Blended Learning - An Effective Pedagogy

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Abstract: *The ICT tools were only a part of teaching process in the regular schools and colleges but the scenario changed after global pandemic and lockdown. The class room learning took a different meaning and context during the covid pandemic and both the teaching and student community got to learn the usage of one or more e - learning platforms like Google Class room, Zoom, Black board, Moodlesetc depending on the availability of internet and resources. The words like blended learning, online teaching, e - learning has gained popularity among all – teachers, students and even parents post - pandemic. It was interesting to note that students from kindergarten to Ph. D students were getting tutored in the online platforms. Blended learning - a new normal – combines both face to face instruction and online based learning to enable students to study an engage in their own pace. This paper looks at the definitions of blended learning, advantages of blended learning, different types and past studies conducted on the effectiveness of blended learning.*

Keywords: blended learning, face to face instruction, technology

1. Introduction

Teaching and learning process is constantly undergoing changes. New technological advancements have made the teaching - learning process more interesting and engaging than ever before. Incorporation of technology has become highly inevitable as it enables the concept clarity and retention among student community. Many online education platforms have programmed very interesting age - appropriate concepts for understanding, analyzing and have been effective in retention of students' knowledge, both at school and college level. The ICT tools were only a part of teaching process in the regular schools and colleges but the scenario changed after global pandemic and lockdown. The class room learning took a different meaning and context during the covid pandemic and both the teaching and student community got to learn the usage of one or more e - learning platforms like Google Class room, Zoom, Black board, Moodlesetc depending on the availability of internet and resources.

The words like blended learning, online teaching, e - learning has gained popularity among all – teachers, students and even parents post - pandemic. It was interesting to note that students from kindergarten to Ph. D students were getting tutored in the online platforms.

Use of internet based technology for teaching and learning has been long before and there co - existed the concept of blended learning since 2000, but it was not as a compulsive learning as only few institutions and students could afford the technology or the internet package. But now, blended learning has taken equal importance as a student can enjoy face to face interaction and even during his free hour can take up assignments virtually.

This article looks at the history of blended learning, different types of blended learning, advantages and the effectiveness of the same. The paper also looks at the researches carried out by different researchers to understand the effectiveness blended learning as an effective pedagogy.

Blended Learning
Blended learning is a combination of face - to face learning instruction with online platforms where students and teachers engage in using technology for active learning. Blended learning is also called technology - mediated instruction, web - enhanced instruction or mixed - mode instruction.

Blended learning requires the physical presence of both teacher and student, with the flexibility of time, place, path or pace. This learning methodology offer students the combination of attending brick and mortar schools with a face to face classroom with a teacher present and computer - mediated activities regarding content and delivery. This learning is also beneficial to professional development and training settings.

The initial idea of blended learning started in the year 2000 when Cooney and his team conducted a research combining work and play in a kindergarten school, though this context is too far from what we are talking today, this gives a fair idea of combing different educational activities for the benefit of learning.

Osguthorpe and Graham (2003), defined blended learning as "Blended learning combines face - to face with remote delivery system, but it's more than showing an information on a website on the classroom screen".

Garrison and Kanuka (2004), stated that "blended learning is the thoughtful integration of classroom face - to - face learning experiences with online learning experiences. "

Driscoll in the year 2002 proposed four different concepts in blended learning.
1) Combining web - based technology for an educational goal.

2) Combing pedagogical approaches (for example: constructivism, behaviorism, cognitivism) for an optimal learning outcome with or without instructional technology.
3) Combining any form of instructional technology with face - to - face instructor - led training.
4) Combining instructional technology with actual job tasks.

Students doing face to face group work in a classroom, then going home to analyse that work and turn in a video as an assessment form, taking a course online, then receiving face to face tutoring between online classes is considered to be a typical example of blended learning. The related educational concepts in blended learning areProject based learning, growth mindset, design thinking, robotics etc.

Advantages of the blended learning:
- Enables a safe learning environment for students.
- Facilitates student engagement.
- Combination of classroom teaching and online improves comprehension of the students.
- Students have autonomy over their learning.
- Efficient use of teachers' instruction time.
- The teaching material can be accessed by the student when they have time.
- Beneficial to appropriate to both slow - paced and advanced learners.
- Increases the motivation of students to engage in practical learning.

Different types of Blended learning:
Face to Face driver models: This is a very interesting model similar to traditional instructor leading sessions but supplemented with technology to allow learners to control their learning pace. Role - play, mentoring, hands - on - practice and feedback are considered to be the benefits. This method is very effective for the slow - paced learners as the use of technology will enable them to learn flexibly in their own pace.

Rotation Model: This is the most common model, in which students within the same course rotate between online and face to face instruction. Stations based rotation can be implemented even in elementary class rooms as it needs only a minimal planning and technical support. In this model, teachers can collaborate; administrators and leaders can provide coaching and support.

Flex Learning: In other words, this model can be called personalized learning. Here the students can access Learning Management System, plan and control their own learning path. The instructor is usually the mentor to answer questions.

Online Lab Model: in this model, students learn entirely through online platform and the students will also be scheduled to learn in a dedicated computer lab to finish their course work or assignments allocated to them.

Self - blend learning model: This model works effectively for the self - motivated students. This is ideal for those who are planning to take up advanced courses to improve their knowledge set and skill.

On - line Driver Model: Students in this model work remotely and material is delivered online. Face - to - face check ins are optional and chat online with teachers to help clarify doubts. This is an entirely self - directed model and most appropriate for students to those who seek independence.

Project based blended learning: In this model the students used both online learnings - either in the form of courses or self - directed access and face to face instruction/challenge to do projects, assignments, products & related artifacts.

2. Literature and Past Research in Blended Learning

Studies done by different researchers across different parts of the world has revealed that blended learning has an impact on the students' learning experience and satisfaction.

The New Media Consortium Horizon report (Adams Becker et al.) released in the year 2017 indicated that blended learning designs were one of the short term forces driving technology adoption in higher education in the next couple of years.

Blended learning is seen as the more effective teaching model compared to class room teaching and technology base instruction, when used separately (Pellas and Kazandis, 2015; Gonazales - Gomez et al., 2016)

Researches have showed that blended learning results in improvement in student success and satisfaction (Dziuban and Moskal, 2011)

According to Garrison and Kanuka (2004) and Piccaino (2009), blended learning has the potential to enhance effectiveness.

Hameed, Badii, and Cullen (2008) researched on the efficiency of e - learning when mixed with traditional learning; the research findings inferred hat blended learning approach offers the most flexible method to e - learning.

The research done by Davis and Fill, in the year 2007 stated that blended learning has the potential to positively impact learning outcomes and students' experience.

Chandra and Fisher (2009) conduct a study among high school students on their perceptions of a blended web - based learning environment. According to this study web - based learning environment has been evaluated as convenient, accessible, promoted autonomy of learning, promoted positive interactions between peers during web - based lessons, enhanced enjoyment and regarded as clear, easy to follow and understandable. Also, in this study, students preferred interacting and asking questions to teacher as face to face instead of asking through email (Chandra and Fisher, 2009).

Blended learning provides a comparatively more productive engagement among students in the online environment and in course content as well" (Ziegler, Paulus, & Woodside, 2006, as cited in Bdawi, 2009, p.6).

In all studies reviewed in this paper, it is being observed that Blended learning is useful, enjoyable, supportive, flexible and motivator for students (learners).

3. Conclusion

To conclude, blended learning is an effective pedagogy as it helps students to take up learning/project/assignments in their convenient time and pace. The benefits are multi - faceted and it strikes a right balance between face to face communication and student community has the benefits of communication, sense of community believing and are constantly motivated. The blended learning is an effective pedagogy to improve the academic performance and self - learning of students, as this is both a collaborative task and practical way of learning. There is a lot of scope for research to understand the methodology, content, time schedules that enhances the motivation and academic performance of students, so it would be beneficial to both the teaching and students community. In future, even the school children will enjoy the benefits of class room teaching and technology based education.

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