Research Paper **Education**

Hybrid Distance Learning: A New Paradigm

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ABSTRACT *Hybrid programs are sometimes offered in conjunction with online-only courses. Students who like personal interaction with instructors and those who can get to a classroom on a weekend or weeknight may prefer a hybrid program. Others who can't make it to the classroom because of work or family obligations or those that prefer to work autonomously can opt to finish their coursework entirely online. Hybrid learning approach is also called Blended learning approach. Thus, in 'Blended learning' or 'Hybrid learning' educational approach traditional classroom is integrated with an online component.*

INTRODUCTION

In an era of rapid developing educational technologies, distance education have notably affected the ways in which we communicate and learn. It fosters learning and teaching in a variety of ways. One of the many advantages of distance education is that it offers instructors and students a flexible learning setting in terms of time and location. **"Distance education is becoming a good way to acquire knowledge separate from the traditional method of attending the classroom"** (Schmidt & Gallegos, 2001). Learning does not require students to being physically present in the same place as an instructor (Walker, 2005) nor at the same time. Distance education might be used for different purposes such as supported learning, **hybrid learning (combination of face-to-face and online learning)**, and entirely online learning (Pearson & Trinidad, 2005**).**

Certain skills can't be taught entirely from a distance .Sometimes an instructor has to be physically present in order for students to get the most out of a lecture or demonstration. Many distance learning universities understand this and offer hybrid programs which have the potential to enhance the quality of learning. Distance learning hybrid programs are those that combine learning both online and in a classroom. Sometimes the need to collaborate with fellow students is best achieved in close quarters. This need can be fulfilled by hybrid distance learning.

The Hybrid learning environment integrates the advantages of e-learning with some advantageous aspects of the traditional method, such as face-to-face interaction. Its goal is to provide the most efficient and effective instruction experience by combining delivery modalities (Sen, 2011). Hybrid learning is described by Thorne as "**a way of meeting the challenges of tailoring learning and development to the needs of individuals by integrating the innovative and technological advances offered by online learning with the interaction and participation offered in the best of traditional learning.**" Hybrid learning provides a flexible platform which helps in addressing the diversity seen in student's learning styles and needs through the integration of interactive online techniques with more traditional teaching strategies. **Hybrid learning systems change the way learners learn but also change the way the teachers teach**.

Hybrid/Blended Learning Framework

Therefore, Hybrid programs are sometimes offered in conjunction with online-only courses. Students who like personal interaction with instructors and those who can get to a classroom on a weekend or weeknight may prefer a hybrid program. Others who can't make it to the classroom because of work or family obligations or those that prefer to work autonomously can opt to finish their coursework entirely online. **Hybrid learning approach is also called Blended learning approach. Thus, in 'Blended learning' or 'Hybrid learning' educational approach traditional classroom is integrated with an online component.**

The Sloan Consortium defines student satisfaction as, **"Students are successful in the learning and are pleased with their experience"** (J. C. Moore, 2009).A similar definition is given by Sweeney and Ingram (2001) and they define satisfaction as, **"the perception of enjoyment and accomplishment in the learning environment**."Both definitions focus on accomplishment and success in learning, and pleasure and enjoyment with the experience. Wu, Tennyson, and Hsia (2010) highlights the importance of satisfaction in a blended learning environment, define **satisfaction as the sum of student feeling and attitude that results from aggregating all the benefits that a student hopes to receive from blended learning environment system.**

Students spend considerable time and money, as well as exerting substantial effort in obtaining a quality education and should perceive their post-secondary educational experiences as being of high value. Student satisfaction is important because it influences the student's level of motivationwhich is an important psychological factor in student success (American Psychological Association)

Several factors influence student satisfaction in the hybrid-learning environment. Walker (2005) has identified six factors which influence hybrid distance learning: **instructor support, student interaction and collaboration, personal relevance, authentic learning, active learning, and student autonomy.**

Instructor Support
Walker defined Instructor Support as "the extent to which the instructor is approachable and responds quickly with feedback". In present study instructor support means the extent, to which the instructor helps, gives prompt responses to and is accessible to students.

Student Interaction and Collaboration
Student Interaction and Collaboration is defined as the opportunity to interact with each other, exchange information, and engage in collaboration. In present study student interaction and collaboration means the extent to which students have opportunities to interact with each other, exchange information and engage in collaboration.

Personal Relevance
Personal relevance is the "connection between student's out-of-school experiences". In present study personal relevance means the extent to

which there is a link between student's out of school experiences.

Authentic Learning

Authentic learning implies that students have the opportunity to solve real world problems that are authentic. In present study authentic learning means the extent to which students have the chance to solve (authentic) real life problems.

Active Learning

Active Learning implies that students exploring their own strategies for learning. In present study active learning means the extent to which students have the opportunity to take an active role in their learning.

Student Autonomy

Student Autonomy is defined as students have opportunities to initiate ideas, make their own learning decisions, and the locus of control is student oriented. In present study student autonomy means the extent to which the course is student oriented and allows them to make their own learning decisions.

Therefore, this current research study deals with above discussed factors which influence student's satisfaction towards hybrid distance learning. In this study, **the relationship between student's satisfaction and the following variables of the hybrid distance education and learning environment would be analyzed: instructor support, student interaction and collaboration, personal relevance, authentic learning, active learning, and student autonomy.** This research carried out by keeping in view the increasing demand for Hybrid distance education not only in India but all over the world.

EMERGENCE OF HYBRID DISTANCE LEARNING

With increased publicity and availability of hybrid distance courses and programs, studies have emerged in search of meaningful, well-structured quality online education. Due to the advancement of the latest technology, hybrid distance education has emerged as an alternative or at least a considerable supplement to traditional mode of teaching and learning (Waits & Lewis, 2004). Especially in higher education, hybrid distance education is increasingly becoming common and emerging as an opportunity for delivering education online along with traditional mode. The focus of these studies has been mostly on the delivery method and the curriculum. On the other hand, studies have been limited in the area of examining the relationships between student's satisfaction in hybrid distance learning courses which is **mix in delivery methods or a hybrid approach where the courses are taught partially online and partially in the classroom.**

For this study the term hybrid courses, are used to refer to distance learning. An "online course" is where 100 percent of the course is taught online, and a "hybrid course" is where 50 percent to 99 percent of the course is taught online. Face-to-face is defined as the traditional, physical classroom setting which meets in person, and it is not any type of digital meetings—such as Skype or another video/audio transmission.

The rising demand with flexible education programs to support career development and lifelong learning has increased people's expectations for quality instruction, effective educational outcome, and

finally satisfaction for learning. The satisfaction of a student can be determined from his level of pleasure as well as the effectiveness of education that the student experiences. Students with higher levels of satisfaction towards various aspects of hybrid learning courses are reported to show considerably higher levels of learning than students with low level of satisfaction

Hybrid learning environments cannot be effective and thrive without considering student's needs and preferences. Obtaining student feedback about the hybrid learning environment is crucial for the successful design and implementation of this environment. Hybrid distance learning environments should be carefully designed to maximize student's satisfaction with these environments**.** Planning and designing distance education courses is a complex task that includes many factors (Pearson &Trinidad,2005) such as the infrastructure, quality of support systems, quality of content and assessment, and peer support networks, may influence the hybrid learning experience. **Schmidt and Gallegos (2001) list other factors such as type of distance delivery method, reasons for enrolling in the course, and learning objectives.** Thus, educators need to consider these factors to provide the students with effective learning environments.

Perceptions and Satisfaction of learner are central in the development and quality of distance education. **Obtaining 'feedback' from students about the design and implementation of the learning environment provided is an essential part of identifying what has worked, and where improvements could be made in the future (Pearson & Trinidad, 2005).** There are numerous researches on hybrid distance learning in foreign countries (Adas, D., & Abu Shmais, W. (2011). Students' perceptions towards blended learning environment using the OCC. An-Najah University Journal for Research – Humanities,Alebaikan, R. &Troudi, S. (2010). Online discussion in blended courses at Saudi universities.Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences).This study is carried out mainly of two reasons1) With growing demand of hybrid distance learning in India 2)Very few researches are there in hybrid distance learning in India.

The questions that hybrid distance learning attempts to answer include:

(a) Do students who enroll in hybrid distance courses truly like hybrid distance learning?
(b) Do the student's reasons for enrolling in hybrid distance course align with their learning preferences?
(c) Do students perceive that they receive a quality learning experience from hybrid distance courses?
(d) Do students prefer some communication channels over others when communicating with instructors and peers in a hybrid distance course?

CONCLUSION

Thus hybrid distance learning will also help to assist the educator in developing strategies that extend the quality assurance framework to support the hybrid learning approach. Distance education instructors and designers should consider the characteristics of a hybrid learning environment to develop successful hybrid distance delivery courses and to meet the expectations of their students.This will help universities operating in highly competitive markets need to find cost effective ways of deliver-ing high quality hybrid education

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