Transforming Education: The Role of Blended Learning

Rozia Bashir[1*], Nusrat Bashir[2], Dr. Najmah Peerzada[3]

[1*]Research Scholar, Department of Education, University of Kashmir rozia.bashir786@gmail.com
[2]Research Scholar, Department of Education, University of Kashmir nusratbashir.scholar@kashmiruniversity.net
[3]Associate Professor, Department of Education, University of Kashmir najmahpeerzada@hotmail.com

Abstract:

Blended learning reflects a paradigm shift in the field of teaching and learning. This innovative method offers a dynamic and adaptable educational experience by integrating traditional face-to-face instruction with digital technologies. The advantages of both traditional classroom instruction and ICT-supported learning, including both offline and online learning, are combined in the novel idea of blended learning. It offers opportunities for computer-assisted learning (CAL), constructive learning, and collaborative learning. The present paper examines the significant impact of blended learning on pedagogy, curriculum development, and student engagement. It explores the various ways blended learning can be put into practice, emphasizing its potential to improve accessibility, personalization, and student outcomes. It also highlights the crucial role of blended learning in creating a more adaptable and successful teaching and learning process by assessing the changing context of education.

Keywords Blended Learning, ICT Supported Teaching Learning Process, Traditional Teaching Learning Process, and Computer Assisted Learning, Online Learning.

Introduction:

The educational system is presently undergoing a transformational phase. In order to provide high-quality educational experiences for everyone, it is endeavouring to adopt new technologies and investigate new pathways in order to face the challenges of expansion and to fulfil individual needs. Due to several challenges, including insufficient funding, lack of facilities, and the advantages of face-to-face interaction, it is not yet entirely prepared to forsake the traditional modalities of knowledge transfer. The traditional mode of instruction offers a crucial personal touch to the teaching and learning process, despite a few limitations. Personalities of the students are directly influenced by the actions and attitudes of their teachers. Development of a strong value system is facilitated by the traditional face-to-face approach. Social skills including cooperation, sharing, expressiveness, and respecting others' viewpoints are simpler for pupils to acquire when learning through traditional methods of instruction. In addition to books and classroom teachers, friends also contribute knowledge to students. In small-group settings like in the playground, students connect with their peer groups to develop a variety of skills. For their healthy personality development, each of these aspects is crucial.

ICT-supported teaching and learning processes are an effective means to broaden students' exposure, reduce off mistakes in instruction, raise the standard, and connect their knowledge with modern technological breakthroughs and globalisation. The use of ICT in the classroom adds a new dimension to teaching and learning, exposes students to a wide range of knowledge, and allows them a variety of learning, unlearning, and relearning opportunities. All students, even those with physical disabilities and employed people can benefit from this sort of teaching. It becomes easier to reach all students. As Swami Vivekananda once said, "If people cannot access school, school should reach them." ICT-enabled learning is exactly doing that. Both the traditional method of teaching and learning and the teaching and learning process supported by ICT have been analysed, and each has few advantages and disadvantages and caters to different needs, demands, and expectations from the educational system. In order to design such a system, one that is based on an integrated approach and that includes the essential elements of both traditional and ICT-supported teaching is required. As a result, the term "Blended Learning" originated from the art of integrating more traditional classroom face-to-face instruction with digital learning tools.

Blended learning refers to a thoughtfully organised combination of worthwhile activities in both online and face-to-face modalities. The combination necessitates considering several elements, with a primary emphasis on learning outcomes and a learner-centred teaching environment. The idea of blended learning requires framing the teaching and learning process to integrate both in-person education and instruction supported by ICT. Blended learning encompasses all types of instruction, including direct instruction, indirect instruction, collaborative teaching, and individualised computer-assisted learning.

Features of Blended Learning

In blended learning students can select either the traditional mode of classroom teaching where they can get personal interaction with teacher and their classmates or they can choose ICT supported teaching learning. This largely depends on the nature of course content and leaning objectives being targeted. Sometime course designers or teachers themselves decide the mode appropriate for topic being dealt with. It is an important feature of the blended learning that teachers are very dynamic, techno savvy and fully trained to work efficiently in both the formats- traditional classroom format and ICT supported format. They will be well equipped in using traditional methods and other modern technologies

Students get ample of time to interact with other students pursuing same course. They can interact with them inside college campus and also in virtual space. Thus, their group become very large and has much diversity so the student's knowledge becomes wide and they also develop a feeling of understanding, love, and harmony with students of other cultures and countries. The present century is the century of ICT. Today the illiterate is not only the one who cannot read and write but a person who is not well versed with modern technologies is also illiterate. Today all professions demand expertise in ICT so blended learning help to make student's ICT experience rich. Students involved in blended learning gain capability to exploit available technologies to the fullest of their benefit.

Life skills are those skills that are needed to lead a happy, peaceful and successful life. The major life skills are empathy, decision making capability, love, patience, communication, self-management, critical thinking. The blended learning helps the students to practice these skills. Students get acquainted with few skills like love, empathy, patience in classroom through his teachers, classmates, and few like self-management, decision making, critical thinking, communication through the online experiences. In blended learning the students get full opportunity for all round development of the personality. All the aspects of personality namely- cognitive, physical and emotional are developed through blended learning which is difficult to achieve in traditional mode or ICT approach if followed in isolation. Traditional classroom teaching is helpful in memory level and understanding level of teaching and so help in cognitive domain development and at same time teacher's behaviour, playground experience and social group with classmates develop affective and physical domain. Online experiences help in reflective level of learning so develop higher faculties of mind and social networking sites and other social interactions though internet help in right type of value development.

Online learning and ICT supported teaching learning process is often targeted with the blame that it ignores physical development of the students. The blended learning overcomes this limitation. As it includes school experience also, so students get time for playing, physical work, yoga inside the college campus. Due to variety of experiences students get wide exposure and their content knowledge is enriched, they get to see various new dimensions of the content and gain practical useful knowledge. Due to physical presence of teacher via traditional approach students get that human touch which is very necessary for their balanced emotional development.

Blended learning approach provides an opportunity to the students to communicate and share their views and feeling with the students all over the world thus, it makes teaching learning process multicultural, interdisciplinary and multidimensional. It is designed to provide maximum gain to students and thus reach the goal of child centered education. A teacher in blended learning is playing different role, traditional role of a teacher in classroom, he acts as motivator, as a resource person, as an organizer, as a developer, when he develops content to be provided through ICT, as a guide on the side. Thus, teacher gets freedom from the monotonous traditional roles and he can try his hands in diverse areas that are good for his professional growth also. Blended learning also includes constructivism. Students construct their own knowledge rather than depending on others to design teaching-learning strategies for them.

Blended learning is a dynamic and transformative approach to education, offering numerous benefits while presenting challenges that need to be addressed. As educational institutions continue to embrace this paradigm shift, it is essential to invest in technology infrastructure, faculty development, and innovative course design. Blended learning has the potential to revolutionize education by providing a flexible, personalized, and technology-driven learning experience that prepares students for success in the 21st century.

Benefits of Blended Learning

1. Teachers and students have more time in the classroom for collaborative and creative activities because some learning is accomplished online or in an offline setting utilising ICT.
2. Students gain from online learning and CAI without losing out on the human element and social contact component of traditional education.
3. It allows for more communication. The communication cycle is completed in blended learning, which is not practical if we only utilise a traditional approach.
4. Students become more proficient with technology and digitally competent.

5. Students' professionalism is strengthened as they develop qualities like self-motivation, self-responsibility, and discipline.
6. It updates course material, reviving out-dated courses.

Challenges in Blended Learning

Although blended learning has many benefits, students, teachers, and institutions struggle with implementing it. Research has shown that students enrolled in blended learning courses may have unrealistic expectations. Students in blended learning programmes thought that having fewer classes meant less effort, that having poor time management skills was unacceptable, and that they struggled to take responsibility for their own learning.

In addition, students in these courses have indicated feelings of isolation because of the few opportunities for social interaction in a face-to-face classroom environment. Having problems with ever-more-advanced technologies is another problem with incorporating blended learning. Lack of Internet connectivity prevents students from participating in online discussions, which may be quite discouraging and have a detrimental effect on learning.

The primary barrier to implementing blended learning in higher education is time commitment. This means that it often takes a minimum of three times as long to create a blended learning course for a large group of students as it does to create a course of a similar sort in a traditional format. The minimal funds available make it impossible to create a Learning Management System (LMS), which is required to enhance blended learning in higher education institutions. The course design may not have adequate technical assistance. This arises from a lack of interaction between information and communication technology (ICT) specialists and the instructors of blended learning courses. For students to have a successful blended learning experience, universities should support course redesign, which may entail deciding which course objectives are best met by online learning activities, which parts of the course are best completed in the classroom, and how to integrate these two learning environments.

Conclusions:

Blended learning provides more flexible, interesting, effective, accessible, and varied learning experiences for both teachers and students. The appeal of the blended instructional method is that it enhances the traditional based learning that currently exists by using technology-assisted learning techniques. Assessment is a critical method for determining how well a student understands the subject they are pursuing at all levels of education. Blended learning strategies allow teachers to deliver lectures and assess students' learning using novel and cutting-edge techniques. It is anticipated that blended learning environments will have a substantial impact on both higher education and business training in the future. Over the past ten years, the use of blended learning settings has grown significantly as a result of improved technology and network connectivity.

It gives students more scheduling flexibility and improves their learning outcomes. Blended learning can be advantageous for many students who are able to overcome academic obstacles caused by distance and culture. By learning how to use technology in the classroom, both teachers and students will acquire skills essential for the twenty-first century. Additionally, students will develop the critical thinking and workplace skills required for success in the future. Education now involves more than merely memorising facts and figures; it also entails working with others to solve complex problems, developing a variety of leadership and communication skills, and increasing motivation and production. Blended learning adoption appears to have a promising future in emerging countries like India, despite some early challenges and limitations. In fact, if the current rates of development are maintained, India may soon exceed western countries in the adoption of blended learning.

It follows that blended learning is, in some ways, a solution to the issues that hamper our educational system. If executed properly, methodically, and with the right perspectives, it could be the future of our educational system. In conclusion, blended learning is not merely an addition to traditional education but a fundamental rethinking of how teaching and learning occurs, making it a promising avenue for the future of education.

References:

1. Dr. R.Jayanthi (2019). A Study about Blended Learning - Its importance and Concept. *International Journal of Scientific Development and Research (IJSDR)*, 4(4), 387397.
2. Lalima & Dangwal, K.l. (2017). Blended Learning: An Innovative Approach. *Universal Journal of Educational Research, 5* (1), 129-136.
3. Muxtorjonovna, A.M. (2020). Significance of Blended Learning in Education System. *The American Journal of Social Science and Education Innovations,* 2(8), 507-511.
4. Tonbuloglu, B., & Tonbuloglu, I. (2023). Trends and Patterns in Blended Learning Research (1965-2022). *Education and Information Technologies, Springer. https: doi.org/10.1007/s10693-023-11754-0.*

5. Vaughan, N. D. (2007). Perspectives on blended learning in higher education. *International Journal of Blended Learning*, 6(1), 81-94.
6. Blended learning: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blended_learning Blended learning. http://edutechwiki.unige.ch/en/blended_learning what-when-how: Benefits and Challenges of Blended Learning Environmentshttp://whatwhen-how.com/information-science-and-technology/benefits-and-challenges-ofblended-learning-environments/
7. The Benefits of Blended Learning: https://www.teachthought.com/technology/the-benefitsof-blended-learning/
8. The History of Blended Learning - https://elearningindustry.com/history-of-blended-learning.
9. The concept of blended learning: https://flexiblelearning.auckland.ac.nz/learning_technologies_online/5/1/html/course_files/4_1.html .
10. Need for Blended learning in the Indian Education system - http://www.besonline.in/blog/need-blended-learning-indian-education-system/
11. The Role of Teacher in Blended Learning Classroom - www.edgenuity.com
12. Teaching and Teacher in Blended Learning Model. - http://www.google.com