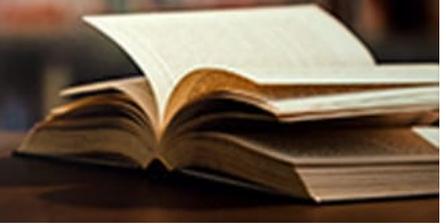


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Dr. Manju Jain
Assistant Professor, Library,
Department of Library and
Information Science
Government Post-Graduate
College, Noida, Gautam Buddh
Nagar, Uttar Pradesh, India

Blended learning to caters the diverse needs of higher education students, leveraging the strengths of both online and in-person learning to enhance their educational journey: A working model for college students

Dr. Manju Jain

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Abstract

“Blended learning has the potential to transform education by personalizing learning experiences and leveraging the power of technology.” – Arne Duncan

Blended learning is an educational approach that combines traditional face-to-face instruction with online or digital learning components. It's a method that seeks to integrate the benefits of both in-person and online learning to create a more flexible, engaging, and effective educational experience. The term "blended" refers to the blending of these two modalities to achieve specific learning outcomes. There is a need for a model of blended learning specially for higher education students. This paper tried to make a model of blended learning for the students of higher education. This study also provides an overview of characteristics and different types of blended learning modules. Through extensive literature and content analysis, the research assessed various literatures from across the world on how blended learning model can enhance their educational journey. The study aims to provide a working model of blended learning which can provide an overview on the subject and open the door of further research.

Methodology: This paper is based on a qualitative method using content analysis techniques. An extensive review of literature on “Blended learning” was carried out to ascertain the emerging tools for the students of higher education.

Aim of study: Blended learning offers educators and students the opportunity to harness the advantages of both traditional and modern educational approaches. It can be particularly useful in providing flexibility for students who might have other commitments, offering a mix of individualized and collaborative learning experiences, and integrating technology as a tool for education in a way that suits the digital age.

The paper aims

- To focus on the various blended learning tools available for students to enhance their study and knowledge.
- To present a model of blended learning for students and teacher to make them aware of the importance of various blended learning tools and techniques to accelerate their progress.

Keywords: Blended learning, mixed learning, combined education, blended learning model, blended learning environment

Introduction

Blended learning is an instructional approach that combines traditional face-to-face teaching methods with online or digital learning activities. It seeks to integrate the benefits of both in-person and online learning to create a more flexible and effective educational experience. The goal of blended learning is to leverage the strengths of both modalities to enhance student engagement, personalize learning, and accommodate different learning styles. In a blended learning environment, students participate in a mix of activities that might include attending physical classes, engaging with online lectures, completing digital assignments, collaborating with peers through virtual platforms, and interacting with course materials available on the internet. The balance between in-person and online components can vary depending on the goals of the course, the subject matter, and the preferences of the educators and students.

Corresponding Author:
Dr. Manju Jain
Assistant Professor, Library,
Department of Library and
Information Science
Government Post-Graduate
College, Noida, Gautam Buddh
Nagar, Uttar Pradesh, India

Main characteristics of blended learning

Combination of Modalities: Blended learning involves a mix of in-person classroom instruction and online learning activities. The ratio of in-person to online components can vary based on the specific educational goals and the needs of the students.

Flexibility: Blended learning allows for greater flexibility in terms of when and where students engage with course content. This can be particularly advantageous for students with diverse schedules or those who may not be able to attend classes in person.

Personalization: With the integration of online components, educators can provide more individualized learning experiences. Online platforms can offer adaptive assessments, personalized learning paths, and targeted feedback to address each student's unique strengths and areas for improvement.

Multimedia and Resources: Online learning often incorporates a wide range of multimedia resources such as videos, interactive simulations, digital textbooks, and online quizzes. These resources can enhance the learning experience and cater to various learning styles.

Collaboration: Blended learning encourages collaboration among students and teachers through both online and in-person interactions. Online discussion boards, collaborative projects, and virtual classrooms enable students to engage with their peers and instructors beyond the traditional classroom setting.

Assessment and Feedback: Online tools can facilitate continuous assessment and feedback. Teachers can use data from online activities to monitor student progress and make informed instructional decisions.

Hybrid Structure: Blended learning can take different forms, ranging from the "flipped classroom" model (where students learn foundational content online before class and use in-person time for discussions and application) to a rotation model (where students rotate between online and in-person activities) or a flex model (where students can choose between online or in-person options).

Technology Integration: Blended learning relies on various educational technologies, such as learning management systems (LMS), video conferencing tools, online discussion platforms, and interactive learning modules.

Blended learning can benefit both students and educators by fostering greater engagement, encouraging self-directed learning, and accommodating a variety of learning preferences. However, its successful implementation requires careful planning, effective use of technology, and ongoing assessment of its impact on learning outcomes.

Blended learning encompasses a range of techniques that combine in-person instruction with online learning activities. Here are some common types of blended learning techniques:

Flipped Classroom Model: In this model, students review instructional content online (videos, readings, presentations) before coming to the physical classroom. Classroom time is

then used for active learning activities such as discussions, problem-solving, group projects, and clarifying concepts. The flipped classroom model allows for more interactive and engaging in-person sessions.

Rotation Model: The rotation model involves students moving between different learning stations or activities, including both online and in-person components. This can be done in various ways: Station Rotation: Students rotate through different stations: some of which involve online activities and others that involve face-to-face instruction or collaboration.

Lab Rotation: Students spend a portion of their time in a computer lab for online activities and the rest in traditional classrooms.

Individual Rotation: Students have personalized schedules that determine when they engage in online or in-person activities based on their needs and progress.

Flex Model: In the flex model, students have the flexibility to choose whether to attend in-person classes or complete their learning activities online. This approach accommodates various learning styles, schedules, and preferences, offering a high degree of customization.

Online Driver Model: In this model, most of the instruction occurs online, with periodic face-to-face sessions for specific activities, assessments, or support. Students primarily engage with course content and assignments through digital platforms, and in-person sessions are used for hands-on activities, discussions, or assessments.

Face-to-Face Driver Model: This approach emphasizes traditional face-to-face instruction but supplements it with occasional online activities. Online elements are used to support classroom learning, such as providing additional resources, practice exercises, or discussion forums.

Flipped Mastery Model: Similar to the flipped classroom, this model involves students learning content online before class. However, in the flipped mastery model, students must demonstrate mastery of the content before moving on. This can be done through assessments or assignments. Students who achieve mastery quickly can progress at their own pace, while those who need more time receive additional support.

Peer Teaching Model: In this model, students take turns teaching a concept or topic to their peers. Some of the teaching can be done online through videos or presentations, while the rest can be facilitated in-person during group discussions or presentations.

Online Collaborative Model: This model focuses on online collaboration and communication. Students work together on projects, assignments, or discussions through online platforms, with occasional in-person meetings for group work, presentations, or discussions.

These are just a few examples of blended learning techniques, and they can be customized and combined based on the learning objectives, student needs, and available resources. The key is to create a balanced and effective

blend of in-person and online components that enhance the overall learning experience.

Here's an example of an ideal blended learning model for higher education students, along with a description of its utility:

Blended Learning Model for Higher Education: Personalized Pathway

1. Flipped Classroom Preparatory Phase:

- Before each class session, students are provided with online resources such as video lectures, readings, and interactive simulations that cover the core concepts.
- Students engage with the online content at their own pace, enabling them to come to class with a solid understanding of the basics.

Utility: This phase allows students to review foundational material independently, promoting a deeper understanding of concepts. Class time can be used for collaborative problem-solving, in-depth discussions, and applying theoretical knowledge to real-world scenarios.

2. In-Person Interactive Sessions

- In-person class sessions are focused on higher-order thinking skills, critical discussions, case studies, and collaborative projects.
- Instructors facilitate active learning activities, group discussions, debates, and hands-on exercises that build upon the pre-class online content.

Utility: In-person interactions promote engagement, critical thinking, and application of knowledge. These sessions also provide students the opportunity to ask questions, clarify doubts, and engage in meaningful discussions with peers and instructors.

Online Mastery Modules

- After the in-person session, students access online modules that offer more in-depth content, additional resources, and self-assessment quizzes.
- Students can progress at their own pace and focus on areas that need further reinforcement.

Utility: Online mastery modules allow students to consolidate their learning and delve deeper into specific topics. Self-assessment tools help students gauge their understanding and identify areas for improvement.

4. Collaborative Online Projects

- Students participate in online collaborative projects, working in virtual teams on assignments that require research, analysis, and problem-solving.
- Online platforms facilitate communication, document sharing, and project coordination.

Utility: Collaborative projects enhance teamwork and communication skills, preparing students for real-world collaboration. Online platforms make it easy for students to work together despite varying schedules.

5. Virtual Office Hours and Discussion Boards

- Instructors hold virtual office hours through video conferencing, providing opportunities for one-on-one discussions and clarifications.
- Online discussion boards foster ongoing dialogue among students and instructors.

Utility: Virtual office hours provide personalized support, ensuring that students can seek help when needed. Discussion boards facilitate continuous engagement, allowing students to share insights, ask questions, and learn from each other.

6. Periodic Assessments and Feedback

- Online assessments, quizzes, and assignments are used to gauge student progress.
- Timely feedback from instructors helps students understand their strengths and areas that need improvement.

Utility: Regular assessments and feedback promote accountability and track student progress. Students can adapt their learning strategies based on feedback to enhance their performance.

Table 1: An ideal blended learning model for higher education students, along with a description of its utility:

Component	Description	Utility
Online Pre-Lecture Content	Students access pre-recorded lectures, readings, videos, and interactive materials before the in-person lecture.	Provides flexibility for students to prepare before class, enabling more engaging and interactive discussions during the in-person session.
In-Person Lectures	Faculty conducts interactive lectures, discussions, group activities, and problem-solving sessions.	Allows students to clarify doubts, engage in deeper discussions, and gain insights from peers and faculty, promoting active learning.
Online Quizzes and Assignments	Quizzes, assessments, and assignments are administered through the online platform to test understanding.	Offers continuous assessment, instant feedback, and allows students to track their progress while ensuring timely submission of assignments.
Virtual Labs and Experiments	Simulations, virtual labs, and experiments are offered online to supplement hands-on laboratory sessions.	Provides practical experience in controlled environments, allowing students to practice and understand concepts that may be challenging in-person.
Online Discussion Forums	Students participate in online forums to discuss course topics, share resources, and ask questions.	Facilitates peer-to-peer interaction, collaboration, and in-depth discussions beyond the limitations of time and physical location.
Group Projects	Collaborative projects are assigned, and students work together online to complete and present them.	Encourages teamwork, communication, and time management skills, as well as the integration of technology tools for efficient collaboration.

Office Hours and Support	Faculty members hold virtual office hours and provide support through online communication channels.	Offers personalized support and one-on-one interaction for addressing individual concerns, clarifying concepts, and receiving guidance.
Assessments and Feedback	Online assessments are conducted periodically, and detailed feedback is provided for improvement.	Allows for regular assessment of student progress and provides timely feedback to guide learning strategies and address areas of weakness.

This blended learning model for higher education offers several benefits to students

- **Flexibility:** Students can access pre-lecture content at their own pace, allowing them to prepare for in-person sessions in a way that suits their schedules and learning styles.
- **Active Learning:** In-person lectures focus on interactive discussions, group activities, and problem-solving, promoting deeper understanding and engagement.
- **Assessment and Feedback:** Online assessments provide frequent feedback on understanding and progress, enabling students to track their performance and address gaps in knowledge.
- **Practical Experience:** Virtual labs and experiments offer practical experience even when hands-on access is limited, helping students grasp complex concepts.
- **Collaboration:** Online discussion forums and group projects encourage collaboration and peer-to-peer learning, fostering a sense of community among students.
- **Personalized Support:** Virtual office hours and online communication channels allow students to seek individualized support from instructors when needed.
- **Time Management:** The model encourages students to manage their time effectively, as they balance pre-lecture preparation, in-person sessions, assignments, and assessments.
- **Technology Integration:** Students become proficient in using digital tools for learning and collaboration, skills that are increasingly valuable in today's digital age.
- **Engagement:** By providing a mix of online and in-person activities, the model helps maintain student engagement and interest in the course material.
- **Holistic Learning:** The combination of online and in-person elements creates a comprehensive learning experience that addresses various learning styles and preferences.

Conclusion

This blended learning model for higher education maximizes the benefits of both online and in-person instruction. It provides students with flexibility to learn at their own pace, engage deeply with content, collaborate with peers, and receive personalized support from instructors. By combining self-paced online learning with interactive in-person sessions, this model creates a holistic educational experience that fosters critical thinking, application of knowledge, and effective communication skills—all crucial for success in higher studies and beyond. Overall, this blended learning model caters to the diverse needs of higher education students, leveraging the strengths of both online and in-person learning to enhance their educational journey.

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