



CHALLENGES AND NEED OF CHANGES IN BLENDED LEARNING OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA

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Abstract

Blended Learning is the term which is necessary in each level of education i.e., primary, secondary or higher. It means to increase the knowledge about technology advancement which comes in the students with help of different teaching-learning experiences. Blended learning is refers to the educational practice of combining digital learning tools with other traditional classroom face-to-face teaching. In a flipped classroom program, students will be encouraged to access digital learning materials through their time-based learning platform. It is a design that increases the experiences of teaching and learning for students and teachers because blended learning is a supportive combination of face to face and online education. It can increased enrolment of students whether it allows education to continue during closures and also promotes deep learning and increased the satisfaction of students. But there are many challenges comes in the present blended learning of higher education in our country. This paper reviews the challenges which comes today in blende learning system and also explains the needs to changes the today's blended learning of higher education. The challenges came like traditional mindset of learners, expensive technology, inadequate training, technology issues like internet, lack of social interaction, limited collaborative learning, cognitive load, technological infrastructure etc. among students. So we have to overcome these challenges and for doing change in its system by adapt some solutions like by providing an optimal environment to learners according to their ability, selecting appropriate virtual learning platform, managing additional investment in technology, strengthen executive function skills etc. in the blended learning.

Keywords: *Blended learning, Challenges*

Introduction

The educational system at present is in a transition stage. To fulfil the challenges of expansion and for catering the need of individuals, it is trying to adopt new technologies and exploring new paths to reach the goal of quality educational opportunities for all, at the same time due to various factors like deficiency of budgets, lack of facilities, advantages of face to face interaction, it is not completely ready to leave the traditional modes of knowledge transfer. Even the students are in a state of dual mind. When a group of teacher trainees were inquired about the mode of teaching they will prefer from tradition classroom teaching and ICT supported teaching the

students were nearly evenly divided between both the choices. To make the knowledge of students correlate with the present advancement of technology and globalization, to minimize the errors of teaching, to improve the quality of education, to increase students exposure ICT supported teaching learning process is a good option. ICT supported teaching provides new dimension to teaching learning process, introduces students to the wide pool of knowledge and opens before them innumerable opportunities to learn, unlearn and relearn. Each and every type of learners whether in- service, physically challenged all can be benefitted by this mode of teaching.

Blended learning also known as “hybrid learning”. blended learning is an educational model for teaching students in both a traditional classroom setting and an online learning environment. You have probably heard the term a lot these days as more schools and universities have shifted to blended learning in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. For many educators and trainers, a blended learning approach provides innovative educational solutions through an effective mix of traditional classroom teaching with mobile learning and online activities. Most people agree that blended learning combines teaching and learning methods from both face-to-face, mobile and online learning and that it includes elements of both synchronous and asynchronous online learning options.

Blended Learning

Blended learning is a process of learning by which students learned via electronic and online media or also with traditional face-to-face teaching. It is an actual classroom for teaching students in both a traditional classroom setting and also in an online learning environment. Blended learning is a type of learning that allows learners to utilize the ability to learn both face-to-face and online through digital platforms.

The goal is not to complement or replace conventional learning styles, but rather to incorporate necessary changes to make the educational path for learners more effective and personalized. Blended learning incorporates direct instruction, indirect instruction, collaborative teaching, individualized computer assisted learning. Blended learning is a term applied to the practice of providing instruction and learning experiences through some combination of both face-to-face and technology mediated learning. During these learning experiences students are not required to be physically together in one place but may be connected digitally with help of online communications. Classroom instructions time may be replaced by online learning experiences and online learning includes varying degrees of interaction or just time alone in independent study and learning

activities. Blended learning includes following:

Face to face teaching:

Face to face interaction helps in synchronous communication. Teachers and students both are able to get immediate feedback that in turns is favourable for teaching learning process.

Student interaction with course content:

The videos provide required content and sharing on blogs and visiting e-books provide new and updated perspectives to the content.

Group discussion and exchange of ideas:

Classroom teaching not only provides students interaction with teachers but well-designed strategies give students to undergo discussions with their class mates on different aspects of the course and exchange ideas.

Accessing e-library:

This is a part of ICT supported teaching learning in blended learning. This widens their outlook and enriches their knowledge, this helps in meeting the cognitive objectives.

Virtual classroom:

It provides student an option to learn anywhere, anytime and from anyone. Students can be a part of a virtual classroom meeting with his co-students and teacher in cyber space irrespective of the geographical boundaries.

Online assessment:

Immediate feedback is a key factor in learning as it motivates the learner and is based on principles of readiness.

All of above things included in the blended learning. Thus, we can say that blended learning creates a truly integrated classroom where the needs of all types of learners can be met. It keeps students motivated, engaged and stimulated also helps teachers to be more effective and make greater gains with their students. It could increased the participation of students, improve quality of discussion, and also foster interactions. The discussion forum could support students and improve learning by solving difficult problems. Overall, blended learning is an

effective way of teaching that is flexible and easy to access.

Here, some definitions of the blended learning are discussed below:

According to Driscoll, (2002)- “Blended learning as meaning to combine or mix modes of web-based technology (e.g., live virtual classroom, self-paced instruction, collaborative learning, streaming video, audio, and text to accomplish an educational goal.” According to Clark, (2003)- “Blended learning is the use of two or more distinct methods of training.” According to Kink, (2006)- “Blended learning is the thoughtful integration of classroom face-to-face learning experience with online learning experiences.”

Importance Of The Blended Learning Of Higher Education

Blended learning has a great importance in the higher education. It provides combination of both modes of learning to students face-to-face with online instructions. Blended learning may be one of many approaches for providing a more flexible approach in the higher education, however, it becomes an extremely prominent approach. This method is important to the future of higher education as a whole, as it provides a range of ways for students to engage. In a changing, increasingly technologically savvy world, blended learning is a valuable way to utilise technology for e-learning without reducing the importance and value of in-person teaching.

Blended learning is important in a number of ways:

1. It provides the best attributes of online and in-person learning, so that maximise the benefits of both.
2. It focus on individual rather than group work, it also allowing teachers to get a better grasp about the strengths and weaknesses of each individual.
3. It can promote closer relationships and allow tutors to understand that how to tailor their approach to each student.
4. It provides more personalised instruction to suit the learning style of individual students.
5. Finally, blended learning is important when you take into account the events

of the COVID-19 pandemic. This caused higher education organizations to reflect on how they can best adapt and change, both in emergency situations and for those with individual complications.

Some more reasons which showed the importance of the blended learning are as under:

Flexibility:

Blended learning provides students an improved level of flexibility. Students can access material from any place and at any time, which means that they do not miss out on education if they cannot present on campus. This is especially valuable for students who may have physical or geographical challenges and has proven to be very useful during the global pandemic, which made in-person learning either impossible.

Work with faculty staff:

Blended learning also provides students with time to work with faculty staff, as teachers are able to connect with them individually through technology. This provides a greater level of connection between students and their teachers, and which students who may have less confidence in group environments to reach out. It also provides them the time and privacy to ask for extra support.

Study at their own pace:

Student learning is more flexible, and it allow students to study at their own pace and give them more ownership over their learning, and also provides variety of ways in which information can be delivered allows for deeper learning and engagement.

Improved student retention:

It also improves the retention level of students. With students encouraged to stay in their education, this method of learning can help to prepare them for their working life, as they have more control over when and how they learn, managing their own time. These provides invaluable transferable skills for the future also.

Need Of Changes In The Blended Learning Of Higher Education

While there are many upsides to a blended learning model, there are also

some challenges that teachers and students may face when dealing with the online learning component of this model. Here, in our country there is a great need of changes in the challenges of blended learning of education. The need of changes felt due to different challenges which are present in our blended learning system of education. These defects are explained as under:

Lack of IT training:

Teachers (especially those who are not tech-savvy) need the right training and support for online instruction, and not every school is able to facilitate this.

Reduced Supervision:

Adjusting to blended learning can be a challenge for teachers who have more need for students on one-on-one or who have less motivation in an online environment than face-to-face experience.

Lack of Resources:

Blended learning is effective only when it is supported by the right technology, equipment, and software. Unfortunately, not every student has access to computers and internet.

Technology Challenges:

There may also be days when the Internet doesn't work, or when programs and software are down, and students are unable to access their courses. This can be frustrating for many students, although these bugs are often quickly fixed, and students are able to continue their work.

High maintenance Cost:

It is sometimes expensive to incorporate advanced technology into its blended learning projects such as infrastructure installation and equipment. In a corporate setup, this is especially true for large organizations with different departments or large employees. But if you compare this cost with all the other benefits that come with mixed education, it is not only a short-term cost, but it will eventually be quite beneficial in the long run.

Technological dependence:

To achieve the learning goals of your blended learning program, content developers use the technical tools and resources that are easy to use, reliable, and up-to-date. All this is possible if participants have strong internet

connectivity as it has a meaningful impact in terms of overall learning environment and experience. Since blended learning is about technical dependence, there is a limitation regarding the technical skills of both teachers and learners. Students and instructors who are not tech-savvy may face a major obstacle in terms of smooth interactions. Participants will face difficulty in accessing the course material; Therefore, this learning strategy must come with appropriate technical support.

Wastage of offered resources:

This is in relation to the boundary discussed in the above point. That is, if learners or students are unaware of the technology used in the online learning course, it is likely that you will not get the desired results. Similarly, if the technical tools provided are inadequate and not related to the course material, it would also be a waste of resources.

Lack of contact:

When it comes to working away from the campus rather than the traditional classroom setting, the issue of exclusion may be prominent. Students with a lack of direct contact can be increasingly lonely which may lead to an increase in mental health issues and disconnect from peers and tutors.

Quality of education:

One of the complaints about the online learning move has been about the quality of education. Students feel that they are not getting as many benefits from their classes as they do individually and they worry that this will have a negative impact on their course. To counter this, institutions must diversify their learning model to help student engagement.

Help and support:

When staff are on site in a higher education setting, they are accessible to students, with office hours that allow them to provide help and support. However, with an online learning or blended learning approach, this can be more difficult. Students may struggle to contact staff or know how to reach out for support when they are not on campus or in lectures.

Self-discipline:

The main challenge of mixed learning for students is that they need a lot of self-discipline to do their learning remotely. Students should be given the tools to succeed in this, while the staff also checks with them from time to time to make sure they are staying on track and not getting bored or satisfied about their education.

Technology and time:

Many higher education institutions may not have the technology or the infrastructure before switching to a blended learning model. It can take significant time and resources to shift to a blended learning approach, especially when it comes to updating technology.

The student's experience:

Institutions need to take into account student experience when implementing blended learning. Maintaining student satisfaction and continuing the quality of their education can be difficult. However, checking with students as much as possible and transitioning during more relaxed moments in the school year can help reduce the negative impact of change.

Internet connectivity:

In some areas, the connection of internet is very slow, due to which high distractions came in the lecture of students and teachers and they miss some important things in the lecture.

Remedies To Change In Blended Learning System Of The Higher Education

Here are many remedies or suggestions which helps us to overcome the challenges of blended learning system for teachers and students:

Use free applications:

Use free applications such as Youtube, Video, and Microsoft teams as a learning source to upload videos for your students to view. It allows you to record yourself while giving a lecture so that students can watch that study at their own time. You can also use visual assistants such as YouTube, Power Point, or Prezi, or learning games to incorporate an interactive and visual element into your online classroom.

Utilize a classroom management system to help keep you organized the learning experience:

Google Classroom, Canvas, and Blackboard are all popular classroom management systems that teachers use. These systems are an excellent resource for you to send notes to your class, list the lesson dates, talk about online courses and lessons, upload assignments, and enable students to start their work. It gives you the freedom to set up your classroom in an organized way, so that students know what they need to do, when.

Provide opportunities in your learning model for collaboration:

Create online group projects and let the students meet on Google Hangouts or Zoom to connect and work among themselves. You can also organize smaller group sessions to work with students, allowing them to talk more openly and work together in a collaborative environment.

Allow for socialization:

It is important for the students to be able to build good relationships with their peers, even when they are not seeing each other's face every day. Chat channels provide students a chance to discuss things with their online class and connect. It also be a good idea to provide a break so that students simply socialize. It is important for creating a happy, positive classroom for students.

Set clear expectations:

Its not important only for students but for a teacher also. Make sure that talk to other members of your household and define clear expectations about respecting your need for quiet time to prepare learning tools, lessons, teach, or grade papers.

Create a consistent learning schedule:

Set the time so that you are going to get up early in the morning, and define a rough outline of when you would like to get learning work done, when you'll take breaks, etc. so that you studied according to a well-mannered and scheduled way.

Have a study space:

Set yourself towards success by creating a designated work station that will allow

you to charge your computer and phone and provides you an easy access to any school supplies, study materials, or other learning needs that you want.

Set up your technology:

Sit on a place where you have sure that the connection of internet be very strong and can't be disconnect. You may also order a new router or cables for a hard-wired connection to really ensure that you can get all your schoolwork done.

Ignore distractions:

Keep things like social media, entertainment, or news apps and tabs off so you can focus on your coursework. This could mean putting your phone in another room or silencing apps so that they don't send you notifications while you're busy studying.

Low Cost:

Government should provides high speed internet connections at low cost, so that every student use it according to their capability.

Support for mental health:

The organisations offered resources for mental health and to ensure that students can connect in a structured way, such as in an online classroom, as well as encouraging social events where possible.

Organise programs:

Government should organized idea exchange programs to discover innovative and interesting methods of online teaching-learning.

Regular tests: There should be conducted online tests in a regular interval of times so that students learned with a great attention and touched with their studies.

Upgradation for teachers:

Government also organised seminars or programs for the upgradation for teachers of all levels in regular period after some time so that they know about technology, new devices and changing scenario of education.

Conduct online competitions:

Government should organise online competitions like debate, discussion and other co-curricular activities to keep teachers and students motivated.

Conclusion:

From the summary, the findings revealed that blended learning is very

important in our today's education system. It increases the knowledge of students and teachers about technology and also enhances the engagement of both of them towards online teaching-learning system. In order to conclude it can be said that blended learning is for some people to the extent there is a solution to the problems prevailing in our education system. If implemented in a well-planned manner, in an organized way with the right kind of attitude it can become the future of our education system. It is in our own benefit that steps to optimize blended learning are launched soon.

Recommendations:

1. Programs organized to strengthen the blended learning system in which teachers should evolved in a planned manner.
2. Teachers should participate in seminars, programs so that they increase the knowledge about technology advancement and stay up to date.
3. Teachers have to start with a cleared and measurable statement of objectives.
4. One of the best ways to make your mixed classroom more successful is to use video tutorials. They may be helpful in achieving the overturned classroom setting that we talked about above, but their benefits far outweigh the pre-recorded lectures.
5. In order to make a mixed classroom effective, not only is it sufficient that students and teachers interact, it is also important that students interact with each other.

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