QUALITY LEARNING EXPERIENCE IN BLENDED LEARNING THROUGH CONSTRUCTIVISM

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ABSTRACT

In the present times, it is imperative to increase the learning outcomes and to improve the quality of learning among the learners. There should be such a framework that integrates the online and face-to-face learning experiences as well as make students the active participants to learn on their own. This way the learner development can be done effectively. Blended learning is one such model that has great potential to provide enormous opportunities to meet the diverse needs of all the learners in the class. Blended learning is a contemporary perception that holds the rewards for both traditional classroom teaching as well as ICT supported teaching learning including offline and online learning. In constructivism, the students become active participants in the learning process and construct knowledge on their own and find meaning through experience. The level of communication and interaction between students will also increase that will lead to quality learning experience. In blended learning environment there is much scope for constructivist learning. This paper seeks to highlight the role of constructivism in blended learning through constructivist learning theory. Moreover, the paper tries to explain that how constructivist application in blended learning milieu helps in providing quality learning to the learners.

***Keywords**: Blended Learning, Constructivism, Constructivist Learning Theory.*

INTRODUCTION

In present times, students experience the world through internet. The escalating access to internet has changed the focus to integrated classrooms. Therefore, teachers also have great opportunity to teach through online activities. The online tools have great prospective to cause constructive learning in the classroom and if used effectively will yield fruitful educational results. The introduction of digital devices in the classroom provides quality

learning experiences to the students and results in constructive learning. Through this paper we will discuss that how quality learning experiences in blended learning can be provided through constructivism.

QUALITY LEARNING EXPERIENCE

Quality learning is about dynamic creation of knowledge. It enables the learners to manage their own learning. The process of learning is made clear to them. This way the learners develop critical thinking skills and ensured that they are part of a lifelong learning journey (Meyerson, 2016). Quality learning experience in blended learning setting can occur only through effective observance of some valid learning theories and constructive principles.

BLENDED LEARNING

The blended learning signifies a broad variety of deliverance choices, devices and pedagogies. It refers to an instruction that is a combination of traditional face-to-face and online elements. Blended learning means, "A student learns partly in a controlled setting away from home and partly through online delivery with some part of student control over time, place, and/or pace" (Horn & Staker, 2011).

Blended learning should be viewed as a didactic approach that unites the effectiveness and socialization prospects of the classroom with technically enhanced dynamic learning potentialities of the online setting, rather than a part of delivery modalities (Dziuban, Hartman and Moskal, 2004). Currently, the blended learning is known as mixed learning that holds rich learning tactics. A blended learning plan may comprise of one or complementary plans grouping (Harvey and Chris, 2001):

- Online and Offline learning settings.
- Collaborative and Individual learning settings.
- Organized and Un-organized learning settings.
- Instructive advancements (e.g. Constructivism, Behaviourism, Cognitivism) to create the finest learning result with or without ideas of technology.

Blended learning is viewed as an innovative move towards teaching learning where electronic tools, face-to-face interfaces in the classroom are fastened together. We can say that in blended learning both learner-centered and teacher centered modes are applied. This innovative move towards teaching learning has synchronized all factors of education with contemporary practices of instruction, variety of softwares and networking. The growing

propensity to utilize blended learning in educational set up is due to variety of motives it carries out such as -

- Builds up the decisive and innovative thinking.
- Develops Problem Solving Skills.
- Makes an individual self reliant.
- Encourages shared thoughtfulness and value for people.
- Forms basis for deep learning and gives self direction.
- Encourages social interfaces and support (Lindsay, 2004).
- Emphasizes the learning modes, construction and evaluation of knowledge (Fook et.al, 2005).
- Supports lasting and self-sufficient knowledge (Fook et.al, 2005).

In blended learning, the instructor chooses from assorted online learning tools as well as conventional face-to-face educational ways to systematize a learning milieu that congregate the needs of each learner in a finest way. Blended learning signifies reforming programme to attain the targets which cannot be accomplished separately either through online or by face-to-face learning.

In other words, blended learning is regarded as the cause of information for programme in order to attain instructive objectives effectively. On this basis, it is supposed that blended learning is the optimization of achieving learning objectives. Therefore, the transmit of didactic skills to an individual at appropriate time can be possible through the use of innovative learning technologies as per the individual learning style (Sing and Reed, 2001) and (Huang, et.al, 2008).

CONSTRUCTIVISM

Constructivism claims that reality is more in the mind of discern; that means discern creates the reality. Constructivism places the learner in active role of constructing knowledge. The identification of diverse learning practices lies in constructivism which the instructor brings in the learning set up and each learner is expected to build up a unique understanding of original information. In constructivism, the instructor acts as guide in processing the information from prosperous basis. Here, the instructor doesn't give explanation of concepts, rather expects the learners to create information through their effort and conversation.

CONSTRUCTIVISM LEARNING THEORY

Constructivism learning theory is an idea that increases student's rational and conceptual development. In order to create the quality experiences in blended learning, the constructivist learning theory provides strong basis for integrating online and face-to-face learning. It supports the combination of online and face-to-face learning practices for structuring the blended learning. For the appropriate use of constructivist theory, a learning atmosphere should be devised, executed and then directed through the course of group effort and interface among the learners, so that learning is created by the group, rather than just the individual (Fernando, 2005). As per constructivist learning theory, the constructivism is as follows -

COGNITIVE CONSTRUCTIVISM

The primeval model of constructivism is referred to as cognitive constructivism (Apedoe and Reeves, 2006). It emphasizes the enhancement of understanding that takes place within an individual learner. It upholds the individual learner revelation and development of performance goals for individual learners. Here, the learners are active participants in their own learning. In the quest of gathering fresh information, the learners create new ways of thinking critically and profound learning.

SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVISM

The inclusion of social element in the course of learning also leads to knowledge construction. In social constructivism, the knowledge is created through social interface where the learner processes the information socially and then internalizes it. In social constructivism, the learners build up the information in a social context and then internalize it. In social constructivism, the social order and situation plays a significant part in comprehending and start of deep learning (Bryceson, 2007).

In social constructivism, the learners are not only active participants in their own learning but also active participants in the learning of others. The exchange of ideas takes place between learners outside of the class and experts (Harkness, 2009). The situation to which knowledge is concerned is of worth in social constructivism. The interaction of learners with the learners of other perspectives, cultures and contexts strengthen their conceptual understanding.

BLENDED LEARNING AND CONSTRUCTIVISM

In an instructive setting, blended learning is supportive in improving the learning of learners. It has immense possibility for augmenting the knowledge and social contact. The

fact is that learning is expected as a social practice where we come across the dealings between learners and teachers.

Therefore, blended learning can easily create the social contact between the learner's ideas and knowledge. Moreover, the resultant effect of constructive utilization of blended learning is formation of learning communities online as well as face-to-face (Song, 2005). There are numerous ways in blended learning that lead to constructivism. Here, we will throw light on two of them; such as –

A. INQUIRY BASED BLENDED LEARNING

It is student centered investigation that utilizes case studies, testing, data analysis and research to motivate students to develop answers to consequential queries (Avsec and Kocijancic, 2016). In inquiry based blended learning, students solve the problems through inquiry and reveal the understanding of students for themselves.

Working independently by the students for inquiring represents the cognitive constructivism and working collaboratively for inquiring will represent social constructivism. In inquiry based blended learning, students can engage in inquiry by using various technology tools and the teacher can connect through face-to-face interaction with the students and direct them towards suitable conclusions (Avsec and Kocijancic, 2016).

B. ONLINE DISCUSSIONS

In the blended learning, for social interaction the learners can use blogs, discussion forums, chats and wikis. Online discussion provides flexible timings to learners to engage. Therefore, both the learner and teacher can review, throw light on and refer to the involvement in the discussion.

It was found that online discussions enable individual students to combine the ideas shared by others in the discussion forum. It specified that online discussions can generate social constructivist learning experiences and a sense of easy connection and enhances student perception of learning (Puntembekar, 2006).

CONCLUSION

In nutshell, we can say that the success of providing quality learning experiences in blended learning depends on some constructive principles. The learners can create knowledge cognitively as well as socially. Through variety of learning approaches and technological tools, they can improve their critical thinking, analytical power, knowledge construction, collaborative working and problem solving ability.

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