



Blended and M-Learning in Higher Education

-A Study With Reference To Selected Private and Government Colleges of Karnataka State

Prof. Hemalatha, M.Phil, M.com, PGDCA

HOD, Dept. of Secretarial Practice, Besant Women's College, Kodialbail, Mangalore, Karnataka, India

ABSTRACT: This is the age of Technological advancements. In today's globalized environment, the effective use of Information Technology has become the Key element for the successful implementation of Mobile phone in education. It is also clear that education is changing constantly every day. So it has become a necessity for all the educational Institutions and Organizations to be a part of this new developing Technological Era.

One of the greatest growing trends in education is Blended and Mobile learning. It provides more opportunity for learning at lower cost and accessibility of resources from all over the world. Earlier, in India, the trend was to use stand alone technology. But now technology convergence towards complete solutions has become the mandatory need of the hour. The concept of well equipped laboratories with desk tops have slowly shifted towards mobile devices like laptops, tablet PCs etc.

A conceptual framework is developed to diagnose and understand the views and perceptions of students studying in Private and government first grade colleges to understand and compare the overall effectiveness of conventional mode of learning and M-learning. The comparison of proportion of students who have undergone M- learning programme was taken up to understand the effectiveness of blended learning in higher education.

The results of personal survey among the students, teachers and parents show that ban on the usage of mobile phones by the College Authorities within the campus is the main reason to lose interest in M-learning. Lack of network access and charging facilities in remote areas are the major problems for not using M-learning. Institutions have gone wrong in assessing the need based education. These institutions should come out of the phobia of traditional class room teaching system and internet should be accessible to everyone with low cost. This helps the students to enhance creativity, analytical ability and helps to keep pace with International education.

To conclude, the on-line education or training programmes are successful only when it is properly planned and trained staff must also be hired to work with students on-line. To maintain the global standard and quality in education one should make use of Blended learning. These parameters will enhance classroom learning, the blended way.

KEYWORDS: iPod, M-learning, tablet PCs, Mobile, Blended

I. INTRODUCTION

"The Pupil can only educate himself. Teachers are custodians of apparatus upon which he himself must turn and twist to acquire the Excellencies that distinguish the better from the poorer of GOD's vessels"

- **Martin H. Fischer**
- **On Facebook**

This is the age of Technological advancements. In today's globalized environment, the effective use of Information Technology has become the Key element for the successful implementation of Mobile phone in education. It is also clear that education is changing constantly every day. One of the rapidly growing trends in education is Blended and Mobile learning. It provides more opportunity for learning at an affordable cost and easy accessibility of resources from all over the world 24 / 7. The concept of well equipped laboratories with desktops have slowly shifted towards mobile devices like laptops, tablet PC, s, iPod etc.



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II. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Utilizing blended learning, however, the students will continue to learn outside of the classroom through the use of technology. This would likely include the incorporation of a website for the class and materials on the Internet or Mobile, such as video clips of film versions of the play or audio and textual criticisms of the play.

With the advent and rapid changes of digital technology blended and Mobile learning has emerged as an innovative new concept. The best features of traditional face-to-face instruction and online learning can be blended together to get the best teaching methodology.

III. FACETS OF BLENDED LEARNING

Blended learning is about a mixture of the method of delivering instructions, the media used for the instructions, instructional methods, and web-based technologies. The development of a virtual campus and blended learning systems change the way learners learn.

This blended learning can be further extended to Mobile Learning Techniques. Mobile Learning is also known as M-learning. This has made exponential leap from theory explored by academicians to a real contribution to learning.

IV. OBJECTIVES

- To understand the concept and uses of blended and Mobile learning
- To delineate the facets of Blended and Mobile learning
- To understand the views and perceptions of the sample respondents on Blended and Mobile learning.
- To study the technique of skill enhancement through Blended learning and make it user friendly
- To promote “learn at your own pace, convenience and place of your choice” principle
- To suggest some measures of adopting blended learning to upgrade the slow learners and bring them to the main stream

V. STATEMENT OF RESEARCH PROBLEM

Mass education using computers in our country is still a distant dream because majority of the students cannot afford or access a Personal computer. Though most graduates are interested in blended learning, they are deprived of it because of the ban on the usage of mobile phones by students within the College campus and this puts them on the back seat in global competition.

VI. METHODOLOGY

The study made use of both primary and secondary data in its analysis. However, a large part of the analysis is based on the primary data. Primary data collected from the sample respondents, include Faculty members, students, parents and corporate leaders in the managerial capacities. For the purpose of analysis, the data was gathered from 240 sample respondents representing 25 corporate leaders, 15 parents, 10 teaching faculty and the student community in general which is 190 including the 10 private and 10 Government colleges.

VII. SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The present study includes only the corporate leaders, teachers, parents and the student community at large. In spite of this study, there are still many areas which need to be covered. Secondly, there may be further additions or modifications in the implementation of blended learning in the years to come.

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VIII. FINDINGS

Analysis of the perception of sample respondents:

An attempt has been made to gather opinions from the sample respondents as to what they meant by Blended learning?; how important is it with reference to the career context?; Given the chance, would they like to be a e-learner; what is the quality of knowledge thus gained, and compared to traditional teaching how would they be benefitted by the implementation of Blended and Mobile Learning?

Opinion of the student Respondents: It has been found that Blended and Mobile Technologies in the hands of students helps them to engage in effective learning activities. It brings about a startling change in their attitudes towards learning and contributes towards improving various skills. The survey data clearly shows that 89.72% of the students opined that blended learning improved their analytical skills. 86.84% of the students say that information accessed through blended and mobile learning helped them to lead, guide and motivate the people to get good performance. The survey data shows that skills improvement, competency and creative power also play a major role in moulding their career. This is shown in Table -1.0

Table1.0- Opinion of the Student Respondents about Blended and Mobile learning

Qualities	No. of respondents	Percentage of respondents (190)
Improves skills	160	84.21
Self dependent	86	45.26
Creativity power	110	57.89
Prepare for change	78	41.05
Effective Communication	120	63.16
Information access	165	86.84
Analytical abilities	142	89.72
Co-operation & collaboration	97	51.05
Competency	115	60.53

Source: Survey Data

Note: Percentages will not be equal to 100 due to multiple responses.

b) Views of Corporate Leaders:

An attempt has been made to assess the views of the corporate leaders who have been exposed to blended learning and are delegated to appoint smart and well informed students through campus interviews and / or through advertisements. They feel that the employees who have undergone blended learning can be trained at anytime and anywhere and they really perform well in the corporate sector. Information sharing through this platform is easy, fast and very successful. The respondents are asked to indicate the level of effectiveness of blended learning by using a four point scale; viz Very great extent, great extent, some extent and little extent. Weights of 4, 3, 2, 1 are assigned correspondingly to the above scale and total scores are summed up, which range between 0 - 28 for a meaningful analysis. The total range of score is split into four categories as given below; reflecting the level of perceived utility: 0-7: little extent, 7-14: Some Extent, 14-21: Great Extent, 21-28: very great extent. This is shown in Table 2.0

Table 2.0 Perception of Corporate Leaders on the level of effectiveness of Blended Learning

Level of effectiveness	Weights	No. of leaders	Percentage
Very great extent	4	9	36
Great extent	3	12	48
Some extent	2	3	12
Little extent	1	1	4
Total	10	25	100

Source: Survey Data

Mean=3.16

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The tabulated data shows that the corporate leaders are of the opinion that the extent of effectiveness of blended learning to a very great extent.

c) Association between Skill enhancement and blended learning

The researcher has made an attempt to test the independence of two attributes. i.e. Skill enhancement and blended learning by applying Chi-Square Test for their relationship. The data has gathered from 240 sample respondents representing corporate leaders 25, Parents 15, teaching faculty 10 and the student community in general 190

H0: Blended learning and Skill Enhancement are independent.

H1: Blended learning and skill Enhancement are not independent.

The survey data is tabulated and presented in the table 3.0

Table 3.0- Relationship between Blended learning and knowledge enhancement

Skill Enhancement	Blended learning		Total
	Very effective	Less effective	
Active	160 (86.49%)	30 (54.55%)	190 (79.17%)
Less active	25 (13.51%)	25 (45.45%)	50 (20.83%)
Total	185 (100.00%)	55 (100.00%)	240 (100.00%)

Source: Survey Data

$$\chi^2 = 26.22$$

Degree of dependence is =68.427

The calculated value of 26.22 > critical value of k=3.841 at 1 degree of freedom leading to the rejection of Null Hypothesis. The chi-square test works out to be significant. This indicates that Blended learning and Skill enhancement are dependent on each other and there is a close association between Skill development and blended learning.

d) Perception of Teachers on the role of blended learning

Attitudes ranged from enthusiastic to antagonistic, with most teachers recognizing the potential of technology but making statements such as everybody does not have the device.

Teachers are of the opinion that Blended learning is a unique learning assessment tool and administrative platform. They felt that the students can be encouraged to use blended learning by using appropriate software to evaluate and generate a student's mark sheet and profile. The list of absentees as well as performance reports can also be generated any time anywhere.

70% of the teaching faculty says that it plays a major role in teaching as well as administrative work. They felt that Mobile learning will ease their work and make the student rich in knowledge.

20% of the teachers opined that Blended learning plays only minor role because of the low computer penetration in India as compared to global standards. They feel that the present infrastructure provided by the Colleges is not enough to implement blended learning. To make use of blended learning, an overall change in the education system has to be brought in.

10% of the teachers say that blended learning does not play any role because only few students can afford or access a personal computer. Secondly they feel that it will be an added burden on them as they have to prepare much in advance and have to keep themselves abreast of the changing technology trends. This is shown in Table 4.0

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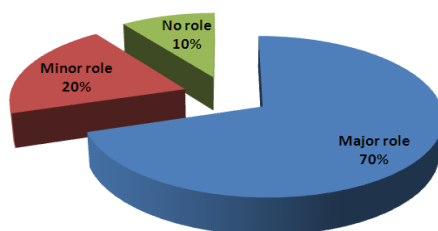
Table 4.0 Perception of Teachers on the role of blended learning

Role	Teachers	Percentage
Major role	07	70%
Minor role	02	20%
No role	01	10%
Total	10	100%

Source: Survey Data

This tabulated data is shown in the pie chart below:

Perception of Teachers on the role of blended learning



IX. SUGGESTIONS

Ban on the usage of mobile phones by students is the main reason to lose interest in M-learning. Face to face learning cannot be replaced with any kind of learning. However Blended learning can act as an additive to enhance advanced learning. Lack of network access and electricity in remote areas are the major problems for not using M-learning. Institutions have gone wrong in assessing the need based education. Institutions should come out of the phobia of not using modern technology instead of traditional class room teaching system and internet should be accessible to everyone with subsidized rates of usage. This helps the students to enhance creativity, analytical ability and helps to keep pace with International education. Every student must own a wireless device and they must use it constantly.

X. CONCLUSION

To conclude, the on-line education or training programmes are successful only when it is properly planned and trained staff must also be hired to work with students on-line. To maintain the global standard and quality in education one should make use of Blended learning. These parameters will enhance classroom learning, the blended way. In India Blended learning has a long way to travel. There are many hurdles which have to be cleared. The hurdles are from the Government policies, reluctance of a teacher to migrate and embrace new technology, attitude of students to misuse new technology etc .Unless we become more mature to understand and make use of the vast development of technology we will not be able to implement Blended learning. Blended learning is a Boon and not a Bane. It should be implemented as early as possible at all levels of education.

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Vol. 3, Special Issue 7, October 2015

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BIOGRAPHY

Prof. Hemaltha, HoD from the department of Secretarial Practice, Besant Women's College, Mangaluru, is a research-oriented person. She has an M. Phil in Commerce and has contributed several articles and research papers to journals, books, national and international seminars. She takes a keen interest in developing the research skills in the young minds of her students.