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Blended Learning-Future of Learning

Dr. Tarannum*

--- ABSTRACT ---

Technology is driving factor of Fourth Industrial Revolution in which digital automation, artificial intelligence, mobile supercomputing, intelligent robots are at its momentum. International competitiveness and global challenges demands highly innovative and competent school environment. Digital era and globalization has led to a new trend in education. One such trend is Blended Learning. The objective of the present paper is to analyse the concept of blended learning and to review the evolution of blended learning. Further, the paper discusses the intricacies and technical complications involved during implementation of blended learning in Indian context. In addition, the paper also critically analyse the competencies needed for handling blended learning along with benefits and challenges of blended learning.

Blended learning models were already gaining prominence before the pandemic and show no signs of fading away. As institutions look to bolster their offerings in a way that promotes long-term resilience, blended learning is a vital part of that long-term strategy. It brings many advantages to today's colleges and universities, and there are challenges to consider as well. Perhaps most important are the long-term benefits that come from being a flexible, resilient college or university.

ADVANTAGES OF BLENDED LEARNING

Implementing blended learning programs successfully offers a wide range of advantages to your institution. We'll cover three of the most important here.

Expands Your Reach

Colleges and universities with effective blended learning programs in place expand their reach beyond what it would otherwise be. Not every student can (or wants to) attend in person and on campus for a full four years or more. Opening up courses so that they can be completed both in-person and online will allow your institution to reach new populations.

These new populations can include working professionals, parents, and those living too far from your residential campus to commute. Such students often cannot relocate for multiple semesters or otherwise put their professional or caregiving responsibilities on pause. But many of them will pursue further education at an institution that will support their needs.

Can Increase Enrollment

This next advantage is closely tied to the previous one: blended learning programs can increase enrollment at a critical time for many higher education institutions.

Whether due to mandated closures, travel restrictions, personal health concerns, or even financial concerns, many students adjusted their 2020–2021 school year plans.

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Blended learning programs allow schools to recapture lost enrollment from several angles, including mandated closures, capacity and travel restrictions, and personal health concerns. Schools can also attract new students through the flexibility that these alternate approaches bring.

Allows Education to Continue During Closures or Capacity Restrictions

In 2020, most colleges and universities faced mandated closures or capacity limits. Without blended learning in some format, these closures and limits would have been more of a threat to some institutions' ongoing operations.

Blended learning was (and continues to be) an ideal solution when classroom attendance is limited or not available. This model allowed education to continue when it otherwise would have been paused.

CHALLENGES OF BLENDED LEARNING

As crucial as blended learning is for the modern educational institution, this model is not without its challenges. Here are three to consider.

Imposes New Burdens on Educators

A true blended model, where some students are in the classroom and others are learning remotely at the same time, can sometimes require more of educators than what traditional-format teaching requires. With blended learning, there's more to handle "live" while teaching, as instructors, must interact with both in-person and remote students. Educators find their attention divided more than they would with in-person instruction alone.

Requires Greater Comfort with Technology

Teaching well in a blended learning setting requires more technology use than is usually needed for in-person teaching. Some faculty have no trouble at all making these adjustments, but the technology-averse will need training and ongoing support.

Remains Difficult Without Proper Technology Solutions

Doing blended learning well requires the right combination of digital tools and services from a technology partner that understands the unique needs of higher education.

BENEFITS OF BLENDED LEARNING

Blended learning creates significant benefits for your institution, some with long-term implications.

Learning Can Continue Unimpeded

First, learning can continue unimpeded. While in 2020 it was a global pandemic, it's impossible to predict what the next significant challenge will look like, and local or regional challenges will vary from institution to institution. But whatever comes next, a well-executed blended learning strategy will allow your institution to keep the learning going without interruption. It's part of being (or becoming) a resilient college or university, one that's ready for whatever comes next.

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