

Assessing Student's Perception on Blended Learning Approach as a strategic Initiative in Higher Education

¹Dr. Anjali Shokeen

ABSTRACT--The world is undergoing rapid changes with the emergence of Informational Technology. It has become inevitable and necessary because of its positive effects in educational field. Moreover, these days teaching in universities has become more challenging job due to diversity, cultural and personality differences among students. Due to differences in learning styles and variation in preferences of students, teachers have been thinking different ways to make learning more effective and interactive. Blending Learning approach is very helpful in interactive learning where teacher's role in face-to-face mode is blended with the virtual mode. The present paper discusses the student's perception on Blended Learning approach. The sample of the study includes 120 students enrolled in various departments at Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University. The rating scale was made to know the perception of students towards Blended Learning Approach in terms of ease of use, mode of Teaching and its effectiveness. The study concludes that the student's perception towards Blended Learning Approach is positive in terms of all three domains of the form. The results show that students have positive attitude towards Blended Learning approach and it is an effective approach for enhancing competencies and skills among students. The results of the study also suggest that Blended Learning should be incorporated in all courses of Higher education institutions to have the desired results.

Keywords--Blended Learning, Online Education, Face to face mode, Higher Education, Students perception.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has made a drastic change in the old paradigms of teaching learning processes and has made many innovations in the modern world. The concepts of pen less and paperless classrooms are emerging, mind maps are introduced as innovative teaching methods, students are engaged in virtual labs. Usage of emerging technologies in education is attracting learners as it is helping the learners in a classroom and also enhancing interactions among teachers and students. Technology is the next giant leap in the field of education; the use of technology in education is not an option rather it will become a necessity. It can empower the next generation of educational technology which will help in achieving the educational objectives. Newer methods of teaching are being evaluated and incorporated in the educational institutions. Technology has changed the ways of teaching and learning through e-books, tablets, e-mails, teleconferences, extended classroom communities. There are various Technological advances which can improve learning processes in colleges and in universities. One of the new methods of teaching learning is Blended Learning Approach. The rise of World Wide Web enhanced the usage of Blended Learning (Young, 2002). Moreover,

¹ Assistant Professor, University School of Education, GGSIP University, New Delhi, anjalishokeen9@gmail.com

Blended Learning is identified as one of the top teaching learning way to emerge in educational institutions (Rooney, 2003).

Blended learning is intended to generate maximum output of the students. It promotes the use of virtual environment that acts to capture the interest and attention of students. Blended learning aims to use technology in teaching Learning process. In classrooms, Blended Learning approach is a combination of the best practises of online and face to face mode (Boyle et al. 2003). An essential feature of Blended Learning is that it utilises more than one method of teaching for providing information i.e. computer based instruction along with traditional mode of classrooms (Thorne, 2003).

Earlier lectures were the most commonly used as a mode of teaching in Higher Education but now these have become passive mode of teaching. This paradigm shift is a challenge for many teachers in Higher Education. Most of the students feel that teaching is boring in classrooms and they perceive that they the classroom atmosphere is not supportive and motivating. Consequently, they do not participate in classes and it causes behavioural problems. Therefore, there is a need to restructure the learning process and changes have to incorporate to accommodate the changes. There are different learning preferences and styles which necessitates multiple modalities for learning so that right content can be delivered in the right form (Singh, 2003). Blended Learning combines various delivery media to promote significant and motivating learning such as live chats, webinars, self-paced learning, social networking etc. (Singh, 2003).

II. WHAT IS BLENDED LEARNING?

Blended Learning is an approach to education that combines online learning platform (online learning materials and opportunities) for interaction online with traditional place-based classroom methods. Students and teacher both can track performance of students and teacher can plan skill development classes for students accordingly. One of the most comprehensive definitions of Blended Learning is: It is formal education program where students learn through online platform and have some control over time, pace and place (Staker & Horn, 2012). In this approach, students are not restricted to the walls of the classroom, to the pedagogy used by the teacher and also not by the pace of the lecture. Blended learning involves the use of technology which in turn provides flexibility in class timings. There are two key principles commonly associated with the concept of Blended Learning: First is that Students who can share information and work with other students directly in a collaborative and interactive environment have a more enriched learning experience and second is that collaboration between students can be improved upon if group activities rely on information gathered from online resources or lessons (Thorne, 2003). The present study is intended to answer- What is the perception of students towards Blended Learning Approach?

III. WHY TO BLEND

Researchers supports that the idea of blending face to face instruction with online mode provides better learning results (Garrison and Kanuka, 2004). Combination of technology with traditional mode of teaching results in improved pedagogy and it makes easy access to information (Bonk and Graham, 2004). Blended Learning builds the community of inquiry and a place where every person can freely express and make dialogues. So it is evident

that blending face to face instructions with online mode helps students in gaining more understanding of the content and it develops cognitive and social skills in them at the same time.

IV. LITERATURE REVIEW

Alshwaih (2009) found that there are no significant differences regarding the achievement and high degree of satisfaction among students with online mode. According to Akkoyunlu and Soylu(2006) revealed that the more students participated in the online discussion forums, the more they achieve. It was concluded that both face to face mode and online mode of learning contributes to the learning process. According to Ashan (2015) Blended Learning enhances collaborative learning, it makes learning interesting and interactive. Moreover it gives enough time to students to do their work. The study concluded that Blended Learning will be more significant. According to Yang and Ying (2016) students appreciated Blended Learning approach as it made learning more flexible and more accessible. They also perceived that they can assess resources and have technical ability to cope with online learning materials.

Today's student is dominated by the use of technology where mobile phones and internet are used at common place. Moreover, students have been participating in interactive games play which has generated high digital skills and Media literacies (Oliver and Goerke, 2007). Internet Information and Communication Technologies (IICT) has transformed the society and Higher Education is 21st century is not an exception of it (Garrison and Kanuka, 2004). Blended Learning is very supportive for teaching and Learning (Kashefi et al.,2012).

V. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The main objective of the study is to assess the student's perception on Blended Learning Approach.

VI. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The present study is Descriptive in its nature. A rating scale was conducted to assess the student's perception towards Blended Learning Approach in terms of Ease of use, Mode of Teaching and its effectiveness. The sample of the study includes 120 Graduate and Post Graduate students who are enrolled in various departments at Guru Gobind Singh Indrapratha University.

VII. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

A survey was conducted to assess the learner's perception towards Blended Learning in terms of Ease of use, Mode of Teaching and Effectiveness of Blended Learning Approach. The results are as follows:

Table 1: Blended Learning except one statement

SR No.	Views on the ease of use Blended Learning Approach					
	Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagr ee	Neutral	Agree	Strongl y Agree

1.	Blended Learning makes teaching learning process interesting and long lasting.	3%	4%	22%	54.7%	16.3%
2.	Blended Learning makes the study boring and creates difficulty in understanding.	14.6%	39.8%	26%	15.4%	4.2%
3.	Blended Learning admits the learners to study at their own pace.	3.3%	8%	25.2%	53.7%	9.8%
4.	Blended Learning approach provides a sense of satisfaction among students.	2.7%	13%	25.5%	46.6%	12.2%
5.	Blended Learning Approach is user friendly and motivates for studying.	2.2%	12.2%	23.8%	48.8%	13%
	MEAN	5.16	15.4	26.5	41.84	11.1

The above table shows that the median is 4 for all the statements related to ease of use of Blended Learning except one statement i.e. Blended Learning makes the study boring and creates difficulty in understanding, in which 54.4% of the respondent disagrees with the statement. It can be seen that 52.94% of the respondents agreed, 26.5% are having neutral response and whereas 20.56% disagree with the statements. It means they have expressed their positive perception towards Blended Learning Approach. They agreed that Blended Learning can be easily accessed and they can easily study content anytime without any interruptions. Self-paced learning also helps them in better understanding. The results of the study are consonant with some previous studies such as Ashan (2015), Kashefi et al, (2012), (Staker & Horn, 2012).

Table 2: the statements related to mode of teaching.

B Views on the mode of Teaching (process of teaching learning)						
Sr No.	Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	Blended Learning Approach enhances the interactions with the teacher.	3.9%	9.8%	28.5%	48%	9.8%
2.	Blended Learning Approach enhances the interactions with the classmates.	5.6%	17.1%	22.8%	38.2%	16.3%

3.	Blended Learning provides the opportunities to effectively make use of Internet	-	5.7%	17.1%	49.6%	27.6%
4.	Blended Learning is delightful and relaxing than the traditional mode of learning.	6.5%	9.8%	27.6%	45.5%	10.6%
5.	Blended Learning is not as much as effective as face to face teaching.	-	30.3%	20%	35.9%	13.8%
	MEAN	3.2	14.5	23.2	43.44	15.62

The above table shows that the median is 4 for all the statements related to mode of teaching. It can also be seen that 59.06% of the respondents agreed, 23.2% are having neutral response and whereas 17.7% disagree with the statements. It means that the perception of respondents towards Blended Learning Approach is positive. They agreed that Blended Learning approach helps in making better interactions with teachers and peers. Self-paced learning also helps them in better understanding and enhances the communications with classmates which in turns better learning experiences. The results of the study are consonant with some previous studies such as Ashan (2015), Oliver and Goerke, (2007)

Table 3: the effectiveness of Blended Learning Approach.

Views on the effectiveness of Blended Learning Approach						
Sr. No.	Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	Blended Learning provides plenty of opportunities in developing competencies.	2.9%	6%	29.3%	52%	9.8%
2.	Blended Learning provides a better engaging approach for Learners.	2.4%	10.6%	22%	52.8%	12.2%
3.	Blended Learning keeps focused on what is to be learned.	1.7%	15.4%	30.9%	43.9%	8.1%
4.	Blended Learning approach is effective mode of teaching.	3.3%	8.9%	27.6%	50.4%	9.8%
5.	Blended Learning should be the part of all courses of Higher Education.	2%	8%	30.1%	42.8%	17.1%

	MEAN	2.46	9.78	27.98	48.3	11.4
					8	

The above table shows that the median is 4 for all the statements related to the effectiveness of Blended Learning Approach. It can also be seen that 59.9% of the respondents agreed, 27.98% are having neutral response and whereas 10% disagree with the statements. It means respondents have positive attitude towards Blended Learning approach. They agreed that Blended Learning approach is helpful in developing competencies and it is very effective mode of teaching which keep students engaged and it should be part of Higher Education. The results of the study are consonant with some previous studies such as- Akkoyunlu and Soylu (2006), Garrison and Kanuka, (2004).

The following two questions were also asked to students to know the best aspect of Blended Learning approach and to suggest different ways to strengthen the approach.

Q.1. what is the most effective aspect of the Blended Learning Approach?

According to the respondents, Blended Learning approach helps in understanding a concept from multiple perspectives which makes learning more meaningful and long-lasting. This approach creates a knowledge enriching environment and it grasps all the attention of the learner Blended Learning Approach provides ultimate flexibility in presenting and discussing complex content that helps in learning effectively. According to students, this approach is well balanced of traditional as well as technological methods. This approach offers immense benefits to students; students benefitted through structured practices of the classrooms while learning at their pace, owing to the adaptive and personalized nature of online learning.

The most effective aspect of Blended Learning is that it promotes interactions among learners and provides ample of varieties to teachers and students to make their learning fruitful. This approach is not monotonous as it uses multiple aspects to deliver the content. It allows practice of various teaching learning strategies and interested students makes use of the resources to enhance their knowledge.

Q.2. Give any two suggestions for strengthening Blended Learning Approach?

Respondents suggested that some innovative methods should be used for creating curiosity among learners which is sometimes missing in the interactions. Teachers should encourage more collaboration and also focuses on the individual differences as well as socio economic factors of the learners. Teachers or mentors need to act more actively in the classrooms to cater the needs and resolve the issued faced by learners. Learners and Teachers must be trained well before using Blended Learning Approach so that the approach supports in an effective way. There is need to improve the competencies of teachers to use Blended Learning approach as all teachers are not techno savvy. Some methods also need to be explored which can complement this approach. Blende Learning Approach should be incorporated with flipped classroom model for the better results. Feedback guidelines and sessions must be required for the different sessions so that it can facilitate evaluation. Blended Learning Approach should be incorporated at all the levels of the education not just at one level. There should be better internet access so that hassle free education can be provided. Moreover good internet connections will help in avoiding discrepancies between teachers and students.

There should be systematic and open transactional approach between teachers and students. There is need to implement strategies to create synergy between in class and out class activities. This Blended learning approach should be made compulsory and it should be more interactive and provide more flexibility to the students. Teachers can make use of interactive videos to explain the concepts in impressive way that will make learning fun and easy.

VIII. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The present study reveals the perception of students on Blended Learning Approach. The findings of the study illustrate the positive attitude of Blended Learning as it helps in collaborative, interactive and interesting learning. It enhances the skills and provides enough time to learn and do their works. Therefore, Blended Learning Approach should be incorporated in all the courses of Higher Education. Although there are some challenges in integrating technology with face to face mode, but there is an emerging need to blend these modes. The new generation is digitally sound therefore Blended Learning approach can be significantly useful for enhancing the learning quality. It can provide more collaboration learning experiences therefore it is the high time that universities have to incorporate such changes in the Higher Education to meet the growing needs of the students.

REFERENCES

1. Akkoyunlu, B., & Yilmaz, S. M. (2006). A study on students' views on Blended Learning environment. Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education, 7(3), 43-56. Retrieved from: <http://tojde.anadolu.edu.tr/yonetim/icerik/makaleler/274-published.pdf>
2. Alshwiah, A. A. S. (2009). The effects of a blended learning strategy in teaching vocabulary on premedical students' achievement, satisfaction and attitude toward English Language, M.A. Thesis, Arabian Gulf University. Retrieved from: <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/3c05/56e8b671e31679c74105dd65a6afa3019b8e.pdf>
3. Bonk, C. J. & Graham, C. R. (Eds.). Handbook of blended learning: Global Perspectives, local designs. San Francisco, CA: Pfeiffer Publishing. Retrieved from: <http://www.click4it.org/images/a/a8/Graham.pdf>
4. Boyle, T., Bradley, C., Chalk, P., Jones, R., & Pickard, P. (2003). Using Blended Learning to Improve Student Success Rates in Learning to Program. Journal of Educational Media, 28, 165-178. Retrieved from: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/1358165032000153160>
5. Garrison, D. R., & Kanuka, H. (2004). Blended learning: Uncovering its transformative potential in higher education. The Internet and Higher Education, 7, 95-105. Retrieved from: http://www.click4it.org/images/5/58/Garrison%2C_Kanuka.pdf
6. Hassan Ja'ashan (2015). Perceptions and Attitudes towards Blended Learning for English Courses: A Case Study of Students at University of Bisha. English Language Teaching, Canadian Center of Science and Education, Vol. 8, No. 9. Retrieved from: <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1075497.pdf>
7. Kashefi, H., Ismail, Z., & Yusof, Y.M., (2012), Supporting engineering students' thinking and creative problem solving through blended learning, Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences, 56, 117-125. Retrieved from: <https://cyberleninka.org/article/n/1238481/viewer>

8. Oliver, B., & Goerke, V. (2007). Australian undergraduates' use and ownership of emerging technologies: Implications and opportunities for creating engaging learning experiences for the Net Generation. *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology* 23(2). Retrieved from: <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/9456/d8aff5e85e811db51f20c695f03bb306c8c7.pdf>
9. Rooney, J. E. (2003). Blending Learning Opportunities To Enhance Educational Programming and Meetings. *Association Management*, 55, 26–32
10. Staker, H., & Horn, M. B. (2012). *Classifying K–12 Blended Learning*. Mountain View, CA: Innosight Institute. Retrieved from: <https://www.christenseninstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Classifying-K-12-blended-learning.pdf>
11. Singh, H. (2003). Building effective blended learning programs. *Educational Technology*, Vol. 43, No.6, 51–54 .Retrieved from: http://asianvu.com/digital-library/elearning/blended-learning-by_Singh.pdf
12. Thorne, K. (2003). *Blended Learning: How To Integrate Online and Traditional*. Kogan Page, London. Retrieved from: <http://kenanaonline.com/files/0011/11429/Blended-Learning.pdf>
13. Yang & Ying (2016). Academics and Learners' Perceptions on Blended Learning as a Strategic Initiative to Improve Student Learning Experience. *MATEC Web of Conferences* 87, 04005. Retrieved from: https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/5143/acc19af296799e168554d1b66f887d26daa8.pdf?_ga=2.74300114.1190778113.1588158339-50953241.1585462442
14. Young, J. R. (2002). “Hybrid” Teaching Seeks To End The Divide Between Traditional and Online Instruction. *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 48, 33-34. Retrieved from: <https://www.chronicle.com/article/Hybrid-Teaching-Seeks-to-End/18487>