TEACHERS' PERCEPTION OF BLENDED LEARNING IN ARTS AND SCIENCE COLLEGES OF THE SALEM REGION

Research Paper

ABSTRACT

Blended learning has emerged as a transformative pedagogical model integrating traditional classroom instruction with digital technologies to enhance engagement, accessibility, and personalized learning. This study investigated the perception of blended learning among Arts and Science College teachers in the Salem region, with specific reference to three dimensions: teachers' perceptions towards students, teachers, and institutions. Adopting a descriptive research design, data were collected from 269 teachers across government-aided and self-financed colleges affiliated to Periyar University using a structured questionnaire rated on a five-point Likert scale. Findings revealed that teachers hold a highly positive perception of blended learning's impact on students' engagement, self-paced learning, and achievement. They also perceive it as beneficial for enhancing instructional skills and personalized teaching, though concerns persist regarding workload and time management. Institutional support was viewed positively, with most teachers acknowledging adequate training and encouragement for blended learning initiatives; however, issues related to staff adequacy and infrastructure were noted. Overall, the study concluded that teachers in the Salem region are optimistic about blended learning as a learner-centered and sustainable model for higher education, provided continuous professional training and institutional readiness are ensured. The findings offered implications for policy implementation under the NEP 2020 and UGC's blended learning framework, emphasizing the need for robust digital infrastructure, faculty empowerment, and student accountability mechanisms to sustain blended learning practices in higher education.

Keywords : *Blended Learning, Higher Education Institution, Faculty Perceptions, Policy Implementation, NEP 2020*

Introduction

Blended learning—the integration of face-to-face instruction with digital tools—has become a transformative model in higher education worldwide (Garrison & Vaughan, 2012). Combining classroom interaction with online flexibility enhances engagement, autonomy, and accessibility (Singh et al., 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated its adoption, and in the post-pandemic era, it is now viewed as a sustainable, learner-centered approach aligned with 21st-century educational needs.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 promotes technology-enabled blended learning to enhance quality, inclusivity, and flexibility (Ministry of Education, 2020). To implement this, the University Grants Commission (UGC) issued the 2021 Concept Note permitting up to 40% of course content online, encouraging the use of MOOCs, SWAYAM, and ICT-based systems (University Grants Commission, 2021). Thus, Indian higher education institutions-particularly Arts and Science Colleges—are urged to adopt digital pedagogies that balance academic rigor with innovation.

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Research Paper

Globally, teachers recognize blended learning's benefits for engagement and personalized learning (Alammary, 2019; Morlà-Folch et al., 2022), yet face barriers like limited infrastructure and training. In India, teachers show positive attitudes but struggle with technological readiness and institutional support. Studies in Tamil Nadu highlight issues of workload and connectivity, while national data indicate that only a fraction of institutions have robust ICT systems.

Background of the Study

Blended learning is a teaching method where face-to-face and online teaching techniques are used simultaneously. It enhances the learning process by using both physical and online teaching. Students can learn through physical class, as well as online discussions, accessing e-resources, and completing assignments, and can receive feedback through learning platforms (Graham, 2019). According to Rennie and Morrison (2012), Blended learning has evolved through many phases. In the first layer, Blended Learning was the mixed application of computer-assisted instruction and face-to-face instruction in the last decade of the 20th century. In the next phase, during the late 1990s and early 2000s, online resources and Learning Management Systems (LMS) emerged and were used in the education system. Educators equipped with the LMS could now share the content and deliver the course. In the 3rd phase during the late 2000s, Blended Learning included active participation of the learners through blogs, social media, and discussion forums. In the 4th phase, Blended Learning started using mobile devices. In this phase, learners could access content any time and from any place, which was especially useful during the Pandemic period (Singh et al.,2021)

Significance of the study

Despite policy emphasis, regional variations in blended learning readiness remain underexplored. The Salem region of Tamil Nadu, comprising Periyar University and affiliated Arts and Science Colleges, presents diverse institutional contexts with uneven digital access. Understanding teachers' perceptions here is vital to identifying challenges and institutional enablers. This study examines how teachers perceive blended learning in terms of its impact on students, professional development, and institutional readiness, aligning local realities with the national vision of NEP 2020 and UGC's blended learning framework.

Objective of the Study

To examine the perception of teachers towards blended learning in Arts and Science Colleges of the Salem region, with reference to

1. The influence of blended learning on student engagement, learning outcomes, and accountability.
2. The impact of blended learning on teachers' instructional skills, workload, and professional growth.
3. The institutional readiness, support, and infrastructure for implementing blended learning.

Research Methodology

A descriptive research design was employed, and data were collected from 269 teachers selected through a convenience sampling method representing various disciplines from both government-aided and self-financed colleges. A structured questionnaire developed by the researcher served as the main instrument, containing statements rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. Data were collected offline only through personal visits by the researcher to participating colleges, ensuring voluntary participation and confidentiality. The responses were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques, including frequency and percentage analysis, to interpret levels of agreement across the three dimensions.

Data Analysis

1. The influence of blended learning on student engagement, learning outcomes, and accountability.

Table 1

Perception of Arts and Science College teachers towards the influence of blended learning on student engagement, learning outcomes, and accountability

Statements	SD	D	N	A	SA
Towards Students					
1.1. Blended learning allows students to engage in learning both inside and outside the classroom.	4	9	28	107	121
	-1.49%	-3.35%	-10.41%	-39.78%	-44.98%
1.2. It enables students to learn at their own pace and according to their individual abilities.	3	4	27	131	104
	-1.12%	-1.49%	-10.04%	-48.70%	-38.66%
1.3. This method encourages students to participate actively and pay attention with interest during classes.	3	11	41	114	100
	-1.12%	-4.09%	-15.24%	-42.38%	-37.17%
1.4. Blended learning helps students achieve better learning outcomes.	4	8	39	118	100
	-1.49%	-2.97%	-14.50%	-43.87%	-37.17%
1.5. Students respond responsibly to videos and assignments shared in groups.	9	24	73	98	65
	-3.35%	-8.92%	-27.14%	-36.43%	-24.16%

The teachers have a highly positive perception of blended learning's impact on students. Most of the respondents (84.76%) agreed that it enables learning both inside and outside the classroom, while 87.36% believed that it allowed students to learn at their own pace, reflecting strong support for its learner-centered nature. Similarly, 79.55% agreed that it encouraged active participation, and 81.04% felt it improved the learning outcomes of the learners. However, only 60.59% agreed that students respond responsibly to online materials, suggesting mixed views on student accountability. In total, the teachers viewed blended learning as effective in enhancing engagement and achievement but recognized challenges in ensuring consistent student responsibility. Further, Positive perceptions of blended learning stem from its flexibility, ability to improve student engagement and performance, and its development of valuable digital skills.

2. The impact of blended learning on teachers' instructional skills, workload, and professional growth.

Table 2

Perception of Arts and Science College teachers towards the impact of blended learning on teachers' instructional skills, workload, and professional growth

Statements	SD	D	N	A	SA
Towards Teachers					
2.1. It enhances the teaching skills of faculty members.	1	2	20	111 (41.26%)	135 (50.19%)
	-0.37%	-0.74%	-7.43%		
2.2. Blended learning strengthens teacher–student relationships.	2	5	40	113 (42.01%)	109 (40.52%)
	-0.74%	-1.86%	-14.87%		
2.3. Blended learning allows me to easily identify students's learning	4	8	54	111 (41.26%)	92
	-1.49%	-2.97%	-20.07%		-34.20%
2.4. Teachers can provide personalized instruction through blended learning.	3	5	39	123 (45.72%)	99
	-1.12%	-1.86%	-14.50%		-36.80%
2.5. This approach enables teachers to bring significant improvements in students' learning.	3	4	41	132 (49.07%)	89 (33.09%)
	-1.12%	-1.49%	-15.24%		
2.6. Blended learning helps reduce the workload of teachers.	13	28	54	122 (45.35%)	52 (19.33%)
	-4.83%	-10.41%	-20.07%		

The teachers perceived blended learning as a positive and empowering approach that enhances their teaching skills and student interactions. A large majority (91.45%) agreed that it improves their teaching abilities, while 82.53% felt it strengthens the teacher–student relationship. Similarly, 75.46% believed it helps them identify students' learning needs, and 82.52% agreed that it supports personalized instruction. About 82.16% also viewed it as effective in improving student learning outcomes. However, only 64.68% agreed that it reduces workload, indicating concerns about the time and effort required for digital preparation. Overall, teachers hold a highly favorable perception of blended learning as a means for professional growth and better pedagogy. However, they emphasize the need for institutional support to manage workload efficiently.

3.The institutional readiness, support, and infrastructure for implementing blended learning.

Table 3

Perception of Arts and Science College teachers towards the institutional readiness, support, and infrastructure for implementing blended learning.

Statements	SD	D	N	A	SA
Towards Institution					
3.1. Institutions provide training and encouragement for the implementation of blended learning.	8	6	28	113 (42.01%)	114 (42.38%)
	-2.97%	-2.23%	-10.41%		
3.2. It can contribute to an increase in student enrollment in colleges.	7	12	43	121 (44.98%)	86 (31.97%)
	-2.60%	-4.46%	-15.99%		
3.3. It can also help reduce student dropout rates.	9	14	40	125 (46.47%)	81 (30.11%)
	-3.35%	-5.20%	-14.87%		
3.4. Colleges can use blended learning to organize online lectures by experts from different	6	6	28	120 (44.61%)	109 (40.52%)
	-2.23%	-2.23%	-10.41%		
3.5. With the available teaching staff, colleges can effectively balance online and face-to-face classes.	7	12	37	119 (44.24%)	94 (34.94%)
	-2.60%	-4.46%	-13.75%		

Teachers had a strongly positive perception of their institutions' support for blended learning. The majority (84.39%) of them agreed that the institutions provided training and encouragement for its implementation, showing proactive institutional engagement. Around 76.95% of them believed that blended learning could increase student enrollment, while 76.58% of them felt that it helped to reduce dropout rates by offering flexibility. Likewise, 85.13% of them agreed that the colleges could organize online lectures by external experts, highlighting appreciation for expanded academic opportunities. However, perceptions were slightly moderate regarding staff adequacy, with 79.18% agreeing that colleges could balance online and face-to-face classes, while some expressed concern about workload and manpower. In toto, the teachers perceived that institutions were supportive and progressive in adopting blended learning but emphasized the need for better staffing, infrastructure, and workload management to ensure sustainability.

Discussion

Teachers in Arts and Science Colleges of the Salem region had a strongly positive perception of blended learning. They believed it enhanced engagement, supported self-paced learning, and improved outcomes of the learner, reflecting commitment to learner-centered instruction. However, moderate agreement regarding students' responsibility suggested a need to strengthen digital discipline and motivation. Teachers also perceived blended learning as a tool for professional growth, enabling personalized teaching and better student monitoring, though workload concerns persist. Institutions are seen as supportive and innovative but face challenges in staffing and resource allocation. Overall, while blended learning is well-accepted, its success depends on consistent faculty training, technical assistance, and supportive institutional policies.

Conclusion

Teachers had perceived blended learning as a practical, transformative approach that enhanced engagement and learning outcomes. While institutional support was appreciated, challenges related to student accountability, workload, and infrastructure remain. Sustaining blended learning requires focused efforts on faculty development, workload balance, and digital readiness. In essence, strong institutional backing and continuous professional training are crucial for its long-term success in higher education.

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