

Blended Learning in Higher Education: Enhancing Student Engagement and Learning Outcomes

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Abstract: The flexibility of blended learning to suit a variety of student demographics and improve the learning atmosphere by using web-based instructional materials has led to its rise in importance in recent years. This method provides improved course administration procedures, more effective instruction, and enhanced student outcomes. For best results, blended learning designs must take a suitable, changing, and methodical strategy. This means creating and implementing into practice blended actions as well as organizing the integration of mixed aspects within an educational program. Teaching methods must assess blended exercises' efficacy and make improvements from the viewpoints of both students and instructors. To promote student involvement with both in-the-classroom and online techniques while saving teachers time, this paper seeks to increase knowledge amongst higher education teachers about converting traditional in-person instruction into blended instruction.

Keywords: Blended learning, higher education, student engagement, pupil's involvement.

INTRODUCTION:

In higher education, pupil participation is essential for both in-depth learning and student happiness, which boosts both admission and retention. It may be difficult, however, to include all pupils in a program at a similar level. Pupils must be engaged with the resources and guidance supplied outside of the educational setting for the educational experience to be effective. While it relies on students' interest, zeal, and desire for education, participation by students is mostly dependent on their physical presence at presentations or workshops. Instructors use a variety of instruments and strategies to increase student participation, and participation in events and circumstances is probably to result in learning that is of outstanding quality. OneNote Class Portable Notebook was employed as an online workspace in a research investigation to encourage student participation in educational activities throughout and outside of the learning environment.

Aim and objectives:

Aim: The study aims to enhance Student Engagement and Learning Outcomes with Blended Learning in Higher Education.

Objectives:

- To analyse a fundamental idea of higher education's educational philosophy.
- Teachers' responsibility and pupils' position in a BL Environment.
- To explore the ICT Projects and Resources for Blended learning.

LITERATURE REVIEW:***A fundamental idea of higher education's educational philosophy:***

The powerful 4Cs (conversation, creativity and invention, teamwork, and critical analysis and resolving issues) have replaced the old 3Rs in higher educational institutions in the twenty-first century. Because of the particular character of educational conversation and the difficulty of writing itself, many pupils find it difficult to acquire the ability necessary for writing in academia, making student engagement in creative thinking and written instruction essential for significant memory retention and learning (Heilporn, et al. 2021). Deep and complicated education requires a variety of thinking abilities, which are encouraged by the intricate and ever-changing process of critical thought. Students' creative thinking must be encouraged and acknowledged as an effective way of analysing their thought processes. While it might be difficult for instructors to help pupils with their educational writing and thinking critically, developing analytical abilities has become one of the greatest sought-after educational results in higher education today (Fisher, et al. 2021). Research indicates that academic writers often take a process-focused strategy to write with no regard for language usage, category, or environment. With consideration for each of these factors, this measure was created to support pupils in enhancing the capacity for critical thought for educational writing.

In the twenty-first century, college has changed a great deal. Now, it works on developing important skills like teamwork, conversation, critical thinking, and coming up with new ideas. The shift from the traditional 3Rs (reading, writing, and science) to the more powerful 4Cs shows that people today have a better grasp of the complex needs of society and the workplace (Yadav, 2022). This way of thinking about school comes from the idea that knowing more than just facts is needed for real and deep learning. It needs students to learn how to think in more complex ways so they can solve tough problems and make important contributions to their fields.

One of the main ideas behind this school attitude is that having educational conversations helps kids learn new things and think critically (Fisher, et al., 2021). Through discussion and debate, students work through hard ideas and come up with new ways to understand together with the help of course material. It's important for students to work together and talk to each other while they are learning, and this focus on talking shows that they understand this.

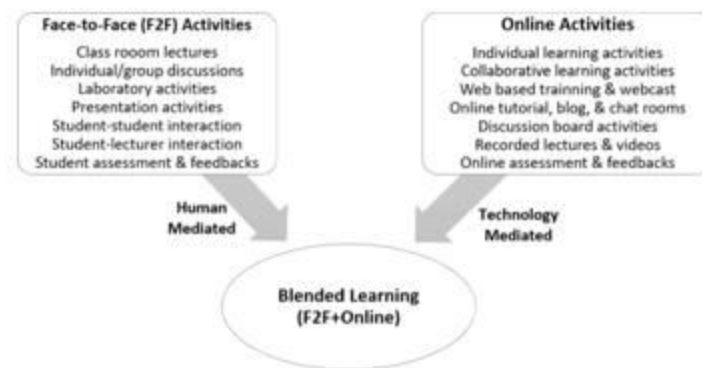


Fig 1. Blended learning

People also think that creativity and invention are important parts of college because they help students fix problems and come up with new ones. By encouraging students to think creatively and express themselves, teachers give them the tools to try out new ideas, question what they think they know, and find new ways to fix problems in the real world (Haryani et al., 2021). People don't have to be creative to work in business or the humanities; people can be creative in technology and the arts as well. This is proof of how important it is in higher education in general.

Teamwork is another important part of school that teaches kids how important it is to get things done as a group (Fisher, et al., 2021). Through group projects and activities, students learn how to talk to each other clearly, work together to solve problems, and use the skills of their peers. Students learn more when they work together, and it also prepares them for a wide range of careers where working together is important.

People think that critical thought and being able to solve problems are important skills for getting through the complicated world people live in now. When students ask tough questions and use logic, they learn to think critically about what they read, spot bias, and make cases based on facts (Lamont, 2020). Kids learn how to think critically, which helps them solve tough problems and make smart decisions in their personal and work lives.

Higher education needs to be completely rethought in order to move towards the powerful 4Cs. Students learn important skills that will help them do well in a world that is linked and getting more difficult. Schools can create environments where students are engaged, learn, and succeed throughout their lives by pushing them to talk, be creative, work together, and think critically.

METHODOLOGY:

Integration and student involvement:

The methodology of blended learning combines in-person and online instruction methods while providing learners with a variety of educational opportunities. Research indicates that it may improve how well students are taught and how well they learn. Compared to conventional classroom instruction, methods of blended education may enhance student achievement and happiness along with a greater feeling of connection. “The indication of major shifts regarding higher educational institutions” is the blended curriculum (Zimba, et al. 2021). On the other hand, successful blended education strategies have shown how crucial organizational backing is for organizing, creating, and carrying out educational and instructional endeavours. “The amount of focus, interest, excitement, and enthusiasm that pupils express whenever they take part in being instructed, which stretches to the kind of inspiration they feel for gaining knowledge and succeeding in their learning” is the universal indicator of the involvement of students. Three factors contribute to pupil participation: behavioural (such as participation in class events and participation), psychological (such as enthusiasm and positive outlook), and intellectual (such as demonstrating a dedication to education). These elements may be further separated into intrinsic (learning for knowledge) and extraneous (using education to accomplish another objective) categories from the motivated standpoint.

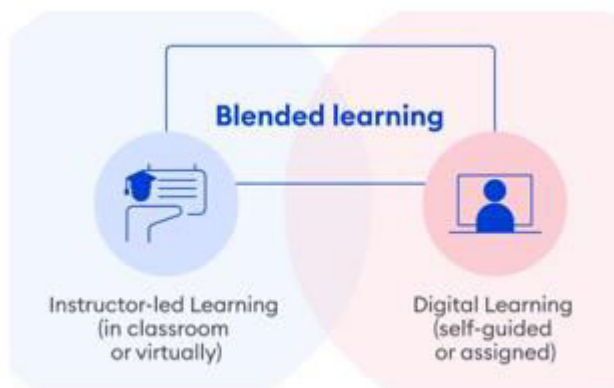


Fig2. Blended Learning for higher education

DISCUSSION:

Blended Learning (BL) has become a popular way to teach in higher education, and it looks like it could help students be more interested in learning and do better in school. This part will go into more detail about the frameworks for teaching, what teachers are responsible for, what students are supposed to do, and how ICT projects and tools are used in the BL setting.

BL Frameworks for Teaching:

BL uses a range of lesson types to meet the needs of all its students. With these models, like split classes, circular models, and self-blending designs, the teacher can pick the best way for each student to learn. Everyone learns in their own way with BL because it has both online and offline exertion (Yeigh et al., 2020). Everyone can get the help and tools that work best for them based on how they learn and what they like. But it's very important to make sure that the BL tasks chosen are in line with the curriculum's learning goals and can be used by students of all ages and groups.

High schools that use blended learning (BL) methods let students study both online and in person. Students can pick which online and offline tasks to do based on their needs, ages, and situations using mixed learning theories that make customised mixes. Blended projects which optimally fit the topic, the demands of the pupils, and the objectives of the educational program should be offered by instructors and educational architects (Islam, et al. 2022). Flipping classrooms, rotational theories, self-blending designs, blended Massive Open Online Course mixed live instruction, blended online instruction, and blended massively open online courses are seven examples of BL activity setups to take into account for BL educational scenarios. It is crucial to guarantee that pupils can gain knowledge well using any kind of medium setting, even though it isn't their first choice or the most comfortable for them.

***Teachers' responsibility in a BL Environment:***

Fig 3. Blended Learning Frameworks for Teaching

While BL is going on, teachers act as trainers and guides, helping students along the way as they learn. BL creates a collaborative learning environment where students actively engage with course material and connect with peers (Gallant, 2020). This is different from traditional classrooms where instruction is often one-directional. Teachers are very important when it comes to creating valuable learning experiences, using technology to help students learn, and giving student's feedback at the right time to help them make progress. BL also gives teachers the tools

they need to understand each student's unique learning needs and adapt their lessons accordingly. This creates personalised learning experiences that help students succeed.

In a blended learning setting, instructors take on the roles of advisors and coaches rather than just information sources, which gives them more power over how pupils learn. In the past, classroom instruction has been standardised, personalised, and led from the top down by the teacher. But with BL, it gets more customised, driven by students, and from the bottom up, with individuality as a key part. Gadgets play a big part in this new shift in knowledge because they provide a balance between teacher-led education, which adds human elements like motivation and empathy to the learning process, and online advice, which offers fun, tech-based education. This new way of teaching works well for both students and teachers because it helps students become more independent and helps teachers help students more often in person. BL's ability to give teachers a better picture and understanding of each student's growth leads to more frequent and close relationships between teachers and students. When teachers believe their students, they can learn about their specific problems and needs. This lets them help and guide their students through tough times. By combining the best parts of face-to-face instruction with online learning, blended learning (BL) lets teachers meet the needs of their students without adding to their workload.

The student's Position in the BL Setting:

Getting students involved is key to the success of BL programmes. Blackboard Learning (BL) raises student motivation, autonomy, and freedom by using technology in the classroom (Benaissa, 2020). Students can take charge of their own learning, set goals, and keep track of their progress. This makes them feel accountable and responsible. BL also lets teachers tailor their lessons to each student's unique learning needs and offer extra help where it's needed. BL also teaches student's important skills like how to do study, learn on their own, and use technology, which prepares them for the needs of the workforce.

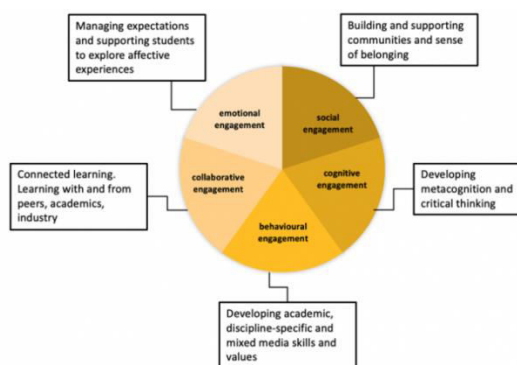


Fig 4. Blended learning and students

Engaging students is very important in a blended teaching setting. When creativity is used in the classroom, students are more interested, stay interested for longer, and are able to do things on their own more easily. Students in all areas of study can benefit from using online education resources because they help them take charge of their own learning and set goals for themselves. When kids learn to be responsible and rely on themselves, they become better advocates for themselves. They keep track of their progress to find chances and get help reaching their goals. BL builds a sense of responsibility in students by pushing them to take charge. With the immediate evaluation data and feedback that is given, teachers can change how they teach and comment on each student. BL also lets students study at their own pace, which gives teachers the freedom to teach more quickly or give more difficult material as needed. BL prepares students for the workforce of the future by teaching them real skills like how to do research, study on their own, be self-motivated, make better decisions, feel more responsible, and use computers.

ICT Projects and Resources:

Materials for learning in the freely accessible sector or published under a liberal license are known as open educational resources (OER), and they are essential for promoting freely available and open learning. Handbooks, curricula, notes from lectures, assessments, films, and visualizations are a few examples of these materials. OER provide BL with affordability for educational shipment, access, and high-quality support. The goal of the worldwide Creative Commons concept is to promote greater fairness and accessibility via the exchange of free, International, and user-friendly resources. Along with a technological remedy for labelling materials with a machine-accessible vocabulary that recognizes them as OER, it offers licenses that anybody may utilize when publishing education or learning materials as open educational resources.

Online learning platforms known as MOOCs, or massively open online courses, provide immediate instruction along with a variety of elements including study guides, clips, virtual examinations, and questionnaires (Adams, et al. 2020). By reducing time and place barriers, they hope to increase the effectiveness of instruction. The three core values for educational policy accessibility, fairness, and quality—are what the Indian administration set out to accomplish via SWAYAM.

Examination and Monitoring:

Higher educational institutions should promote Continuous Comprehensive Evaluation or CCE to emphasize student-focused instructional systems. It is recommended that educators use novel methods of evaluation throughout the year, such as open-book exams, team exams, spoken or speaking exams, and upon-request exams. Exams conducted with open books, in groups, orally or in writing, and upon request are examples of summative assessment techniques (Bouilheres, et

al. 2020). Different types of formative assessment include electronic albums, original works of art, digital and in-class tests, and using AI systems to grade and evaluate. These methods are meant to help students work together, give them helpful feedback, and get them ready for the job market. Using AI technologies may also help raise the general level of education, as well as help students focus and learn faster.

It is very important for BL efforts to include projects and tools that deal with information and communication technology (ICT). OER, or open educational materials, are many free things that can be used to learn, such as videos, audiobooks, and slideshows. They make it easier to learn and more fun to do so. They also lower the cost of school. Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) give students a lot of different ways to learn (Voudoukis and Pagiatakis, 2022). They can take online classes that are tailored to their interests and needs to build on what they learn in school. It is also easy to test students and keep an eye on them with ICT tools. They can now give kids new kinds of tests and help them learn by giving them feedback right away.

BL has a huge chance to make college students more interested in learning and help them learn better. New ways of teaching, more power for teachers and students, and the use of ICT projects and tools can help schools create dynamic learning places that meet the needs of all students. It will become more and more important for BL to shape the future of higher education, help students do well, and inspire people to keep learning throughout their lives as education changes.

CONCLUSION:

The chapter offers ideas for introducing blended learning (BL) in colleges and universities, highlighting the responsibility of colleges and parent organizations to guarantee that all necessary conditions are fulfilled and that procedures are closely followed. Nationally, BL should be utilized to build subject-domain and modern-day abilities rather than taking the place of traditional classroom instruction. Universities need to aim to be role models for effective application.

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