

Evaluation and Establishing Strategies of Blended Learning

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Abstract

Blended learning is a new emerging learning method which integrates online learning and face-to-face learning. This paper aims at discussing the advantages and disadvantages of blended learning and propose approaches to fix some existing problems. Moreover, this paper also gives attention to Chinese blended learning experimental examples. The ultimate goal is to improve hybrid learning and benefit students and teachers.

Key words: Blended learning; Learning method; Teaching and learning

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INTRODUCTION

Linda was watching instruction videos online and then she received some messages from her online group, and her group members were inviting her to join in their discussion about critical thinking. This is called blended learning. "Technology-based training emerged as an alternative to instructor-led training in the 1960s on mainframes and mini-computers" Blended learning is a new method of teaching and learning. "Blended learning is a formal education program in which a student learns at least in part through delivery of content and instruction via digital and online media with some element of student control over time, place, path, or pace. While students still show up at real schools with a teacher present, face-

to-face classroom methods are combined with computer-mediated activities.

Professor Li Kedong and others believe that the core idea of mixed learning is to solve problems in different ways according to different problems and requirements. In teaching, we should adopt different medias and information transmission methods to learn. And this way of solving the problem requires the least cost and the greatest benefit. In China, Professor He Kekang points out that hybrid learning is to combine the advantages of traditional learning with the advantages of E-learning. It can be seen from this that whether it is the combination of various teaching techniques, the combination of various teaching methods, or the combination of the two, the key to mixed learning is "optimal choice", the combination of strength and strength, and the complement of advantages. This attempts to find a learning method that can not only exert the advantages of network learning, but also achieve the lowest input to obtain the highest efficiency and optimize the learning effect.

Blended learning benefits both teachers and students in the long run; hence it should and will be widely used in the future.

LITERARY ANALYSIS

Blended learning inspires students' autonomy of learning, Students can be given full freedom. Nowadays, students are very busy with students' union work, club activities, competition performances and so on. In order not to delay these social activities, students often can not sit in the classroom to listen to the teachers lectures, sometimes even skipping classes. Now break the limits of classroom to solve this contradiction, as long as you want to learn, at any time, not in busy time missed learning. Mixed learning not only possess the freedom of time, but also the freedom of space; it is not confined to the classroom, anywhere and even when the toilet can learn. In addition,

the freedom of progress has been achieved. In traditional learning, whether you understand or not understand, or half understand, the course will continue. After flipping the class, if you don't understand, you can pause, rewind, replay the lecture video until you understand. If you think that progress is too slow, you can completely advance or extend learning, and learning progress can be controlled by the students themselves.

In America, doctor Canola. Twigg established a Programming Course Redesign to research that whether blended learning is more useful than traditional classroom teaching method. The program got 880 million fund supports from Pew Charitable Trusts and it gave these supports to 30 different schools to adopt blended learning. From 1999 to 2004 the outcome showed that of 30 courses, 25 courses witnessed the significant improvement of students' learning. Besides, they also found out that students could complete more curriculum than ever and they acquired positively learning attitude. This research proved that blended learning reduces the dependence on teachers and arouses autonomy: Students themselves search information online to do their assignments instead of waiting for the teachers to tell them everything. It is valuable firstly because they acquire the awareness of autonomous learning and after possessing this consciousness they will learn actively. Students study online and research additionally to get more information to fully understand the topic that teachers have mentioned. In the process of researching and searching students think more and have a deeper understanding of the topic. Construction of network resources provides effective support for hybrid teaching, which extends teachers' teaching behavior from classroom to outside, and greatly improves students' learning efficiency and optimizes learning effect, that is, teachers can play a leading role. At the same time, the main role of students is brought into play. Classroom teaching is based on the design of teaching activities and is an important part of teaching preparation. In the classroom teaching activities, the teachers are no longer the center, but the initiative of the students to be mobilized to actively participate in the teaching activities, to promote the students to master the innovative content skillfully, and to complete the creative tasks in the classroom. The practical activity design of innovative education aims at breaking through the conventional thinking, being good at innovation and improving the ability of innovation by allowing students to complete the innovative results according to the innovative knowledge they have learned. For example, the foreign teacher Robert Cettl in University of Jinan adopts such a blended learning system. When he gives students a certain topic, they search much information online to understand the topic. Then they discuss in groups and compare notes, which not only helps them learn new things but also enhance their awareness of cooperation. "subsequent research into blended learning found that

students participating in online or blended instruction produced stronger learning outcomes than those that participated only in face-to-face learning instruction" (Drysdale et al., 2013, p.4) that certifies the opinion that blended learning does good to students' learning. Another example is worth attention: Yan Yan, a 2015 teacher-oriented student at Central China Normal University, is preparing a class presentation on language Teaching and Learning principles next week. For this reason, they not only prepared the teaching material in advance, read the online materials uploaded by teachers, but also summed up, extracted the essence and rehearsed in the dormitory. Thus students have more independent thinking and study deeply, which does good to their development.

Hybrid learning improves academic performance and assists teachers in teaching and helping teachers improve themselves. Blended instruction is good for teachers to renew the concept of education, diversify teaching methods and eventually become expert teachers. In China, teachers are centers of teaching process and students passively receive what teachers say as teachers' authorities have been long been established. This traditional model does cause problems: Students lack self-learning awareness and teachers also don't diversify teaching methods. But blended learning greatly approaches these problems. If students have questions, they can contact the teachers online. In face-to-face classroom there may be fewer chances for students to communicate with teachers, but online both can have more interactions. "Rather than playing to the lowest common denominator – as they would in a traditional classroom – teachers can now give their instruction to help all students reach their full potential." (Dream Box Learning, Retrieved, 2016). Under blended learning model, teachers play roles of teaching content organizer, guide, helpers during students' plan-making process, assessor and resource-provider. These roles require them to pay attention to each student and take more efforts to reflect and improve their teaching. Furthermore, mixed Learning multiplies evaluation methods and makes assessing procedure rational and fairer. Since the reform of school teaching, most of the subject assessment methods have changed: In the past, the final examination results were given priority to. Now, attendance, class discussions, forum speeches, assignments and quizzes are recorded through the "cloud classroom platform."

The teacher makes the whole process observation, the record, the comprehensive appraisal to the student's study. The new assessment is fairer and more exercisable. Blended benefits not only students, but also teachers. Teaching philosophy of paying attention to the brand - new guidance of teaching and advocating innovation puts higher requirements for teachers' work. A teacher in Central China Normal University said: The time spent in teaching is two to three times that of the previous, but it is worth it. First of all, the teaching ability is promoted,

secondly, in the situation of thinking highly of scientific research and ignore teaching in many colleges and universities, the school has its own innovation in the assessment system. The two most obvious changes are: The Central China Normal University decides to open an evaluation of “teaching-type professors”. The first prize is 100,000 yuan, and the first prize course becomes the innovation demonstration course of the reform and innovation of the whole school. A number of young teachers grow up and stand out.

In comparison with advantages, admittedly, blended learning do have defects because it is a new teaching model and needs time to grow into maturity, which is an important reason for its not being widely applied now; however these problems can be reduced and blended learning has a promising future. Firstly, designing and perfecting programs and platforms take a long time. To solve this problem, universities need to accelerate technical research and programming, respect and reward high-tech experts to motivate them. Establishing a good and long cooperative relationship between universities and scientific research institutions is quite necessary. Chinese government could invest more into schools and balance allocation of resources. The second concern is that blended learning takes full good advantage of the internet, but the lack of IT knowledge can be a barrier of e-learning, both teachers and students don't know how to use the Internet, that's the problem. “IT literacy can serve as a significant barrier for students attempting to get access to the course materials, making the availability of high-quality technical support paramount.” (Alexander, 2010). Insufficient knowledge of internet serves as a barrier for students to study online. That problem can be solved, firstly teachers' computer competence should be satisfactory since teachers are the facilitators and resource-providers, only when teachers have a good command of internet technology and software can they instruct students. Based on the experience in the teaching reform conducted in Jiangsu University, teachers' lack of mastering modern education technology skillfully become the barrier to apply new teaching model. Teachers themselves have limited abilities to carry out mixed teaching. The design of mixed learning teaching mode is difficult. At present, teachers' training system is not enough for the teachers who are going to carry out mixed teaching. This kind of training should be carried out through mixed learning theory. In the course of training, the teachers should pay attention to other teachers' successful cases of mixed learning. Moreover experts should in advance, point out the various problems and solutions that may be encountered during teachers' teaching process. Therefore, it's quite necessary to strengthen modern educational technology training of teachers. Teachers can combine self education with activities arranged by schools to enhance computer competency and application level. They can start from basic operational knowledge and

skills of multimedia computer, the basic principles and methods of Computer-assisted foreign language teaching and application of Multimedia computer Software and development of platform. Besides, training to strengthen multimedia integration capacity is also important because each kind of media has its pros and cons and thus how to integrate advantages of each kind of media should be given consideration. Teacher should consider traits of each curriculum and adopt corresponding media separately. As for students, a systematic course should be set for them. Schools can invite experts in computer to teach them and students can communicate and learn from their peers. Another problem may be that it endows students with autonomy and independence, thus some students are likely to play computer games or do other things irrelevant to e-learning when they have access to internet. To solve this problem, a monitoring system needs to be built. Central China Normal University has already provided a preliminary example to solve such problems. Central China normal University Building No. 8, Dai Jinjun's advanced mathematics classes in 9 “wisdom classrooms.” There are about 40 students in each classroom. They are divided into six groups, sitting around six electronic screens, sometimes staring closely at the screen. Sometimes click on mobile phone answering questions. Chinese Youth Daily, an online reporter who attended the class, noticed that apart from answering questions online, students who are busy with watching lesson videos and answering online questions having no thoughts and time to play with their mobile phones, thus setting online questions about the content and adopting Electronic monitoring can be good solutions to former mentioned problems.. Another problem is that blended learning increases fees of study. Students search for information on the Internet, however, some information is not free and they are required to pay for it, which increases extra expenses of study. An effective solution to this problem is establishing websites targeted for students where they can find useful but free information. Moreover, fee of information should be reduced for students and this requires the ministry of education and schools increase Investment in educational technology funds. Indeed there are some disadvantages in Blended learning, but these disadvantages can be reduced or solved, then it will be easy to use blended learning widely.

Blended learning is not being large-scale used in China mainly because of Chinese traditional teacher-oriented teaching method: Teachers stand in the front of the classroom and speak, while students just listen and they are in a passive state with low participation awareness. But attention should be paid that China also has begun practice blended learning in a small scale, which contributes to the further research of blended learning and reforms of educational model. For example, Inner Mongolia University for the Nationalities. After one year's construction, the outcome of blended learning is

pleasant. Ninety-three point nine percent teachers support blended learning and Ninety-five point two percent students agree that blended learning improves learning initiative. Because of the good outcome, most universities will use blended learning in the future. Besides, 27 blended learning courses based on MOOC from Peking University in 2015-2016 were selected as the research data sets, the basic situation and teaching organization methods of 20 courses were investigated, and the practice case of some blended learning courses was analyzed. Furthermore, some suggestions on strengthening the teaching design of the blended learning based on MOOC were proposed, expecting to provide reference to carry out blended learning. Peking university designed three processes: a) before-class, b) while-class, c) post class. In the first period, students watch videos and raise questions, and then teachers pick up students at random to test whether they have watched videos. This quiz takes 10% of students grades. Moreover, students should learn MOOC courses online, which accounts for 50% of their final grades. This design combines online assessment with face to face assessment, which diversifies accessing methods. In the second period, students do a learning report in the class and set challenging activities. Other groups can question one group's report and if it fails to answer then other groups can get points. This is a typical combination of cooperating learning and competitive learning, which arouses students' learning desire and enhances sense of participation. Increasing universities start innovating teaching mode, and let's take Central China Normal University for example. "If you want to take my class, you have to play with your cell phone skilfully!" The first winner of the Science Group of the Fifth College Young Teachers' Teaching Competition in Hubei Province, and associate professor of mathematics and statistics of Central China normal University, is Dai Jinjun, an associate professor at the School of Mathematics and Statistics of Central China normal University. March 21 in the evening, Central China normal University Building No. 8, Jinjun's higher mathematics classes in nine "wisdom classrooms" started at the same time. There are about 40 students in each classroom. They are divided into six groups, sitting around six electronic screens, staring attentively at the screen and clicking on their mobile phones to answer questions. China Youth Daily's online reporter noted in the lecture that students who are using their mobile phones studying have little thought or leisure to play with their phones, except for answering questions online. As the university's "teaching festival" recognition of the

undergraduate teaching innovation award winner, Dai Jinjun has previously set a record of eight classes, the average score of 20 points higher than the other classes. Since 2015, Central China normal University has held a "teaching festival" every year to encourage teachers and students to explore the deep integration of information technology and education and teaching, to advocate teachers to innovate teaching methods and to return to the teaching standard. The students found that the classroom had changed; the teachers had feedback and the teaching philosophy had changed. Behind this, the school's baton of student assessment and teacher evaluation has also changed. This exploration around reconstructing the mode of teaching and learning of teachers and students shows its effect. Therefore, there is no doubt that blended learning will be largely applied in China.

CONCLUSION

Blended learning combines the advantages of online learning and traditional classroom learning. It is an innovation of teaching method, which aims at cultivating students' learning autonomy and driving teachers to enhance their teaching skills. Admittedly, hybrid learning is not mature now because of fund, technology, design etc. But from a long-sighted perspective, it does benefit a lot and it is the inevitable trend of the information society.

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