

EDIFICE OF EDUCATION-BUILDING THE TABERNACLE

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ABSTRACT

Blended learning is creating a potpourri of both offline and online erudition experiences in a way that they complement each other. Educational institutes have recognized that using a plethora of learning methods both online and offline are far more efficacious in delivering personalized and more relevant learning experiences. Blended strategies augment student engagement and learning through online activities and improve the efficaciousness by reducing the teaching time. The objective of this paper is to explain the meaning of blended learning, the various elements, the nuances, procedure, the benefits, limitations and challenges for blended learning. Online learning environment can facilitate the success of students because they can review materials whenever they desire and are more comfortable asking teachers for help. It typically broadens the horizons of the instructions in the classroom, provides novel as well as a plethora of strategies that address various challenges that students encountered. Learners who took either all or a portion of their classes online performed much better. Online learning can certainly facilitate the success of students because they can review materials when they want and feel more comfortable in asking teachers for help. Blended education can achieve a holistic development of students- social, mental, emotional and physical by overcoming challenges and barriers for universal access of education. It will foster the development of innovative teaching strategies that will emanate from the new scenario.

Keywords: *Blended learning, Online learning, Teaching, Learning, Collaborative Learning, Web based learning, Education, Blended Education, Productive Student Engagement, Social development, Mental and Emotional development*

Introduction

Education is the light that sets us free from the abyss of darkness, education is the way to future, its the very foundation that builds the character, moulds the behaviour, and that leads to a path that always drives us to the truthful and ethical or moral standards and teaches us to live in an upright manner. It erases our ignorance with knowledge, skills, competencies and also provides us with confidence. The aim of blended learning is to make it more engaging, personalized and more collaborative for the students. Knowles, Holton, and Swanson explained, "that the most valuable learning occurs when the learner takes responsibility for their own learning, learners are collaborative, cooperative, and supportive, learners are liable for their new

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learning, the focus is on student centered classroom." They, also elaborated that, "the learning process should provide a path or corridor to develop creative, critical thinking and life-long learning skills." "The teachers and technology facilitated it by assisting and providing a system, infrastructure, platform, and blended framework. Moreover, the educational research literature has indicated that blended approaches to learning might provide an optimal environment for enhancing student engagement and success".

Objective

The objective of this paper is to explain the nuances of blended learning, the benefits, the elements and the procedure of the same. It also aims at discussing limitations and challenges, achieving a holistic development

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of a student, social development, mental and emotional development, physical development

by overcoming challenges and barriers for universal access of education and therefore developing innovative teaching strategies for the new normal of education .

Blended learning - an amalgam of both offline and online learning

Blended learning is creating a potpourri of both offline and online erudite experiences in such a way that they complement each other . In the present times Educational institutes have amply recognized the fact that using a variety of learning methods both online and offline are far more effective in delivering personalized and more relevant learning experiences than in isolation. Blended learning is the future of education ,its aim is to coalesce the strengths of both traditional and online learning methods in order to give your learners a more engaging learning experience. Through blended learning, we get the glimpse of advantages of the best of both worlds, benefitting both educators and learners. “ (LMS) learning management systems makes it simple to set up blended courses that contain any combination of face-to-face and online training components, this makes it very convenient for the instructor to upload the content and for the learner to view and learn from the material and content.”

Emotional and mental Development

Blended learning involves harnessing the power of the internet to create more personalized learning experiences to reach students where they feel empowered to have an increased control over the time, and pace of learning. Blended strategies augment student engagement and learning through online activities and improve efficacy by reducing lecture time.

Instructional strategies such as exploratory discussions ,lecturing, guided learning, role-play , debates and so on should be amalgamated with online learning tools such as e-books, podcasts, webcasts , digital video libraries, Wikis, Google classroom , Animaker , Google Earth ,multiplayer online games and a plethora of others to facilitate learning.

Enriched learning experiences

Conventional teaching is quintessential , where there is face to face interaction. “Online learning, virtual learning, web based learning, intelligent tutor systems are the new technologies in education” and hence we need to amalgamate both the domains and arenas in order to make progress. Online learning provides students with enriched learning experiences and helps to extend learning beyond the classroom. It has the advantage of learning through animations, multimedia, videos ,chats and so on. The main motive is to have newly constructed knowledge transferred to learners through sharing their work with their peers and the mentor.

It encompasses the following three elements:

- make presentations or distribute the reports online
- review the process
- receive feedback from instructor

The first is a kind of ‘show and tell’. Students may first make presentations or display their work online in VLEs. The second one is a kind of ‘self-reflection process’, where they can compare their own work with their peers and review their own work to see how well they have done it. The third is about how their work is evaluated by their peers and the instructor so that they are informed of how well they have done their work and where they need to make improvements as far as knowledge construction and learning strategies are concerned.

Myriad advantages of Blended Learning

- There is an enhanced learning outcome
- Reduced withdrawal rate
- Greater flexibility for students and teachers
- Ability to foster a holistic learning environment
- Leads to potential cost and resource savings
- Develops collaborative dynamics
- Assessment in live situations
- Ability to perform field work and visits to places of interest
- collaboration among students

Digital tools to support blended learning

Digital tools can be used to sustain learning and teaching in a blended environment, and it is imperative for educators to explore all of them, to become familiar so that they can

understand how to collaborate them for moving towards a blended learning environment. Blogs are indeed an ideal tool for disseminating views and opinions. They can be written by a single author or several collaborating together. Multi-author blogs can provide an opportunity for improving communication and increasing impact. Discussion Boards are similar to Blogs in that they often work at the augmentation or modification level. They can be used for reflection, thinking and analyzing, brainstorming, cooperative debate, collaborative writing etc.

Live Internet streaming is used for live guest speeches, question answer sessions, demonstrations, live debates, polling etc. video conferencing is used for taking online feedback, hosting weekly discussions or question answer sessions, lectures and so on. Mind mapping is carried out using Cause-effect diagrams, flowcharts and graphs where brainstorming is carried out by a student or a group of students. Twitter is another platform that can be used effectively for taking feedback, understanding the opinions, following specific topics and problem solving. Students can get feedback on their performance as part of doing an activity.

Massive open online courses (MOOC) these are online courses that aim at unlimited participation and open access via the web. They offer traditional course materials along with filmed lectures, readings, and so on. A number of MOOCs also offer interactive user forums to support community interactions between students and professors. "MOOCs often emphasize open-access features, such as open licensing of content, structure and learning goals, to promote the reuse and remixing of resources."

In a flipped classroom, students become active and are egged on to question, make decisions, debate and make choices in a learning environment. Classrooms transport into studios and learning goes on in a unique way. Learners are required to complete group projects or assessments online and then come in for face-to-face instruction when required. To use this approach, one may wish to develop a self study course that requires learners to learn autonomously, and create a calendar of dates upon which learners must "attend a lecture or presentation in a physical classroom.

This is often ideal for tasks that require face-to-face group collaboration or complex subject matters that can be more effectively explored by in-person demonstrations or discussions". Sequential learning happens through the use of video recording, podcasts and so on. Another interesting platform is OER ie Open Education Resource which allows students to create their own instructional videos.

Blended learning in educational research is an amalgamation of different learning environments, a synthesis of the conventional face-to-face classroom methods with more modern computer-mediated activities. It has been observed that Online learning environment can facilitate the success of students because they can go back and review study materials when they so desire and feel far more comfortable asking teachers for help.

It has also been observed that quintessentially students who took a portion of their classes online performed better when compared to those who were taking the same course through merely the traditional face-to-face instruction.

Instruction that combines both face-to-face and online elements has a greater advantage than merely face-to-face instruction or merely online instruction. Online learning can be enhanced by giving learners control of their interactions with media and inviting learning reflections. Some researches proved that providing several online options in addition to traditional classroom training does indeed augment what students learn. The interaction and level of contentment enhanced, students grasped more, in courses that incorporated blended learning.

Reviews

According to the Christensen Institute, "blended learning can help in building relationships between students and educators." Blended learning can be seen as a complement to social-emotional learning. There are numerous ways in which blended learning can improve the social-emotional landscape in classrooms by creating small groups that focus on socio-emotional skills, teachers can play games or role-play in small groups to help students learn how to build their

social skills, they can foster guided discussions or place students in small collaborative groups to discuss social issues and develop their emotional skills. Blended learning provides innumerable benefits to teachers and students, one significant advantage of blended learning is to support social-emotional learning because the model provides teachers and students opportunities to intensify socio-emotional practices. It provides students a space to collaborate and increase their power to empathise. It enables teachers to teach small groups of students socio-emotional skills naturally. Students get an opportunity to help each other and to forge relationships thus fostering empathy. Students who can recognize emotions are better adjusted and are more popular, outgoing, and sensitive. These students are usually high scorers and have more resilience.

Rightly asserted by Garrison and Kanuka (2004), "blended learning is both simple and complex" (p. 96), the simplest form of blended learning was a mixture of physical classroom activities and learning activities supported by online technologies. "Blended learning is intricate due to its vast number of "blends" ". " It not only fostered learning process via online or classroom technologies (Garrison and Kanuka, 2004; Vaughan, 2007), but also traversed the gap between learning and working" . (Bohle Carbonell et al., 2013 furthermore, was divided into the "third generation" (Phipps and Merisotis, 1999,) of distance education systems. "The first generation alluded to correspondence education using a one-way instructional method, involving mail, radio, and television." The second generation meant distance education aided with single technology, such as multimedia projector device. The third generation pointed to blended learning, characterized by combining face-to-face learning with various computer technologies to learn and instruct. Generally, blended learning meant combination of learning delivery methods, including most frequent face-to-face instruction with asynchronous and/ or synchronous computer technologies. Combination of face-to-face learning and various computer technologies is beneficial to higher education (Phipps and Merisotis, 1999, p.26). " The structure established by

Osguthorpe and Graham (2003) was another useful case in suggesting the definition of blended learning and the goals of blending." "They defined three components to be blended: (a) learning activities, (b) students, and (c) instructors, so blending learning differed based on different goals such as pedagogical richness, access to knowledge, social interaction, personal agency, cost effectiveness, and ease of revision.

One thing that must be borne in mind is that today's digitally focused world is reducing students' abilities to recognize human emotions and jeopardizing their empathetic capacities . Empathy is fostered in environments that prioritize face-to-face connections hence a crucial step for educators is to help teachers create classrooms that nurture meaningful interaction and engagement. Blended learning is important because it breaks down the traditional walls of teaching, now with access to present-day technologies and resources we can tailor the learning experience for each student. Blended learning also offers flexible time frames that can be personalized to each person, providing them the opportunity to learn at their own pace.

"When technology is incorporated in school lessons, students will be more interested in and eager about the subjects that they are studying. Subjects that might be tedious- like mathematics and science, can be learnt with animated videos and help in retention. Surfing the net to look up information would help students to supplement their knowledge. This interaction with the resources helps students focus for longer periods, it also assists in learning through exploration and research. Adoption of e-Learning materials augments student's to set learning goals and take charge of their own learning. Students learn to be self motivated and responsible. They start to traverse new grounds and new vistas to reach their goals. Blended learning ingrains a sense of 'student ownership over learning' can be a powerful force propelling learning. It's this feeling of responsibility that helps the feeling of ownership.

Reviewing, analyzing, and giving feedback to student work, helps the instructor to mould their methods and feedback for each student while improving competence.

The elasticity of blended learning and the faculty to access internet material, or net sources permit students to learn at their own pace, thereby creating a meaningful environment, teachers thus accelerate learning process so they play a pivotal role in education as they are the ones who are using the instructional material along with the teaching aids that is the e-material that the teacher creates .

The landscape of education

Blended learning offers a multitude of real-world skills, that directly translate into life skills, from:- Research skills, Self-Learning, Writing skills, Self-engagement, Better decision making, responsibility, Computer Literacy, developing a self driving force.

Learners regardless of their age learn differently and teaching methods that are to be adopted should echo this, by designing modules or teaching programs in a way that reaches visual, auditory, and kinetic learners equally. With the profound integration of technologies (ICT), we'll be able to improve teaching, learning power ,understanding dimension, cognition aspect , as then theoretical and practical knowledge would be intertwined ,so the technique of information retention, learner's engagement, responsibility, and enjoyment would improve tremendously.

The human component

Students never outgrow their learning styles, that brings us to a point that blended learning is more important than ever. Blended Learning is a fusion of learning methods that integrates diverse teaching models. "Blended learning leads to growing accessibility of e-Learning, online resources, and the continued need for a human touch in the learning experience is a vital component that is seen in it" . A blended learning acts as a lens in the society delineating that the learner is enthusiastically engaged in their own unique learning experiences. This approach also helps cater to the individual needs of the learners, every student has a unique learning style and a blended approach is more likely to cater to those needs than a traditional classroom teaching experience.

The educational landscape is swiftly changing, the awareness of the technology and widespread integration of those technologies into our society, has integrally changed teaching learning process in a short span .

The quickly changing educational landscapes should be an indicator to show that teaching methods need to evolve to keep up with the times and incorporate integrated technologies into the learning model, it's time to embrace technology for the advantages they bring. We should try combining the AR (augmented reality),virtual reality (VR) technology, the 6E's (Engage, Explore, Explain, Engineer, Enrich, and Evaluate) model, and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) thus engineering education and walking towards developing a "hands-on activity" intended at serving learners to reach "learning by doing" so we as teachers should try to develop the lesson plans which take into account the latest technology and trends along with the virtues of ancient, medieval system of education.

In fact it seems to be the ideal solution as it is conducive to all learning styles. It brings together the support of classroom learning with the flexibility of e-learning, a learner may complete a module online and then participate in a group activity with others offline. This blended learning model is extremely versatile and flexible hence it can be accommodated to virtually any subject matter or audience. On the road to amalgamate this model, you can create- "e-Learning games ,stories and other activities that give learners the opportunity to explore the topic online, and finally develop face-to-face activities that delve deeper into the subject matter." "This real time can also be used to address questions or concerns that the learner may have, or to give instructors the chance to assess the learner's knowledge acquisition and retention."

Blended Learning Model also focuses on online instruction, where only small groups or specific learners have access to the face-to-face instruction. In some cases, the online training courses are offered within the classroom itself, thus learners can receive one-on-one support from the instructors. Learners can also form groups which meet in person to explore a topic in detail. To integrate this approach, one can offer face-to-face support for learners who may need more support, they can schedule group sessions from time to time wherein instructors can meet with learners who require additional assistance. The learners are encouraged to collaborate with each other so that all of them can be enriched from the experience .

Blended Learning Models

A La Carte Blended Learning Model essentially involves only online instruction, but the training may take place in a physical classroom or lab. The instructors may record videos or audio lectures, and offer online support to their learners via forums such as email, or instant messages. A La Carte helps in cutting down the instruction cost. To use this model, self study courses can be developed which include everything an online training module would require such as - multimedia, but offer virtual support from an instructor. A good example for this is providing the learners the opportunity to Skype chat or connect with the instructor through Zoom, Webex, Google classroom and so on so that learners can ask questions and discuss about their ideas and concerns on an online forum that you have set up, and then complete their training experience by attending a class, seminar ,workshop or a webinar.

The Enriched Virtual Blended Learning Model centers around face-to-face instruction, which is supplemented by online tools and resources after the sessions with the instructor are over. They can use these resources to learn more about the topic on their own, outside the physical classroom. For example, you can ask them to participate in online webinars or workshops . Powerpoint presentations , Games and slide show presentations are also ideal online resources if one opts for the enriched virtual model.

CONCLUSION

We need to go back to our roots if we wish to achieve holistic development in our students .We must model our educational edifice system on the Gurukul system , adapt it to and synchronise it with the modern milieu. The zeitgeist of the past needs to be zealously revived and assimilated with the spiritus

mundi of the modern era so that the exquisite tabernacle of education is built and the symphony of success goes on forever . Lets move forward with the armour of blended learning that blends the past, the present and the future.

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