Role of Teachers towards Blended Mode of Teaching: A Conceptual Framework

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Abstract:

Blended learning is a combination of online and in-person instruction where the online component essentially replaces rather than enhances face-to-face interaction time. In terms of content and delivery, in-person classroom practices are integrated with computer-mediated activities, even if students still attend traditional classrooms with teachers present. Additionally, it is employed in training and professional development environments. It is challenging to have a general understanding of blended learning because it is so context-dependent. By combining best practices from both formats, the blended learning approach improves learning experiences and knowledge retention without undervaluing the advantages of in-person instruction from a teacher. In blended learning, students have some discretion over time, location, path, and pace, but both teachers and students must be physically present. Now-a-days, "blended learning" has become very popular in today's tech-dominated society, particularly among parents, educators, and students in general. Students' learning experiences are more effective overall because to this teaching strategy. The education sector has been greatly impacted by the quick development of digital technology and its application in practically every industry, which has raised demand for digital teaching methods globally.

Introduction:

Online learning experiences and in-person classroom instruction are combined in blended learning. It's a teaching strategy that preserves the advantages of face-to-face connection while utilizing technology to improve conventional teaching techniques. Blended learning seeks to establish a more adaptable and stimulating learning environment by combining these methods. A training method called blended learning, sometimes referred to as flipped classroom, hybrid learning, or mixed learning, blends traditional in-person instruction and face-to-face learning with digital, online learning resources. It offers a flexible and all-encompassing learning experience by combining in-person encounters, like workshops or classroom sessions, with self-paced eLearning modules, virtual training, or digital resources. This hybrid technique is very effective at accommodating varying learning styles and improving knowledge retention since it enables

students to interact with the content both alone and collectively. Combining traditional classroom instruction with online learning is known as blended learning. Online learning activities and instructor-led classroom instruction are combined in blended learning, often referred to as hybrid learning.

Significance of Blended Learning:

Because it provides flexibility, increased engagement, and individualized learning experiences, blended learning—a mix of online and in-person instruction—is significant. It enables students to acquire critical digital skills, access material at any time, and learn at their own speed. Additionally, blended learning improves accessibility for all students, tracks student achievement, and fosters better communication. Writing on paper and learning facts is no longer the only aspect of education in the twenty-first century. The school system is being redesigned in response to technological advancements. With the extensive use of digital technology and easy access to the internet, teaching has changed significantly, particularly during the COVID epidemic. This quickly shifting environment should serve as a reminder that conventional teaching approaches need to change in order to stay relevant. Integrated technologies must be incorporated into the learning model. Blended learning is one such learning style that simplifies, facilitates, and improves learning. Students benefit from this kind of learning because it blends the best elements of digital and traditional teaching approaches. Online learning enables students to customize their education, even if classroom instruction is essential for maintaining discipline overall. Every pupil is unique, just as no two fingers on a single hand are same. Students receive additional digital help in addition to traditional chalk-and-board instruction. They study at their own speed and on their own timetable, making sure they comprehend new ideas completely before feeling pressured to advance. By combining online learning resources with the traditional location-based classroom method, blended learning offers the potential to improve the overall efficacy of the learning process. In the pre-digital age, traditional means of delivering or receiving education were sufficient, but the sudden explosion of digital technologies has had a significant effect on the education sector and raised demand for more digital teaching strategies. Although a blended learning strategy is undoubtedly a great way to improve student experience and engagement, its advantages go well beyond that. With engaging, relevant, and suitable online learning resources, it enables students to guide their own education. Among other benefits, it encompasses the role of an educator in fostering social contact, dialogue, and group learning.

Brief Review of Related Studies:

Raju and Rajkoomar (2016): While acknowledging the potential of ICTs, blended learning has the tendency to offer more engaging learning experiences. In order to develop a framework for designing and implementing blended learning in the delivery of LIS curricula in South African universities, a doctoral study was conducted with the goal of investigating the educational and pedagogical issues in blended learning. The results of that study are reported in this paper.

Tony et al. (2018): In the last ten years, governments and educational systems around the world have had to deal with social shifts that have never been seen in contemporary human history. The authors of this study describe the strategies of a school that uses blended learning to implement a school-wide approach to teaching and learning in an effort to deal with such a situation.

Caravias (2018): The research literature in higher education that examines instructors' ideas of blended learning and their methods for both design and instruction is critically reviewed and synthesized in this paper. First, conceptual frameworks and definitions of blended learning are examined. Picciano's Blending with Purpose Multimodal framework is discussed.

Seung (2007): Few theories and models exist to define blended learning, identify the optimal combination of different delivery media, and direct the practice of blending, despite the fact that it is widely accepted as being popular and successful. Following a study of various blended learning definitions and models, the authors introduce Strategic Blended-Learning and Performance Solutions (SBLPS), a conceptual framework for strategic blending.

Caravias (2018): Learning management systems (LMS) offer the chance to use blended learning strategies, which incorporate a variety of learning resources and delivery techniques with information and communications technology (ICT). In order to improve learning, blended learning is viewed as a connection between educators, learners, and classrooms spread across many locations. Lack of reliance on time limitations, contemplation time, accommodating students' varying needs and learning preferences, more engagement, and more flexibility in teaching and learning are some benefits of blended learning.

Tilagavati (2021): Objectives: A conceptual framework for teaching sustainable development courses in online learning environments at higher education institutions is presented in this research. Higher education institutions are increasingly requiring sustainability development courses, mostly to inform the next generation of community members who will help make it happen. In order to serve a younger generation of potential students, incorporate technological advancements into their teaching methods, and focus on growing concerns about global environmental challenges, higher education institutions are undergoing a significant transition.

Lee (2013): The study offers a conceptual framework for a blended professional development program that helps teachers learn a subject and improve their teaching methods. Twenty-nine middle school teachers took part in a year-long, blended professional development (PD) program, consisting of seven continuing teachers and twenty-two first-year teachers. The findings demonstrated that the teaching methods of the participants shifted toward more student-centered classes, promoting verbal interaction, utilizing a range of questioning techniques, and utilizing cooperative group projects while utilizing a greater range of resources. Keywords: virtual interactions, blended professional development, and mathematics teacher education.

Brandford et al. (2020): The use of abridged technologies has changed the way distance education is delivered, moving beyond the concept of distance alone. Because of the tools used in modern remote learning, the word "distance" has become a metaphor. Technology's affordances have encouraged interaction between students, between students and teachers, and between students across boundaries. This has been made feasible via blended learning, which incorporates both in-person and online instruction. The Learning Management System (LMS) is one of the technologies that has enabled blended learning in distance learning. However, plans for using LMS have been a key component of modern literature, particularly in Africa.

Seema & Padmanbha (2024): Through schooling, which instills cultural values and practices and equips them with the skills they need to make constructive contributions to society, children are socialized into society. In this sense, education raises public knowledge of local and global issues while fostering economic growth. Teacher training programs must prepare teachers to use contemporary technology in the classroom in order to satisfy the demands and expectations of students in the twenty-first century. More student-centered, interdisciplinary, intimately related to real-world events and processes, and flexible enough to accommodate different learning styles can all be facilitated by technology.

Charles and Halverson (2019): Academic success and happiness are two significant educational outcomes that are correlated with learner engagement. Despite the fact that learner engagement in blended environments is already being studied, there is currently no theoretical framework that directs research or practice, and operationalizations and definitions of engagement are not very consistent or explicit. To

determine whether modifications to instructional strategies (facilitators) lead to increased engagement (measured by indicators), it is critical to develop definitions, models, and metrics of the characteristics that indicate learner engagement. The constructs most pertinent to learning in general and blended learning in particular are identified in this article's review of the body of research on learner engagement.

Attitude of Teachers towards Blended Learning:

Studies show that teachers have typically good attitudes on blended learning and are willing to use it. This optimistic outlook is frequently impacted by elements such as experience, locality, and gender. The time commitment, technological difficulties, and evaluation techniques related to blended learning, however, may also cause some educators to voice concerns. Web-based instruction bolstered by media and human interaction is part of the ideal blended learning program. Using the right learning tools to fit each learner's unique learning style maximizes the attainment of learning objectives. It alludes to an educational program that blends online learning with conventional classroom instruction. To help learners realize their full potential, eLearning techniques are integrated with traditional in-person instruction. Since each learner has unique needs and learning preferences, this educational software gives them more freedom to study at their own speed. This learning strategy has become a term in the corporate sector since it works best for organizations. Organizations must determine the "right" content for online and in-person training as well as the times for virtual classrooms and in-person sessions, which takes time when developing a blended learning strategy. More opportunities for both high-quality and high-volume human connection in a learning setting are made possible by blended learning. Through blended learning, students can "be both together and apart." Because of the advantages that computer-mediated educational tools offer, a community of learners can communicate at any time and from any location. Given its potential to have a large impact on distant learning, blended learning offers a "good" mix of technologies and interactions that creates a constructive, socially supported learning environment.

Factors of Successfulness of Blended Learning:

In case of blended learning important criteria are taken into account during integrating online and in-person training which are beneficial for teachers. These consist of the following: course design (unambiguous structure, captivating activities), technology infrastructure (reliable access, user-friendly interface), learner characteristics (motivation, self-directed learning skills), and teacher characteristics (technology competence, teaching experience). Additionally, for blended learning to be successful, learner support and student-teacher contact are essential.

Learner Characteristics:

•   Engagement and Motivation: Students must be inspired to take part in both in-person and virtual learning activities.

•   Self-Directed Learning Skills: Since blended learning frequently calls for students to assume greater accountability for their education, having strong self-directed learning abilities is advantageous.

•   Technology Proficiency: Being able to navigate online platforms and engage in online activities requires a basic understanding of technology.

•   Learner contact: Motivation, knowledge creation, and a sense of community all benefit from opportunities for contact with instructors and peers.

Teacher Characteristics:

- Technology Competence: Teachers must feel at ease utilizing and incorporating technology into their lessons.

- Teaching Experience: To successfully combine online and in-person instruction, teachers must have prior experience with both.

- Pedagogical Knowledge: Teachers must be able to create blended learning programs that capitalize on the advantages of both online and in-person instruction.

Course Design:

- Clear framework and Organization: It is crucial to have a course framework that is well-defined and includes explicit learning objectives and expectations.

- Engaging Activities: To encourage active learning and knowledge construction, both in-person and online activities should be created with an emphasis on interaction and engagement.

- Online and Face-to-Face Integration: To create a seamless learning experience, the online and face-to-face elements should be carefully combined.

- Flexibility and Accessibility: The learning environment should be adaptable to all learning requirements and styles, and the materials and activities should be available to all students.

Technology Infrastructure:

- Reliable Access: The internet and other technology needed for the blended learning environment must be accessible to both teachers and students.

- User-Friendly Interface: It should be simple to use and navigate the web platform and tools.

- Technical help: To handle any potential technical problems, there should be sufficient technical help accessible.

Learning Environment:

- Collaborative and Supportive: The classroom setting should foster contact and cooperation between students and teachers.

- Emotional Support: To promote a feeling of community and belonging, teachers should offer students emotional support, particularly in an online setting.

- Constructive Feedback: Teachers' regular, helpful criticism is essential to students' motivation and learning.

Teachers may create and execute effective blended learning programs that capitalize on the advantages of both online and in-person learning environments to improve the overall learning experience by carefully taking these elements into account.

Efficiency of Teachers for Blended Learning:

By offering resources and tactics that boost organization, student engagement, and individualized learning experiences, blended learning can increase teacher effectiveness. Teachers can use technology to monitor

student progress, provide material in a variety of forms, and modify their lesson plans in response to the needs of each unique student.

Here's how blended learning impacts teacher efficiency:

1. **Enhanced Organization and Time Management**

• **Digital Resources:**

By using learning management systems (LMS) to store resources, monitor assignments, and interact with students, educators can save time and streamline administrative duties.

• **Grading that is automated**

Some grading tasks can be automated by online systems, giving teachers more time to provide more individualized instruction and targeted feedback.

• **Flexibility in scheduling**

While students can study at their own speed outside of class, blended learning approaches, such as flipped classrooms, provide teachers extra time in class for individualized help and interactive activities.

Improved Student Interaction and Personalized Learning:

• **Targeted Support**

Teachers can determine areas in which students are having difficulty and offer specialized support, such as individual sessions or differentiated activities, by examining student data from online platforms.

• **Diverse Educational Opportunities**

By combining multiple learning modes, blended learning enables educators to accommodate students' varying learning preferences and styles, resulting in more effective and engaged learning.

• **Enhanced Student Engagement**

By making learning more dynamic and engaging, online resources can boost students' enthusiasm and involvement.

Professional Development Opportunities:

• **Resource Access**

Blended learning promotes lifelong learning and development by giving educators access to a wide range of online resources, professional development opportunities, and communities of practice.

• **Development of Skills**

Teachers can improve their general efficacy and flexibility by learning new techniques for employing technology in the classroom.

Considerations for Effective Implementation of Blended Mode of Learning:

• **Teacher Training**

To effectively integrate blended learning, educators must receive sufficient training on how to use online resources, modify their pedagogical approaches, and evaluate students' learning in a blended setting.

- **Curriculum Development**

To maximize student learning outcomes, a well-designed blended learning curriculum that incorporates both online and offline activities is essential.

- **Accessibility**

For blended learning to be implemented fairly, it is imperative that all students have access to the technology and assistance they require.

Teachers can improve student results and teacher satisfaction by adopting blended learning, which allows them to tailor instruction, maximize their time, and provide more effective and engaging learning experiences for their students.

It has been demonstrated that blended learning, which blends traditional in-person instruction with online learning elements, is successful in raising student engagement, boosting learning outcomes, and accommodating a variety of learning preferences. Blended learning can boost student enthusiasm, self-directed learning, and digital literacy, but its successful integration necessitates rigorous preparation and instructor preparation.

Benefits of Blended Learning for Teachers:

- **More flexibility and personalization**

Teachers can adapt their lessons to fit the requirements and learning styles of each individual student through blended learning, providing more individualized learning opportunities.

- **Increased involvement of students**

Students' engagement and retention of the material can be improved by combining online and in-person activities to make learning more dynamic and interesting.

- **Better evaluation and feedback**

Teachers can pinpoint problem areas and offer focused assistance by using online platforms that offer instant feedback on student work.

- **Digital literacy skill development**

Because blended learning requires the use of technology, students are able to acquire critical 21st-century digital literacy abilities.

- **Cost-effectiveness potential**

Although it's not typically the main objective, blended learning occasionally results in cost savings through effective learning material distribution and resource optimization.

- **Need for appropriate assistance and training**

Teachers must receive sufficient instruction on how to successfully use online materials and tools into their lesson plans.

- **Planning and development time and effort**

Creating and executing successful blended learning programs can take a lot of time, necessitating meticulous preparation and development of both online and offline activities.

- **Getting used to new roles and technology**

Teachers may need to change from being traditional instructors to being learning facilitators in a blended learning setting.

- **Ensuring equitable access to technology**

It's critical to guarantee that every student has internet connectivity and the devices they need in order to fully engage in blended learning activities.

- **Resolving technological problems and offering assistance**

Instructors may need to be ready to assist students who are having trouble using online platforms and troubleshoot technical problems.

Concluding Remarks:

Through interesting and pertinent online resources, blended learning not only improves student experience and engagement but also gives them the power to decide for themselves and take control of their education. Students are also inspired and more receptive to conversation, social contact, and group projects.

Suggestions:

These are the key considerations for effective blended learning:

- **Clearly defined learning goals:**

Blended learning experiences must to be planned with well-defined learning goals that complement both online and offline activities.

- **Combining offline and internet activities:**

To produce a seamless and significant learning experience, the online and offline elements should be carefully combined.

- **Student-centered approach:**

Rather than merely substituting online teaching methods for conventional ones, blended learning should be created to empower students and encourage active learning.

- **Continuous assessment and reflection:**

Teachers should keep an eye on how well their blended learning strategy is working and change as necessary in response to student performance and feedback.

- **Cooperation and exchange:**

Teachers can increase blended learning's overall efficacy by exchanging resources and best practices. Therefore, blended learning has a lot of potential advantages for both teachers and students, but in order to be as successful as possible, it needs to be carefully planned, implemented, and supported continuously.

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