

ON THE JOB AND BLENDED LEARNING: TIME TO CHANGE MODE OF DELIVERY AND MENTORING

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Abstract

Pandemic has taught us how information, knowledge and delivery of information reach beyond the four walls of classroom. Students also adopted to the changing environment of online learning. Information technology has taken education to another level, where can actively learn and earn, can go beyond boundaries and time. NEP has given a platform for exploring the possibilities and UGC has come up with dual qualifications. Currently students expect from teachers as facilitator, mentor, guide, friend and philosopher. Traditional system of delivery of syllabus need to be changed with more use of technology. Information is available to them, but educators need to guide them and help them to select suitable for them.

Keywords: Blended Learning, On the Job Learning, flexible learning.

Introduction

The educational sector underwent a vast change during pandemic. It realised importance of use of technology to reach out to the students more creatively and effectively. Traditional method of teaching is considered the best method of imparting knowledge to the learners. At the same time increased need of imparting knowledge beyond boundaries of time and space has become need of the time. Expectations of learner changed and there need for blend of different modes of knowledge disbursement. In blended education mode of education the trainer combines various methods of imparting knowledge in a planned and systematic ways so that learner receives information and practice in a real time situation. The University Grants Commission is encouraging universities and colleges to adopt this mode. It has granted a few universities to start online degrees (UGC, Aug, 2021)

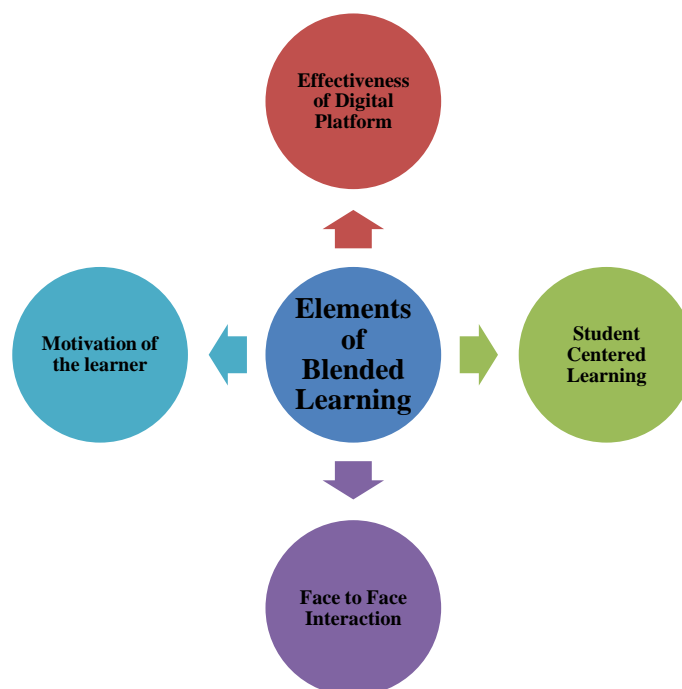
Blended Learning

Blended learning is a combination of two training systems —traditional classroom teaching and IT based eLearning. The theoretical inputs are given through online learning where the learner can get access a number of time and a fast learner can complete the understanding in lesser time. The trainer has the advantage of recorded classes which the learner could view it anytime and anywhere. It uses information technology extensively and making the learner engaged in understanding the core concepts in a creative way which a class room teaching may not be possible. The learner can view it repeatedly so that the understanding become clear and firm.

A motivated learner could find various sources for learning the concepts and understanding the theatrical aspects of subjects. There are various possibilities in the online learning. The learner should be strongly motivated to learn the concepts rather than skipping the videos of concepts. The trainer should be skillful, creative and adaptive to the online learning system to make effective interaction with the learner. The learner as per his/her time can attend and perceive the concepts. There is no human intervention and fellow learners interaction to make learning as experience of collaborative effort of trainer, learner, fellow learners and the environment. This elements of learning could be fulfilled with blended learning where there is active interaction between learners and trainers.

Blended learning takes the benefits of online learning and overcome the limitations by blending online and offline learning. It makes online learning interactive through games, videos, tutorials, quizzes and social media components and support the online learning by offline classroom interactions.

The classroom offers an opportunity for role-playing with immediate face-to-face feedback. Online learning offers personalized, self-paced learning with eLearning components that lend themselves to interactive media such as games, videos, tutorials, quizzes and social media components, all accessible from the learner's home page in the Learning Management System (LMS)—and accessible from the learner's smartphone or tablet.



Major Elements of Blended Learning -

1. Motivation of the learner
2. Effectiveness of Digital platform
3. Student Centred Learning
4. Face to Face Interactions

1. Motivation of the Learners

In Blended learning model, motivation of the learner is very vital for success. Extrinsic and intrinsic motivational factors are very important in blending learning model. Both the instructor and the learner need to be motivated to achieve the desired goal. The learner has to access the level of independent learning, interest on the subjects under study, method and patterns of learning and efficiency in using digital platforms.

2. Effectiveness of Digital platform

In the recent past the need and spread of digital literacy has increased. Digital literacy and effectiveness of digital platforms are very important for the success of blended learning. Many of the educational institutions use digital platform for administrative and academic purpose. The event of pandemic has increased the use of these platforms. The content developers, trainers and educational instructors need to take special care while preparing and presenting the online materials to learners. They need to take care of the wide variety of learners, their learning environment and background while creating digital materials.

3. Student Centred Learning

This model of learning the learners take the decision on how, when and why to study specific topic, subject or discipline. This model of learning removes many of the shortcomings of traditional method of learning where the instructor or the teacher is the centre. The instructor decides what to learn and how to learn. In student centred learning the learning becomes collaborative, experiential and enjoyable. The trainers become a mentor and facilitator rather than instructor and knowledge provider. In blended learning if we adopt student centric the result would become more effective and learning become enjoyable activity.

4. Face to Face Interactions

The programme of blended learning is not avoiding the role of the teacher or instructor through online

mode. Here the face to face interactions become more effective and the trainer needs to be equipped with differential needs of the learners and level of learning. The learners prepare themselves before coming to the training for their face to face interactions. Depending on the level of the learner, the trainer could elevate to higher potentials of learning and make the learning experiential.

Research Method

A survey was conducted to know the interest of students in blended learning model and their expectations on blended learning system.

Sources and Method of Data Collection

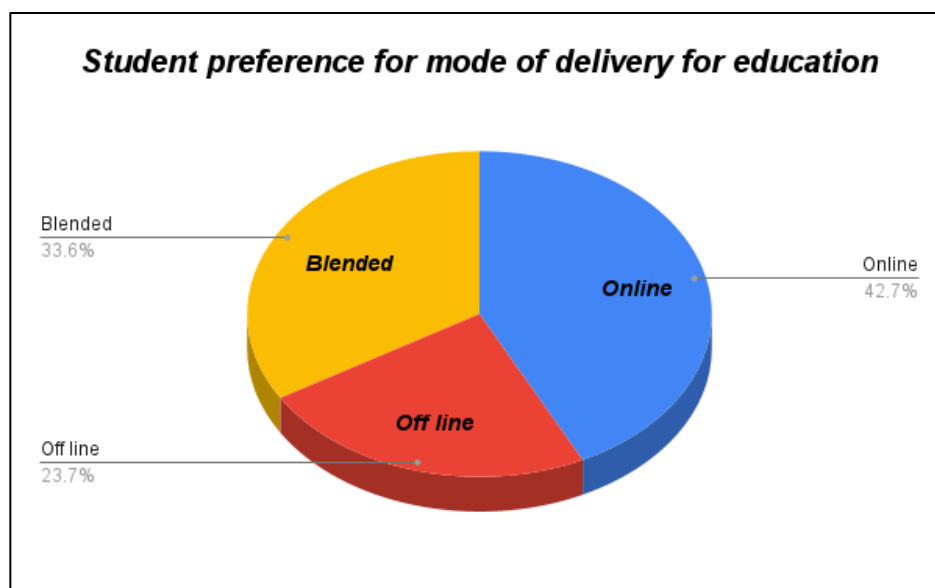
Primary Data - The study is descriptive based on survey method. All the data are collected directly from the respondents through the questionnaire, i.e. primary data. Primary data are collected from the students of a particular educational level by way of questionnaire.

Sample Size - Source collection of information was 232 samples which were taken for the study using stratified random sampling. The study includes the data taken from students at the graduation level.

Secondary Data - Secondary data has been collected from documents, reports, web sites and research papers.

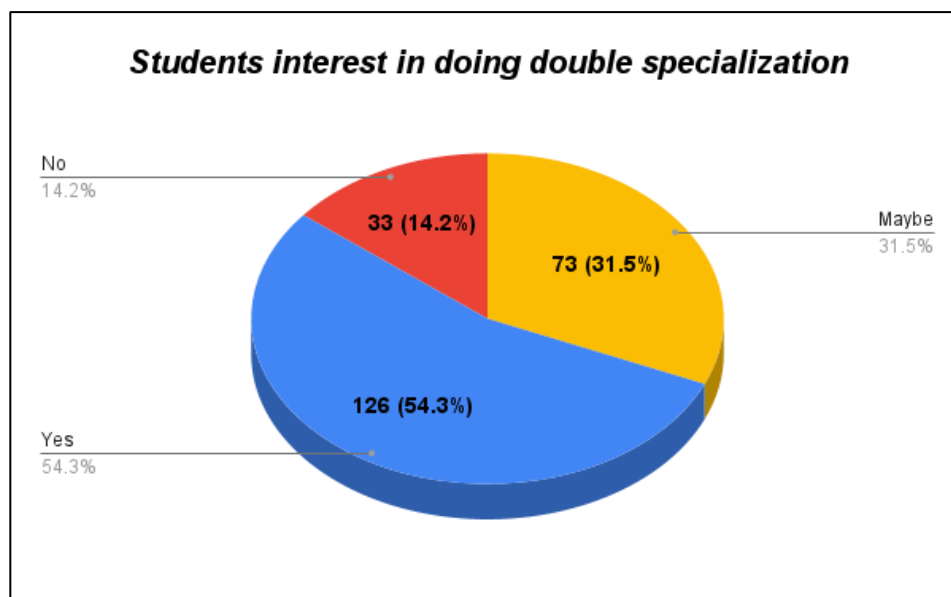
Data Analysis and Interpretation

Exhibit 1: Student preference for mode of delivery for education



The survey shows that the students are interested in the online and blended learning rather than traditional class room teaching. More than 75% respondents showed their willingness for online and blended learning. This shows the effect of online learning that the students experienced during pandemic had influenced their learning patterns. The educational institutions need to take into consideration the demands of students in the current day times and make education student friendly. Further students are tending towards blended learning where they can experiment with their passion and interest along with academic upgradation. This calls for changes in the education system. The recent policy NEP and its effective implementation would help to change the education system to greater levels

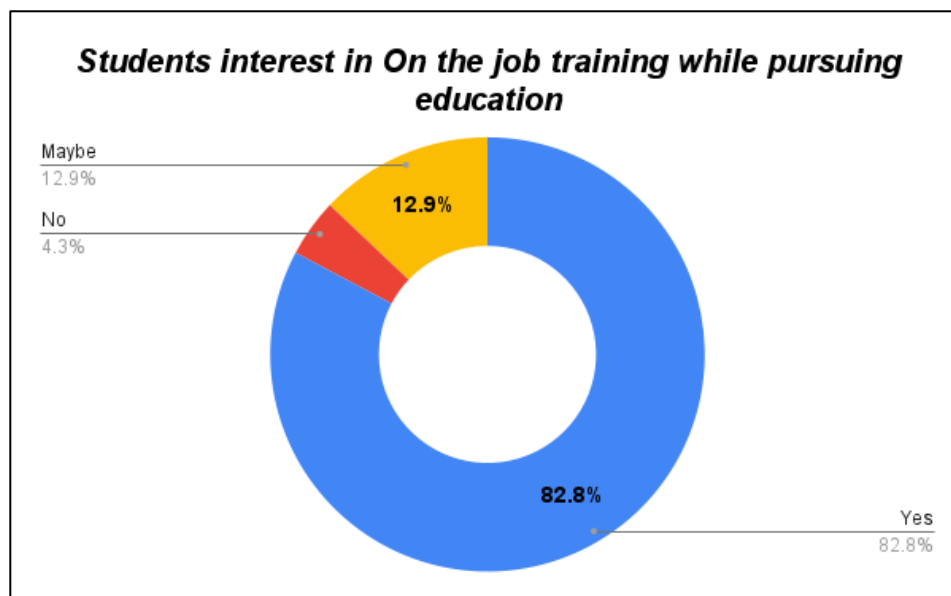
Exhibit 2: Student interest in doing double specialization



Discussion:

The recent circular April 2022 from UGC opens up for dual specializations. The respondents are of the opinion that they are interested in dual specialization. This has to be researched along with blended learning and online education. Students would try for wider choice and different streams of learning. They are not confined to traditional one stream specialization. Moreover, the interest in dual specialization point out that the learners wanted to experiment with different steams, the learners are to some extend multitasking or learners are open to different knowledge streams. The UGC had already permitted students to do one degree and one diploma course a few years back. The recent development in giving students to dual specialization will make a change in the educational system.

Exhibit 3: Student interest in on the job while pursuing education



Discussion:

It is evident from the respondents that they are preferring to have blended learning model of education rather than traditional method of learning. The learner prefer to have experiential knowledge rather than book knowledge. They would like to go for job experience which further indicates that whatever they learn in educational institutions, should be leading to job. Pure learning is not their choice of education. More than 80% of the respondents would like to have job in their specified field while studying.

The educational institutions need to comply with changing needs of the students. The SPPU in Pune adopted internship in the specialization field at the graduation level so that students get experiential knowledge of the subject under study. Many universities and educational institutions have already started with this concept and introduced internships and work experience as part of their curriculum. This is a very welcoming and appropriate step towards blending academic with industry. Other universities and educational institutions need to adopt blending of industry exposure with academics.

Conclusion:

The blended learning is going to be the new phase of educational system. The survey conduct reveals that learners are interested in dual specialization, on the job learning and blended learning. The benefits and reach of blended learning is more comprehensive and appropriate in the latest need. The UGC and many of the educational institutions have already taken steps to accept the need of the time and creating room for new age learning. Blended learning going to help the learners as well as educational institutions to maximize their potentials and reach to wider community around them.

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