

Second National Conference on New Perspectives in ELT
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Blended Learning –
Method to Introduce E-learning in the Pedagogy

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Abstract

The biggest challenge faced by all academicians of technical education is to develop the employable skills of students through innovative and interesting methods. Students of this era easily get bored with normal chalk and talk method. Their expectations inside the normal class room go beyond the traditional methodology involved. Since this is the age of internet and smart technology, providing the pedagogy in a blended learning methodology will solve the purpose.

The purpose of this paper is to give in an over view of such methodology which can be effectively applied to the designed curriculum across technical institutions. Blended learning method is referred to as a harmonious way of giving various pedagogical approaches by using mixed modes of web-based technology like streaming video-audio, virtual classrooms and collaborative learning, film, videotape or web-based training. The use of blended learning initiates an organization into e- learning. Moving from traditional methods of pedagogical learning towards e-learning may appear to be very expensive. By introducing blended learning tools slowly and steadily into the curriculum paves the resourceful way to the e-learning platform. From small steps the organization can leap to build a vast tech-savvy pedagogy. Blended learning compliments the existing courseware instead of replacing it and the transformation is highly cost effective. The paper elaborates on the methods that an organization can adopt in terms of blended learning to introduce the e-learning in pedagogy.

Key Words: Blended learning, Pedagogical implementation, Traditional methodology,

E -learning, ICT.

Introduction

In today's scenario education has changed rapidly through a huge revolution in computer and internet technologies. The teaching and learning process has undergone a huge change particularly when we talk about distance education. The use of internet has shrunk our world which in turn has made a demand for online learning or e- learning. The role of online learning is huge when we think about higher education and it has its pros and cons as well. Though e-learning has restrained the socialization process by avoiding face-to-face communication, a new methodology has in turn surfaced. This is rightly termed as blended learning, hybrid or mixed learning. Holding on to the traditional method of learning or e- learning alone will bring in so many weaknesses in practicing pedagogy. So taking the strength of both the methods gives a valuable output to the students, and thus the concept of blended learning has emerged as a new concept and has occupied all realms of education.

Blended learning is taken up as the effective learning process by most of the instructors across the world as they believed that the varied delivery methods can increase the students' satisfaction. It also helps them to undergo a pedagogy that is not too boring. The students across the globe have come out with the opinion that the blended learning methodology is very useful for them to do a task-based effective learning process where their learning outcomes have gotten a huge success.

The following sections provide extensive views on blended learning methods. Different forms of blended learning methods are to be implemented, in order to move an organization from its traditional method to e-learning process. The different models that are used, the techniques that are to be adopted by the teachers in order to emerge out to a complete e-learning pedagogy are also further discussed in the paper.

What is Blended Learning?

When we analyse the definition of blended learning, we tend to get so many definitions that are not unique. Driscoll (2002) defined blended learning as a combination of instructional

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methods. Delialioglu and Yildirim (2007) and Gulbahar and Madran (2009) believed that blended learning is the same as hybrid instruction, which combines the potentials of web-enhanced instruction. Garrison and Kanuka (2004) found that blended learning environments seize the values of traditional classes, which improve the effectiveness of meaningful learning experiences. Bonk (2004) rightly defined it on a more conservative side, as a combination of instructional modalities, methods and face-to-face and online instruction.

However this study takes up the definition given by Colin and Moonen as “a hybrid of traditional face-to-face and online learning so that instruction occurs both in the classroom and online, and where the online component becomes a natural extension of traditional classroom learning” (Colis & Moonen, 2001 cited in Rovai & Jordan, 2004, p.3).

Blended learning represents a much greater change in basic technique than simply adding computers to classrooms. ‘The flipped Class room’ is an offshoot method that is very popular these days. No single definition for the terms is agreed upon as it has got so many other terms like hybrid, mixed or integrative method. There are three primary components that constitute the general learning model in blended learning.

- In-person classroom activities facilitated by a trained educator.
- Online learning materials, often including pre-recorded lectures given by that same instructor.
- Structured independent study time guided by the material in the lectures and skills developed during classroom experience.

Why Traditional Approaches Do Not Work?

The passive transmittal learning, where the teacher is the center of the learning process, places the liability of learning process on the shift of knowledge from expert to the student. The direct instruction technique, such as the lecture, while the students sit and take notes is deeply rooted in the traditional way of getting education. The teacher being ‘the guide on the side’ helps much in a student-centered approach. Teachers in an online environment cannot move around the

class to offer the suggestion or guidance on spot to rectify the mistakes that arise. The responsibility is much now on the students than on the teacher. The teacher shares the responsibility while remaining unseen, through the effective design of the course. Though this appears to be easy it needs to be modified for successful learning activities. So before getting completely online by introducing the e-learning process, a combination of e-learning and face-to-face method fills the need of the hour. The initiation of this blended way of learning by uses of technological tools along with the chalk and talk method, enables us to glide slowly from traditional teacher centric methodology to complete automated online methodology.

Advantages of Blended Learning

The combination of digital instruction and face-to-face class, students can work on new concepts easily with more practical approach. The use of information and communication technologies into higher studies helps toward an independent and collaborative learning experience.

This in turn give them full satisfaction and success throughout the completion of the course. The attitude of the students towards learning is fine tuned. The pedagogy becomes more simple and easy with the introduction of the blended learning method. The use of computer based qualitative and quantitative assessment modules have enriched the student's understanding of the pedagogical methods adopted to deliver the course material.

Blended learning is a cost effective method. It is comparatively less expensive than the traditional method. It lowers the cost by introducing all the concepts into online space and it essentially reduces to a large extent, the usage of textbooks. On the other hand the students love to use electronic devices which they eagerly bring to classes. Textbook budgets are largely cut down with the use of digital devices. There is ample time for data collection and customization of instruction and assessment, a very competitive benefit of this approach. The automatic collection and retrieval of data at the correct time enables the students, parents and teachers to have a valid measure on the academic progress. Tests are automatically scored and this brings in an instantaneous feedback which helps the student gain high accuracy and efficiency with the

subjects. Blended learning allows the students to work at their own pace and make sure that they fully understand the concepts before they move on. It initiates them to demonstrate more autonomy, self-regulation and independence in order to succeed.

Pedagogic Suggestions for Implementation of Blended Learning

Pedagogy refers to the different strategies and styles of instruction used to achieve the learning process. In order to convert the normal teaching process into e-learning, students need to learn and interact with technology. It is recommended that teachers should acquire an understanding of the pedagogy which will emphasize their online environment. The following suggestions will provide a foundation through which teachers can comprehend the strategies for creating successful online materials. E learning rightly includes the use of ‘Information and Communications Technology - ICT Tools’ through online-assessment, effective use of online resources and the internet.

The curriculum should be designed in such a way that the pedagogic design should help enthuse the students to learn on their own. Effective use of ICT tools in searching, indexing, storing and retrieving information quickly should be explained in every single step of the curriculum. The pedagogic strategies should also ensure that along with a minimum set of competencies in the chosen specialization, the students also should acquire the generic skills and attitudes. These generic skills should be defined as the learning outcome.

Transformation from Blended Learning to E-learning

The gradual shift from blended learning to e-learning is possible when the benefits for the learners are huge. Blended learning methods with mixed modes of web technology, for example, live virtual class room, self-paced instruction, collaborative learning, streaming video and text and instructional technology like video tape, film, web-based training will help the need.

Following are the examples which can help in the transformation:

(1) Put the assessments online.

This will help to easily keep track of the performance and the students will be able to understand

their levels of standard.

(2) Make reference materials online.

This will enable the students to easily reach the materials on time and have easy access to them whenever it is necessary

(3) Provide mentoring/ coaching – Access to Experts as a tool.

By making this a tool, students will find it easy to interact with the resource person after class hours which will help them to get answers to their queries then and there.

Conclusion

Students and teachers engage in using technology for active learning process. This can be achieved by blended learning where the combination of face-to face instruction with the online platform is done. To bring in a new environment for effective learning process, the need for harmonious learning environment is essential and this is sought completely through blended learning methods. The paper has discussed and reviewed many advantages of blended learning over traditional face-to-face class room. It demonstrated the helpful ways of introducing e-learning in the academic pedagogy. The blended learning approach rightly foster a change in the current methods and if practiced through a streamlined process, the institution will definitely cultivate easily an online platform for its courses and can successfully launch all its programs online.

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