

POST-PANDEMIC CHALLENGES OF LEARNING: STUDYING THE BLENDED LEARNING APPROACH

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Abstract

The Covid Pandemic has changed our lives forever. On one hand, we were struck by a massive health disaster but on the other hand, it provided us with an array of opportunities in the field of education. The Pandemic put a halt ongoing to formal educational institutions for learning. Instead, it shifted the classrooms to the living rooms of the students. But as the pandemic phased off, we realized the various drawbacks of completely shifting to an online mode of learning. It can be hence argued that online learnings need to be supplemented with various other tools in order to gain its objectives of holistic learning. Students need to be provided with blended learning to help them achieve their educational goals. This paper uses descriptive analysis looking at how blended learning is the need of the hour instead of completely shifting to online learning.

Key Words: Online education, Pandemic, Blended Learning

The Pandemic Education Scene

Online education had entered the education scene even before COVID-19 hit the world. The online class now is the demand of the day as little scopes are to find out alternatives to online classes in these unprecedented days caused by corona pandemic across the globe. Alam, A. (2020). Be it language apps, virtual tuitions, video conferencing tools, or software of online learning, there has been a substantial gush in its usage since COVID-19. In response to this huge demand, many online learning platforms have been providing free access to their services, including those like BYJU'S, a Bangalore-based instructive technology and online tutoring company that was founded in 2011, and is now the world's most highly valued tech company. During the Pandemic, many companies entered the online market all over the world benefiting students immensely as they could not physically travel to get educated. While some are of the opinion that the inadvertent and swift move to online learning with no training, inadequate bandwidth, and little groundwork – will result in a poor user experience that is un conducive to continuous growth, it is also believed that a new hybrid model of education has emerged, with significant benefits. Wang Tao, Vice President of Tencent Cloud and Vice President of Tencent Education put forth that he believed that the amalgamation of information technology in tutoring will be further fast-tracked and that online education will ultimately become an integral module of school education. Academic

leadership, collaborative peer learning, the know-how of digital technology and online learning tools, training of faculty, dean review, the readiness of students, and discourse are important to create an ecosystem for effective online teaching. Pandit, D., & Agrawal, S. (2022).

This paper uses descriptive analysis to look at how blended learning has entered the new academic scene and how it will contribute to the future of hybrid education.

Online Learning: A Changing Education Imperative

Online education has traditionally been viewed as an alternative pathway, one that is particularly well suited to adult learners seeking higher education opportunities. However, the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic has required educators and students across all levels of education to adapt quickly to virtual courses. Lockee, B. B. (2021). The delivery of the online part of the course is usually through learning technologies, typically involving a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) such as 'Blackboard' or 'Moodle' and comprising the use of synchronous and asynchronous electronic tools, such as, respectively, 'chat' and 'bulletin boards'. It is clear that this pandemic completely changed the education system that many emphasise was already trailing down in its significance. Schools continue to concentrate on outmoded rote learning and academic skills, rather than on abilities such as thinking critically and adaptability, which will be more significant for accomplishments in the future. Could shifting to online learning be the catalyst to producing a new, more effective way of educating students? While some are concerned that the hurried nature of the transition online may have mired this goal, others plan to make e-learning part of their 'new normal' after experiencing the benefits first-hand. Sharma, P. (2010).

There are, though, challenges to overcome. Students without access to reliable internet or technology fight to partake in digital learning; this gap is seen across nations and between income brackets within countries. Whilst 95% of pupils in Switzerland, Norway, and Austria have a computer system to use for their schoolwork whereas only 34% in India have this access according to OECD data.

Travelling from Traditional Learning to Blended Learning

For those who do have access to the right knowhow, there is indication that education online can be more effective in various ways. Research illustrates that on average, students recollect 25-60% more material when studying online as compared to only 8-10% in a regular classroom. This is majorly due to the students being able to grasp faster online; e-learning needs 40-60% less time to study than in a old-style classroom setting as students learn at their own pace, going back and re-reading, bouncing, or accelerating through concepts as they choose. Following the application this technology into teaching, some

pitfalls have been identified and this have led to the Blended learning phenomenon. Tayebnik, M., &Puteh, M. (2013).

Nevertheless, the efficacy of learning online varies amongst specific age groups. The universal consensus on kids, especially younger ones, is that a planned environment is essential because kids are more easily distracted. To get the complete benefit of online education, there needs to be a rigorous effort to offer this structure and go beyond duplicating a physical class/lecture through video capabilities, in its place, using a range of collaborative tools and engagement methods that promote inclusion, personalization and intelligence. The term ‘blended learning’ has gained considerable currency in recent years as a description of particular forms of teaching with technology. Oliver, M., &Trigwell, K. (2005).

Academic scenario post-pandemic has proved that an abnormal reaction to an abnormal situation is normal behaviour. All of our discrete, social, public, economic, religious and academic activities are motivated by the dominant abnormal situation and over-reliance on institutions. Online teaching, undoubtedly allows for ground-breaking methods and help students gain knowledge across the regions, but it is not without disadvantages of its own. It takes time, practice, and skill training to deliver and this mode is highly prone to multiple communication barriers at the same time.

Studies have put to light that children expansively use their senses to study, making knowledge fun and effective by using technology is critical. It has been observed that clever combination of games has established higher engagement and amplified motivation towards knowledge gaining especially among students who are younger, making them truly fall in love with learning.

Blended Learning: The solution

The future belongs to Education 4.0, as a part of the evolution of education but with a very high impact of digital technology. Empowering education to improve innovation, the transition to the new stage requires the development and harmonization of education systems by employing the new relationship that must be established: student-teacher-technology = smart education and the use of e-education (online, electronic tools). Zhu, X., & Liu, J. (2020). Major events of the world are often a variation point for rapid revolution – an example being the rise of e-commerce post-SARS. While we have seen that e-learning has seen the same post-COVID-19, it is among the few sectors where investment has not yet dried up. The pandemic has brought to light the very importance of circulating knowledge across borders, companies, and to all parts of society. Online learning technology can, also, play a role here, it is obligatory upon all of us to reconnoitre its full potential.

Detailed textual study material and instructions have been wickedly abandoned over the crazy assault of video lectures. It is blended learning, that is a combination of the contact teaching with a teacher and of a self-contained preparation using on-line education. Hubackova, S., & Semradova, I. (2016). Text directly balances writing, an aptitude that is appraised in almost all types of tests from early school to the university system. So much so that students of subjects like Fine arts and Music, too, have to write almost an equal number of tests as the students of science. The same is the case with arts and humanities as subjects are tested only on the basis of written examination and zero emphases is laid upon the spoken aspect. Online education has the potential to transform the education system by expanding educational opportunities, transforming student populations and encouraging the development of new pedagogical methods making the learning process more reliable, more efficient, and less stressful for both instructors and students. Butnaru, G. I., Niță, V., Anichiti, A., & Brînză, G. (2021).

This makes a case in favor of written or printed material with a need to adopt a more supportive approach towards examination with the agreeing of several modes and formats.

A recent survey steered by the NCERT highlights that more than 35 percent of students of the schools like KVs still rely upon textbooks. This data will positively be much higher in the case of the state government schools which cater to the underprivileged groups and frugally deprived regions.

One-third of the students and parents have found that online learning is either tough or onerous. It also divulges the pupils' struggle to assume simulated classroom as real and flags the need for a corrective mechanism which most states have failed to deliver as only 6 out of 38 states and UTs have taken measures to take care of the kids' mental and physical well-being since the implementation of the lockdown. This is why a number of influential voices are pitching for the blended learning.

There have already been fruitful evolutions amongst many universities. Zhejiang University managed to get more than 5,000 courses online just two weeks into the transition using online platforms. The Imperial College London started offering a course on the science of coronavirus, which is now the most joined class launched in 2020 on Coursera.

The Future of Knowledge Seeking

The use of hybrid learning is more effective than online or FTF models in higher education. Due to the potential benefits, an increasing number of institutions are interested in developing hybrid courses, programs, and degrees. Future research should evaluate the effectiveness of hybrid learning. Meydanlioglu, A., & Arıkan, F. (2014). It has altered the way of teaching. It empowers one to reach out to one's students more proficiently and successfully through chat

groups, video meetings, voting and also document sharing, especially during this pandemic. Learning in the form of Blended learning is one of several alternative efforts to improve the quality and quantity of the lecture process. Through learning by using Blended learning, students and lecturers can interact in learning across distances, time and space. Sutisna, E., & Vonti, L. H. (2020).

It can, thus, be concluded from the analysis that blended learning is the need of the hour. Traditional and Online learning need to go hand in hand in order to achieve the goal of global education in the times to come.

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