Rethinking Commerce Education: The Potentials and Pitfalls of Blended Learning

SIMRAN SHARMA[1], MANISH KUMAR SRIVASTAVA[2]
[1]*Research Scholar, Department of Commerce, Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Gorakhpur University, Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh, India*
[2]*Professor, Department of Commerce, Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Gorakhpur University, Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh, India*

Abstract- ***Blended learning, incorporates conventional face-to-face schooling through online learning, is gradually more adopted in commerce education due to its flexibility and the possibility to improve student commitment and knowledge outcomes. However, such pedagogical approach presents challenges, including the need for robust technological infrastructure, faculty training, and effective assessment methods. This study examines opportunities (Potentials) and challenges (Pitfalls) regarding blended learning under field of commerce learning. It also discusses the tools and strategies that are utilised in this form of learning, as well as the critical elements that affect its effective implementation. The Strategies for overcoming obstacles and maximising blended learning's advantages are included in the paper's conclusion.***

Indexed Terms- ***Blended learning, Challenges, Commerce Education, Opportunities, Technology.***

I. INTRODUCTION

Students of twenty-first century anticipate constant access to their courses from their mobile phones and other portable devices, as they continue to integrate technology into every aspect of their lives. Additionally, technology is continuously generating chances for teachers to plan, lead, and create a cooperative "community of exploration" where students may engage and cooperate with teachers, classmates, and content (Vaughan et. al., 2013). Through the acquisition of information about international business practices and laws, commerce education equips students to engage in international trade. The six primary sectors of business are trade, transportation, storage, advertisements, the financial sector, and insurance all cover various aspects of the company, including economics, marketing, Human Resources, finance, accounting, and so on. Blended learning combines the advantage of online with in-person training, and has gained popularity in educational settings as a flexible and successful method of learning and teaching. In commerce education, blended learning offers special chances of improving scholar engagement and learning results since a comprehensive understanding of academic ideas and real-world applications is required. However, implementing a blended learning approach also comes with several difficulties, including faculty training, securing technology access, and creating appropriate curriculum and evaluation methods. Blended Learning seeks to offer students "control over their learning," and one way to boost students' sense of ownership (UGC, 2020). This study looks at these possibilities and difficulties, guiding teachers and organizations who want to use blended learning in commerce education. Blended learning offers a more thorough and adaptable learning experience by fusing traditional in-person training with online learning techniques. Blended learning in commerce education might involve a combination of virtual classes, active simulations, discussion boards, and in-person instruction for case studies, practical exercises, and group discussions. The goal of integrating these many learning modes is to enhance educational results, promote active engagement, and accommodate various learning styles. (Graham, 2013).

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Bonk (2004) Three most popular definitions of BL were listed by Bonk (2004, p. 5): First, a mix of media for delivery (or instructional modes). Second, a blend

of teaching strategies and third, a combination of in-person and virtual learning.

Garison's (2004) study on blended learning is both effective and efficient when it comes to enhancing meaningful learning experiences, and it aligns with values of conventional higher education institutions.

Graham's (2006) A basic overview of blended learning systems is given in the report, along with several trends and concerns that are very pertinent to people who are putting these systems into place. Findings highlight merits & demerits of F2F and computer-mediated learning contexts. Flexibility, student involvement, and depth of reflection are the strengths of computer-based learning, whereas human connection and spontaneity are strengths of F2F learning.

Suprabha (2019) The purpose of the research is to determine how higher secondary commerce students' problem-solving abilities are affected by blended learning as opposed to constructivist education. Findings proved that, in contrast to control group, trial group, which had been imparted using a BL instructional technique, had considerably higher post-test scores and increased problem-solving skill scores. Hrastinski (2019) In the literature, blended learning refers nearly all types of schooling which incorporates more or less combination of in-person and digital instruction from models, conceptualizations and inclusive definitions. Phrase "Blended Learning", it is now used interchangeably. Other combinations, like mixing different pedagogical methods, technology & instructional methodologies, are frequently referred to as blended learning, even if these blends do not correspond with popular definitions of BL.

Kumar et.al., (2021) It surveys different frameworks, models, techniques and tools useful for "blended learning", it reports the implementation and assessment of BL at 2 universities. Blackboard, CodeTantra & the G Suite are examples of similar tools that have been used to fulfil need of both universities & to appropriately conduct & complete all educational events throughout the pandemic.

Sanders & Altman (2023) The paper's objective is to provide a summary of the models and techniques for choosing the most effective blended learning strategy. In conclusion, provided the following elements are taken into account, blended learning can be successful: instructor support and preparation, student motivation and involvement, and the quality of online resources. A technology-based delivery method such as WebCT or Blackboard must be acquainted with and comfortable with the professor and teaching candidates in an online technological setting.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To determine the benefits regarding blended learning (BL) in conventional classroom environment; and
- To ascertain the challenges faced in putting BL into practice as a cutting-edge approach to providing learners with educational services.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

During this research, a descriptive research design is used to achieve the objectives. This paper is an aggregation of literature collected from journals and papers published on challenges opportunities, tools and techniques, best strategies and suggestions that affect blended learning with reference to commerce education.

V. UNDERSTANDING TRADITIONAL AND MODERN MODE OF TEACHING

Conventional teaching modalities are those that employed in education since long tenure. These usually include direct instruction, in which pupils are essentially passive consumers of knowledge and the instructor serves as the main figure in the classroom. Several essential components include teacher-centered learning, rote learning, classroom-based instruction, fixed curricula, examinations and tests, lecture-based learning, and standardized testing.

More participatory, student-centered, and technologically integrated teaching methods are stressed in today's teaching methods. Critical thinking, problem-solving, and teamwork are the main goals of these approaches. The main elements include the following: Project-Based Learning (PBL), Blended Learning, Gamification, Experiential

Learning, Mindfulness, Social-Emotional Learning (SEL), Flipped Classroom, Collaborative Learning, Technology- Enhanced Learning, and Student-Centered Learning.

VI. TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES USED IN "BLENDED LEARNING" UNDER COMMERCE EDUCATION

Combining the benefits of online learning with the classroom's flexibility and resources, blended learning provides a flexible way to tuition in commerce school. BL in commerce education, following efficient tuition strategies can be used:

- *Learning Management Systems L.M.S.:* Central hubs where students may access course materials, turn in assignments, and take part in discussions include platforms such as Moodle, Blackboard, and Canvas. Online and offline learning may be seamlessly integrated with the aid of Learning Management Systems (LMS) platforms (Al-Samarraie& Saeed, 2018).
- *Continual Evaluation:* A technique for evaluating students that evaluates every facet of their growth is called Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE). It chairs a strong stress on assessment continuity, thoroughness, and analysis of cognitive, emotional, and psychomotor domains.
- *Video Lectures and Webinars:* With the help of websites like YouTube, Zoom, and Microsoft Teams, teachers may host live webinars and pre-recorded courses. To explain difficult ideas like market research or financial modelling, these resources are essential in the teaching of business (Dziuban et. al., 2018).
- *E-Resources:* Students may access current readings and resources through digital libraries and e-books, which is especially helpful in the rapidly changing sector of commerce.
- *Interactive Simulations:* Students can practice making decisions in a risk-free setting with programs like business simulation games and SAP ERP Simulation. These resources aid in comprehending how theories of commerce are used in practical situations, such as supply chain management and investment strategies (Vlachopoulos & Makri, 2019).
- *Online Discussion Forums:* Outside of the classroom, students can participate in cooperative problem-solving and peer learning using platforms like Piazza and discussion boards in LMS. This aids in developing analytical and critical thinking abilities that are crucial in business (Chen, et.al., 2010).
- *Assessment Tools:* The learning process is improved by the instant feedback and increased assessment frequency that online tests, surveys, and quizzes provided by LMS platforms (Al-Azawei, et. al., 2017).
- *Smart Class and Presentation:* In blended learning, smart classrooms and presentations may enhance the educational process and make lectures more interesting. Interactive technology, such as speakers, projectors, and touch panels, is used in smart classrooms to improve student learning. While teacher training and early expenditures are drawbacks, learning may be made more interesting and academic achievement can be improved through digital notes, internet resources, and communication.
- *Flipped Classroom:* This methodology involves students exploring internet resources (readings, videos), then applying what they have learned to interactive, hands-on tasks in the classroom. This method has proven successful in disciplines such as accounting and marketing, where students may master the necessary skills on their own and use class time for application (Bishop & Verleger, 2013).
- *Face-to-face learning:* This approach combines online learning resources with conventional classroom instruction. It is similar to a traditional classroom setting in which the instructor serves as the main facilitator and digital technologies are used as supplemental materials to enhance comprehension, offer more practice, or present cutting-edge teaching strategies.
- *Modular Learning:* For the purpose of studying complicated subjects like economics and finance, information may be broken down into smaller modules that allow for concentrated learning and self-pacing (Graham, et. al., 2013).
- *Gamification:* Learning exercises may be made more engaging and motivating by incorporating

game features like badges, and points along with leaderboards, particularly in subjects like statistics or financial analysis that call for a lot of repetition (Dichev&Dicheva, 2017).

- *Flex Model:* With the majority of instruction provided online, the flex model embodies a learner-centered approach that gives students self-sufficiency over direction and pace of education. This concept is distinguished by a flexible learning environment where students usually work on personalized online platforms and can get in-person help from professors as required. Instead of giving out direct teaching, teachers operate more like coaches, offering advice and assistance.

VII. OPPORTUNITIES OF "BLENDED LEARNING" IN COMMERCE EDUCATION

In business education, blended learning presents a multitude of alternatives that improve teaching and learning outcomes. Some of the major opportunities are as follows:

- *Enhanced Student Engagement*

Through interactive internet elements like games, films, and simulations, blended learning encourages higher levels of student participation and may make learning more engaging and fun. With the help of these resources, students may have a more individualised education and interact more fully with the subject matter. Furthermore, combining online and in-person components creates a more diversified and rich learning environment that may accommodate a range of student requirements and preferences (Garrison et. al., 2008). This also leads the learner's attention for a longer period.

- *Better Educational Results*

According to research, While in-person classes encourage conversation, teamwork, and practical exercises that improve understanding and retention of subject matter, online components offer at one's own learning and instant feedback through quizzes and engaging tasks (Graham, 2013). Blended learning can increase overall educational effectiveness by taking into account a variety of learning choices (Allen et. al., 2017).

- *Adaptability and Easily accessible*

One of the most significant advantages regarding blended learning is elasticity it offers. Scholars can access materials also participate in educational actions as per convenience, which is especially beneficial for those who juggle studies with work or other commitments. This flexibility allow learner to study at their speed, revisiting complex topics as needed and engaging with content which best suits their education styles. It is up to the teachers to assign any kind of work, synchronous or asynchronous. However, scholars are free when they want to learn. Such a tactic draws the pupils' interest and motivates them to pursue further studies.

- *Growth of Digital Knowledge and Skills*

Students who have access to technology in the classroom are better able to acquire digital literacy skills, which are crucial in the current digital economy. Blended learning offers a fantastic chance for students to become proficient in these areas, better preparing them for the technology-driven workplace. This is especially true in commerce education, where knowing digital tools and platforms is becoming increasingly vital (Means et al., 2009).

- *Cost-Effectiveness*

Comparing blended learning to traditional classroom-based learning can help educational institutions reduce expense. It can lower expenses related to printed documents and on-site resources and lessen the requirement for physical space. A sustainable approach to providing high-quality education is to employ online information, which is easier to update and reuse (Allen & Seaman, 2017).

- *Critical Thinking*

Digital technology is closely related to online environments that facilitate communication, community building, and collaboratively creating "knowledge" in order to foster critical thinking (Depaepe &Smeyers, 2007). The phrase "virtual places" is employed by Burbules (2007) to characterize these domains of work-related activities where people while working, they communicate, collaborate, and spend time with each other. The capacity of students to acquire knowledge instead of merely taking in information can only benefit from

this opportunity to enhance critical thinking abilities in instruction study (Namyssova et al., 2019).

- *Optimal Utilization of time*

In conventional in-person classes, there are administrative tasks that need to be done outside of class. These tasks include printing out handouts, manually grading assignments, and keeping track of attendance. Numerous tasks may be automated through blended learning by the use of technology, allowing teachers to devote more time to assisting students in comprehending and developing their potential, and producing outstanding lectures (Weitzel, 2021).

- *Enhance communication*

Numerous communication possibilities are provided by blended learning systems, such as Dropbox, email, instant chat, online grading tools, online discussion boards, and more (Malthora, 2020). Students who are uncomfortable asking questions in person might find this usefulbenefit of online education, which offers a more extensive support system. They can now send a message to the entire class or the teacher personally. Unlike typical classroom settings, blended learning encourages student cooperation. One of the best online training platforms is blended learning since it fosters more cooperation between students and teachers. Students can converse more easily with one another when they use many tools for collaboration, including blogs, online forums, instant conversing, etc.

- *Learner-Centered Education*

An effective online teacher is someone willing to step back from a leading position in the learning process and instead support students to have active role in educational process, as stated Pratt & Palloff (2013). The histories, requirements, and Interests are considered while utilizing a learner-centred methodology in the virtual classroom.

Students now have greater control and accountability for how people pick up knowledge, such as the ability to instruct one another via collaboration and individual interactions with the facilitator role of teacher.

VIII. CHALLENGES CONCERNING BLENDED LEARNING WITHIN COMMERCE EDUCATION

There are several benefits to BL in commerce school when it comes to the combination of traditional in-person training with online learning. To guarantee its efficacy, educators and institutions must address a number of the issues it brings. Some major obstacles are as follows:

- *Infrastructure & Access of Technology*

A strong technology foundation, comprising dependable internet connectivity, modern hardware, and suitable software, is essential for the effective execution of BL. It may not be as effective in many places due to a digital divide, particularly in developing countries where access to these resources is inadequate. To prevent aggravating already-existing disparities, every student must have equitable access to the required technologies (Means et al., 2009).

- *Training & Development for Faculty*

Making the switch to the use of blended learning necessitates big adjustments to instructional methods. Teachers must acquire new abilities in the areas of digital tool use, online content creation, and virtual classroom management. Blended learning solutions may encounter opposition or inefficient implementation due to the lack of expertise or training that many educators may possess in these areas. Support and ongoing professional development are crucial for professors to assist them adjust to these new expectations (Graham, 2013).

- *Self-Motivation and Student Readiness*

Students who participate in blended learning have a higher obligation to manage their time wisely and maintain their motivation to finish their online lessons. Not every student is ready for this degree of autonomy, and some might find it difficult to maintain the self-control needed to thrive in a mixed-learning setting. According to Allen and Seaman (2017), educational institutions must offer assistance to students in order to help them acquire the skills needed for independent study.

- *Online Content Quality*

The quality of online information has a major impact on blended learning's effectiveness. Learning results can be lowered and student engagement can be weakened by poorly prepared or unappealing materials. It takes time, effort, and experience to create excellent, dynamic, and captivating web material, which can be difficult for educators who are already handling a lot of work (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008).

- *Evaluating and providing feedback*

It might be problematic to evaluate student success in a mixed-learning setting. Creating new, efficient assessment methodologies can be difficult, and traditional assessment techniques might not be appropriate for online components. Furthermore, giving prompt and helpful feedback to students in an online environment might be more difficult for teachers, necessitating the development of new strategies and technologies to guarantee that students get the support they require. (Picciano & Dziuban, 2007).

IX. STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF BLENDED LEARNING

Effective blended learning implementation calls for thorough preparation, adaptability, and continuous support from teachers and students. The following are some essential tactics to make sure blended learning is successfully integrated:

- *Capitalizing on Infrastructure and Technology*

Educational institutions need to make investments in dependable hardware, software, and technical support for staff and students to facilitate blended learning. According to Means et al. (2009), providing all students equitable access to these resources is essential to closing the digital divide and allowing them to fully engage in blended learning.

- *Support and Training for Faculty*

Continuous development is necessary to present teachers with ability & know-how necessary planning and execute blended learning successfully. A culture of innovation and continual improvement may be fostered by providing faculty with workshops, seminars, and one-on-one coaching to assist them become more at ease with technology and online teaching techniques (Graham, 2013).

- *Creating Interesting Web Content*

Providing interesting online material is essential to blended learning's success. Teachers should concentrate on creating multimedia-rich, interactive resources that accommodate different learning preferences. Online material quality may be improved by working with instructional designers and utilizing educational technology tools (Picciano & Dziuban, 2007).

- *Boosting Academic Achievement*

Institutions should offer tools and assistance for students to gain time management, self-discipline, and digital literacy skills in order to aid in their adjustment to blended learning. Students can overcome the difficulties of blended learning with the aid of orientation programs, online tutorials, and academic advisor access (Allen & Seaman, 2017).

- *Creating Powerful Evaluation Techniques*

In a blended learning setting, evaluation should be ongoing, and comprehensive, and include both formative as well as summative assessments. To properly measure student achievement, educators should employ a range of assessment techniques, including online tests, peer evaluations, and project-based assignments. To promote student learning and development, it is also essential to provide regular feedback (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008).

CONCLUSION

A distinct set of opportunities and problems arise with blended learning in commerce school, which, with appropriate management, may significantly improve the learning process. More flexibility, individualized instruction, and access to a larger variety of materials are made possible by the merging of conventional and digital learning settings. Benefits like this help students develop critical thinking, digital literacy, flexibility, increase involvement, less time-consuming, the possibility of better learning results and interdisciplinary teamwork—all of which are necessary for meeting the changing needs of the corporate world.

However, there are important issues that must be resolved if blended learning is to be implemented successfully. These issues include making sure that everyone has equal access to technology, offering sufficient training to teachers, and sustaining student engagement in a largely virtual environment. A deliberate strategy involving infrastructure investment, careful curriculum design, and continuous support for teachers and students is required to overcome these obstacles.

Therefore, a vibrant, inclusive, & future-ready learning situation might be produced through successful use of "blended learning" in commerce school. Institutions may better prepare scholars aimed at success in contemporary business world by seizing the possibilities and minimizing the difficulties.

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