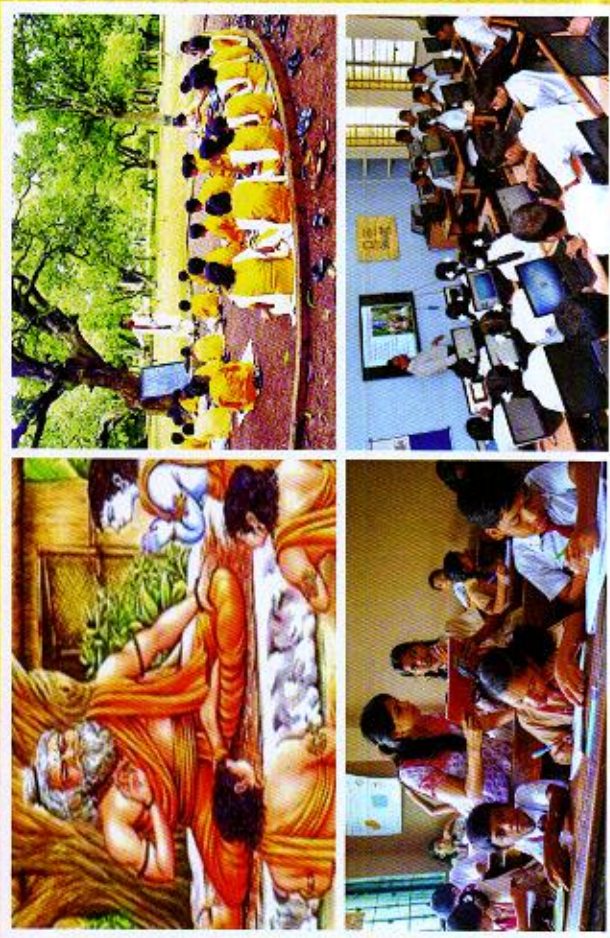


LEARNING ENVIRONMENT FOR THE 21ST CENTURY: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES



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OBJECTIVES ON BLENDED LEARNING: CHARACTERISTICS, STRAINTS IN IMPLEMENTATION

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Corona Virus Disease 2019 has created a havoc in the human life. As far as education is concerned, all the educational institutions are temporarily closed with the situation, online classes have been commenced by schools to cope with the tremendous change among teachers in their way of teaching. Simultaneously, the execution of face-to-face teaching along with online works, it is very essential for every teachers to be thorough upon the blended concept of blended teaching and learning and how it can be executed. This paper throws light upon the characteristics and various models of blended learning. Even though no one can propose a recipe for the proper blend of the face-to-face and online works, it is very essential for every teachers to be thorough upon the transaction and the online works, it is very essential for every teachers to be thorough upon the

blended learning, online learning, characteristics, blended models, constraints

Introduction

The Novel Corona Virus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) has created a havoc in the human life. Alterations in the social, economic and political aspects of man have taken place due to the sudden spread of this disease. Among these, the urgency in transformation of education and the process of teaching and learning is of most importance.

As far as the Indian context of education is concerned, with the upcoming of the pandemic, all the educational institutions are temporarily closed till date. To cope with the situation simultaneously, online classes have been commenced by schools nationwide.

Online learning is the most important aspect of the present form of 'distance' learning. The introduction of technology has completely changed the face of education. Especially in this COVID era, there is the essentiality for the implementation of technological sophistication to address the needs of geographically separated learners. Most of these technological intervention practices are new in the Indian culture of education, but already widely practiced in other nations outside India.

Similarly, in Kerala concept, schooling in the 'brick and mortar' classroom set up was considered to be of prime importance. But nowadays we can witness all the teachers trying hard to adapt to the technology mediated teaching learning environment which is 'new' to them. In short, we can witness the extensive intrusion of technological applications such as Google Meet, Google Classroom, Zoom, YouTube, Skype etc. to each and every normal households, playing an inevitable role in creating successful learning environment.

Taking into consideration the tremendous change among teachers in their way of instruction, we can expect the stake holders of education to continue employing the same technological advancements for teaching and learning, even if the current chaotic situation of COVID come to an end. Simultaneously, the execution of face-to-face teaching along with ample online learning practices, in the right amount and in the most suited way will be a great challenge. Even though no one can propose a recipe for the proper blend of the face-to-face transaction and the online works, it is very essential for every teachers to be thorough upon the

Blended Learning

Blended Learning is meant to be the process of learning that involves the mixing up of face-to-face and online learning. "Blended learning is any program in which a student learns at least in part through online learning, with significant control over time, place, path, and/or pace" (Horn & Staker, 2015). It is a combination of face-to-face and online learning experiences" (Garrison & Vaughan, 2007). It explains that the blended learning may constitute the mixing and use of face-to-face and virtual classrooms (with video streaming, email, conference calls, etc.) with traditional one-to-one classroom training. There are also many models of blended learning in which certain courses are provided online and the rest is through real face-to-face learning (Cleveland-Innes & Wilton, 2018).

Benefits of blended learning

One of the most important features of the blended learning practices is that the learner has the freedom to choose *how to study, when to study and where to study*. The learner has the freedom to decide which part of the course should be learnt through online learning and which part should be learnt through face-to-face learning. They can even plan their studies according to their comfort. But most of the time, it is necessary for teachers and course managers to design it for students especially when they have to take into consideration their lack of maturity to make decisions in learning.

Blended learning design and execution of this kind of innovative strategy is always well versed with the needs of face-to-face and ICT mediated learning process. Being dynamic, flexible and updated are the inevitable qualities we have to expect from such a learning strategy.

Blended learning increases the scope of student interaction within themselves and with their peers beyond the usual school time. The learners are exposed to more learning opportunities on online platforms with a large mass of students and resources from all over the world. The learners thus gain wider perspectives of the content that

management, decision making, critical thinking etc. This innovative strategy also throws light upon the reflective practices of learning among pupils.

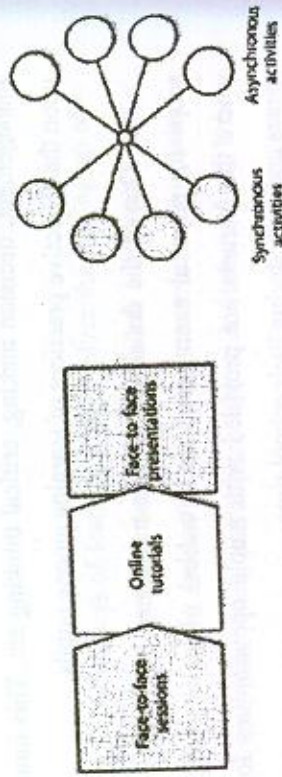
One of the drawbacks always mentioned in the case of online classes are the lack of scope for physical exercises. This is tackled when the strategy is shifted to blended nature, where the learners are provided with ample opportunities for physical activities like sports, games and yoga during their school time.

Always a 'human touch' makes process of education easier and effective. The one-to-one interaction in the classroom between the educator and the learner is essential in filling the voids in understanding the content and also to ensure the fulfilling the individual needs of the learners.

This learner centered innovative strategy is designed with the aim to offer maximum gain to pupils by constructing the knowledge by themselves. Meanwhile the teacher will act as a guide, motivator, organizer and resource person.

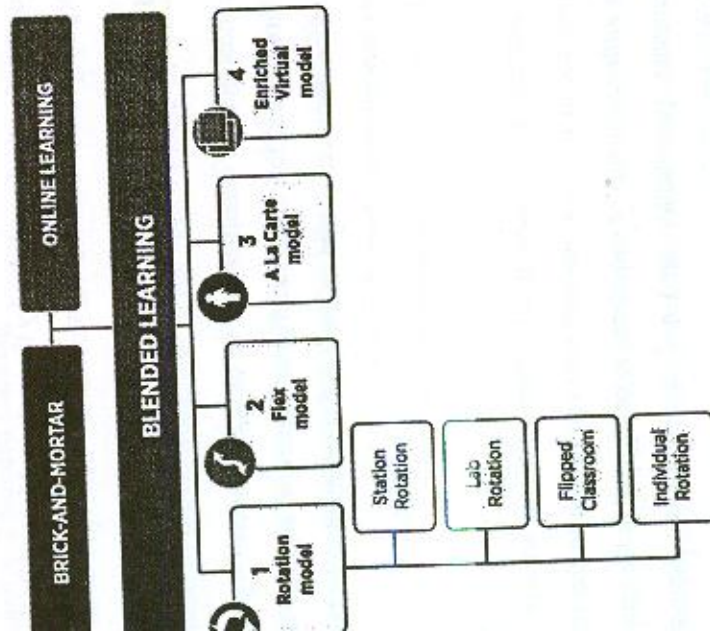
Models of blended learning

One of the most general classifications of blended models (Figure 1.) are (i) **blended presentation and interaction**, for which the *flipped classroom strategy* is an example, where instructor provide online resources (based on theory of the content to be taught) that have to be dealt by the students independently from their home and later providing seminars or tutorials (based on the application of the theory learnt independently) in the real classroom with the supervision of teacher; (ii) **blended block**, which constitutes sequence of processes or activities of one-to-one interaction and online learning in the form of *blocks* arranged one after the other, this model being more useful for those learners who can't reach to the real classrooms more frequently; (iii) *fully online*, can also be considered to be blended in the sense that there is a mix of synchronous (seminars, presentation etc.) and asynchronous (discussion forums) online activities (Hannon & Macken, 2014).



blended learning. From *Guide to Blended Learning*, by M. Cleveland-

ost accepted classification (Figure 2.) is that constitutes for categories of
ion, Flex, A La Carte and Enriched Virtual Model.



learning models. From *Blended using disruptive innovation to improve*
Horn, & H. Staker 2015.

assigned work, upon the instruction of the teacher, each groups will undergo the next activity and so on. The activities may include written assignments, poster presentation, group discussion, solving worksheets, small group instruction or individual works online using computers or tablets.

This model has subcategories as (i) *Station rotation* in which the teacher will have set of activities or 'stations' in which at least one will be technology based, and the students in groups will get into these stations in rotations; (ii) *Lab rotation* in which the stations will be in the form of various laboratories related to various disciplines, say, biology, chemistry, physics, mathematics etc. and at least one of these laboratories will be technology mediated; (iii) *Flipped rotation*, as flipped classroom discussed previously and (iv) *Individual rotation*, that centers upon the learner's autonomy to select among the pool of activities provided and the amount of time to be spent on each of them.

When the learning activities takes place in online mode, but is carried out within an institution, where every students and teachers have to be physically present, then the model is flex. In A La Carte model, it is the student who decides which course or subject to be studied online and which is in face-to-face mode. Majority of the learning tasks are completed online, in the case of enriched virtual model, so that the student has provision to arrive into the 'brick and mortar' set up only if he feels it is necessary to interact with the resource person or the instructor.

Constraints in implementing blended learning

The practice of blended learning as an innovative strategy is never an easy task as far as the Indian situation is concerned. Each and every stakeholders of education have to overcome a large number of hurdles to implement it effectively. Some of the constraints are discussed here.

- Lack of enough technological infrastructure is considered to be the foremost issue. Most of the schools does not have funds to allocate for buying and installing technological equipment and media facilities within the classrooms. Similar is the case of students in the country. The families with low socio economic status finds it almost impossible to purchase electronic gadgets to meet the educational needs of their children. There are

use of technology in teaching learning process is equally new to teachers there is a mass of technology emigrant educators who are in a puzzled leaves them undecided from where to begin and what to do. Without they will find it difficult to execute such an innovative teaching learning

old school 'supporters who still remain adamant that this huge technology in the teaching learning process would not benefit as much classroom transaction. In fact, these people are threat to the effective d execution of blended strategy of learning process. The so called ss have to go a long way to convince and inform such people about the le range of scope of this strategy.

work and consequently the work pressure for the teachers cannot be this juncture. Teachers find it strenuous to cope with the extra stress digm shift. es for teachers who are not well versed with the concept of blending, to t delivery and related activities in disproportions. Such a situation may den among learners in the form of cognitive overload. This would again o misled learners with losing interest towards learning.

f educational evaluation is a real mess due to the technology mediated ss. The learners who are expected to be even more exposed to internet / result in increasing the chance for plagiarism, in place of their original hile, detecting and tackling such incidents of non-credibility for each and an enormous task for the teachers.

Some constraints

meet the financial constraints, more budgeting and funding should be al institutions from the part of corporate and industrial sectors. Thus, we s to meet the need of technological advancement to implement blended among the various models discussed, the practice of flex model suites better ion because that model ensures students to be physically present in the

For *quality blending*, the definite course content together with its learning activities and tasks, both in one-to-one and online mode, should be fused for attaining the same learning objectives. It is the duty of the instructor to plan, design and manage blended learning activities in a manner that they complement each other. The technological resources used for blended learning should be reliable, handy and accepted by all the stakeholders of education. Otherwise, the expenditure of the budget allocated turns to be a wastage.

There is the very need to bring shift in the mentality of the 'old school' supporters. The so called 'innovative' class have to go a long way to convince and inform 'those people about the benefits and wide range of scope of this strategy. Awareness programmes on the benefits of technological innovations in the field of education can also be introduced to parents and other members of the community.

The digital emigrant teachers can't afford students waiting for them to become technologically savvy, as they have to transform themselves and create transformations simultaneously. So this thrusts upon the need of teachers to inculcate 21st century skills including self and people management, problem solving skills, critical thinking skills, technological skills etc. Teachers play prime role in creating awareness among students not only upon the unethical practices and academic misconduct, but also on the cyber-attacks to which they will be exposed while learning online. They should be guided to be alert and undergo proper security measures whenever the situation demands.

To conclude, the teachers should strictly undergo both in-service and pre-service training programmes, which would catalyze the process of molding them into 'complete' teachers that the society needs. Since, this shift will take time, all the stakeholders can have patience along with the zest to make the innovative strategy work for betterment of the teaching learning process.

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CORRELATION OF LEARNING ENVIRONMENT AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF HIGHER SECONDARY STUDENTS

*Dr. Md. Afroz Alam**

ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to investigate the correlation of learning environment and academic achievement of higher secondary students. Descriptive survey method was adopted in this study. A sample consist of 100 students of class 12th selected randomly from 10 Govt. Higher Secondary Schools in Darbhanga district of Bihar. Out of which there were 50 boys and 50 girls student. For measuring the correlation of learning environment and academic achievement of higher secondary students, a self-prepared tool was used by researcher. To obtain the academic achievement scores of students in biology subject of 12th class, the investigator constructed an achievement test, which was standardized by calculating validity and reliability. Data analysis involved the use of Pearson's product moment coefficient of correlation to measure the relationship between the learning environment and academic achievement along with t-test. The results revealed that there is a high positive correlation between learning environment and academic achievement of higher secondary students. There is a significant mean difference between the academic achievement of boys and girls, rural and urban students. Learning environment has positive effect on academic achievement of boys and girls, rural and urban higher secondary students.

Keywords: Learning Environment, Academic Achievement, Higher Secondary Students, Biology.

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