Blended Learning at Tertiary Level

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ABSTRACT

Blended learning is a process through which online or e-learning is combined with traditional teaching method in the classroom to create a new, hybrid teaching methodology. It is more relevant in the present context as it brings a lot of new techniques instead of just using computers to lecture in the classrooms. It is a most needed basic change in the method by which teachers and students interact with each other. It has already produced an offshoot – the flipped classroom – that has quickly become a distinct approach of its own. There is no reliable definition for blended learning till date and also there is no universal agreement on the term itself. Many use terms like the hybrid, mixed, or integrative to describe the same trend. But the trend is significant. The aim of the paper is to highlight the latest techniques that could be used in teaching the learners.

Keywords: *Blended Learning, Flipped Classroom, Hybrid, Virtual Learning Environment, Self-assessment*

Introduction:

Many methods were evolved by ELT experts to teach English at various levels. Blended learning is one such method which allows the learners to learn at their own pace by a combination of techniques such as face-to-face and online teaching methods. The point of blended learning is to mix traditional and digital technologies in a way that helps learners learn more productively, complementing each other, doing what each does best. Digital technologies could be used inside the class, or beyond the classroom, to enhance learning by offering specific types of benefit that are more difficult with traditional methods. Educators need to figure out how to help the learners to learn from their iPads because they are not in a position to do it for themselves. Hence it is worthwhile to look at some specific examples of how blended learning has supported learners in different ways, beginning with the issue of flexibility. There already exists a lot about digital technology as offering to learn anywhere and anytime. What is more important is that technologies really did transform education and the way people learn.

Reasons for Using Blended Learning Approach:

The VLE (Virtual Learning Environment) allows the teachers to investigate any online media, things like a video, etc. It allows them to create online quizzes like multiple choice or short answers and also allows them to create spaces for online submission of assessment, to create online discussion spaces and forums, to upload any other type of file or resource that may be used in a class. It offers a larger toolkit to engage the learners. Another advantage is the engagement in between classes and a gradual increase of online activities by asking students to log on probably to perform a simple task, a quiz, perhaps update an assignment or a brief in between times. The major advantage is learners can progress more quickly through a course.

Creating a Blended Learning Model:

For the present study, The Blended Learning Toolkit prepared by the University of Central Florida is used. It is an open educational resource that could be used for teaching the learners.There is a general accord among education innovators that blended learning has three primary components:

1. In-person room activities expedited by trained professionals.

2. Online learning materials, with already recorded lectures given by the same teacher.

3. Structured freelance study time target-hunting by the fabric within the lectures

and skills developed throughout the room expertise.

A course for tertiary level learners could be created through blended learning model based on online activities that benefit the learners through direct interaction whereas traditional teaching, (especially at the faculty level) tends to position a stress on delivering material through lecture method. But in a blended learning model lectures are videotaped prior to the time of teaching and therefore the learners will watch on their own time. The room time is an additional possible method that could be used for structured exercises that emphasize the application of syllabus to unravel issues or work tasks.

In the present study, the researcher has used four methods of blending technology with classroom practice to use the learners' time in an effective way.

1. Video sessions bring the workplace into their home and they learn at their convenience

2. A recap of the video in class using their mobile, tab, etc.

3. The teacher's mobile shows them the key points about the skills they are learning.

4. Evaluation of the learners by the teacher.

Duration of Learning:

To upgrade the learners through blended learning, a duration of six months, i.e., an individual semester may emphasize classroom time at the beginning, then

gradually increase the amount of work that students do online or during independent study. Many argue that class discussion boards, for example, are far more useful if the participants have met face-to-face first.

Flipped Classroom:

The "flipped" room is a modern coinage that refers to categories that are structured virtually completely around a reversal of expectations for lectures and class work. Students are expected to observe lectures on-line reception and complete it a day before they begin it for discussion in the classroom. Learners are expected to prepare in advance by watching a video of the practical technique and then use the time in class for guided practice. This is often called "flipped learning," theory at home, practice in class. The main focus is to make the learners active at every stage. Teachers should design flipped learning model carefully as learning beyond the classroom should not just mean watching videos. There is more to it than that. They do a quiz or an assignment and come to class much better prepared. That way, they use the class time more productively and so progress more quickly. ("Crib Sheet: Flipped Teaching")

Blended Learning Redefining Teaching Roles:

In certain situation, the move towards blended learning has inspired educators to redefine traditional roles. The word "facilitator": has been used as an alternate for "teacher," with a slightly different focus on the role of a teacher. The facilitator focuses on empowering the learners with the skills and information needed to make the most of the online material and independent study time, guiding students toward the most meaningful experience possible.

For this, the facilitators need to concentrate on four key areas:

1. Development of on-line and offline course content.

2. Facilitation of communication with and among students, together with the pedagogy of act content on-line while not the discourse clues students would get personally.

3. Guiding the training expertise of individual students, and customizing material where doable to strengthen the training expertise.

4. Assessment and grading, not like the expectations for lecturers at intervals the normal framework. ("blended.online. ucf.edu")

By putting an emphasis on learning through supervised activities, blended learning has proven to be a very adaptable technique for teaching language at the advanced level. Here, the teachers could shift their focus from the delivery of knowledge to its application, and therefore there is no need for additional training for the learners. Part of the course is delivered through a blended learning approach. At the end of the last session, the teacher may ask the learners to watch a video in their own time. They could watch it as many times as they want and then they should read the lesson. The teacher begins the lesson with a quick recap,

ask some questions to establish the learner's understanding of the video and then they were to get straight on and recreate the look that we had seen using the techniques that they had picked up from the video. This cuts down the lesson time the teacher needs to demonstrate.

Using Flashcards with lecture method enhance the understanding of the students. The learners can use and they can study at their own time. Blended learning is a win-win for everybody, in the fact that the learners could learn at their own pace within their own time and also for the tutor when you are in the session. There is only one educator who may have around twenty learners that all need his/her attention. So if the teacher asks the learners to get out the phone in the session, recap using that, learners will probably think it is wonderful using it as a learning tool. One of the challenges being faced across the whole vocational education sector now is less time for training. This could be solved by using blended techniques.

Free Tools for Blended Learning:

There is a range of free survey tools (or tools with free versions) that is available for the learners. But the difficulty is it may not produce quizzes and polls for the learners.

Typeform:

Typeform is one in all these – a free version lacks a number of the tool's advanced functions. Typeform does not need user expertise and is relatively simple to access the quiz. For instance, it is simple to include

pictures and videos into the welcome screen or quiz queries, and the teacher can customize the background image and the type of fonts. It is just like the other tools, provides a web link to the poll or quiz to send by email to learners or infix in a VLE (such as Moodle). The results are shared with learners as charts and downloaded as a computer program. It additionally permits the user to trace a variety of participants together with the sort of device they use. The major difference between type form and other tools is that it provides a video tour of the tool, FAQs and a two minute tutorial in addition to a video summary.

Advantages of using Type form over other Online Tools:

The advantage of Typeform over other tools like Survey Monkey and Google forms is that it could be used with learners collaborating via their mobile phones, tablets or laptops. For instance, a poll to survey initial responses to a matter is required to begin a discussion. This is especially helpful in conducting research where the learners need to use questionnaires.

Wiksate:

Access to technology and the internet provides ample opportunity to innovate and transform learner experience. Wiksate is an online platform that can be used anytime anywhere for the interaction of learners with educators and other learners. In this, the teachers are free to create a learning group with specific goals. Wikisate is yet another free version which has advanced tools for online teaching. It is designed for a specific

group such as for learners, educators, recruiters, etc.

Advantages of using Wiksate:

Formal learning is structured and scheduled delivery of the content. However, students are compelled to learn so much during a stipulated period of time and hence most of the learning and experiences are lost in the due course. According to Wiksate: "It is now recognized that 70% of learning is experiential, 20% through relationships and 10% via formal education" (www.wikstate.com). Wiksate integrates the formal, social and experiential in the learning process.

Wiksate for Individual Learners:

In this era, there is an increase in informal learners, where learn through interactions, experiences and surfing through numerous links and content on the Internet. WikGlo provides a platform for the learners to connect and learn from others, share their experiences and picks from the Internet to increase our knowledge network and visibility to add a unique dimension to their profile.

Besides it is used to create Learning groups where they can ask questions, share something interesting, interact, curate and build Knowledge and also connect with experts and others. ("www.wiksate.com")

Wiksate for Educational Institutions:

College administrators and faculty are increasingly challenged to engage students and get learning outcomes. These have a direct impact on Institute accreditation, student employability, and placements. Wiksate Education is a hybrid technology that offers a solution to the issues faced by educational institutions through various enhanced digital applications.

Advantages:

1. It creates an Institutional Knowledge Network by providing a virtual network for students, alumni, faculty, and expert to interact on campus and off campus.

2. Improvement of Institutional Visibility by promoting active engaged learning. Showcase analytics to accreditation agencies. Wiksate helps to score 200+ NBA Points.

3. Increases Employability and Visibility of Students through showcase skills of the students to the prospective employers through the Wiksate Public Profile Page.

4. Increases Industry and Alumni Interaction by Promoting informal learning by engaging industry experts and alumni through Wiksate.

5. Improves Faculty Efficiency through Automation by creating, collating and reporting results through learning groups, real-time quizzes, and assignments.

6. Gamify and Engage Staff & Students with Wikcoins and badges. Recognize, reward and promote informal learning.

Padlets:

Padlet is extremely straightforward to use

and easy directions are found here. Several video tutorials created by educators are obtainable, together with videos by the homogenized Learning necessities team. Unlike several other forms of the wiki, it permits for multiple users to edit at the same time. There at multiple settings to permit users to switch the Padlet wall, by adding totally different 'wallpapers', setting privacy and permissions and customizing the wall's weblink whereas the default format is free-form, different formats (list or grid) might give a neater viewing expertise if an over-sized range of posts is anticipated. The classic version of the tool is free; however, the premium versions provide a lot of privacy, security, branding, user management, and observance, together with a version specifically for educators, Padlet Backpack.

Learning and Teaching through Padlet:

Padlet is accustomed to increase learner interaction in a wide range of techniques. In class, a link to a Padlet wall is shared with learners (for example, as a QR code that learners will scan with their sensible phones or tablets). The convenience with padlet is convenient to use and encourages learner engagement, and also the results could be shared instantly with different learners. Padlet is coupled to or embedded inside a VLE like Moodle, and learners will read or share resources with one another related to their subject. Learners are made to compile a style proof wall of quotes, articles or pictures to explore a problem, imaginary being or debate and learners work in a group brainstorming for ideas inside the classroom as well as in the Virtual Learning Environment.

Sharing Evidence of Learner Practice:

Language learners compile articles or images to explore an issue, fictional character or debate; Learners' brainstorming ideas within and beyond the classroom; also use the Crib Sheet created prepared by the teachers, where the teachers or trainers share images, websites, and videos. Learners curate a collection of web-based resources for project work individually or in groups e.g. a wall of types of sentences or nouns, pronouns, etc.

Using Padlet for Teaching a Large Classroom:

The teacher or trainer creates three Padlet walls dedicated to the following groups: Gifted learners/ advanced learners, Average learners and slow learners. In pairs, learners are directed to search the web for 20 minutes to find examples of the grammatical items in all the three groups. For each target group, pairs post links to images, videos or web pages that provide an exemplary of grammatical items aimed at one of the three groups on the relevant Padlet wall. Pairs add their names to the post and provide at least one reason for their selection. The teacher later will share the Padlet walls with the whole group via the Smart Board or projection screen and invite the learners to justify their choices. Thus the students will be engaged as well as involved in doing such activities. ("ugc.futurelearn.com")

Google Classroom:

It is a VLE that can be used as a tool for teaching language as well as to interact with learners and specialists in the subject area. This is extremely useful in teaching languages. The first step here is to create a Gmail id. Teachers, as well as the learners, must have a valid Google Mail id to use this learning platform. The following are the various Google apps used for collaborative learning.

Google Site

It is used to create and manage personal Google Webpages. It could be used by both learners as well as the teachers. Learners create sites to showcase their works and teachers use curriculum portal through which they upload lesson plans, resources, etc.

Google Groups

In this, the students are asked to follow the teacher who initiates the discussion on discussion board. Further, parent groups are created for easy communication.

Google Plus:

It is a social platform where people with a valid g mail id can interact. This could be used by the teachers to share the lessons, question papers, quizzes with the students.

Hangouts:

It is primarily used for chatting and could also be powerful learning experience as interaction with hard to manage student is easier and also shy students would be relatively bold to ask questions without disrupting the flow.

Video Chat

It can be used to deliver a Guest Lecture, Making a Grandparent (or any native speaker) read a story and also to offer the learners online help. Further, it is an efficient tool to share Photos, Links and events.

Result and Discussion:

The benefits of blended learning rely on its flexibility, active learning, individualisation, learner control, feedback. Google classroom and Wiksate provides plenty of opportunity for learner interaction thereby enhancing the quality of learning experience. The various tools mentioned in combination with face-to-face teaching will benefit the learners thereby developing their skills at all levels.

Scope for Further Research:

This research is limited to the teaching of English to advanced learners and further research can be conducted for teaching language or any other subject to all level of learners.

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