



BLENDED LEARNING APPROACHES FOR FUTURE TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMME

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Abstract

Blended learning is becoming a popular concept in education in those developed countries where access to on line tools is easy and affordable. It is interchangeably used with other terms such as ' technology enhanced education, web based education etc. Basically it is a combination of on line learning resources and traditional pedagogy. This combination is for better educational product. The paper gives an account of concept, need, benefits, advantages and disadvantages of blended learning. The paper focuses the use of blended learning (BL) in future teacher education programme. It illustrates the need of BL in teacher education.

Key terms: BL, Definitions, word usage, Levels, Benefits, teacher education.



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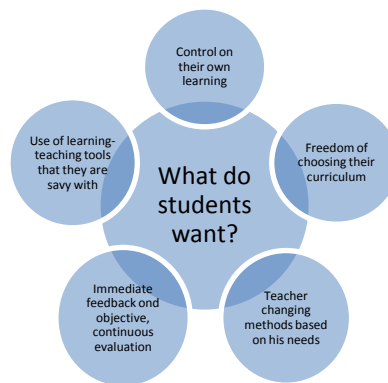
Introduction:

The concept of blended learning has been around for a long time, but its terminology was not firmly established until around the beginning of the 21st century. One of the earliest references to the term appears in a press release in 1999, when the Interactive Learning Centers, an Atlanta-based education business, announced its change of name to EPIC learning. Currently, use of the term 'blended learning' mostly involves "combining Internet and digital media with established classroom forms that require the physical co-presence of teacher and students." To combine or mix modes of web-based technology (e.g. live virtual classroom, self paced instruction, collaborative learning, audio and text) to accomplish an educational goal.

Definitions of "Blended Learning":

1. Blended learning, the teaching practice that combines teaching methods from both face-to-face and online learning, is an established, rapidly growing instructional model that is proving highly effective in helping schools and districts address the challenges of student achievement, limited resources, and the expectations of 21st century learners.
2. Blended Learning is defined as the combination of offline and online learning.
3. INACOL, the International Association for K-12 Online Learning, defines blended learning as "combining online delivery of educational content with the best features of classroom interaction and live instruction to personalize learning, allow thoughtful reflection, and differentiate instruction from student-to-student across a diverse group of learners.

4. The Sloan Consortium, an institutional and professional leadership organization dedicated to integrating online education into mainstream education, describes blended learning as part online and part traditional face-to-face instruction.
5. Blended learning is a formal education program in which a student learns at least in part through online delivery of content and instruction with some element of student control over time, place, path or pace. While still attending a “brick-and-mortar” school structure, face-to-face classroom methods are combined with computer-mediated activities. Proponents of blending learning cite the opportunity for data collection and customization of instruction and assessment as two major benefits of this approach. Schools with blended learning models may also choose to reallocate resources to boost student achievement outcomes.



Word usage:

The terms "blended," "hybrid," "technology-mediated instruction," "web-enhanced instruction," and "mixed-mode instruction" are often used interchangeably in current research literature. However, recent researchers in the United States tend to use the term "blended learning" with more regularity.

Blended learning is implemented in a variety of ways, ranging from models in which curriculum is fully online with face-to-face interaction to models in which face-to-face classroom instruction is integrated with online components that extend learning beyond the classroom or school day. The rapid growth of blended learning has been a catalyst for additional instructional transformation, including:

- Evolving pedagogy in which teachers' roles include facilitation, student mentoring and differentiating instruction for individual learners,
- Increased flexibility and personalization of students' learning experiences, and
- Strategic uses of technology as districts tap the capabilities of the learning management systems to support a wider range of instructional programs

Blended learning seems to offer what education technology has long promised but rarely delivered: greater student learning and improved school efficiency. Education Elements works with schools to deliver on that promise, and make sure that blended learning offers more hope and help than hype.

Teacher education programme and use of on line tools:

Teacher education programmes have included components on ICT in D. T. Ed. B. Ed. and M. Ed. syllabi. But it has remained as an isolated ICT paper in the curriculum. Theory and practicals are given for the component on ICT but the objective of integrating ICT in Teacher

education curriculum is rarely served. Today's student teachers are quite techno savvy. They not only like to use various technology tools but they know the best possible use of technology. Technology tools such as laptops, mobile- smart phones, internet etc can easily be handled by them. They want to use these tools in their work. The curriculum provide little opportunity to do it.

Blended learning is a combination of on line and off line resources. While reframing teacher education curriculum we must think about strengths of on line tools as well as strengths of traditional approaches and use them together to strengthen the curriculum. Most of the students complain about old and rhetoric B. Ed. curricul. they find it uninteresting and unuseful for future teaching learning programme. the curriculum should have activities that can be completed by student teachers using on line resources. For in stance, they can make review of a particular unit using on line resources such as websites, surveysd, youtube etc and submit them as their assignment. For doing this they can use online facilities like e- mail, drop box, G drive etc. Using blended learning in teacher education programme is not only for the sake of using online tools nor it should be used just because the technology is available. It should been used for better academic output.

Blended learning in teacher education:

1. Time frame available for B. Ed. and M. Ed. courses is very limited. It often becomes difficult for teacher educators to give justice to the entire curriculum in such limited time span. If we integrate on line tools , students can work beyond the brick wall classroom and complete a part of curriculum on line. Teacher educators can devote more time for practicum part that needs one to one interaction with students.
2. Student teachers have positive inclination for use of on line tools. Those who are from urban and semi urban areas, have access to these tools.
3. If student teachers undergo learning process of blended type , they will get ideas for implementing blended learning for their students.
4. Secondary school curriculum and text books are changing more frequently. They are based on constructivism. Lots of activities, games, Projects are given for students. To fit all these activities in school time table is very diffiucult. Students, parents and teachers are supposed to work beyond scholl and make their learning more comprehensive. Use of ICT tools with internet provide very rich and complete experience for students. To give these experiences to students, our student teachers need to undergo such experiences during their training.

Present teaching-learning strategies:

In India most of the community lives in rural area where all the facilities about technology are not available so teaching is done offline. It means teacher teaches in class and students listen whatever teacher tells them. As there are many problems of availability of technology, trained teachers, power supply, maintenance of materials of technology, funding etc. Due to all these reasons technology is not mostly used in all teaching-learning process. But as in teacher training course use of technology is compulsory they have knowledge of soft skills. They must handle aids of technology. Today's and tomorrow's teacher must have a skill of handling technology as students are technology oriented so teacher must have knowledge of soft skills.

Implications of blended learning in a classroom:

- * Blended learning can make the student-teacher interaction easier in a classroom.
- * Classroom based audio-tape resources will be available (language laboratories).
- * Auditorium multimedia visual resources (movie projectors, slideshows, VCRs).
- * Textual resources: textbooks, exercise books.
- * Home-learning resources (video and audio recordings)
- * Blackboard and whiteboard resources, including high-tech “printing whiteboards” and “online whiteboards”.
- * Demonstration resources ,including “museum exhibits”, ”laboratory experiments”, live theatre historic re-enactment, hands-on workshops, role-playing etc.

Benefits of blended learning

Like any other great blend, Education Elements believes blended learning works because it combines two things in a way that makes each better than they are on their own: teachers’ talent and technology tools. Blended learning allows teachers to do what they do best – work directly and closely with individual students and small groups – by harnessing the adaptive power and precision of technology. Ryan notes that blended learning is the future because it helps address students’ diverse needs and learning styles, supports effective response to intervention and gives learners direct experience with technology-supported skills essential for 21st century success. The benefits of Blended learning are summarized below:

1. It provides students online tools to supplement classroom instruction and extends learning beyond the classroom.
2. One can have tailored learning experiences for students based on their needs.
3. It engages students with online tools similar to those used outside the classroom.
4. It provides convenient easy communication with students and parents.
5. It helps to create, deliver, and analyze formative and classroom assessment.
6. It increases communication among teachers enriches professional development.
7. It helps to manage curriculum and curriculum development.
8. It also helps to generate student, class, and district performance reports.
9. It helps in curriculum development.
10. It saves time.

What blended learning isn’t?

Simply adding online computer games or videos to a student’s day or homework time doesn’t count as blended learning. Neither does rolling a laptop cart into a school. Nor does it mean that students are isolated at their keyboards with no social interaction. In great blended learning schools, technology and teaching inform each other. Students alternate regularly between engaging with teachers and peers and focusing on online content tailored to their learning pace and progress. Education Elements believes that tightly integrating online content and offline instruction helps students get exactly what they need when they need it – and that regularly reviewing student progress data and dynamically adjusting student groups optimizes student-teacher interactions.

Advantages:

- Course access at one’s convenience and flexible completion.
- Reduction in physical class time.
- Promotes independent learning.

- Multiple ways to accomplish course objectives.
- Increased opportunities for human interaction, communication, contact to students.
- Less time commuting and parking.
- Introverts participate more.

Disadvantages:

- A strong dependence on the technical resources with which the blended learning experience is delivered.
- Tools need to be reliable, easy to use, and up to date in order for the use of the Internet to have a meaningful impact on the learning experience.
- IT literacy can serve as a significant barrier for students attempting to get access to the course materials, making the availability of high quality technical support paramount.
- Use of lecture recording technologies can result in students falling behind on the material. In a study performed across four different universities, it was found that only half of the students watched the lecture videos on a regular basis, and nearly 40% of students watched several weeks' worth of videos in one sitting.

Challenges of Blended learning:

- Self motivation
- Fear of technology.
- Lack of access to technology.
- Learning curve.
- Demand on Information Technology.
- Getting faculty and student buy –in.
- Maintaining a quality training process. Supporting instructors as they develop engaging courses.

Use of Blended Learning in Revised B.Ed. syllabus:

Course	Blended Learning Approach
108 Micro teaching, Integration lessons, Simulation lessons	Student teachers are provided with small videos of 5 min. through online resources like google+, mails. They can get extra information about topic through webs, you tubes, ppt etc. Videos of demonstration lessons provided to students before they could conduct demo lessons.
109 Technology based teaching, team teaching, lessons using models of teaching	Videos of demonstration lessons can be provide to students before they can conduct innovative lessons. Discussion on these videos can be held before conducting actual lessons. They can get extra information about topic through webs, you tubes etc.
110, 206, 207 Practice lessons, Internship- lessons and Activities	Models lesson plans and other teaching aids like ppt for a particular lesson can be given online (edmodo) and face to face guidance in the class. They can get extra information about topic through webs, you tubes ppt.etc. Samples of timetable, planning of unit test etc. in the form of documents provided online. Actual planning discuss face to face in the class
111 ICT practical Co curricular activities, social service	Students will showcase their work in the form of photographs, reports ,videos etc. Videos of social workers and their work, visit to social organisations and NGO

112 Health and Yoga	Videos of yoga can be shown, information of healthy diet , students can be asked to prepare a chart of healthy diet with help of internet.
208 Reading and reflecting on texts	Passages can be given to the students and discussion in class can be held, Language Games, grammar activities can be conduct in the class, working with words, online problem solving task can be given
209 Understanding of self	Videos of great personalities can be shown to the students , documents regarding personality factors can be provided to students Group discussions can be held in class, Interviews of great personalities can be shown
210 Basics of research	Students can be asked to download the research articles, online reviews etc. Workshops on research report writing can be conducted.
211 Drama and Art in education	Students can be shown documentary films, workshops on role play can be organised, students can be asked to write script reviews of some scripts can be asked to download, workshops on good handwriting, good blackboard writing
212 Open course Entrepreneurship programme	Students showcase their work in the form of photographs, reports videos etc.(edmodo) Videos of great entrepreneurs and their work can be shown, Group discussions can be held.

Conclusion:

In this way blended learning can be used in teacher training course like B.Ed. Use of these online sources can be taken and face to face learning can be done through this approach. This is one of the recent pedagogical trend in education. For the teacher of 21st century this is one of the important approaches and useful for teaching-learning process.

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