

Promoting the Participation of Teachers and Students in Absorbing Blended Learning: A Crucial Need in Higher Education

M. Al Muthassir Farhana¹, Dr. Jabbar Al Muzzamil Fareen^{2*}

^{1,2} PDPM Indian Institute of information Technology, Design and Manufacturing, India

*Corresponding Author Email: ²jamfareen2006@yahoo.com

Abstract

The present higher education is in dire need to promote blended learning on par to the level of regular classroom learning. Today, both the teachers and students are in need to undertake teaching and learning process through both online and offline mode. Higher education needs to stabilize themselves in providing necessary tools and resources to promote both E-Learning and classroom learning. This paper is concerned in highlighting the interest and readiness of the teachers and students to incorporate blended and hybrid learning in their regular courses. Further, the present study emphasizes how the teachers and students can really make use of the limited resources and how the shortcomings of the limited provision of the resources can disrupt the process of online teaching and learning. The necessity for providing online platforms for teaching, learning and evaluation by the higher educational institutions and the challenges of the teachers and students to use it efficiently is also discussed. It is implied that the teachers and students need to be given sufficient training to overcome the pedagogical constraints and technical glitches to facilitate blended learning as an effective mode to support the didactic process of higher education.

Keywords

Blended learning, digital teaching, E-learning, higher education, hybrid education, online platform.

INTRODUCTION

Teaching is one of the noblest professions that in its entire course it delves on enlightening the students with required knowledge and skills. Teachers help students to acquire great skills of learning to understand the subject. Teaching learning process invokes both the teachers and students to engage in discussing new ideas and thoughts and disseminate knowledge and information on any given subject. As teachers play a pivotal role in promoting the quality of teaching and research in any educational institution, their impact on the students in their pursuit of adopting various pedagogical approaches and methods to learn and seek knowledge is never-ending. In this paper, a general analysis on the students' psychological traits and online learning difficulties and teacher's efficiency in resolving their online learning issues are vividly elucidated. The impact of COVID-19 on education and in particular, teachers' and students' preparation and their challenges in adopting hybrid education and its effect in new normalcy is discussed.

TEACHERS' AND STUDENTS' CHALLENGES IN SWITCHING TO HYBRID EDUCATION

Teachers face divergent problems in the process of teaching, learning and evaluation and it can be broadly undertaken to scrutinize their preferences in selecting and adopting various pedagogical approaches, methods, and strategies to the need of the subject. The cult of modern technologies in education has succeeded the traditional method of teaching by enhancing both teachers' and

students' use of digital platforms for teaching, learning, and evaluation [1], [2]. As today we are at the testing times of facing COVID surge with its first and second wave, educational institutions remain closed, but it emerged successfully with the adoption of digital learning without affecting students' education [3]. In the prevailing COVID-19 pandemic, neither the institutions nor the teachers and students are completely trained and prepared to switch suddenly to digital education. But as it is unwarranted, that the students' immediate education need not to be affected that the combined efforts of the teachers, students and the management and their readiness to act even without training is really a case that needs to be revered. Higher education has positively responded and immediately reacted to adopt online learning and use technology for its sustainability amid the pandemic.

The teachers endure stress and anxiety when they are to switch from the traditional to modern methods of teaching. When they are engrossed with limited technological resources and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) tools like computer, laptop, and smartphones on the part of both themselves and students, they are unable to cope with the prevailing tough situation to continuously engage the classes online [4], [5]. Both the teachers and students reveal about the low internet connectivity issues in the due course of their online classes and regret they are missing their regular physical classrooms. The teachers and students become helpless when they are not able to immediately switch into the digital classrooms and hence the procurement of technical tools and its utility in actual teaching has become mandatory [6]. When both teachers and students feel to be

more restless and uncomfortable if they are not able to become a technical savvy in the online classes, they become less confident to carry out the studies online. Lack of preparation on the part of a teacher or student to engage in the classes online makes both to struggle and thrive to use and update their ICT tools [7], [8], [9]. Gradually, the teachers with all their institutional support, engage collaboratively with students to work in the digital platforms like MOODLE and Canvas. With an initial struggle and gradually practicing to the digital teaching, the teachers are able to resolve their technical issues and glitches and helped the students to confidently perform in online classes.

In the primary and secondary education, due to the continuing process of online education with limited technological resources at the end of both teachers and students, they are not able to cope up with the challenges in digital teaching. The continuous surge of COVID-19 has disrupted every sphere of life and hence primary and secondary education sectors are not exceptional, as it has been highly affected too. But as the higher and technical education institutions are able to provide digital platforms and the teachers and students are able to procure technical tools and aids, they are able to stand defensive in all odds of the pandemic. The teaching learning process has not been hampered as they are able to smoothly conduct the classes online as well as evaluate the performances of the students in their digital platforms. In the post pandemic situation today, higher education is engrossed to embrace hybrid education model as a necessary approach to synchronize with both oncampus and online learning [10]. In this new normalcy, most teachers and students are much oriented towards adopting flexible learning in a hybrid curriculum.

STUDENTS' PSYCHOLOGICAL TRAITS AND THEIR ONLINE LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

Most students are confounded with their own personal and academic problems that they cannot share even with their friends too. They often seem to be depressed with their high stakes exams and feel to be more miserable to face the quizzes, surprise tests, weekly and monthly tests apart from the regular midterm tests. Students often need to regulate themselves and indulge in their studious online learning activities and should seek guidance from their teachers for their acute performances in exams [11]. By using the right direction and proper guidance from the teachers, students can excel in all their academic performances. The teachers generally have professional and psychological introspections with the peer teachers and students throughout the process of online teaching-learning and evaluation. Students learning abilities and interests and their confidence and capability to practice and perform in all the activities are quintessential for their successful performance in the exams.

Students' academic and psychological problems should be understood and analyzed by teachers through their continuous formal and informal internal assessments and online class observation. When student fails to realize the

purpose of their online learning, they are not able to engage in active learning process. They are not able to keenly participate in oral and written activities. They are not able to keenly involve on the given topics and themes and hence they lack interest to converse in group discussions. They are not able to easily collaborate with other students to consistently perform in group projects. As most students lack good concentration and sufficient interest, they are not able to pay high attention and focus on the subject. Most students rely on selective intensive study to learn the syllabus content that are mostly expected or asked in the exams. Hence most students focus on reading the content related to examination-oriented syllabus only. They are always inclined at applying coaching techniques to practice previous question papers for securing more marks in the exams. Further, to get even a pass or minimum score in the subject, they seem to memorize with or without understanding the content while facing high stakes exams. Hence, the teachers need to organize the students and motivate them throughout the learning process. Generally, students are not regularly committed on doing the assignments at the right time. And moreover, most good students fall prey to over confidence, if they perform better in the exams. The act of over confidence and even slight negligence to revise the subject makes them to attain low percentages in the final exams. Hence sometimes, teachers could not rely upon even the brilliant students too. Hence, in this context, teachers should always encourage and appreciate the students to engage in more productive tasks.

While undertaking psychological introspections, it is observed that most students skip their breakfast and lunch and hence they are found to be physically affected and lack sufficient energy to perform the routine classroom tasks. This has been one of the major concerns in academics that students' health is deteriorating with stress, anxiety, and lack of nutritious intake. Both parents and teachers need to closely scrutinize and monitor their wellness and help them in developing their physical and mental health and stability. They need to nurture essential potentialities to shape and ignite themselves to display their learning responsibilities at the right time. Good online learning reveals the intensity of optimistic outlook, and it endows self-motivation and self-appraisal skills. Teachers should help the students to accomplish better academic record besides maintaining decorum, good character, and conduct. They should nurture the discipline and basic etiquette in the students and help them to inculcate those ethics and values that are keenly observed in both academic and workplace contexts. This will help them to follow better qualities in life and will also definitely impact on their interest and involvement in committed online learning.

Students can be found disturbed if they lack confidence in gaining sufficient knowledge of the subject in the online classes. Due to lack of interest in the subject concerned, a student is unable to grasp the subject and a teacher has to make immense efforts to provoke interest in the mind of the student. When teachers are able to reform the attitude of the

students and are able to make them involved in active learning, they become more optimistic in understanding their learning objectives and concentrate on their workouts. Despite finding fault with the students, a good teacher will focus in mending their learning attitudes through their general appraisals. Students need to be guided to develop their online interpersonal communication skills and be courteous with fellow friends and other teachers too [12], [13]. They need to be motivated to carry out their routine online study in a more systematic order so that they can plan and execute their learning in a more organized way [14]. The importance of a teacher can be better analyzed through their positive approaches in helping students for the refined improvement in their relevant areas of studies. As the teachers should come down to the level of the students for helping them to understand the subject, it is equally essential that the students should also aspire to develop their skills to the expectations of their teachers.

TEACHERS' PSYCHOLOGICAL TRAITS AND THEIR DIFFICULTIES IN ONLINE TEACHING

Due to the nation-wide lockdown in the pandemic, most educational and industrial sectors endure financial losses, and the staffs are at the risk of losing their jobs and due to the rising unemployment crisis, most of them are not able to immediately get into new placements. Hence, due to the growing rigidity and crisis of lockdown, most self-financing educational institutions reduce the perks or at the risk of placing the teachers only after lockdown. Teachers feel to be more insecure about their position and are always in danger of losing their jobs. Due to ongoing lockdowns, economic crises, and health depression prevailing in COVID-19, students, as well as teachers, are not able to immediately avail the resources they need for digital learning. Moreover, as most employees are deprived from job opportunities as in any other commercial sectors, in educational institutions too, most teachers are encountering loss of jobs, and they are not able to get into new jobs as no new openings are immediately prevalent today in this pandemic situation. Their expectations for regular salary and the threat of unwarranted salary deductions in the pandemic make them to be more insecure in rendering their regular services. Hence, the perpetual ability and dignity of the teachers are at stake due to the loss of jobs or the deductions of the salary perks amid nationwide lockdown tensions prevailing throughout the country.

TEACHER'S CHALLENGES AND REFORMS IN FACILITATING HYBRID LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Teachers' striving for perfection and the problems they face in the educational institutions can be broadly examined in terms of their academic liabilities and functions. The concern of a teacher in any educational institution is to help the students' progress in their studies and develop their learning abilities and skills to achieve their intended learning outcomes of the course. A teacher's performance is

appreciated only through the result of the students gain in the examination. If a teacher is unable to produce better results all the blame falls on the part of the teacher. Hence, the teachers shoulder the responsibilities of promoting good results, thus motivating, and monitoring the students to be more conscious in learning the subject with the examination point of view. Their perspective of teaching is centered around examination-oriented syllabus, as the results of the students' performances in the examination affect the standards and potentialities of both the teachers and students.

Teachers generally attempt the students to realize their responsibilities to undertake online learning tasks and mentor them to their needs. As students seem to be not much serious about their studies or when they are less indulged in their learning, teachers need to guide them to become prompt to contribute to their active learning in their studies. Further, students are concerned about the high-cost education and the stress they endure towards availing educational loan to get into their higher education. Hence, the teachers need to motivate them to learn the subject by applying appropriate strategies to raise their Cumulative Performance Indicator (CPI), so that they can succeed in academics and seeking placements too. A teacher must continuously monitor, guide, motivate and mend the students for their continuous progress in the course. When the teachers are unable to guide and motivate the students in the right direction, and the students are not serious in involving themselves in their studies, all their due efforts on their teaching excellence or their expertise in subject are not at all recognized.

The divergent academic and administrative factors found in self-financing educational institutions are rigid and rigorous in nature and complicated in structure. Teachers are unable to engage in further studies and update the knowledge as they are heavily extracted to render their routine services in the institution. Improper recognition of their teaching and other functional duties makes them to be more disillusioned. They generally feel disappointed when they are not recognized and appreciated by the management, colleagues, and students. They always tend to have high expectations of the performances of the students and generally work at procuring better results in the public examinations. When sometimes, if the students are not adopting self-directed learning skills, they should prompt them to undertake their studies, and ask them to collaborate with other students to complete the group projects. Due to the academic pressure for yielding better student outcomes in an institution, teachers are generally bounded to assign projects to the students. With appropriate training and efficient services, all the teachers are now able to understand the ground realities to face their students' online learning requirements and management's expectations in working out their demands.

Teachers should have a profound knowledge of student's psychology and should act to improve their online learning beliefs and actions. Some students fall prey to their own psychological conflicts or to the complexity of too many academic intrusions. They are largely begotten with

inferiority complex and lacks mutual understanding between themselves. This also makes a teacher help the students to collaborate themselves and pacify between them. Due to the procrastination attitudes of students in completing their class assignments in time, most teachers incline to indulge them in creating their portfolio and assess them through their project writing. In the higher education, when most students are concerned with the ongoing dearth in career prospects in their field, they eventually loose interests to study. This also affects the teachers to design specialized professional courses which can really meet the needs of the industry.

As online learning is pivotal for today's education, teachers should be always aware of the prevailing students' online learning difficulties and mend their problems at the earliest, so that the impact of slow learning complications should not fall on the fellow students [15]. Besides helping the students to become more focused in their learning outcomes, they should also be groomed with self-introspection and self-appraisal activities. This will help them to cultivate their self-assessment skills and gradually it will also aid them to observe, monitor and review their peers too. The act of self-monitoring, peer review and teachers' feedback will help the students to ascertain their success in their academic pursuits. This will really attribute to the teachers to realize how far they are able to contribute to the pursuit of online education and how far they are able to succeed in their hybrid teaching goals. A teacher is a very responsible professional in society who visualizes learning, hopes and anxieties of the student generations yet to come. The prime task of a teacher is to educate the students with utmost care and responsibility. They should take adequate measures to train them to work to the needs of the industry. Teachers should be good observers and prompt the students to indulge in outcome-based learning. The teachers need to scaffold and alleviate any false claims and errors that took place while assessing the projects of the students. They should emphasize the importance of technology and modern approaches in education at all regular intervals and promote better academic performance of the students.

A teacher is a great academician who delves for the upgradation of students. The foremost task of a teacher is to highlight the hidden talents of a student and encourage them in all aspects for their betterment and to shine in the relevant field. Teachers should act as a facilitator who should always prompt for the better professional endeavors of a student and develop their skills at all considerable means. A teacher should be a person of prodigy, their potential for the development and progress of the student and institution is always highly desirable. Teachers should not have any partiality to do with the students and if any discrepancies are to be found, it should be immediately rectified by them. They should be unbiased and always conscious for creating a refined scholastic atmosphere in the institution and should take immediate disciplinary action if any misbehavior or misconduct is to be found on the part of the students. The true face of a faculty and student shows the image of an

institution. Hence, they should always be refined to cult true personality and positive attitudes. There should not be any disguises or false presumptions to be found on the part of both the teachers and students.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

The government and the management need to closely monitor the problems that students encounter while learning, and the necessary requirements like internet connectivity need to be provided on par with the power supply for all the common hold and students to reap the benefits of technology, media, and education. In self-financing educational institutions, most teachers are in threat of losing their perks and sometimes they are in the risk of losing their jobs too in the COVID pandemic situation. This needs to be immediately addressed as it will be the threat for the quality and values that add to the profession of teaching and the teachers' mindset towards digital learning. As students can utmost benefit from hybrid learning, all the key players in the education sectors should persistently contribute for developing oncampus and online learning with necessary amenities, resources and ICT tools for the successful engagement of teaching learning fraternities.

REFERENCES

- [1] Abbott, C. (2001). *ICT: Changing Education*. Sydney: Psychology Press. ISBN: 9780750709507
- [2] Baporikar, N. (2016). Technology integration and innovation during reflective teaching. *International Journal of Information and Communication Technology Education*, 12(2), 14–22.
- [3] Dhawan, S. (2020). Online learning: A panacea in the time of COVID-19 crisis. *Journal of Educational Technology Systems*, 49(1), 5–22.
- [4] Bonvillian, W. B. & Singer, S. R. (2013). The online challenge to higher education. *Issues in Science and Technology*, 29(4), 1–15.
- [5] Kebritchi, M., Lipschuetz, A., & Santiago, L. (2017). Issues and challenges for teaching successful online courses in higher education: A literature review. *Journal of Educational Technology Systems*, 46(1), 4–29. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0047239516661713>
- [6] Vajargah, K. F., Jahani, S., & Azadmanesh, N. (2010). Application of ICTs in teaching and learning at university level: the case of Shahid Beheshti University. *The Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology*, 9(2), 33–39.
- [7] Chen, W. & Jia, J. (2016). Comparison of online and onsite students' learning outcomes and experiences in a massively open online course in China. *Journal of Educational Technology Development and Exchange (JETDE)*, 9(1), 67–88. <http://doi.org/10.18785/jetde.0901.05>
- [8] Meskhi, B., Ponomareva, S., & Ugnich, E. (2019). E-Learning in higher inclusive education: Needs, opportunities and limitations. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 33(3), 424–437.
- [9] Cohen, A., Barot, O., Hagit, G., & Ezra, O. (2020). Student perceptions of online teaching in higher education in light of the Corona crisis: Promoting and inhibiting factors. School of Education, Tel Aviv University. (Hebrew)

- [10] Cronjé, J. C. (2020). Towards a new definition of blended learning. *Electronic Journal of E-Learning*, 18(2), 114–121. <http://doi.org/10.34190/EJEL.20.18.2.001>
- [11] Oluniyi, O. & Apena, T. T. (2016). Adoption of e-learning among instructors in higher institutions in Nigeria: A case study of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria. *The International Journal of Management Science and Information Technology*, 20, 53–73.
- [12] Croxton, R. A. (2014). The role of interactivity in student satisfaction and persistence in online learning. *MERLOT Journal of Online Learning and Teaching*, 10(2), 314–326.
- [13] Zheng, B. & Warschauer, M. (2015). Participation, interaction, and academic achievement in an online discussion environment. *Computers & Education*, 84, 78–89. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2015.01.008>
- [14] Hung, M., & Chou, C. (2015). Students' perceptions of instructors' roles in blended and online learning environments: A comparative study. *Computers & Education*, 81, 315–325. doi:10.1016/j.compedu.2014.10.022
- [15] He, W., Xu, G., & Kruck, S. E. (2014). Online is education for the 21st century. *Journal of Information Systems Education*, 25(2), 101–105.