BLENDED LEARNING: AN APPROACH USEFUL FOR STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

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Abstract

Blended learning is definitely more beneficial approach than old-school educational methods of teaching and learning. It works for the students, since it helps them to learn more through practical implementation of the knowledge they gain. It also works for the teachers, since it makes their job more easy and enjoyable. Blended learning is the effective integration of various learning techniques, technologies, and delivery modalities to meet specific communication, knowledge sharing, and informational needs. Blended learning is an approach to education that combines online educational materials and opportunities for interaction online with traditional place-based classroom methods. A system that combines face-to-face education and online learning. It is also used in professional development and training settings. It requires the physical presence of both teacher and student, with some elements of student control over time, place, path, or pace. The major advantage that blended learning offers is level, where one instructor can only teach so many people at a time. Blended learning is suitable for all educational levels, from preschool to the postgraduate level. Make an effort to introduce blended learning in your classroom, and you'll soon witness the results. In present digital world, our education system has to have the sufficient input of blended learning to change the perspectives of students and thinking of teachers at every level of education.

Key Words: Blended Learning, Flipped Classroom, Station Rotation, Virtual Blended, Online Driver, Teacher station

INTRODUCTION

Blended learning is the effective integration of various learning techniques, technologies, and delivery modalities to meet specific communication, knowledge sharing, and informational needs (Finn & Bucceri, 2006). It is the integration of online and face-to-face instruction in order to promote engagement and improves outcomes by learners through optimization of teaching and technology. An instructional approach that augments the traditional face-to-face instructional environment with asynchronous technologies for communication and learning.

Blended learning is suitable for all educational levels, from preschool to the postgraduate level.When it comes to changing the approach teachers have in the classroom, most of them have a question: Why? There's no doubt about it: The educators have to spend a lot of time in gaining the needed qualifications for proper use of technology. Not all online resources

are safe to use in the classroom. In addition, they need to drastically change the program and adapt to a completely different method of teaching.

CHRONOLOGICAL MILIEU

Technology-based training emerged as an alternative to instructor-led training in the 1960s on mainframes and mini-computers in USA. The major advantage that blended learning offers is scale, whereas one instructor can only teach so many people at a time. One example is PLATO (Programmed Logic for Automatic Teaching Operations), a system developed by the University of Illinois and Control Data. PLATO in particular had a long history of innovations and offered coursework from elementary to the college level. Mainframe-based training had a number of interface limitations that gave way to satellite-based live video in the 1970s. The advantage here was serving people who were not as computer literate. The major challenge was the expense required to make this work. In the early 1990s, CD-ROMs emerged as a dominant form of providing technology-based learning as bandwidth through 56k modems weren't able to support very high quality sound and video. The limitation to CD-ROMs was tracking completion of coursework, so learning management systems emerged as a way to facilitate progress tracking. The aviation industry used this heavily to track how well one did on courses, how much time was spent, and where someone left off. AICC, Aviation Industry Computer-Based Training Committee, was formed in 1988 and companies such as Boeing used CD-ROMs to provide training for personnel.

However, a 2015 meta-analysis report that historically looked back at a comprehensive review of evidence-based research studies around blended learning, found commonalities in defining that blended learning was "considered a combination of traditional f2f [face to face] modes of instruction with online modes of learning, drawing on technology-mediated instruction, where all participants in the learning process are separated by distance some of the time." This report also found that all of these evidence-based studies concluded that student achievement was higher in blended learning experiences when compared to either fully online or fully face-to-face learning experiences. Modern blended learning is delivered online, although CD

ROMs could feasibly still be used if a learning management system meets an institution's standards. Some examples of channels through which online blending learning can be delivered include webcasting (synchronous and asynchronous) and online video (live and recorded). Khan Academy is the popular one used in classrooms to serve as platforms for blended learning and other educational solutions.

TYPES OF BLENDED LEARNING

- Station Rotation Blended Learning
- Lab Rotation Blended Learning
- Enriched virtual blended learning
- Flex Blended Learning
- The' Flipped Classroom' Blended Learning

- Individual Rotation Blended Learning

STATION ROTATION BLENDED LEARNING

Station-Rotation blended learning is a; model that allows students to rotate through stations on a fixed schedule, where at least one of the stations is an online learning station. This model is most common in elementary schools; because teachers are already familiar rotating in “centers” or stations. It is primarily characterized by the fixed schedule that guides the 'blending’

LAB ROTATION BLENDED LEARNING

The Lab Rotation model of blended learning, similar to “Station Rotation,” works by allowing students to rotate through stations on a fixed schedule in a dedicated computer lab allowing for flexible scheduling arrangements with teachers enabling schools to make use of existing computer labs.

ENRICHED VIRTUAL BLENDED LEARNING

The Enriched Virtual Model incorporates the entire school into a blended learning approach to education rather than operating on a class by class basis. Students at the school attend classes on a campus and learn online off-campus. This form of blended learning can begin as a fully online educational experience and then add the on-campus experience to supplement classes taken over the Internet. In the Enriched Virtual Model, students do more of their learning online and attend traditional classes less regularly. In Enriched virtual blended learning, the student's focus is on completing online coursework while only meeting with the teacher intermittently/as-needed.

FLEX BLENDED LEARNING

The 'Flex' is included in types of Blended Learning and its model is one in which; a course or subject in which online learning is the backbone of student learning, even if it directs students to offline activities at times. Students move on an individually customized, fluid schedule among learning modalities. The teacher of record is on-site, and students learn mostly on the brick-and-mortar campus, except for any homework assignments. The teacher of record or other adults provide face-to-face support on a flexible and adaptive as-needed basis through activities such as small-group instruction, group projects, and individual tutoring.”

THE 'FLIPPED CLASSROOM' BLENDED LEARNING

"Flipped" classrooms are ones where students view the lectures and other content presentations online, outside of class, and the class time is used almost exclusively for application activities such as quizzes, group work, projects, problem-solving, discussions, and debates. It is a specialized form of blended learning and, like blended learning, promises more engaged students and deeper learning. It may also enable having fewer or

shorter classroom sessions. Perhaps the most widely known version of blended learning; a'Flipped Classroom' is one where students are introduced to content at home, and practice working through it at school supported by a teacher and/or peers. In this way, traditional roles for each ones are 'flipped.'

INDIVIDUAL ROTATION BLENDED LEARNING

The Individual Rotation model allows students to rotate through stations, but on individual schedules set by a teacher or software algorithm. Unlike other rotation models, students do not necessarily rotate to every station; they rotate only to the activities scheduled on their playlists." West Belden primarily uses the individual rotation model for blended learning, where a "student has an individualized playlist and does not necessarily rotate to each available station or modality. Teachers determine student groupings during common planning time, which occurs for at least 90 minutes each day.

BLENDED LEARNING MODELS

There is little consensus on the definition of blended learning. Some academic studies have suggested that it is a unnecessary term. There are many components that can comprise a blended learning model, including; instructor-delivered content, elearning, webinars, conference calls, live or online sessions with instructors, other media and events, for example; Facebook, E-mail, Chat rooms, Blogs, Podcasting, Twitter, YouTube, Skype and web boards". Models vary in various way:

- the teacher plays arole,
- the physical environment in which the learning is taking place,
- how instruction and learning is being delivered? And
- the flexibility of pace and place of learning.

However, there are distinct blended learning models suggested by some researchers and educational think-tanks. These models include:

Face-to-face driver — Where the teacher drives the instruction and augments with digital tools ina digital classroom.

Rotation — Students cycle through a schedule of independent online study and face-toface classroom time.

Flex — Most of the curriculum is delivered via a digital platform and teachers are available for face-to-face consultation and support.

Labs —Entire curriculum is delivered via a digital platform but in a consistent physical location. Students usually take traditional classes in this model as well.

Self-blend — Students choose to augment their traditional learning with online course work.

Online driver — Students complete an entire course through an online platform with possible teacher check-ins. All curriculum and teaching is delivered via a digital platform and face-to-face meetings are scheduled or made available if necessary.

ADVANTAGES OF BLENDED LEARNING

It is important to note that even blended learning models can be blended together and many implementations use some, many, or even all of these as dimensions of larger blended learning strategy. Odyssey ware, educational software consultants of Virginia USA, provide support to district staff in developing a unique software course to assist the students at school level of education. Students can log in to take the course as they online work to complete their tasks. Therefore in the light of above discussion the following advantages can be discussed;

STUDENTS LEARN WITH FREEDOM AND GREATER FLEXIBILITY

Classroom teaching a two-way process. There is an interaction with the teacher in the classroom. The students are no longer placed in a mold; they are not expected to sit quietly through a 40-minute lecture. By the end of such a traditional lecture, they would forget all questions they had on mind while they were actively listening during the first ten minutes; unfortunately, that's how long their focus can last before wandering away.

Blended learning is convenient because it gives them freedom to participate in the process. They are not afraid to ask questions and be critical about some of the concepts they learn about. Encourage them to discuss, don't judge their questions and opinions.Stay open for free-minded interpretations of the concepts you're teaching, that's how the students will understand how the knowledge they gain helps them understand the world that surrounds them.

STUDENTS EXPLORE ONLINE RESOURCES

The 'web' is a source of endless knowledge. As a teacher, we have an opportunity to teach them how to find the best online sources and make sure they are reading up-todate, reliable information. You helped them to gain a skill they will definitely use in life. Teach them how to check and verify facts and how to take the things they read with a healthy dose of doubt. We'll find several online sources of information, but not all of them will be reliable. Show them how to check the facts and how to recognize authoritative sources of information?

STUDENTS GET MORE TIME FOR REFLECTION

Let's say we're teaching a history lesson to high school students. we ask them to research as much as possible about World War II, and they all present facts in the classroom. We compare those facts with the coursework material, and take the time to reflect. Since we're not wasting time on the standard lecturing process, there's enough space for us to respond to questions and make learning interesting for all of them.

STUDENTS GET MORE FEEDBACK

When we save time for more discussions in the classroom, it means that we'll be listening to what students say? That's a great way to evaluate their understanding of the coursework concept. We will see how many of them participate in the discussions, and we shall realize how much they are interested in the concepts? We shall give them feedback through our response. We will have a chance to give such feedback every single day, by encouraging them to keep up with the good work or inspiring them to get deeper into the research process. There's no need to wait for tests when we evaluate their knowledge on a daily basis.

ANXIOUS STUDENTS CAN RELAX

Some students don't like discussions, they are the ones who usually stay quiet throughout a heated argumentation, although we know that they have a lot to say. It seems like they are too afraid to speak up. The traditional classroom teaching method doesn't give these students a chance to overcome this anxiety.Try to involve these students in the discussion, instead of waiting for them to take part, ask what they think? We shall notice they are getting anxious, their voice may start trembling and we shall notice the confusion on their faces. Try to get their answers through a conversation, and involve them fairly in all class discussions. In a way, will be forcing them to face their fear of speaking up, and the only way to overcome a fear 1s- facing it.

CONCLUSION

Though many of us don't have technology-rich classrooms in our school and colleges, the rapidly evolving education background increasingly requires us to incorporate technology to customize student learning. Blended learning, with its mix of technology and traditional faceto-face instruction, is a great approach. Blended learning is an approach to education that combines online educational materials and opportunities for interaction online with traditional place-based classroom methods. Blended learning combines classroom learning with online learning, in which students can, in part, control the time, pace, and place of their learning. A teacher-designed blended learning model, in which teachers determine the combination of teaching strategy which can change teacher approach and students perspective about learning.

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