BLENDED LEARNING - A STUDY ON STUDENT'S PERCEPTION ABOUT SUITABILITY OF THE FRAMEWORK FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract: In today's digital era, use of technology and web based means of communication have provided an opportunity to educators, all over the world to investigate the most suitable learning environment which may cater the needs of diverse learner. Modified learning environment which incorporates the benefits of traditional as well as modern learning is the need of hour.

New opportunities for learning and engagement in life are offering of globalization and technology which is continually altering our views of education. Technology enables learning extend beyond the classroom walls and facilitates better access to learning resources. Blended learning approaches have amplified the need for teachers, students and the wider community to take advantage of learning opportunities afforded through improved personalization, collaboration, and communication enabled by learning technologies. Blended learning has many different forms and it will continue to evolve. New practices will be introduced to increase its reach and effectiveness. It should not be viewed as a single model but as an approach that shares the ultimate goal of the provision of better educational experiences and outcomes. Blended learning provides flexible, cost effective and time saving for the learners and teachers.

The main aim of the study is to find out the perception of students towards Blended Learning. Survey method was employed for this research. The researcher has chosen 75 PG students for the study. The researcher found that median is 4 for all the structured questions used in the questionnaire. Outcome has absolute characteristics irrespective of gender. Hence blended learning is a suitable and effective method for the better learning in higher education.

Keywords: Blended Learning Approach, Digital era, modified learning environment,

INTRODUCTION

Over the period of time education systems undergone various changes which result in various learning styles adopted by the learners. Advance technology facilitates to modernize the way information is learnt and present to the people. In earlier decade, students learn in traditional setting where the instructor-led approach was used. Traditional classroom setting, provide access to the experts, involved students in questions and discussion. They are exposed to social interaction which provides them an opportunity to learn from others. In another case some students prefer an individualized or less structured environment and need self-paced learning material. Various learning styles of students need to be balanced by the educators which is the biggest challenge. By adapting traditional and modern education systems and techniques, it is possible for an educator to cope with emerging challenges in education.

There is always a teething trouble for the students when they come across various concepts, principles and processes, as it is essential for them to understand, memorize, rememorize and do it. Blended learning (BL) facilitates students to study and make them capable of changing their attitude towards learning. Researcher selects the topic to provide a suitable model to the education institute to implement blended learning in their institutes.
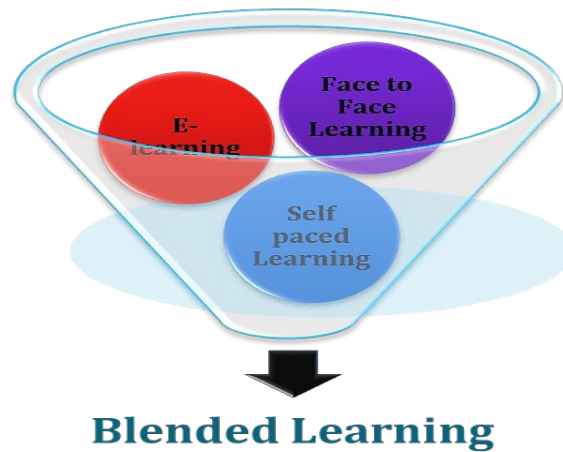
1. BLENDED LEANING

Blended learning is a combination of more than one method of delivery. By combining different modes of delivery educator can optimize the learning outcome. Blended learning entrenched the idea that learning is not just a one-time event rather it is a continuous process where learner is involved. Blending always provides various benefits over using any single learning delivery medium alone.

Blended Learning is an approach of meeting the challenges of tailor-made learning and development according to the needs of individuals by assimilating the innovative and technological advances. Blend of online learning with traditional learning offers interaction and participation in best manner. It helps in bringing traditional physical classes with elements of virtual education together.

1.1 Blended Learning Involves
▪ Face-to-face education involves traditional classroom learning.
▪ E-Learning is learning utilizing electronic technologies to access educational curriculum outside of a traditional classroom.
▪ **Self-Paced** Courses are available to watch or listen to on your own time and at your own **pace**, with no deadlines or expiration dates

Characteristics of Blended Learning

1.2 The Benefits Of A Blended Learning Approach
▪ Inclusion of more differentiated/personalized instruction.
▪ Increased access to resources, experts and learning opportunities.
▪ More authentic and student driven tasks being incorporated into the curriculum for higher student engagement.
▪ Greater opportunities for collaboration (especially beyond the classroom and involving the wider school community)

1.3 The Advantages Of Blended Learning

▪ From a pedagogical perspective, blended learning aims to incorporate the best aspects of face-to-face classroom learning experiences with the best of mobile and online learning experiences. It is an opportunity for students to practice technology skills in navigating online course materials and creating their own digital content for assessment

▪ An increase in learning outcome measures and lowering of attrition rates compared to fully online courses. The ability to reserve face-to-face time for interactive activities, such as higher-level discussions, small group work, debates, demonstrations, or lab activities

1.4 Challenges In Implementing Blended Learning Strategies:

BL comes with number of challenges for teachers and students to implementing, some of them are :

- Developing blended learning pedagogy
- Technological challenges
- Student preparation/support and transition
- Assessment considerations
- Culture and innovation.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:
- To determine the students' perceptions toward BL in terms of its suitability in higher education
- To study the student's perception towards blended learning process, feasibility, ease of using MOODLE in higher education and content used in Blended learning methods.

3. PROBLEM WITH TRADITIONAL EDUCATION METHODS
In recent past blended learning grabs the attention of researcher and educators. Tradition chalk and talk methods has the following issues higher education-
- Learning style of the learner changed due to fast pace technology
- Unable to provide hands on experience
- Lack of relevancy with the need of industry
- Availability of good educators
- Quality of institutions
- Excessive competition
- Lost focus of inculcating values and building personality
- Discourages deviances
- Lack of student's involvement and low attendance in class

To address these issues blended learning can provide suitable solutions. Researcher aims to study the perception of students in higher education towards Blended Learning pedagogies.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

This study was conducted under the three parameters-

a. Perception towards blended learning process,
b. Feasibility,
c. Ease of using MOODLE

in higher education and content used in Blended learning methods. In the present study, the investigator used the survey method. Structured questionnaire is designed to collect the information through google forms. Google form link were send to 120 students and 60 copies of questionnaire were distributed manually. Out of which 50 responses were collected through Google forms and 25 responses were collected through manual distribution of the questionnaires. Analysis is done with the help of descriptive statistics.

In the present study, students studying in MBA from one of the leading institute were chosen for the study where BL is implemented in various courses. Out of 180 students 75 respondents submitted their responses. Random sampling method is used for the sample selection.

5. DATA ANALYSIS

Table 1- Distribution Of Students According To Gender

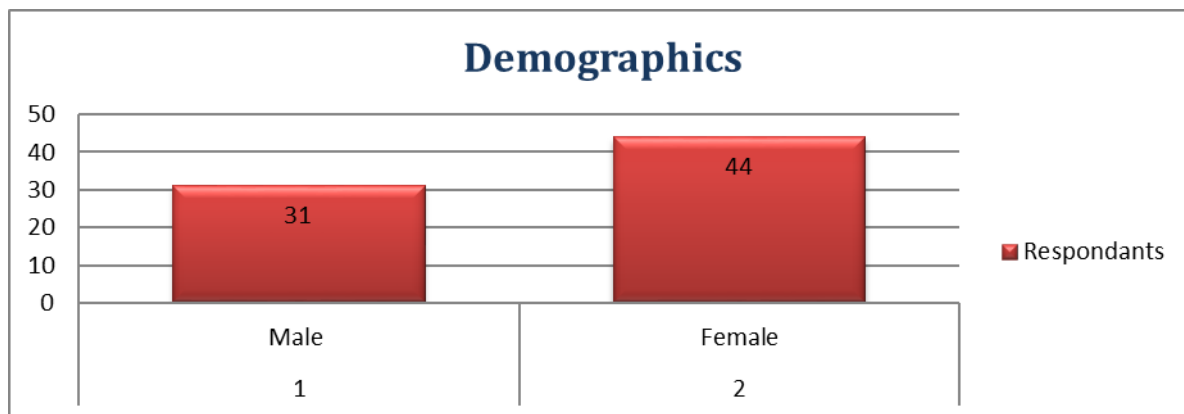| Sr. No	Gender	Respondents
1	Male	31
2	Female	44

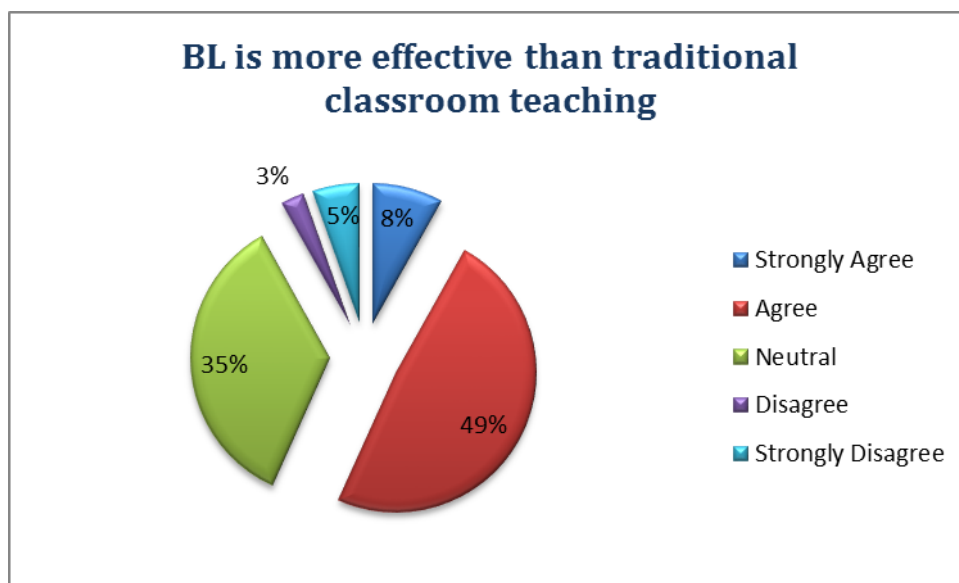**Figure 1- Distribution of Students According To Gender**

Figure 2- BL is more effective than traditional classroom teaching

The above graph shows that 8% students strongly agree and 49% students agree that blended learning is more effective than traditional classroom teaching. 57% students are of the opinion that BL is more effective.
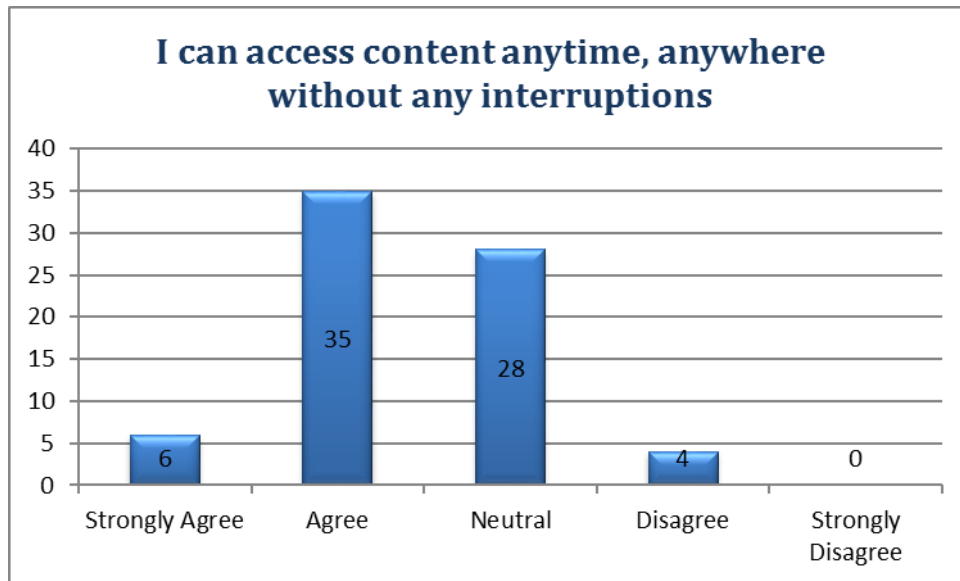
Figure 3- I can access content anytime anywhere without any interruptions

The above graph shows that 60% students are of the opinion that BL facilitate students to access study material and learn the topics of the course anytime, anywhere.
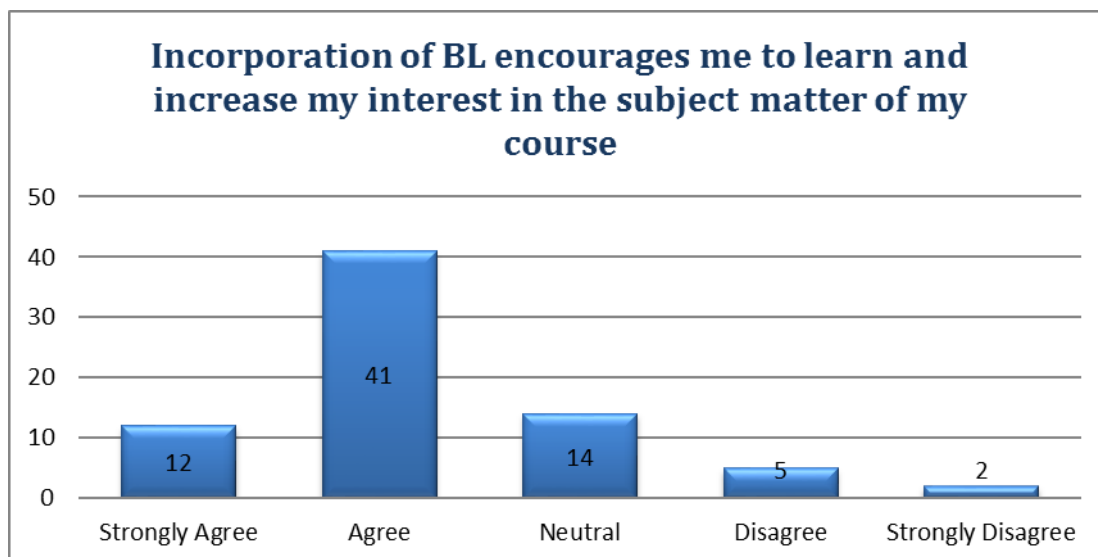

Figure 4- Incorporation of BL encourages me to learn and increase my interest in the subject matter of my course

The above graph shows that 71 % students are of the opinion that BL increase their interest in the subject by providing them access to the content anytime anywhere without any interruptions
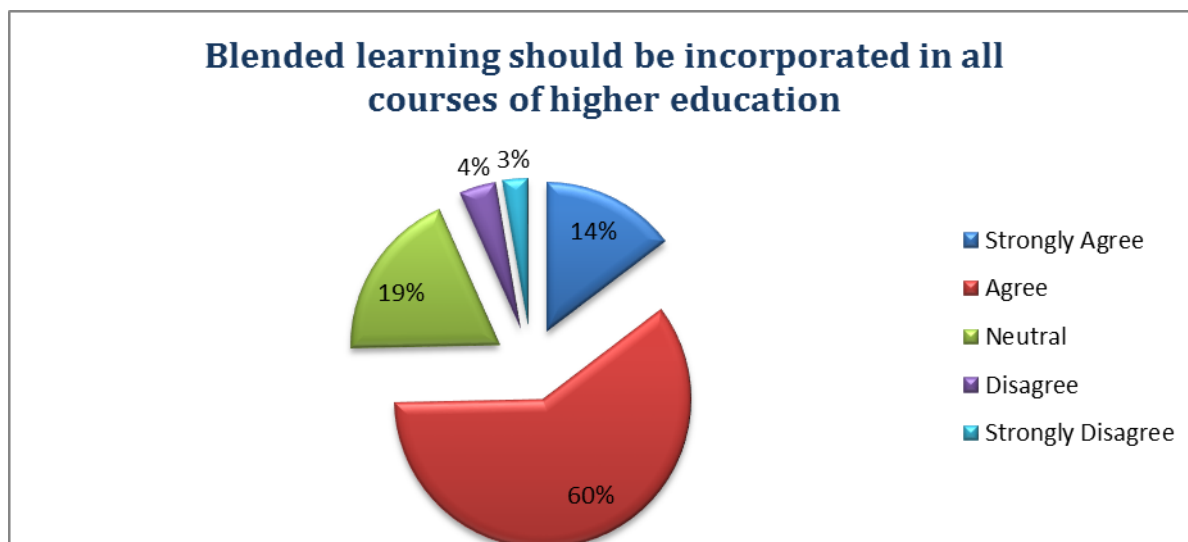
Figure 5-Blended learning should be incorporated in all courses of higher education

The above graph shows that 64% students are of the opinion that blended learning should be incorporated in higher education.

Table 2- Present The Students' View On BL Process

Frequency distribution of perceptions of ease of use (N=75). Median score of 3 indicates neutral stand and above 3 indicate agreement with the statement

Sr. No.	Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Median
1	BL should be incorporated in all courses of higher education	11	45	14	3	2	4
2	Incorporation of BL encourages me to learn and increase my interest in my course	12	41	14	5	2	4
3	BL is less stressful than traditional classroom teaching	13	26	25	2	8	4
4	BL is more effective than traditional classroom teaching	6	36	26	2	4	4
5	BL helps in effective utilization of time	9	43	18	2	2	4

Interpretation-From the above table it is observed that median is 4 for all the questions and outcome is towards absoluteness, hence we can conclude that perception of the students towards blended learning process is positive. Blended learning should be incorporated in higher education.

Table 3- Present The Students' View On Ease Of Using BL

Frequency distribution of perceptions of blended learning process (N=75). Median score of 3 indicates neutral stand and scores above 3 indicate agreement with the statement

Sr. No,	Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Median
1	Online learning is easy from learning perspective	2	41	25	6	0	4
2	Online learning is mode is user friendly	1	41	27	4	0	4
3	I can access content anytime, anywhere without any interruptions	6	35	28	4	0	4

Interpretation- From the above table it is observed that median is 4 for all the questions, outcome is towards absolute characteristics, and hence we can conclude that perception of the students towards ease of using blended learning is positive. Blended learning is easy to use, learn and also convenient as they can accesses the content anytime, anywhere without any interruption

Table 4- Present The Students' View On BL Contents

Frequency distribution of perceptions of blended learning process (N=75). Median score of 3 indicates neutral stand and scores above 3 indicate agreement with the statement

Sr. No,	Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Median
1	BL increases focus on topics of study	2	48	20	3	0	4
2	BL provides illustrative content for the study	5	51	15	2	0	4
3	I get opportunity for self-pace learning	18	40	15	0	0	4
4	The online activities on fulfill our course objectives	13	32	24	4	0	4
5	BL help me to learn and increase my interaction with my classmates which provide better learning experience.	14	43	14	1	1	4

Interpretation- From the above table it is observed that median is 4 for all the questions outcome is towards absoluteness, hence we can conclude that perception of the students towards learning content delivered through blended learning is positive. Blended learning helps to focus on particular topics. Self-paced learning help students in understanding the concept better and increase their interaction with peers. Peer interaction helps in better learning experience.

6. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

This study was done under the three parameter perception towards blended learning process, feasibility and ease of using MOODLE in higher education and content used in Blended learning methods. Structure questionnaire was used for the study. From the analysis of the data, it was found that for the entire questions median value is

4, which is showing that outcome has absolute characteristic irrespective of gender. The student's perception towards blended learning is very positive. Blended learning should be used in the higher education.

7. CONCLUSION

Teaching and learning is one of the areas in education which has been influenced by the rapid rate of innovation in technology. It describes a blended learning approach in teaching application of integration. The Blended learning approach used consists of face to face instruction, exercises from textbooks and developed courseware which was used in the tutorial class and also made available on the e-learning. Results obtained from the study involving the Blended Learning (BL) approach have shown that students demonstrate positive perceptions towards learning. Study also reveals that students are optimistic about incorporation of BL in Higher Education. Therefore, with the help of technology, Blended Learning can be used as an alternative approach in teaching and learning in order to motivate students.

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