BLENDED LEARNING: AN INNOVATIVE APPROACH IN TEACHING LEARNING

Dr Himanshu Rastogi
Associate Professor, Amity Business School,
Amity University Uttar Pradesh – Lucknow Campus

ABSTRACT

Blended learning is an innovative concept that incorporates both traditional classroom teaching and ICT-enabled learning, including both offline and online learning. It encompassescommon learning, constructive learning, and Computer-Aided Learning (CAI). Blended learning requires significant effort, the right attitude, a substantial budget, and motivated teachers and students to make it work. As blended learning is a complex and challenging endeavor, organizing it is a difficult task. This article on "Blended Learning: An Innovative Approach in Teaching and Learning" discusses the concept of blended learning, its key features, and the prerequisites for implementation in the teaching and learning process. The extent of blended learning in the Indian Education System is also elaborated. This article aimsto explain that blended learning is an innovative approach that needs to be adopted in the current scenario of the teaching and learning process.

Keywords: *Blended Learning, Peer Interaction, Virtual Classroom, Scientific Attitude, ICT Supported Teaching Learning.*

INTRODUCTION

The present education system is currently in transition. To meet the challenges faced by every individual, it strives to adopt new technologies and find innovative ways to provide quality educational opportunities for all. However, due to various factors such as insufficient budgets, lack of facilities, and incentives, it is challenging to completely abandon traditional forms of information transmission. Both traditional classroom teaching and ICT-assisted teaching can offer solutions to the challenges encountered in the teaching and learningprocess. Students are almost equally divided between traditional and online modes of learning. Traditional teaching, despite a few shortcomings, adds a much-needed human touch to the teaching and learning process. The personality and behavior of teachers directly impactstudents' development. Face-to-face communication fulfills affective goals along with cognitive and psychomotor skills. The traditional approach of face-to-face interaction helps develop a strong value system. Social skills, such as cooperation, sharing, expressing, and respecting other opinions, are easier to develop in the traditional form of teaching. Students learn not only from books or teachers in the classroom but also from peer interactions. They acquire many skills on the playground and in various social interactions, such as in canteens and prayer halls. All of these are essential for the proper development of personality. As mentioned above, the traditional approach has its advantages, but it is not without flaws. Traditional Mode of Learning: Traditional education is defined as the study of culture,custom, and tradition. In traditional teaching methods, students learn concepts through memorization. In contrast, in the modern education system, students learn through human- environment interaction.

Shortcomings of Traditional Mode of Learning:

a. It does not meet everyone's individual needs, mainly due to the improper student- teacher

ratio.

b. It does not effectively adapt to the challenge of physically teaching students.
c. Teachers are not adequately trained for integrated classrooms.
d. It is not suited to address the challenges of irregular students, as attendance is compulsory, and the evaluation system relies on annual exams. If students fail the exam, their entire year is wasted, contributing to the rigidity faced by irregular students who are excluded from the mainstream school system.
e. Furthermore, due to the lack of professionally trained teachers and the inappropriate attitudes of some teachers, and a lack of follow-up activities in schools, children wholeave school for any reason do not have the opportunity to re-enter the formal education system.
f. The formal traditional education system does not reach every child, as it still serves a providential purpose. Children from disadvantaged groups, geographically isolated areas, and those with medical issues do not benefit from this traditional form of education.
g. Additionally, students suffer due to teacher ineffectiveness. There is a lack of clarityin teacher training, and teachers are not interested in updating themselves.
h. Courses are not regularly revised, books are not updated, and teachers do not show interest in self-improvement.

BLENDED LEARNING

Blended learning is a comprehensive concept that encompasses various teaching and learning methods, merging traditional classroom instruction with ICT-enabled learning. It includes the following components:

a. Face-to-face Teaching: This traditional mode of teaching allows students to interact directly with teachers, positively influencing their personality,behavior, and value systems. It fosters synchronous communication and offers immediate feedback, enhancing the teaching and learning experience.
b. Interaction with Course Content: Traditional teaching methods and schoolcampuses provide students with direct access to course content through printedmaterials, while ICT-mediated learning offers indirect interaction through versatile and engaging resources like videos, blogs, and eBooks.
c. Peer Interaction: Both formal and informal interactions with peers at school campuses help students develop essential life skills and social values.
d. Group Discussion and Idea Exchange: Classroom teaching encourages students to discuss course aspects with their classmates, building confidence, eliminating hesitations, and developing communication and listening skills.
e. Access to E-Library: ICT-supported learning provides access to digital libraries with a vast array of books and subjects, broadening perspectives and enriching knowledge, helping students achieve their cognitive goals.
f. Virtual Classrooms: These offer students the flexibility to learn anytime and anywhere, fostering global interactions and multicultural experiences, as they can connect with students and experts worldwide.
g. Online Assessment: Online assessments provide immediate feedback, enhancing motivation and preparedness, while ensuring a more formal, transparent, and efficient evaluation

process.

h. E-Learning: Students with diverse needs can opt for e-learning, receiving personalized instruction through video conferencing with private tutors in a virtual environment.
i. Educational Blogs: Educational blogs offer students a platform to showcase creativity and engage in discussions on various topics, beyond the traditional curriculum.
j. Webinars: These ICT-enabled seminars allow students to participate in discussions and presentations on topics of interest through video conferences, fostering collaboration among participants.
k. Watching Expert Lectures on YouTube: Students can access expert lectures in their field of study through platforms like YouTube, gaining valuable insights and knowledge.
l. Online Learning with Videos and Sounds: Various resources, such as animated videos, provide students with a simplified and engaging way to understand complex concepts based on realism and real-life applications.
m. Virtual Laboratories: In professional courses, virtual laboratories are usedwhen setting up physical labs is impractical, unsafe, or costly, allowing students to gain essential skills in a virtual environment.

When these components are integrated into a single framework, it constitutes blended learning.

MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF BLENDED LEARNING

The main features of blended learning are,

a. Student Choice: Blended learning provides students with the flexibility to choose between traditional classroom teaching and ICT-enabled teaching methods, dependingon the nature and goals of the subject matter. The decision may be made by course designers or teachers, depending on the topic.
b. Teachers' Versatility: Teachers are equipped with dynamic, technological skills and are well-trained to effectively utilize both traditional and modern teaching methods. They can seamlessly transition between these formats.
c. Face-to-Face and Virtual Interaction: Students benefit from both face-to-face interactions in physical classrooms and virtual spaces. This diverse interaction allows students to connect with peers from various backgrounds and cultures.
d. ICT Experience: Blended learning enriches students' ICT (Information and Communication Technology) experience, a crucial skill for success in various professions in the 21st century.
e. Life Skills Development: Blended learning supports the development of essential life skills such as empathy, judgment, love, patience, communication, self-control, and critical thinking. These skills are practiced both in the classroom and through online experiences.
f. Comprehensive Personality Development: Blended learning aims to develop all aspects of students' personalities, including cognitive, physical, and emotional domains. Traditional classroom teaching contributes to memory and understanding, while online experiences promote reflective learning and values development.
g. Physical Development: Blended learning overcomes the criticism often directed at e-learning and ICT-based teaching, as it includes physical activities and experiences on school campuses, such as playing, physical work, and yoga.
h. Broad Exposure: Students gain exposure to a wide range of content, broadening their

knowledge and perspectives. Blended learning enriches the learning experience by presenting various dimensions of the subject matter.

i. Human Touch: Traditional classroom teaching adds a human touch to education, fostering balanced emotional development in students, which is especially importantat the intermediate level.
j. Multicultural and Multidimensional Approach: Blended learning promotesmulticulturalism by enabling students to communicate and collaborate with peersfrom around the world. This diverse experience also enhances multidisciplinary and multidimensional learning.
k. Child-Centered Education: The primary objective of blended learning is to maximize the benefits for students and make education child-centered.
l. Versatile Teacher Roles: In blended learning, teachers take on various roles, acting as motivators, resource persons, organizers, programmers, and content guides, which allows for professional growth.
m. Constructivist Learning: Blended learning embraces constructivism, where students actively create knowledge and learning strategies, fostering independence and self- directed learning.

IMPLEMENTING BLENDED LEARNING IN CLASSROOM

Implementing blended learning is a complex undertaking that requires thorough preparations across various aspects of the teaching-learning process, including teachers, students, content design, and infrastructure. The following are fundamental prerequisites for the successful implementation of blended learning:

a. Well-Trained Teachers: Teachers play a central role in blended learning. They should be well-versed in the concept of blended learning, possess the necessary skills to combine traditional and digital approaches, and be proficient in developing digital content for online access. Additionally, teachers should have a strong command of internet usage, online resources, and various tools such as blogs, YouTube, Skype, and video conferencing for educational purposes.
b. Scientific Attitude: Teachers should maintain a scientific attitude, emphasizing observation and problem-solving skills. A scientific approach enables educators to address challenges positively, analyze situations objectively, and effectively communicate these attributes to students.
c. Openness to Change: The success of any innovative educational method, including blended learning, hinges on teachers having a broad vision and a positive attitude toward change. They must be flexible, receptive to innovation, and dynamic in their teaching practices.
d. Adequate Facilities: Well-equipped computer labs, reliable internet connections, and video conferencing capabilities are essential components of blended learning. Schoolsshould not only offer conducive classrooms but also provide well-stocked computer labs with sufficient devices for each student and internet access, preferably withcampus-wide Wi-Fi coverage.
e. Student Access to Personal Computers and Internet: Apart from school infrastructure, a fully ICT-friendly campus should extend basic hardware support to students for bothonline and offline learning at their residences. This requires proactive government investment and a positive approach.

f. System Flexibility: The system should exhibit flexibility in scheduling, examination methods, and overall structure, as these aspects are crucial for the effective implementation of blended learning.
g. Informed and Supportive Parents: Parents should be educated about the innovative approach of blended learning so that they can prepare and support their children in embracing this departure from traditional teaching, understanding its benefits.
h. Formative Assessment and Continuous Internal Assessment: Schools and higher education institutions (HEIs) should be ready to fully implement continuous internal assessment (CIA) and other formative assessment tools, as traditional summativeassessment may not align with blended learning. Online resources should be incorporated to enhance system flexibility.

These are some of the vital and foundational requirements that are indispensable for the successful implementation of blended learning.

ADVANTAGES OF BLENDED LEARNING

Blended learning offers several advantages, including:

a. Increased Classroom Creativity and Collaboration: By incorporating information and communication technology, whether online or offline, into the learning process, teachers and students have more time for creative and collaborative activities within the classroom. This allows students to benefit from online learning and Computer-Aided Instruction (CAI) while retaining the essential elements of social interaction and the human touch provided by traditional teaching.
b. Enhanced Communication Opportunities: Blended learning provides additional opportunities for communication. The communication cycle is completed with blended learning, which might not be achievable through a strictly traditional teaching approach.
c. Improved Digital Fluency: Students become more tech-savvy and experience enhanced digital fluency as they engage with online learning components.
d. Strengthened Professional Skills: Blended learning fosters the development of essential qualities such as self-motivation, responsibility, and discipline among students. These skills are crucial for their future professional development.
e. Course Content Updates: Blended learning facilitates the regular updating of coursecontent, breathing new life into established courses and ensuring their relevance to current educational needs.

These advantages underscore the value of blended learning in the modern educational landscape.

CHALLENGES OF ADAPTING BLENDED LEARNING IN INDIA

The Indian education system is plagued by various problems such as failure to expand the system to provide free and compulsory education to all children, deterioration in the quality of retention and increase in quantity, the education program is unable to meet the demands of the international market. and even if they are able to maintain and promote the Indian value system, there are no teachers are fully committed to their profession and teacher inefficiency has a negative impact on student learning. Some radical steps and major revolutions are urgently needed to overcome the

challenges. Blended learning helps to some extent to solve these problems in India education system.

- Owing to the large population, the formal school system of our country cannotprovide equal educational opportunities for everyone, therefore mixed education is a good alternative, because it expands the area of educational opportunities and education reaches more children.
- Technical and scientific development constantly demand that the education system matches and correlates with their pace, so that students can cope with the rapidly changing market. The field of technology and science is the most dynamic andchanges the fastest with new innovations, so the content delivered to students must be revised accordingly, but in India, courses are generally not changed or updated that often, so if embedded learning is adapted, the students and teachers can easily update their knowledge and skills.
- Lack of good teachers is also a big problem. There are fewer teachers, however, many primary schools do not have a proper teacher-student ratio, this problem is not only in the government sector, but private educational institutions are also in a similar situation. Another serious problem is that teaching is also not very dedicated to the profession, so blended learning is a good choice because online learning can replace the teacher.
- Generally undisciplined, irregular attendance and interrupters etc. exist because our traditional way of doing things cannot meet the unique demands of each student or make the delivery of that content interesting to students. Also, the course is frequently not focused, students are not confident and sure about their future, so this anxiety and stress leads to discipline problems, but blended learning is a combined solution to all these problems. As stated above, blended learning provides students with different experiences, makes them active and they remain at the center of the teaching learning,greater participation and responsibility for learning makes students more disciplined. And because Blended learning, by offering high-quality education from dynamic resources, makes learning more engaging and valuable education for all remains a major challenge. The Constitution provides for free and compulsory education for all under 14s, but our system is also unable to fulfill this goal. But when our institutions implement blended learning, they can easily increase enrollment regardless of geographic boundaries.
- Educated students are also not efficient and clever to meet the demands of the global market, thus suffering from unemployment, but as stated above, blended learning helps students acquire all the modern technologies and life skills that will help them succeed.
- The education of special children also causes problems, but blended learning with its diversity can easily meet the needs of special children, for example, excellent studentscan satisfy their knowledge in blended learning, blind students can be easily trained inblended learning such as information and communication technology the supported teaching-learning offers technical support in their learning, also people with mobility disabilities can become part of general education and enter good educational institutions regardless of distance learning, because blended learning helps to learn both online and at home.
- The quality of education is mostly higher education, and also a major problem. None ofour higher education institutions are among the best in the world, so graduating and upgrading is a good choice. When students gain experience in both forms, their knowledge is enriched. With access to experts and content material available online, our students acquire advanced skills that enhance their prospects for quality employment. These benefits extend beyond the curriculum

and teaching methods Similarly, there is another problem with our education system that it fails to develop the right value system and love for Indian culture and traditions in students because it is absorbed in modern technologies, but blended learning gives equalimportance to traditional teaching and classroom teaching and thus can add the essence of Indian value to students. System.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of blended learning requires the full commitment of educational institutions and management of educational institutions. It needs a well-planned design that involves the entire educational hierarchy from the top down to the people. To prepareeducational institutions for blended learning, educational budgets must be increased, this can be done with the help of non-governmental organizations and in coordination with industry and the business sector. These sectors can be encouraged to contribute financially to the implementation of blended learning, because these sectors have the most to gain if theproduction of their educational institutions is more effectively managed for the world market.Another very important thing to consider is developing the right attitude towards this revolutionary concept in all those interested in the education system. Awareness programs, seminars and discussion forums should be organized to change the attitudes of parents, community, teachers and students. They can be used to raise awareness of the benefits of blended learning so that the right minds are ready to implement it. Mass media can be usedfor this purpose. Teacher education programs, both in-service and pre-service, must bereoriented to prepare teachers for integrated learning. The funds and efforts that go into the different education of all projects should be channeled into preparing our primary schools for mixed education, because this solves many problems at the same time, and both money and efforts are used more fruitfully. In conclusion, blended learning, to some extent, is thesolution to the problems in our education system. Well planned, organized and executed with the right attitude, it can become the future of our education system. It is in our own interest that steps to adapt blended learning begin soon.

REFERENCES

i. Staker, H., & Horn, M. B. (2012). Blended Learning. [PDF]. Retrieved 2013-10-24.Knewton. (n.d.). Blended Learning: A Disruptive Innovation.
ii. Atarimagazines.com. (n.d.). Plato Rising. Retrieved 2013-10-24.
iii. Alexander, S., & McKenzie, J. (1998). An Evaluation of Information Technology Projects for University Learning. Canberra, Australia: Committee for University Teaching and Staff Development and the Department of Employment, Education, Training, and Youth Affairs. [http://jite.org/documents/Vol5/v5p235-249Heinze156.pdf]
iv. Bonk, C. J., & Graham, C. R. (2006). The Handbook of Blended Learning Environments: Global Perspectives, Local Designs.
v. Khan Academy. (2012-10-11). In the real world Coach resources. Retrieved 2013-10-24.Collis, B. (2005). ICT for Blended Learning.
vi. Orefice, G. A. (n.d.). Creating a Premium Blend? 20 Questions and a Case Study – LearningSolutions article.
vii. Dangwal, K. L. (2004). Computers in Teaching and Learning: Shre Vinod Pustak Manir, Agra.

viii. Dangwal, K. L. (2013). Computers Shiksha. Vedant Publication: Lucknow.
ix. Duzer, J.V. (2002). Instructional Design Tips for Online Learning. [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blended learning]
x. Epic. (2009a). White Paper – Blended Learning.
xi. Epic. (2009b). White Paper – Blended Learning in Practice.Friesen, N. (2012). Report: Defining Blended Learning.
xii. Garrison, D. R., & Kanuka, H. (2004). Blended Learning: Uncovering its transformative potential in higher education. The Internet and Higher Education, 7, 95–105.