

# Blended learning: A way forward to develop teaching skills and competencies among student-teachers'

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## ABSTRACT

Incorporation of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in education has changed the total scenario of education system. Due to its ease of access it touches all level of education starting from primary to higher education. The use of ICT is more in higher education than the other level of education. In teacher education too, ICT plays a pivotal role. It has significant influence in development of teaching skills and competencies of student- teachers'. Development of skills and competencies of the student-teachers' depends upon their learning environment. Collaborative learning method yields high level of skills and competencies in students-teachers' than the other methods of learning. In this paper, an attempt has been made to analyse the usefulness of blended learning in developing teaching skills and competencies among student- teachers'.

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## 1. Introduction

The advancement of technologies has brought changes in all level of education. One major change brought about by technology in education is that communities now extend beyond the classroom and continue to grow virtually by means of new and innovative technologies (G.Lord & Lomicka, 2008, p. 159).The most practiced form of the e-learning in the higher educational institutions is blended learning (Jachin & Usagawa, 2017, p. 1482).Now a day's blended learning is increasingly adopted at all level of learning. "Blended learning is defined as structured opportunities to learn, which use more than one learning or training method, inside or outside the classroom" (Marunic, 2015, p. 61).Blended learning is a combination of e-learning and traditional face to face learning. "Blended learning is appropriate for students who live far away from the university or have other commitments that conflict with the on-campus class time" (Alebaikan & Troudi, 2010, p. 51).Blended learning provides opportunity to the students to learn from outside of the classroom and maximizes the learning opportunities of the students. Blended learning emphasizes on learning outcomes rather than combining or matching different learning methodologies or style in order to maximize learning (Singh & Reed, 2006). Successful implementation of blended learning increase accessibility, learning flexibility and lower the cost.

## 2. Benefits of Blended learning

**Matches students need:** Students comes to an institution with different background and characteristics having different needs. In a traditional classroom, students gets less opportunity to expose themselves and hence to meet their needs. In blended learning students get the optimum opportunity to expose themselves and hence get the opportunity to meet their needs. Blended learning allows students to learning when they need and what they need.

**Extended learning time:** Blended learning occurs across the class room and beyond the classroom. Using blended learning students can learn from their home, workplace

irrespectively. Flexibility nature of blended learning allows the students to learn when they want to learn.

**Interaction outside the classroom:** Blended learning maximizes the interaction between the students and teachers. When the interacting between the students and teachers takes place beyond the four wall of the classroom, it makes learning of the students more effective. Students can interact with teachers via email, app etc. and make learning more beautiful and successful.

**Improves the quality of teaching and learning:** Quality of teaching and learning depends upon the methods adopted for the teaching and learning. Quality of teaching and learning is expected when the methods adopted are suitable for both teaching and learning. As blended learning is combination of face to face learning and e-learning, it helps in improving the standard of teaching and learning. Online resources help the teachers to gather study material from different sources which are globally competent. Here, both face to face learning and e-learning becomes supplements to each other and hence it becomes more effective.

**Enhance student's interest:** In teaching learning process when technology is incorporated then it likely becomes more interested and focused. Studies have shown that students are more focused and interested in ICT based learning. In blended learning students get the experience of online learning along with face to face learning, so it becomes more interesting for them.

**Student's autonomy:** Students of higher classes are more diverse and their needs are also diverse. In a classroom setup, it is not possible to give them autonomy to fulfill their diverse needs. But blended learning provides autonomy to the students to meet their diverse needs. In blended learning, students can learn what they want to learn by means of e-learning and can learn when they want to learn. As there is scope for self-learning, hence

students enjoy the autonomy to learn according to their own pace.

**Students own pace:** In a classroom, all the students possess different level of intelligence and capacity to learn. In the same class it is not possible for each of the students to pace with the flow or according to their pace of learning. Blended learning allows students to learn according to their own pace. The ease of availability of various e-resources irrespective of time and place and the flexible nature of blended learning allow students to learning according to their own capacity and interest.

### 3. Blended learning in teacher education

The use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has become a pivotal part of our day to day life. Blended learning approach recognized to be an effective in teacher education and has long been used in classroom in many ways (Duhaney, 2012, p. 197). Blended learning ensures collaborative learning to students and teachers whilst accommodating their own learning style and capacity. Teacher education tries to develop teaching skills and competencies among the student-teachers'. Development of quality of education of a country depends upon the quality of its teachers. Though technology has developed and occupied the classroom to some extent, still it is unable to replace a teacher. For improving the quality of education, the foremost duty of teachers is to perform his/her duties and responsibilities effectively. But a teacher can perform his/her duties and responsibilities effectively when he/she acquires the skills and competencies requisite for an effective teacher. Teacher education inculcates those skills and competencies among the student-teachers' which later on they apply when they go to the real field. A trained and qualified teacher can only make

teaching learning more useful and effective. In developing skills and competencies among the student-teachers' blended learning found to be an effective method of learning. Through blended learning both teacher educators and trainees become benefitted by availing the combined mode of learning i.e. face to face learning and e-learning. In blended learning students-teacher' gets more opportunity to explore themselves by availing online materials and resources of their needs. The extended interaction between the trainer and trainees in blended learning gives ample opportunities to the trainees for developing teaching skills and competencies.

Teacher education prepares the future teachers which will one day become the backbone of the education system. The role of teacher is becoming more demanding and broadening. So, the student-teachers' should be prepared accordingly that their teaching skills and competencies developed up to the level and become an effective teacher of future. It is only possible when student-teachers' are more exposed by means of collaborative learning.

### 4. Conclusion

Blended learning is the mostly used form of e-learning in higher education. Due to its ease of accessibility and flexibility blended learning is becoming the most common method of learning in all level of education. Researches have shown that quality of education can be improved by implementing blended learning benefiting both teachers and students. For quality improvement of teacher education and its teacher trainees, blended learning can be the way forward. This paper shows the positive impact of blended learning in teacher education and how blended learning can develop or improve skills and competencies among the student-teachers'.

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