ROLE OF TEACHERS IN BLENDED LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Vandana Srivastava
Research Scholar, Galgotias University,
Greater Noida, Uttar Pradesh

Abstract

Blended Learning is one of the strategies used to apply the e-learning trend that is becoming more popular. This paper gives an overview of the concept of Blended Learning from different perspectives such as the Holistic Perspective, the Educational Perspective, the Pragmatic Perspective, the Corporate Training Perspective, and the Chief Learning Officer (CLO) Perspective. It also discusses the many blended learning methodologies. This paper also discusses the Blended Learning approaches, such as the synchronous instructional method and the asynchronous instructional method, to assist readers in selecting the optimal instructional method. In addition, the study highlights the dimensions of the blended learning strategy, which include blending offline and online learning, self-paced and live blending, collaborative learning, and blending structured and unstructured learning. This study also covers the areas where this technique is useful, as well as the obstacles that this technique faces, such as technological challenges, organizational challenges, and described in terms of its various advantages. Factors that promote successful blended learning are also mentioned in this paper.

Keyword: *Asynchronous, Holistic, Perspective, Collaborative, Beneficial.*

Introduction

"Blended learning is not just a trend, and we're starting to see technology integrated in really intentional ways." -Katie Linder.

Blended learning is an educational approach that combines traditional in-person classroom teaching with online and digital resources. It seeks to integrate the benefits of face-to-face instruction with the advantages of digital technology to create a more flexible and effective learning experience.

In a blended learning environment, students engage in both offline and online activities, often using a learning management system (LMS) or other online platforms. The goal is to optimize learning by catering to individual student needs and providing a more personalized experience. Here are some common components of blended learning:

1. **In-person instruction:** Students attend physical classes where they interact with teachers and peers, engaging in traditional teaching methods and activities.
2. **Online learning:** Students access educational content through digital platforms, such as online courses, videos, interactive simulations, or virtual classrooms. These resources can be available synchronously or asynchronously, allowing learners to access them at their own pace.
3. **Student-centered learning:** Blended learning often emphasizes personalized learning paths based on individual students' strengths, weaknesses, and learning preferences. Teachers can track progress and adjust instruction accordingly.
4. **Flexibility:** Blended learning allows students to have more control over their learning schedules and pace, making it easier for them to balance other commitments.
5. **Data-driven approach:** The use of digital tools enables the collection and analysis of data on students' performance and engagement, helping educators make data-informed decisions to improve learning outcomes.
6. **Collaboration:** Blended learning can promote collaboration among students and teachers through various online communication tools and collaborative activities.
7. **Differentiated instruction:** Teachers can tailor instruction to suit various learning styles and abilities, as blended learning provides opportunities for individualized learning paths.
8. **Flipped classroom model:** In a flipped classroom, students review lecture materials or content online before coming to class. The in-person class time is then used for discussions, problem-solving, and activities that deepen understanding.

The adoption of blended learning has increased significantly due to the advancement of technology and the need for more flexible learning options. It offers the potential to enhance engagement, improve learning outcomes, and prepare students for a technology-driven world. However, successful implementation requires careful planning, teacher training, and ongoing assessment to ensure its effectiveness and positive impact on students' learning experiences.

Types of blended learning

Blended learning can take various forms, depending on how the in-person and online components are integrated. Different models of blended learning allow educators to customize their approach based on their students' needs, available resources, and instructional goals. Here are some common types of blended learning:

1. Rotation Model:
   - Station Rotation: Students rotate between different learning stations, which may include in-person teacher-led instruction, independent online activities, group work, or hands-on projects.
   - Lab Rotation: Students spend part of their time in a computer lab or using digital devices for online learning, while the rest of the time is spent in traditional classrooms.
2. Flex Model:
   - Flex-Mod: Students primarily learn online, with the flexibility to attend occasional in-person sessions for additional support or collaborative activities.
   - Self-Blend: Students take one or more online courses to supplement their traditional education.
3. A La Carte Model:
   - Students take one or more specific courses online while attending regular classes at school. This model allows students to access specialized or advanced courses not available in their schools.
4. Enriched Virtual Model:
   - Students participate in most of their learning online but come to the physical classroom for certain activities, such as hands-on labs, discussions, or assessments.
5. Flipped Classroom Model:
   - In this model, students review online content, such as video lectures or readings, outside of class. Classroom time is then utilized for discussions, collaborative activities, and problem-solving, allowing for deeper engagement with the material.
6. Virtual Classroom Model:
   - All learning occurs online, with teachers conducting live virtual classes, discussions, and interactive activities using web conferencing tools and other digital resources.
7. Flex-Plus Model:
   - This model combines traditional in-person classes with online learning options. Students have the flexibility to choose between attending in-person sessions or accessing the same content online.

8. Online Driver Model:
    - Students take the lead in their learning, primarily engaging with online resources, and may receive limited in-person support or supervision.

It's important to note that blended learning models are not mutually exclusive, and educators often adapt and combine elements from different models to create a customized approach that suits their teaching style and their students' needs. Successful implementation requires careful planning, ongoing assessment, and support to ensure that students can effectively navigate both the in-person and online learning components.

Role of teacher in Blended learning

In a blended learning environment, the role of the teacher evolves from the traditional instructor to that of a facilitator, mentor, and guide. Teachers play a critical role in ensuring the success of blended learning by effectively integrating in-person and online components to create a cohesive and engaging learning experience. Here are some key roles of teachers in blended learning:

1. **Curriculum Design and Content Curation:** Teachers curate and design the blended learning curriculum, selecting appropriate online resources, educational tools, and digital content that align with the learning objectives. They ensure that the content is engaging, relevant, and complements the in-person instruction.
2. **Instructional Facilitation:** Teachers guide students through the learning process, providing clear instructions and expectations for both online and in-person activities. They offer support, clarification, and motivation to keep students on track and help them overcome challenges.
3. **Personalization and Differentiation:** Blended learning allows for personalized learning paths based on individual student needs. Teachers can analyze data from online tools to identify students' strengths and weaknesses, adapting instruction to cater to diverse learning styles and abilities.
4. **Monitoring and Assessment:** Teachers monitor students' progress in both the online and offline components, using data from digital tools to track performance. They use this data to inform their instructional decisions and provide targeted feedback to help students improve.
5. **Classroom Management:** In a blended learning setting, teachers need to manage the physical classroom as well as students' online activities. This may involve guiding students on using technology responsibly and setting guidelines for online

interactions.

6. **Facilitating Collaborative Learning:** Teachers promote collaborative learning opportunities by organizing group activities, discussions, and projects that foster teamwork and peer learning, both in-person and online.
7. **Supporting Technological Literacy:** Some students may require support in navigating online tools and platforms. Teachers help build students' technological literacy skills to ensure they can effectively use digital resources for learning.
8. **Providing Flexibility and Accessibility:** Blended learning allows for greater flexibility, and teachers accommodate students who may need alternative arrangements for online access or in-person attendance.
9. **Creating a Positive Learning Environment:** Teachers foster a supportive and inclusive classroom culture that encourages active participation, open communication, and a growth mind-set in both the physical and digital spaces.
10. **Professional Development:** As blended learning continues to evolve, teachers engage in ongoing professional development to stay updated with new tools, methodologies, and best practices in educational technology and blended learning.

Overall, teachers are essential in creating a cohesive and effective blended learning experience. Their expertise, guidance, and adaptability are crucial in maximizing the benefits of both in-person and online learning for their students' academic growth and success.

Difference between Blended learning and Traditional learning

Blended learning and traditional learning are two distinct educational approaches that differ in their delivery methods, instructional strategies, and student experiences. Here are some key differences between the two:

1. **Delivery Method:**
   - **Blended Learning:** Blended learning combines both in-person, face-to-face instruction and online learning activities. It involves the use of digital resources and technology to supplement or enhance the traditional classroom experience.
   - **Traditional Learning:** Traditional learning, also known as classroom-based learning, relies solely on in-person instruction in a physical classroom setting. Students attend classes with teachers delivering lessons directly.
2. **Flexibility and Schedule**:
   - Blended Learning: Blended learning offers greater flexibility in terms of time and

location. Students can access online resources and complete activities at their own pace and convenience, in addition to attending in-person sessions.

- **Traditional Learning:** Traditional learning follows a fixed schedule, with students attending classes at specific times and locations determined by the school's timetable.

3. **Use of Technology:**
   - **Blended Learning:** Technology plays a significant role in blended learning, as students use online platforms, educational apps, and digital tools for learning activities, assessments, and communication.
   - **Traditional Learning:** Technology is typically less prominent in traditional learning, with minimal or no use of digital resources during class time.
4. **Learning Environment**:
   - **Blended Learning:** Blended learning environments involve a mix of physical classrooms and online spaces. Students interact with teachers and peers in person and also engage with virtual learning materials and activities.
   - **Traditional Learning:** In traditional learning, the primary learning environment is the physical classroom, where students interact directly with their teachers and classmates.
5. **Personalization**:
   - **Blended Learning:** Blended learning allows for more personalized learning experiences. Students can progress at their own pace, access additional resources tailored to their needs, and receive targeted feedback through digital platforms.
   - **Traditional Learning:** In traditional learning, instruction is more standardized, and students typically follow the same curriculum and pace as their peers.
6. **Student Engagement**:
   - **Blended Learning:** Blended learning often leverages technology to create interactive and engaging learning experiences, which can enhance student motivation and participation.
   - **Traditional Learning:** Student engagement in traditional learning relies more on teacher-student interactions and the classroom atmosphere.
7. **Assessment:**
   - **Blended Learning:** Assessments in blended learning can include both traditional methods (e.g., in-person exams) and online assessments, providing a comprehensive evaluation of student's knowledge and skills.

- **Traditional Learning:** Traditional learning primarily relies on in-person assessments, such as written tests and quizzes, as the primary means of evaluating students' learning.

Both blended learning and traditional learning have their advantages and disadvantages, and the choice between the two depends on various factors, including the educational goals, resources, and preferences of the students and educators involved. Blended learning has gained popularity due to its potential to combine the benefits of both traditional instruction and online learning, offering a more flexible and personalized learning experience.

Blended learning in India in contexts of NEP 2020

As of my last update in September 2021, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 was introduced in India with the aim of transforming the country's education system. The NEP 2020 emphasizes the integration of technology and encourages the adoption of blended learning approaches to enhance the quality and accessibility of education. Here are some key points related to blended learning in the context of NEP 2020:

1. **Digital Infrastructure:** The NEP 2020 acknowledges the importance of developing robust digital infrastructure to facilitate the implementation of blended learning. This includes ensuring access to high-speed internet, providing digital devices to students, and equipping schools and colleges with the necessary technology.
2. **Use of Online Resources:** The policy promotes the use of online resources and digital platforms to supplement traditional teaching methods. It encourages the creation and dissemination of e-content, digital textbooks, and educational apps to support blended learning.
3. **Technology in Teacher Training:** The NEP 2020 emphasizes the need for teacher training programs to integrate technology effectively in the teaching-learning process. Teachers are encouraged to adopt digital tools and platforms to enhance their teaching methodologies.
4. **Multilingual e-Content:** The policy aims to develop and promote e-content in regional languages, making educational resources more accessible to students from diverse linguistic backgrounds.
5. **Blended Learning in Higher Education:** The NEP 2020 advocates for the integration of blended learning in higher education institutions, where a mix of online and offline teaching methods can be used to cater to different learning styles and promote self-paced learning.

6. **Credit Transfer and Online Courses:** The policy encourages the development of an Academic Bank of Credit (ABC) to facilitate seamless credit transfer among institutions. It also supports the creation of online courses and MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) to provide students with a wider range of learning options.
7. **Assessment Reforms:** The NEP 2020 emphasizes the need to shift from rote-based assessments to competency-based evaluations. Blended learning can play a role in implementing innovative and formative assessment methods that assess students' understanding and application of knowledge.
8. **Lifelong Learning:** The policy promotes lifelong learning and encourages the adoption of blended learning approaches for adults and non-formal learners to upskill and reskill.

It is important to note that the implementation of the NEP 2020 and the adoption of blended learning practices may vary across different states and institutions in India. As the education system evolves, policymakers and educators will continue to work towards effectively integrating technology and blended learning to achieve the goals set forth by the NEP 2020. For the most current information on the status of blended learning in India under the NEP 2020, I recommend referring to more recent sources and official government updates.

FUTURE OF BLENDED LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

The future of the blended learning environment was already promising, and it's likely that it has continued to evolve and become even more prevalent in education. Blended learning, which combines traditional face-to-face instruction with online learning components, offers a flexible and personalized approach to education. Here are some potential developments in the future of blended learning:

1. **Advancements in Technology:** With the rapid progress in educational technology, there will likely be more sophisticated tools and platforms available for educators and students. Virtual and augmented reality, artificial intelligence, and immersive simulations may become more integrated into blended learning experiences, providing more engaging and interactive learning opportunities.
2. **Personalized Learning Paths:** As data analytics and AI improve, educators can better understand each student's learning style, strengths, and weaknesses. This insight will enable them to create more personalized learning paths, addressing individual needs and preferences, ultimately enhancing the learning experience and outcomes.

3. **Seamless Integration of Online and Offline Learning:** Blended learning environments will become more seamless, with smooth transitions between in-person and virtual activities. Learning management systems will be more efficient, allowing students to access course materials, submit assignments, and collaborate with peers and teachers effortlessly.
4. **Global Collaboration and Networking:** Blended learning can connect students from different geographic locations and cultural backgrounds, fostering cross-cultural understanding and collaboration. Students will have the opportunity to interact with peers worldwide, broadening their perspectives and developing essential global skills.
5. **Upskilling and Lifelong Learning:** The future of work will require continuous upskilling and adaptability. Blended learning will play a crucial role in providing accessible and flexible options for adults seeking to learn new skills or change careers. Lifelong learning will become an essential aspect of personal and professional development.
6. **Blurring Boundaries Between Formal and Informal Learning:** The lines between formal education and informal learning opportunities will continue to blur. Blended learning environments will encourage learners to engage with educational content beyond the classroom, utilizing various resources and platforms.
7. **Accessibility and Inclusivity:** As technology improves and becomes more accessible, blended learning can be extended to learners with diverse needs and abilities. This includes students with disabilities, those in remote or underserved areas, and non-traditional learners who may have other commitments or constraints.
8. **Teacher Professional Development:** Educators will receive ongoing professional development to adapt to evolving blended learning strategies and tools. Training programs will focus on optimizing the use of technology and data to improve teaching practices and student outcomes.

However, it's essential to remember that the future is unpredictable, and while these trends seem likely based on past developments, there might be unforeseen factors that could shape the blended learning environment differently. As technology continues to advance, education systems, policymakers, and institutions must remain adaptive and responsive to ensure the best possible learning experiences for students.

Conclusion

Blended Learning Environments promise to be an important part of the future of both higher education and corporate training. Over the past decade, with the increased

availability of technology and network access, the use of Blended Learning Environments has steadily grown. It provides students with time flexibility and improved learning outcomes. The blended learning offers the open way for many students who can get through the physical and cultural barriers in the education.By learning to use technology in the classroom, both teachers and students will develop skills essential for the 21st century. Current conditionsdemandthinking about new modes of learningwithout compromising the quality of education. Over the period we will be forced to go in such a form of education that is the amalgamation of offline (face to face, traditional, in- campus learning) and online. Therefore, blended learning is considering worldwide as a future delivery system of education. As blended learning is the mixture of online and in campus teaching so teachers' role becomesmorechallenging. Every teacher would have to play different roles to provide a supportivelearning environment for their students. Consequentially, the teachers should have to be a tech-friendly, and supporter to keep students more active and for their positive engagement in a blended learning environment.

References

1. Blended learning: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blended_learning
2. Blended learning. http://edutechwiki.unige.ch/en/blended_learning
3. ALL YOU WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT BLENDED LEARNING; 05th January 2019 by PARVATHY JAYAKRISHNAN - https://www.scoonews.com/news/all-you-wanted-to-know-about-blended-learning
4. what-when-how: Benefits and Challenges of Blended Learning Environmentshttp://what-when-how.com/informationscience-and-technology/benefits-and-challenges-of-blended-learning-environments/
5. The Benefits of Blended Learning: https://www.teachthought.com/technology/the-benefits-of-blended-learning/
6. The History of Blended Learning - https://elearningindustry.com/history-of-blended-learning
7. The concept of blended learning: https://flexiblelearning.auckland.ac.nz/learning_technologies_online/5/1/html/course_files/4_1.html
8. Need for Blended learning in the Indian Education system - http://www.besonline.in/blog/need-blended-learning-indianeducation-system/
9. Vaughan, N. D. (2007). Perspectives on blended learning in higher education. International Journal of Blended Learning, 6(1), (pp. 81-94).