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Blended Learning for effective remote Learning

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Abstract

This paper explores about effective application of Blended Learning for Remote Learning. This paper discusses how Blended Learning approach will help the teachers and institutions to select most appropriate environment for remote learners. The author highlights implications of important concepts in remote learning and blended learning. It discusses about concept and pedagogies of remote learning , different aspects and benefits of blended learning, It helps teachers to develop understandings and strategies to facilitate learning in a blended environment.

Introduction:

Distance education, like all other technical–social developments, is historically constituted in the thinking and behavioral patterns of those who developed, tested, and implemented what were once novel systems. Given the requirement for distance education to be technologically mediated in order to span the geographic and often temporal distance between learners, teachers, and institutions, it is common to think of development or generations of distance education in terms of the technology used to span these distances. Thus distance education theorists (Garrison, 1985; Nipper, 1989), in a somewhat technologically deterministic bent, have described and defined distance education based on the predominate technologies employed for delivery.

Identifying blended learning (or e-learning) with distance-learning is a mistake that has significant implications for program design and delivery. The design of distance-learning requires that all learning outcomes are anticipated and this may require expertise beyond the scope of most academics. Distance learning therefore involves substantial development time and a project management approach that is essentially sequential. The consequence is that

flexibility is impaired. In practice all teaching and learning includes some element of distance learning. It is the art of programme design teams to decide what proportion this should be and what activities are best conducted by distance (Procter, 2002).

Smith (2001) defines blended learning thus:A method of educating at a distance that uses technology (high-tech, such as television and the Internet or low-tech, such as voice mail or conference calls) combined with traditional (or, stand-up) education or training.

Pedagogies for remote learning:

There are different pedagogies of remote learning, which can be effectively used to address the full spectrum of learning needs and aspirations of 21st century learners. Important of them are; the **cognitive- behaviourist pedagogy, social constructivist pedagogy and connectivist pedagogy.**

Cognitivist behaviourist models defined the first generation of individualized distance education. They maximized access and student freedom, and were capable of scaling to very large numbers at significantly lower costs than traditional education, as demonstrated by the successful mega-universities (Daniel, 1996).

Constructivist distance education pedagogies moved distance learning beyond the narrow type of knowledge transmission that could be encapsulated easily in media through to the use of synchronous and asynchronous, human communications-based learning. Thus, Garrison and others argue that the rich student-student and student-teacher interaction could be viewed as a “post-industrialist era” of distance education.(Terry)

The third generation of distance-education pedagogy emerged recently and is known as **connectivism**. It is noteworthy that connectivist models explicitly rely on the ubiquity of networked connections between people, digital artifacts, and content, which would have been inconceivable as forms of distance learning were the World Wide Web not available to mediate the process. Thus, as we have seen in the case of the earlier generations of distance learning, technology has played a major role in determining the potential pedagogies that may be employed.

It is clear that whether the learner is at the centre or part of a learning community or learning network, learning effectiveness can be greatly enhanced by applying, at a detailed level, an

understanding of how people can learn more effectively: Cognitivist, behaviourist, constructivist, and connectivist theories each play an important role.

Advances in network and communication technologies have shifted the way we deliver instruction to learners in remote locations. Newer ways to blend traditional instruction with technology mediated instructional methods have emerged in an effort to meet the diverse needs of learner satisfaction and improve their learning levels. Several research studies claimed the positive effect of blended learning for teaching and learning (Bielawski, L. and D. Metcalf, 2005)

Blended Learning:

The term "blended learning" is being used with increased frequency in both academic and corporate circles. In 2003, the American Society for Training and Development identified blended learning as one of the top ten trends to emerge in the knowledge delivery industry (cited by Rooney, 2003).

Blended Learning is an approach to learning and teaching which combines and aligns learning undertaken in face-to-face sessions with learning opportunities created online.

Proportion of Content Delivered Online	Type of Course	Typical Description
0%	Traditional	Course with no online technology used — content is delivered in writing or orally.
1 to 29%	Web Facilitated	Course which uses web-based technology to facilitate what is essentially a face-to-face course. Uses a course management system (CMS) or web pages to post the syllabus and assignments, for example.
30 to 79%	Blended/Hybrid	Course that blends online and face-to-face delivery. Substantial proportion of the content is delivered online, typically uses online discussions, and typically has some face-to-face meetings.
80+%	Online	A course where most or all of the content is delivered online. Typically have no face-to-face meetings.

Table 1: Approaches to Learning

Blended learning is more than just combining an online component to the traditional classroom…it is a systematic process of selecting the most appropriate media for a specific learning intervention based upon learning objectives. Learning Environment Component: A learning environment can either be synchronous or asynchronous. Each learning environment has its distinct set of advantages and disadvantages, and the goal of blended learning is to leverage those specific attributes of each environment to ensure the most optimum use of resources to attain the instructional goal and learning objectives.

Instructional Component: Used to select the most appropriate instructional strategies that support the learning objectives (Instructional strategies are the products of learning objectives and serve to ensure the learning objectives and facilitate the transfer of learning.

When developing blended learning, maintaining instructional quality is paramount. Consequently, learning objectives need not be compromised when developing a blended learning solution.

Need for Blended learning: Osguthorpe and Graham (2003) identified six reasons why one might chose to design or use a blended learning system: (1) pedagogical richness, (2) access to knowledge, (3) social interaction, (4) personal agency, (5) cost effectiveness, and (6) ease of revision.

Graham et al. (Graham, Allen, & Ure, 2003, in press) found that overwhelmingly people chose BL for three reasons: (1) improved pedagogy, (2) increased access/flexibility, and (3) increased cost effectiveness.

Courses that integrate online with traditional face-to- face class activities in a planned pedagogically valuable manner; and…where a portion (institutionally defined) of face-to-face time is replaced by online activity.

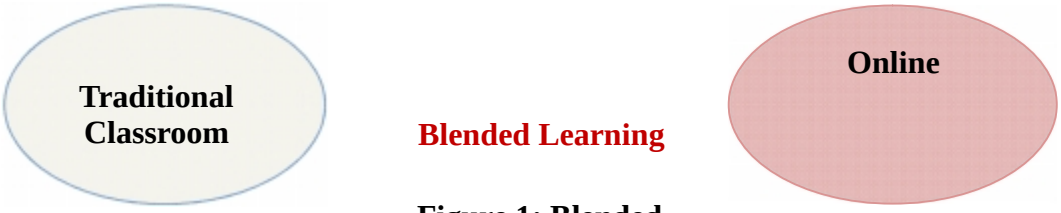

Figure 1: Blended

Consequently, from an *educational* perspective, blended learning is primarily focused on integrating two separate paradigms…the traditional classroom [synchronous] environment and the asynchronous online environment.

The major thrust of blended instruction is to overcome the shortcomings of online instruction and utilize various instructional sequencing and delivery strategies to enhance learner satisfaction while also achieving increased learning outcomes. Among the many definitions available, three representative definitions of blended instruction include: (a) a learning method with more than one delivery mode is being used to optimize learning outcomes and reduced cost associated with program delivery ([Singh, H. and C. Reed), (b) any mix of instructor-led training methods with technology-based learning (Bielawski, L. and D. Metcalf,2005) and (c) the mix of traditional and interactive-rich forms of classroom training with any of the innovative technologies such as multimedia, CD-ROM, video streaming, virtual classroom, email/conference calls, and online animation/video streaming technology.

Distance education often suffers from making large amounts of information available for students to absorb independently (Waddoups & Howell, 2002). Some have seen blended learning approaches increase the level of active learning strategies, peer-to-peer learning strategies, and learner centered strategies used (Collis, 2003; Hartman, Dziuban, & Moskal, 1999; Morgan, 2002; Smelser, 2002).

Benefits of blended learning for remote learning:

Increased Access/Flexibility. Access to learning is one of the key factors influencing the growth of distributed learning environments (Bonk, Olson, Wisher, & Orvis, 2002).

Increased Cost Effectiveness. Cost effectiveness is a third major goal for BL systems in both higher education and corporate institutions. Blended learning systems provide an opportunity for reaching a large, globally dispersed audience in a short period of time with consistent, semi-personal content delivery.

Improved Pedagogy. As indicated above, one of the most commonly cited reasons for blending is more effective pedagogical practices. Blended learning may be applied at all levels of teaching learning;

- Activity level

- Course level
- Program level
- Institutional level

Across all four levels, the nature of the blends is either determined by the learner or the designer/instructor. (Jennifer Patterson 2011).

	Synchronous Media	Asynchronous Media
Visual only		Correspondence(print) Recorded video, Collaboration software,
Aural only	Audio conferencing	Recorded Audio
Visual & aural	Instructional Television Satellite e-learning Video teleconferencing Web conferencing Audio graphics	Recorded video Computer based instruction Asynchronous web based instruction, Online training

Table 2: Media of Instruction

For effective learning we can select delivery media mapped to the distance learning environment

Distance Learning Classroom

- group centric (classroom environment)
- primarily synchronous
- dialectic & collaborative
- constrained by time & place

Supporting Media

- Satellite e-learning
- Video Conferencing
- Audio Conferencing
- Audio Graphics

Virtual Classroom

- individual centric
- synchronous & asynchronous capability
- mostly didactic but can support interaction
- constrained by time not place

Supporting Media

- Web conferencing tools

Virtual Learner

- Individual centric (portable to any location)
- primarily asynchronous
- primarily didactic with little/no interaction
- not constrained by time & place

Supporting Media

- Mobile devices
- Web conferencing tools

Designing Blended learning:

Some of the major issues while designing Blended learning are as follows;

1) the role of live interaction (2) the role of learner choice and self-regulation, (3) models for support and training, (4) finding balance between innovation and production, (5) cultural adaptation, and (6) dealing with the digital divide.

Teaching with Instructional Television (ITV)

There is a tendency to regard the future of distance learning as belonging solely to online or web classes. However, some researchers have found that courses offered in ITV were sometimes preferred by students even when the same course was offered online. Also, the visual and interactive nature of instructional television benefited students and that student satisfaction with ITV has been generally confirmed.

Conclusion:

A survey of the research literature has provided a number of dimensions to blended learning that are found to be common within most tertiary educational institutions (Oliver and Trigwell, 2005; Sharpe et al., 2006). Smith, Lewis, and Massey (2000) observe that the issues in education raised by the development of new educational technologies are extraordinarily important and extraordinarily divisive. New technologies necessarily evoke debate and policy decisions around educational methodology, implementation, evaluation and costs.

Utilizing blended learning and lecture capture presents a unique opportunity for institutions deliberating where and how to invest their limited resources to support strategic academic priorities. Given its documented contributions to student learning and satisfaction, the use of blended learning and lecture capture across an entire university is becoming commonplace. Thus in all we can conclude that Blended Learning will definitely be a key to, Drive distance learning programs, Support comprehensive plans to improve graduation rates, Offer remote learning during emergencies and campus closures, and Recruit and retain more students.

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