MERITS AND DEMERITS OF BLENDED EDUCATION: A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Education system has witnessed a tremendous growth globally. Education earlier was very limited to a classroom and face-to-face teaching but these days many other options are available for students such as distance learning, online learning, blended learning, field learning and etc. which provides enough flexibility in matters of time and location. This article mainly talks about blended learning. As name suggests blended learning is a mixture of traditional learning and online learning. Author discusses about blended education and its major models. The article highlights merits and demerits of blended learning which are thoroughly studied and discussed based on prior available literatures. Author believes that education systems like online learning and blended learning are far better than only traditional learnings but contradicting to the statement they can be more dangerous, which may end up harming the learners. Therefore, author believes making a profitable usage of such platforms is only possible with proper training of teachers and students, constant observation on children and parents' duty is to monitor their kids and also concentrate on safety measures.

Key words: Education, Learning, Blend, Hybrid learning, online learning, distance learning, rotation model, net generation, flex model, self-learning, global exposure, obesity, headaches, etc.

1.0.INTRODUCTION

Lech Walesa rightly quotes that "Now is the era of intellect, information and the internet". People now are so advanced that they always think about the tomorrow and in this world everything has become virtual. Virtual space gives flexibility to almost each and everything. People can connect with each other, shopping, commuting business, learning, teaching, reading and the list goes on. Every layman today has a minimum knowledge of technology. The spread of technology and network system is well understood by a saying of Bill Gates "The internet is becoming the town square for the global village of tomorrow".

The role of internet and digital space has seen a great growth in education. Adaptation of ICT into academics has brought great changes to the education system. (Isti'anah, 2017) mentions that today's generation as "Net Generation" as they are very much acquainted with the knowledge and usage of technology. Students prefer to digital tools rather than hardcopies of notes and books, because, it provides enough flexibility in cases of storing space and access time (Isti'anah, 2017).

A blended education is a platform where fundamental teaching style (face-to-face) is coordinated with technological applications for the purpose of learning (Nouby & Alkhazali,

2017). The traditional technique of blackboard method and face-to-face teaching rules for a long period but when the technology made its entrance in the field of education it rapidly took over the traditional method. Even though technology is ruling over it is making sure to take the face-to-face method hand in hand by making it into a blend (Kintu, Zhu, & Kagambe, 2017).

Online learning incorporates distance learning, correspondence learning, education through television telecast and videoconferencing. The author mentions after studying many research works that, the involvement of technologies has shown no significant differences in the effectiveness of learning (Means, Toyama, Murphy, & Baki, 2013)
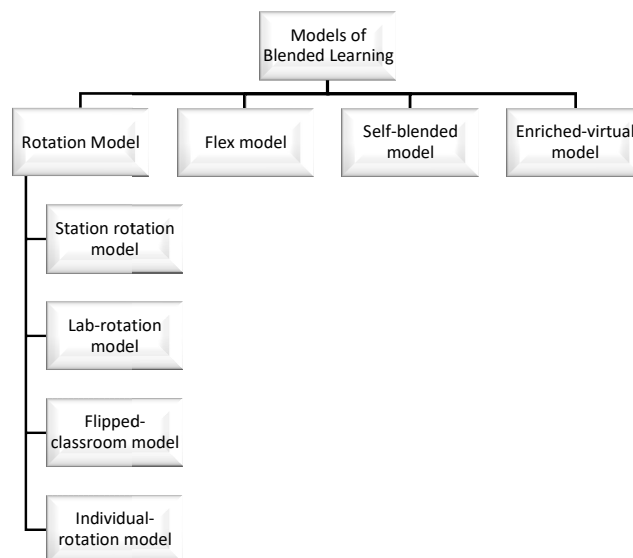
No proper universally accepted definition of blended learning can be found, despite that the terms such as blended learning or hybrid learning are very widely used in the market. Bonk and Graham (2005) described blended learning systems as "a combination of face-to-face instruction and computer-mediated instruction". The 2003 Sloan Survey of Online Learning (Allen & Seaman, 2003) provided somewhat more detail, defining blended learning as "a course that is a blend of the online and face-to-face course. Substantial proportion of the content is delivered online, typically uses online discussions, typically has some face-to-face meetings". Horn and Staker (2010) defined blended learning as "any time a student learns at least in part in a supervised brick-and-mortar location away from home and at least in part through online delivery with some element of student control over time, place, path and/or pace".

MODELS OF BLENDED LEARNING

(Jayanti, 2019) mentions in her work four types of models which are widely accepted. The rotational model, flex model, self-blended model and enriched-virtual model are the four types of models and rotational model is again divided into four sub-divisions as mentioned below.

Fig. 01: Figure showing generally used models of blended learning

1.1.**Rotation Model –** the students undergo the process of rotation which are fixed as per a

schedule among several modes. The rotation is chosen by the teachers. Different

modalities include classroom instructions, group work, project works, assignments and etc. the rotation model is considered to be one of the blended educations, only when at least one of the modalities involve online platform (Jayanti, 2019).

A group of students going through rotations through all the stations created by the teacher for the purpose that all students should learn everything from respective stations is called station rotation. Whereas, lab rotation is where students go on rotation from classroom learning to computer lab for online learning. Flipped classroom is a type where the students are taught about new concept at home and they are asked to practice it in school. And lastly, Individual rotation is such that teachers prepare schedules of every individual student which they have to follow over rotation. Here, not necessary that every individual should gr through all the stations.

1.2. **Flex model** – Here students mostly learn every concepts online through computer labs, even after providing everything related to the lecture online, certified teachers will be on-site all the time. Students are free to go and consult their teachers anytime they want (DreamBox Learn, 2012).

1.3. **A La Carte Model** – This model is also known as self-blended model because, in this model, students themselves try to take online courses in addition to their core curriculum. This requires students to learn on their own pace by adjusting their own time, availability and interests (Spiro).

1.4. **Virtual-Enriched model** – This model commonly uses virtual space. Here students are more encouraged to complete their online courses and meeting their teachers in person is as or if needed (TeachThought Staff).

The researchers (Khan, Qayyum, Shaik, Ali, & Bebi, 2012) have proposed a blended learning model in their research paper "Study of Blended Learning Process in Education Context". Their blended learning model is based on self-learning through the combination of e-learning and face-to-face classes. Researchers mentioned that, according to their model, a students can take either a classroom lecture or e-learning platforms where teachers provide lectures and extra information regarding contents. And in the matter of practical, a student can either conduct his practical in the lab at the institution or the same can be simulated and made available via e-learning platforms.

2.0. MERITS OF BLENDED EDUCATION

Blended education has proven its importance and its effectiveness in teaching-learning setup. Blended learning has taken the education system from face-to-face classroom teaching to teaching online only relying on the device and internet. Even though this method has some drawback but it is still witnessed growing. Blended education is better than the traditional methods because of its flexibility and easy access. Following is some of the literatures through which the author has decided to talk about merits of blended education

(Bonk & Graham, 2009) who believed in three reasons for blended learning being recommended quite often are blended learning has improved pedagogy, increased access and

flexibility and increased cost-effectiveness. They also mention that people try blended learning mostly the teachers just to see the advantages and disadvantages as compared to traditional methods. Despite of blended learning having face-to-face and online teaching features, it also possesses many other advantages such as flexible alternatives with respect to time and classroom setup, it gives tremendous options for sharing and storing huge amount of study materials which can be accessed by students at any time, teachers get more time to dedicate to the children also they will be able to give personal attention since they can be in touch with their students even outside of the classroom (Eryilmaz, 2015).

According to the opinions of (Kavitha & Jaisingh, 2018) blended learning creates a kind of collaborative behaviour between the learners and teachers, they believed that blended learning helps to save a learner's time and develops a sense of support and confidence among them. After enlightening with many similar works (Means, Toyama, Murphy, & Baki, 2013) mentioned in their paper that blended learning involves more productive time, learners can access to extra resources and develops interactional behaviour among learners. They highlighted that online learning is equivalent to the traditional face-to-face method in comparison but blended education is more effective than the traditional method.

Education system always got its success through multiple stages. Evaluation and feedback are the most crucial parts of learning. Therefore, (Khan, Qayyum, Shaik, Ali, & Bebi, 2012) believe that blended learning gives feedback to the learners in a very short period. In traditional methods a teacher has to go through entire works of every individual unbiased, in blended learning, technology also helps the tutor to give feedback on spot. Technology does not only help in providing feedback but also can be helpful in creating assessments and many innovative ideas which keep learners busy in something fruitful.

(Oweis, 2018) believes that blended learning is an alternative to online learning because it shows high profits and cost-effective. Following is some of the benefits as mentioned by the researcher,

- Learners will be able to get exposed and connect globally
- Improves a role of a teacher from importing to producing which help them develop a good leadership quality
- The learning peer will have access to multimedia, e-communications, online libraries and many such platforms which helps them to have more than one platform for learning.
- This method of education brings students from different specializations and different universities on one platform which helps in collaborative learning patterns.

According to (Jayanti, 2019) blended learning saves a lot of time of students because of which they will be able to involve themselves in learning process for a longer period of time. Researcher believed that due to this advantage of time saver students invest their focussed time longer on a project or practical than books and secondary materials. Integration of network, technology and learning makes students more excited, focused and interested. Researcher says that students bored with monotonous lessons of math and science, will now be interesting with the indulgence of virtual lessons, tutoring, ICT, videographic and pictographhic presentations.

The author also believes that blended learning encourages students to become independent which prepares them for future. Integration of technology gives direct exposure to the contents and self-directed instruction which keeps students engaged and teachers will get more time to work towards accomplishment of classroom objectives. Indulging in this process helps both teacher and students to improve their skills which is most important in 21st century. Education has not limited itself to only reading and memorizing, instead it is a collaboration of learning, critically thinking, problem solving and learning workplace skills.

3.0. DEMERITS OF BLENDED EDUCATION

The previous section did explain about all the merits of blended learning, that does not mean it is challenges free. Many researchers have spoken about challenges of blended learning. Following is some of the reviews of literature which have mentioned about the demerits of blended learning.

(Oweis, 2018) highlights that blended education takes place by the hybrid of face-to-face and online teaching. As already seen that blended learning gives access to wide range of sources, the same can become a reason for its disadvantage. Because such a huge number of resources increases the number of students and shortage of teachers. Apart from this, blended learning can be a challenge to those who have insufficient technical knowledge and accessibility as most of the students belong to rural areas of the country where teachers might not connect to children of rural areas due to network issues. Plagiarism and credibility are also one of the major concerns of blended learning.

Even though blended learning encourages individual learning, with continuous practice of it might make students feel isolated. It becomes difficult to develop social relationships. And this is very sensitive issue because students going to school will be regularly in touch with his teachers and friends which helps him to maintain the balance with social environment but students staying home and learning alone can make them isolated (Eryilmaz, 2015).

(Khan, Qayyum, Shaik, Ali, & Bebi, 2012) believe that blended learning is not easy to adapt because it requires a complete change of teaching culture. A proper training and skill development of a teacher is the most important thing. Not only that but blended learning expects changes in infrastructure, administration, funding, authorities, management and proper technical support system. Blended learning will give good results when all the aforementioned bits of it are to perfection.

With easy access to internet students can try to misuse the technology for abusive purposes (Jayanti, 2019), or they can even be targets of cyber crimes as they are very vulnerable towards crimes. With continuous exposure to blue rays of the screen children may face impaired vision, obesity, headaches and fatigue. Besides no physical activities like sports and extracurricular activities can impact their mental health (Nandy, 2020).

4.0. DISCUSSION OF THE AUTHOR

After studying the available literatures on merits and demerits of blended learning, the author's views on blended learning are as such. There is no doubt about merits of blended learning as it is a new future of education system. Children these days are benefitted by both methods of teaching i.e. traditional method and modern methods. Modern methods include distance learning, online learning, blended learning and etc. distance learning and online learning systems do not encourage physical contact with their teachers. But blended learning helps children to learn through teacher face-to-face and as well virtually meeting them. Children cannot be benefitted by only traditional methods of teaching these days because the present era is running in the shoes of future's. therefore, blended learning despite having drawbacks have shown unremarkable growth in the field of education. As name suggests blended learning should take traditional learning and virtual learning hand in hand because neglecting traditional learning and completely depending on virtual learning can impact on children's health, such health issues in most of the cases are very difficult to retrieve.

5.0.CONCLUSION

Human life is subjected to change in accordance with changes because it is a sign of evolution. Human beings are not only evolved in appearance and culture but they were responsible for technological growth, considering that, AlivTofler beautifully says "The greatest growling engine of change is technology".

Cooperation of technology into human life have proved to be one of the reasons for the growth of humans. This paper specially talks of the indulgence of technology in education. Due to mixture of traditional and online learning students are the most benefitted group. There have been many studies which have shown better understanding, skill development, independency and self-learning characteristics in learners due to blended learning setups.

But, as Bill gates quotes "Technology is just a tool in terms of getting the kids working together and motivating them, the teacher is the most important". Because to become blended learning successful a teacher has to be properly skilled and trained. Introducing technology to children does have really good outcomes but we cannot neglect about is cons. Christian Lous Lange rightly puts it into few words "Technology is a useful servant but a dangerous master".

Concluding Suggestions
- To maintain the education propagandas and cyber ethics, proper training of teachers and learners must be the primary requirement.
- Teacher's duty is not only to educate children but monitor their online activities to best of his abilities.
- How much ever, we must have achieved in technology but we should not forget our base, therefore, completely relying online for education can lead to develop major issues in children.

- Parents should update themselves about new trends of crimes happening online and they too have an important role to perform in their children's lives by monitoring and regulating the time and usage of electronics and networks of their kids.
- Blended learning should stick to the boundaries defined in its name. It gives positive results only when both the platforms come in contact to make learning better without compromising learners' health.

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