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BLENDDED MODE OF TEACHING AND LEARNING FOR TEACHERS COMMUNITY

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Editors

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A STUDY ON BLENDED LEARNING: A NEED OF THE DAY

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Abstract

The world in the recent past has witnessed a rapid growth and spectacular development in the area of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Whereas in India, states like Assam were not fully utilizing the possibilities of such enhancements in technology and continued with traditional face to face teaching-learning method throughout these years. Innovative educators have for many years been creating new delivery methods in education by combining elements of in-person teaching with technology-enabled learning to bring people together virtually. Since the late 1990s, when simple learning management systems began to emerge, blended learning has grown very quickly. There are now many possible combinations and permutations, but it took time for this to occur. Teachers are still a key part of blended learning – teachers who have subject-matter expertise and basic technology skills, along with the new pedagogies that go with technology, such as constructivism and collaboration. Blended learning expertise provides both.

Introduction

Customize student workloads, meet diverse learning abilities, and support students at home or in the classroom: these are just a few of the things that a blended learning approach enables you to accomplish. As a teacher, you must effectively address a range of learning styles in a variety of settings and situations. Blended learning can help personalize education for each of the unique students you teach, while making lessons more effective. If you're like most teachers, your students are already doing some form of blended learning (for example, by using a computer to complete an assignment), so they've already been introduced to the concept of blended learning. Many of your students are probably also familiar with tablets, smart phones, and other forms of technology, which they may be using for non-school purposes. By bringing these tools into an educational setting (whether in the classroom, a hybrid setting, or distance learning) it's possible these students can learn even more effectively. Blended learning solutions created by Learning A-Z deliver digital and mobile resources that are also printable and projectable, all designed to make differentiated instruction easier than ever.

What is Blended Learning?

Blended learning is an educational methodology that blends online or digital components with face-to-face instruction. Including technology in education helps set students up for success later in life, because computers and other connected devices are so integral to communication and business today. When students learn in a blended learning setting, they do more than master the subject they're learning; they also master the use of technology. In-person instruction from a teacher is essential to the blended learning approach. Developing listening skills in addition to visual and kinesthetic skills is important for student development.

Benefits of Blended Learning

The combination of the benefits of online learning with the advantages of face-to-face instruction can also improve learning in ways mentioned below, that is impossible to achieve using only one method:

- Blended learning promotes a two-way learning experience which is possible through collaboration between the students and the instructors, which can increase substantially via an online training platform.
- It facilitates increased access to resources for students and teachers which helps to improve attitude towards learning. This makes blended learning accessible to a wider array of learners worldwide.
- It promotes better communication between learners which in turn results in a more engaging and beneficial learning experience.
- It enhances teacher and student interaction which helps in better, customized and successful evaluations
- It makes it better for students as they can learn according to their capabilities and capacity
- It provides the flexibility of time and learning environment, where students can learn independently and helps them to be self-paced
- Apart from all these benefits, it also helps a student to inculcate virtues like responsibility and proper management of time.

The Need for Blended Learning in Education

The past one year has been a year of numerous discussions and amid Covid-19, the hot topic of discussion has been how technology has disrupted our lives and the continuity of learning despite several challenges. While a lot has been said and done to ensure continuous teaching and learning, it is now time to look into the future and blended learning clearly looks like the way forward.

Emerging as the new model of teaching as more institutions adopt technology in learning, blended learning is a perfect mix of web-based training supported by human touch and media. Put simply, it refers to an education programme that encompasses teaching methods of both traditional classrooms and online learning. With the application of appropriate learning technologies, blended learning optimises learning objectives by

matching personal learning style of each student. Every learner has different needs and ways of learning, and blended learning helps them in reaching their full potential by offering greater flexibility to learn at their own pace. All in all, it offers an incredible solution and makes learning an enriching experience for learners in today's environment.

Though the concept has been around for some time now, Covid-19 has acted as a catalyst for educational institutions to adopt blended learning and thrive. According to experts, "Educational institutions will have to adjust to the new changes brought in learning after Covid-19 and adopt a blended approach, and teachers will not be the only source of information in the future." They further predict that educational institutions cannot go back to classroom-only teaching, as blended learning is the way the education industry will follow in the future.

While Indian School of Hospitality (ISH) had technology from its inception in 2018, before the pandemic; the knowledge delivery and consumption were done in the traditional classroom setup. Due to the existing technology at ISH, both the facilitators and the students were able to adapt very quickly to exchange of ideas and resources online. While some of the material that we used in classrooms could be used in online delivery mode, the rest had to be reworked to continue the rigour of the subject.

Developing a blended course allowed us to create new material and apply innovative teaching strategies. The teacher's classroom presentations were shared on the Learning Management System (LMS) days prior to the online session. This allowed students to review and prepare for the online sessions in advance, thus using the class time for debating and clearing their doubts. The facilitators also reported that student participation had increased due to the sharing of information on the learning portal in advance.

As e-learning is maturing, at ISH, it is being used to address various student's needs. Dependent on the students learning preference and knowledge intake, students get to select from multiple delivery modes, which also increases their control over time and place. One faculty member notes that, "All the study material and recorded lectures are uploaded on LMS. This resource library allows students the flexibility to control the pace of consumption along with how and where they study. We believe that the change of class interaction from lecture to debate not only increases the student engagement but is there to stay in years to come."

Blended learning looks like a viable model for the future of education which allows the combination of online and in-person components in any proportion. It allows each student to find a unique blend of the two to suit their style and pace of learning, level of access to technology and family situation. Blended learning also has the advantage of bringing expert teachers from all over the globe to any institution with the use of technology.

As educational institutions walk through the unknowns of the 2021-22 school year, administrators and educators will have to continue analyzing, examining and evaluating how to maximise teacher-student interactions as well as online learning tools to increase the outcome of learning, promote student development and ensure delivery of quality education. While the coming times are sure to bring more challenges, it is equally likely that there will be a major overhaul in the education sector leading to incredible growth and development along the way.

How do I get started with blended learning?

- Think about what type of blended learning method you want to use. Blended learning requires complementary online and in-person learning.
- Ensure that all your students have the technology they'll need. If students don't have access to computers or mobile devices at home, consider bringing technology into the classroom.
- Make sure students know how to use the technology required. Set up sample lessons in the classroom so you can supervise. If you're using blended learning at home, provide guidance.
- Test one method first to gauge its effectiveness. As your students have different learning styles, they also have varying levels of experience with technology. Experiment with your methods to see what resonates with your students.

Conclusion

Blended learning can be defined as the combination of face-to-face classroom instruction with online learning within a course or programme – a definition broad enough to include a wide range of variations appropriate to the individual needs and contexts of a school or course.

One key concept is that blended learning is not merely the addition of some technological element to an existing course but rather is an integrated plan utilizing the best of what both face-to-face and online learning have to offer. The blended presentation and interaction model, the blended block model and the fully online model provide initial frameworks for the deliberate structuring of blended learning to improve learning outcomes.

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