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Blended learning models in commerce education: A study among undergraduate students

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Abstract

Blended learning has emerged as a transformative approach in higher education, especially in commerce education, combining traditional face-to-face instruction with online learning methodologies. This study explores the effectiveness, challenges, and perceptions associated with blended learning among undergraduate commerce students in India. It employs a secondary data approach to analyse how blended learning models have been implemented, their outcomes on academic performance, and students' adaptability. The findings reveal that blended learning enhances accessibility, engagement, and learning outcomes, though it also faces limitations such as digital divide, lack of training, and inconsistent policy support. This paper concludes with practical suggestions for optimizing blended learning environments in commerce education.

Keywords: Blended learning, commerce education, undergraduate students, online learning, higher education, digital pedagogy, e-learning, India

Introduction

In recent years, education systems across the world have witnessed a paradigm shift due to the integration of technology into teaching and learning practices. Among the various instructional strategies that have evolved, blended learning has gained significant attention. It combines the best of traditional classroom teaching and online learning, offering a flexible, student-centered approach. In commerce education, where analytical skills, business concepts, and theoretical frameworks dominate, blended learning provides a dynamic environment for enhanced understanding and application.

The COVID-19 pandemic further accelerated the adoption of blended learning, forcing institutions to adopt digital tools at an unprecedented pace. As the world adapts to post-pandemic educational realities, understanding how blended learning impacts commerce education becomes imperative. This study aims to analyse the effectiveness, challenges, and future prospects of blended learning models in the context of undergraduate commerce education in India.

Background of the Study

Commerce education in India has traditionally relied on lecture-based teaching methods, emphasizing rote learning over conceptual clarity. However, the increasing availability of digital platforms, mobile devices, and online resources has disrupted this conventional model. Blended learning offers a balanced approach by integrating online educational materials and opportunities for interaction online with traditional classroom methods.

The University Grants Commission (UGC) and various state higher education bodies have encouraged the integration of ICT (Information and Communication Technology) in teaching. MOOCs, Learning Management Systems (LMS), and virtual labs are being adopted in colleges, particularly under schemes like SWAYAM and NPTEL. However, the effectiveness of these tools in commerce education remains under-researched, particularly in semi-urban and rural colleges.

This study seeks to fill this gap by examining existing literature, case studies, and institutional reports to draw a comprehensive picture of blended learning in commerce undergraduate programs.

Scope of the Study

This study is confined to undergraduate commerce students in Indian colleges, focusing primarily on how blended learning models have been adopted and perceived.

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The geographical scope includes urban, semi-urban, and rural institutions for comparative insights. The thematic scope includes pedagogical methods, student engagement, academic outcomes, infrastructural readiness, and faculty training.

It does not cover postgraduate or professional commerce programs like CA, CS, or MBA courses. The focus is strictly on secondary data to provide a literature-based analytical framework.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the concept and types of blended learning models used in commerce education.
2. To analyse the impact of blended learning on student engagement and academic performance.
3. To understand student and faculty perceptions of blended learning.
4. To identify challenges in implementing blended learning in undergraduate commerce education.
5. To provide suggestions for enhancing the effectiveness of blended learning models.

Limitations of the Study

- The study is based solely on secondary data, including academic journals, government reports, and institutional publications.
- Primary data such as student surveys or interviews are not included.
- The focus is restricted to India and may not be generalizable to other contexts.
- Blended learning in postgraduate or non-commerce disciplines is not considered.

Methodology

This is a qualitative, exploratory study based on secondary data analysis. The data sources include:

- Peer-reviewed academic journals (e.g., International Journal of Educational Technology, Journal of Commerce and Management)
- Reports from UGC, MHRD, and state education departments
- Online articles, white papers, and conference proceedings
- Case studies of colleges and universities implementing blended learning

The study employs thematic analysis to identify key trends, benefits, challenges, and stakeholder perceptions. The data is categorized into pedagogical strategies, institutional frameworks, learner outcomes, and policy implications.

Blended Learning Models in Commerce Education: A Study among Undergraduate Students

Blended learning, also known as hybrid learning, is an educational approach that combines traditional face-to-face classroom methods with online digital media. It represents a shift from traditional, instructor-centered learning to more student-centered methods. This model leverages the strengths of both physical and virtual learning environments, promoting better flexibility, engagement, and personalized learning pathways.

Relevance in Commerce Education

Commerce education involves both theoretical concepts

(like principles of economics, accountancy, and business law) and practical applications (such as using accounting software, case studies, and simulations). Traditional methods sometimes fail to address the need for real-time, interactive, and hands-on learning experiences. The inclusion of blended learning models allows educators to integrate e-learning tools such as Google Classroom, LMS (Learning Management Systems), MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses), video lectures, and interactive content to enhance understanding.

Types of Blended Learning Models

1. **Rotation Model** - Students rotate between different stations or learning modalities, including online learning.
2. **Flex Model** - Online instruction is the backbone of the learning experience, with teachers providing support as needed.
3. **Enriched Virtual Model** - Combines online delivery with occasional face-to-face sessions.
4. **Flipped Classroom** - Students learn new content online at home and engage in problem-solving during classroom time.

Significance for Undergraduate Commerce Students

Undergraduate students, especially in rural or semi-urban areas like Srikakulam district (if your context is local), often face challenges like lack of exposure, limited faculty availability, and out dated teaching methods. Blended learning bridges this gap by:

- Providing access to global content and expert resources
- Enabling self-paced learning
- Improving digital literacy
- Encouraging collaborative and interactive learning

Technology Integration in Commerce

Commerce education today increasingly involves the use of ERP systems, Tally, data analytics, and financial model software. A blended approach allows students to:

- Practice using these tools online
- Revisit difficult concepts through recorded lectures
- Participate in online case discussions and virtual internships

Pedagogical Impact

Research shows that blended learning improves student performance and satisfaction. It promotes critical thinking, better retention, and application of knowledge. It also allows teachers to track student progress through online assessments and engagement metrics.

Challenges of Implementation

- Technological infrastructure issues (especially in government colleges)
- Faculty training and resistance to change
- Student adaptability and digital divide
- Need for curriculum redesign to incorporate blended elements

Opportunities Ahead

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 supports digital and blended learning initiatives. With proper planning, investment, and teacher training, commerce departments in colleges can design effective blended modules that:

- Encourage industry-academia collaboration
- Include certifications from platforms like SWAYAM, Coursera, or NPTEL
- Promote employability skills such as data analysis, financial reporting, and digital marketing

Application in Commerce Education

Blended learning enables the visualization of abstract financial concepts, business simulations, interactive case studies, and self-paced learning. For instance, students can learn accounting software online and practice problem-solving in class. It enhances flexibility, caters to diverse learning styles, and promotes active participation.

However, the digital divide remains a concern, especially for students from underprivileged backgrounds. Challenges include lack of internet access, limited digital literacy, and insufficient training for faculty members.

Conclusion and Suggestions

Blended learning improves student engagement and learning outcomes when implemented effectively. Students appreciate the flexibility and access to resources but also report challenges related to technology. Faculty members face difficulties in content creation, adapting teaching methods, and managing time. Institutions with adequate infrastructure and policy support report higher success rates in blended learning. Government initiatives like SWAYAM and DIKSHA have been instrumental but need further customization for commerce courses.

Conduct structured training programs for teachers to improve digital pedagogical skills. Invest in ICT infrastructure, especially in rural and semi-urban colleges. Develop commerce-specific digital content that aligns with the curriculum. Provide technical and academic support to students. Incorporate feedback mechanisms to continually assess and improve blended learning strategies. Encourage collaboration between institutions to share best practices and resources.

Blended learning offers a promising pathway to modernize commerce education in India. It balances the richness of traditional teaching with the accessibility of digital platforms. Despite challenges, the model holds immense potential to democratize education, enhance learning outcomes, and equip students with 21st-century skills. Strategic implementation, stakeholder collaboration, and continuous innovation are crucial to realizing the full benefits of blended learning in commerce education.

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