

Original Article

Blended Learning a Valuable Tool to Teach 21st Century Skills

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Abstract: Combining the greatest aspects of online and in-person instruction is known as blended learning. The study's objectives are to teach 21st Century Skills using the blended learning approach for simple and efficient language acquisition and to incorporate both the development of 21st Century Skills and the blended learning approach as learning topics in our school system's curricula. The practices of the two primary 21st-century model components—soft and hard skills—are integrated through blended learning. With this more student-centered approach, kids can fully engage in ICT, Numeracy, problem-solving, and collaboration. With blended learning, students can engage, communicate, present, work in groups, debate, and exchange ideas and resources at any time and from any location. Through engaging in engaging activities and interacting with diverse personalities, students can optimise the blended learning approach and cultivate 21st-century competencies. The advent and popularity of blended learning can be leveraged to learn new skills and gain knowledge in the most efficient manner possible.

Keywords: Blended Learning, Student, ICT, Problem-Solving.

I. INTRODUCTION

Although blended learning is not a novel approach in education, it garnered prominence and was implemented amid the COVID-19 epidemic closures in order to maintain student engagement and motivation. Using online resources to supplement in-person instruction will increase students' interest in what they are learning. In this way, students will successfully learn 21st-century abilities.

Various 21st century skills are prioritised by districts, schools, and organisations based on the priorities of their respective communities. Nonetheless, educators generally concur that these abilities need to be incorporated into shared core education and learning experiences.

Teaching strategies and materials have been employed by classroom teachers to assist pupils in developing their abilities and learning objectives. Group projects, paper-based exams, visual aids, and in-person presentations have long been the mainstays of classroom education. Information technology has more recently changed global social, political, and economic landscapes. Information technology advancements have changed how individuals see themselves and their surroundings, which has made it necessary for the field of education to undergo parallel change and development at the same rate. In higher education, there is a growing need and demand to address the requirements of different students and offer relevant and stimulating learning opportunities. When paired with new technologies both inside and outside of the classroom, this naturally integrates information and communication technology into the traditional learning environment. The use of blended learning to teach pupils 21st century skills must be prioritised by the educational system. 21st century skills can be included into the educational system.

Without a doubt, the economy of the modern period is knowledge-based, and the ability to compete economically across borders depends on having skills that are up to date with modern demands. People today need to have specific abilities in order to live and work in a knowledge society that values collaboration over competition and relies heavily on technology for effective interpersonal communication. It was suggested that education ought to equip students with the knowledge and abilities needed to thrive in their communities and find employment in the twenty-first century. In light of this, some educational establishments have worked to create frameworks that specify 21st century competencies and offer recommendations for incorporating them into the curriculum. According to all of them, blended learning is the greatest and most effective technique to instruct a pupil. Our educational system offers a wide choice of effective and efficient learning experiences when blended learning is used. With blended learning, all of your learning-related issues are resolved. With the guidance of an always-motivating teacher, students are able to choose their own pace, giving them the flexibility to choose how best to study. In this manner, the student enjoys the process in addition to studying.

A. Blended Learning

Blended learning is an educational methodology that integrates in-person and virtual learning experiences. Online and offline learning should ideally work in tandem, each utilising its unique advantages. More opportunities for both higher-



quality and higher-quantity human connection in a learning environment are presented by blended learning. With blended learning, students can spend time together as well as alone. Because of the advantages that computer-mediated instructional tools offer, a community of learners can communicate at any time and from any location. A good combination of technology and human contact is provided by blended learning, which produces positive, socially supported learning experiences. Another way to look about blended learning is as a form of artefact that represents the difference between "traditional education" and digital learning. Naturally, this suggests that learning will only occur digitally in the future, which is a clumsy perspective. The key idea here is that blended learning incorporates both traditional and modern elements, as well as digital and physical learning.

Since blended or hybrid learning is still relatively new, not all educators employ it in the same manner. But there are now emerging trends. For example, the majority of instructors in blended learning environments communicate with students virtually using some form of course management system programme. While Moodle and Blackboard are still among the most popular learning management systems available today, cloud-based content and learning management systems are gradually replacing them. These kinds of platforms allow students to view lecture videos, monitor their progress on assignments, communicate with peers and professors, and access additional resources such as academic articles or PowerPoint presentations.

Blended learning offers,

- 1) Flexibility in their learning environment, which addresses different students' studying habits, schedules, and rhythms of studying. Some students do not realise that they need more time than their classmate until they get the chance to practise at home. It allows a student to practise comfortably from home and at the speed of each learner.
- 2) Personalised instructor feedback in and outside class. Some students are too shy to ask questions or to engage in a feedback session with the instructor. Blended learning provided non-face-threatening scenarios for all types of students. The teachers always give feedback on student's expression and on content in English.
- 3) Understanding the importance of face-to-face instruction. Given the practice that students had online they gained confidence in their language ability and proved this ability in class, boosting their language ego.

Blended learning maximises the student's exposure towards learning. Provide experience for all students of a variety of academic genres as well as opportunities for individual students to gain further experience in those genres relevant to their academic specialisms. Make available opportunities for students to make discoveries for themselves and maximise the opportunities for students' communication.

B. 21st Century Skills

Professionals such as educators, employers, researchers, and academics frequently refer to these skills as 21st-century skills. The knowledge, life skills, professional skills, habits, and characteristics that are vital to a student's success in the modern world—especially as they transition to college, the workforce, and adulthood—are referred to as 21st century skills. It is the responsibility of the instructor to design assignments and problem-solving exercises that will genuinely be useful to the students in the future. Students can accomplish this by working on difficult projects that need teamwork, goal-setting, negotiation, meaningful communication, and the creation of difficult products. Every lesson is prepared by the teacher, who will also support the growth of 21st century abilities. It could take some time for the student to get used to this new method of instruction. But soon, they'll start to feel more capable of exercising critical thought, asking questions and finding the answers, and using their creativity to express them. Most significantly, they will have far superior communication abilities.

Possessing the ability to apply appropriate software tools to process information, communicate knowledge using multimedia using practical and technical abilities, read thoroughly for meaning in multimedia content, and understand how to use information technology skills ethically. For students to achieve both now and in the future, they must not just become literate but also capable of using that literacy in their own particular information environments.

C. Features of 21st Century Skills:

a) Letting Students Lead the Learning

The finest learning settings are those in which students feel empowered to learn. Good teachers are more akin to facilitators, providing motivation and assisting learners in making their own discoveries. To ensure that kids learn for the rest of their lives, teachers should allow their students to be self-learners.

b) Creating an Inquiry-Based Classroom Environment

Students must be able to ask questions and then find the resources to answer them if they are to take charge of their own education. A KWL diagram (Know What You Know? What information do you seek? Questions like "What have you learned?" can help pupils become truly self-motivated learners.

c) Encouraging Collaboration

Sharing is the norm in the sound and dynamic classroom. Even more so in a language classroom, students are social creatures. Instructors ought to provide pupils every chance to organise into pairs and small groups. In addition to fostering the growth of speaking and listening abilities, this teaches the kids how to work cooperatively to accomplish tasks.

d) Developing Critical Thinking Skills

Memorization and recall are only two aspects of learning. Students who possess critical thinking skills go far beyond just information comprehension. These abilities help students handle issues in novel contexts, draw conclusions and generalisations, organise data into novel patterns, and create conclusions based on standards and supporting data. Instructors must to incorporate exercises that foster critical thinking into their teaching.

e) Encouraging Creativity

Throughout every lesson, educators should inspire their pupils to be creative. Through creative exercises, students can convey their learning in novel ways. Students' learning is reinforced and made more memorable by this synthesis and personalisation of information, which happens long after class.

D. Developing 21st-Century Skills through Blended Learning

The need for technical abilities has grown as a result of technology innovation and the world's constant change. To give it, teachers need to assess their own role in the classroom and assess whether their curriculum is geared towards assisting students in becoming successful and developing the skills necessary for this kind of learning environment. In the twenty-first century, teachers are using blended learning to help students manage vast amounts of content, acquire the knowledge and skills needed to use technology as an effective tool in a responsible way, and help students create their own learning styles.

Interaction: While virtual sessions with multimedia-rich content are accessible to students at any time and from any location with an internet connection, interactive trainings are conducted for the students in the classroom. Through the use of various content delivery techniques, these exercises hope to promote engagement, the acquisition of knowledge and skills in traditional classroom settings, and the continuation of the learning process through the use of online resources. Many of the educational tasks and activities that were once completed in traditional classroom settings are now effectively completed online or through electronic means. Students can engage in peer interaction and communication through a variety of options, including online communities, organisations, and forums established through a blended learning environment. Many social and interpersonal skills are developed as a result of this type of contact and open communication.

Communication: The opportunities to report and present these initiatives in an online learning environment promote student-to-student conversations and reflections. Blended learning enables educators to provide students with precise instructions and attainable objectives for group projects. Improved and motivated learners, academic success, teamwork, skill acquisition, etc. are all aided by communication. Through online learning initiatives, students are also given a variety of options to expand their knowledge outside of the traditional classroom setting. Students become more engaged as a result of the communication, which produces better data and work feedback. Students gain an awareness of their online presence and role when they communicate online through blended learning channels. This awareness helps them develop what is known as "netiquette skills," which are a set of guidelines for appropriate online behaviour that combine the terms "network" and "etiquette."

Activities: Interactive exercises are another method that blended learning aids in students' skill development. With blended learning, students can connect, communicate, present, work in groups, debate, exchange ideas, and share materials at any time and from any place. As a result, soft skills like teamwork, communication, IT, time management, problem-solving, and research are heavily trained in and promoted. Higher academic accomplishment is also greatly aided by the interactive activities. In this approach, students who participate in blended learning activities acquire a greater number of hard and soft skills necessary for the twenty-first century.

II. CONCLUSION

Leaders in higher education and business describe 21st century skills as the primary factor influencing performance in advanced coursework and the job. Students in our institutions are being prepared for careers that might not even exist in the contemporary world. Giving kids a solid skill set that will enable them to face unknown situations is the definition of career preparation. Social media has altered how people communicate with one another and introduced new difficulties while navigating social settings. Access to knowledge has significantly enhanced in the era of the Internet. Large-scale information processing and analysis are skills that students must acquire. Knowledge of the fundamentals of a subject can only go students so far; they also need to learn how to apply concepts and facts to difficult situations.

Blended learning is beginning to be used by many educational institutions and training programmes, and its popularity will only grow in the coming years. The fact that blended learning is adaptable to all kinds of learners is a significant advantage. Blended learning adjusts to your demands regardless of your age, whether you're a businessperson, retiree, or university student. You have the flexibility to continuously adjust your study schedule based on your availability, but you also have access to a well-organized support system to make sure you meet your learning objectives. This is where the next generation's education of 21st Century skills is greatly aided by blended learning.

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