also have access to ready learning strategies that can be employed to suit the learners' needs according to their understanding level. The process of teaching on the virtual portal gave an opportunity to the teachers to learn and understand and harness the digital space to maximize the learning opportunities. virtual learning offers a suitable mode of teaching and learning and has become an opportunity door for teachers to positively impact the lives of so many school children during these challenging times. But the question that arises is - 'Can Technology Optimally Replace Physical Teaching?' A teacher is not just a facilitator of knowledge but he / she is also a mentor, a guide, a friend and a role model for the students. Whether it is on the online interactive platform or in a physical classroom, teachers as mentors are trained to handle different emotional issues that students face. In a physical classroom, a teacher gives personal feedback and guides students based on the years of experience she /he has acquired. A Teacher understands the importance of inculcating basic human values. A young child needs to know and understand the importance of basic values in life which teachers can impart to them through value education thus helping them to be socially responsible citizens of our society. Teachers encourage students in their journey and decision making process. Although technology is not bound by any physical barrier, teachers and educators play an equally important and crucial role to guide and direct students toward the right resources and monitor them and their learning outcomes.

Blended Learning as Transformational Potential?

Teachers generally say that their course is a blend that consists of x % online and y % faceto- face, which is not informative without knowing the nature of the activities occurring in the distinct learning environments and how the course effectively uses the features of the two environments .

Role of Live Interaction vs. Computer-Mediated Communication?

Under what conditions is human interaction important to the learning outcomes and learner satisfaction with the experience? Some evidence indicated that learners in blended environments place greater value or emphasis on the face-to-face components, while other findings suggest that the face-to-face elements are necessary (Graham, 2006).

Role of Learner Choice and Self-Regulation

How learners make choices about the kinds of blends in which they are participating? Do choices depend on convenience and flexibility? Online components require greater amount of discipline for learners to succeed

CONCLUSION

Blended learning is emerging as one of the most popular pedagogical concepts and with the advancement of technology and learning analytics the boom is going to be experienced. There should be more studies guiding teachers or administrators on how to create a successful blend. Furthermore, blending of face to face and online learning environments should be planned precisely and strategically to have diverse benefit from this approach. As technological innovations spread, new types of blends will occur and education will be blended with different technologies but the key question to be answered will remain same "How should we organize such learning environments in order to support learning effectively? The answer is we should study to integrate constructivist and collaborative models into blended learning environments and aim to educate students in more creative and innovative way.

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