



# Blended Learning Approach for Early Childhood Education

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## Abstract

This literature review depicts the current reality of blended learning in schools and the systems that will need to transform to fully implement technology into the daily school experience, also This literature review examines the influence of on early childhood Education. It uses scholarly journals and articles to show the benefits and risks of technology use and how it can be used to compliment growth, development, and learning of young children. Blended learning needs rigorous efforts, right attitude, handsome budget and highly motivated teachers and students for its successful implementation. On other hand, Early Childhood Education examines how it develop the domains of: (a) social emotional, (b) cognitive, (c) physical motor, (d) language and literacy, and (e) mathematics. The purpose of this action research project was to determine if teaching with a blended learning approach increases student engagement in an early childhood classroom.

*Keywords: blended learning, student engagement, early childhood education*

## How Blended Learning Impacts Student Engagement in an Early Childhood Classroom

Student engagement is a desired element for teachers in any classroom across the world. Teachers want students to actively participate in their lessons, activities, and projects. They are constantly trying new ways to capture their students' attention and keep their interest. Early childhood teachers, along with other teachers, are trying to make sense of what strategies are research-based and what will make the greatest impact in their classroom.

## 1. Introduction

During the Covid 19 pandemic of 2019 - 2020 and the school shutdowns that occurred because of it, the importance of technology in educational settings became clear. Schools around the world closed and many attempted to use virtual learning to continue to provide education for students. Out of all the fads in education, blended learning has found its way into the classroom and will be staying for a while as more and more school districts push for implementing blended learning in their schools. Teachers are wondering if blended learning will be the answer to the long-lived question of figuring out what increases student engagement.

Personality and behaviour of the teachers directly influences the blooming personality of the students. The focus of this action research was to determine what type of impact-blended learning has on student engagement in an early childhood classroom, specifically an inclusive preschool half-day program. With a push for academics in early grades, such as preschool, early childhood teachers need something to help the students focus on the task.

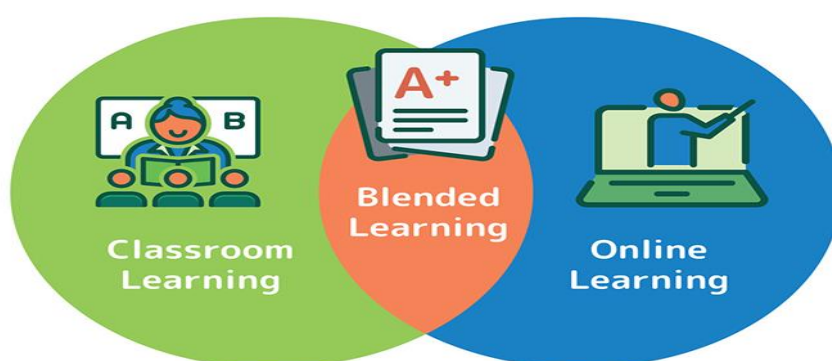
As discussed above that traditional approach has its own benefits but it is not free from deficiencies. It has following shortcomings:

- It is failing to meet the individual needs of all the students in the class basically due to improper pupil teacher ratio
- It is not adapting itself to meet the challenge of teaching physically challenges students
- Teachers are not trained for integrated classroom.
- It is not fit to meet the challenges put forward by the irregular students as attendance is must and evaluation system depends on the annual examination. If students fail to take the examination his whole year is a waste, due to rigidity the irregular students are in a way excluded from the mainstream of school system.
- Similarly, absence of professional counsellors and absence of right attitude of the teachers and dearth of follow up activities in the schools the children who discontinue the school for any reason do not get the chance for entering in the formal educational system again.
- School is not able to reach every child and so education for all is still a far-sighted goal
- Children from deprived groups, from the areas that are geographically isolated and medically unfit students are not able to gain benefit from this formal traditional mode of teaching.
- At the same time students must suffer due to dearth of teachers, their learning has many ambiguities due to inefficient teachers.

## 2. Blended Learning

Blended learning is a learning approach that combines instructor-led brick-and-mortar classroom training and online learning activities.

### Blended Learning



## Types of Blended Learning



1. Face-to-face driver
2. Rotation
3. Self-blend
4. Online driver

## 6 Reasons Why Classrooms Need to Implement Blended Learning

5. Studies Show Students Learn Better
6. It Promotes Student Ownership of Learning
7. It Prepares Students for a Tech-centred World
8. Blended Learning Cuts Costs
9. Blended Learning Increases Collaboration
10. Keeps Students More Interested and Engaged

## Blended learning is equitable

- Students with physical disabilities or conditions that are difficult to accommodate in the classroom
- Students who are sensitive to noise and distraction
- The introverts who'd rather die than put their hand up in a class discussion.



## What are the advantages of blended learning?

- Well-suited for large groups
- Better preparation and feedback
- Great for the non-technology fans
- Employees set their own pace
- Reduction in costs
- Blended learning develops technological soft skills
- Blended learning is cost-effective

- Blended learning is flexible
- Blended learning can bring parents on board
- Blended approaches can make personalized learning a reality
- Blended learning can boost engagement
- Blended learning keeps classroom connections alive

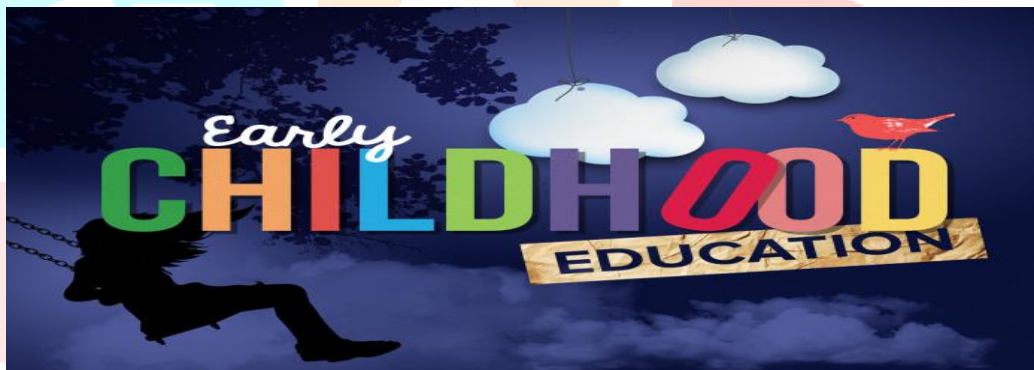
### What are the disadvantages of blended learning?

- Temporary increase in the workload (transition phase)
- Lack of motivation
- Basic technology knowledge
- Plagiarism and credibility problem

### Blended Learning vs. Traditional Learning

The strict traditional learning approach is giving room to new technologies. We cannot say that a blended learning approach is always better than the traditional one. It does, however, promise to offer the best of both worlds.

### 3. Early Child Education



***“Nearly half of all pre-primary-age children around the world are not enrolled in preschool.”***

In low-income countries, the picture is bleaker, with only 1 in 5 young children enrolled. Children from poor families are the least likely to attend early childhood education programmes. For children who do have access, poorly trained educators, overcrowded and unstimulating environments, and unsuitable curricula diminish the quality of their experiences.

### Why should universal access to pre-primary education be a global priority?

- Quality pre-primary education sets a strong foundation for learning.
- Universal pre-primary education helps make education systems more effective and efficient.
- Equitable pre-primary education is an effective strategy for promoting economic growth.

## Why Is Early Childhood Education Important?



Early childhood education is a term that refers to the period from a child's birth to when they enter kindergarten. But it's a common misperception that early childhood education is only about learning basic skills.

Nations around the world are becoming aware of the importance of early childhood education as well. UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) is an international governing body whose mission is "to contribute to the building of peace, the eradication of poverty, sustainable development, and intercultural dialogue through education."

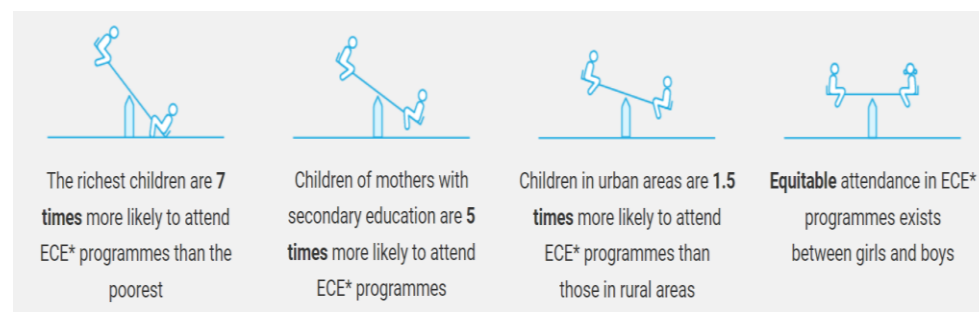
### What should governments do to ensure pre-primary education for all?



- Scale up investment
- Progressively grow the pre-primary system, while improving quality

It is only by investing in quality as education systems grow – not after – that governments can expand access and maintain quality.

- 9.3 million new teachers are needed to achieve universal pre-primary education
- Only 50% of pre-primary teachers in low-income countries are trained
- Only 5% of pre-primary teachers globally work in low-income countries



## Technology Use in Early Childhood

Easy access to technology has created new conditions for learning and development in the early childhood setting. More and more children, even those in economically challenged homes, are using technology such as mobile devices daily. One study spanning 8 years, found that in 2009 almost every home had a computer with broadband internet; at least one television, mobile phone, or

gaming console; and multiple forms of technology created specifically for kids such as dolls, toys, digital books, DVD's, video games, mp3 players, and cameras.



### Advantages of Early Childhood Education

- Early Childhood education makes children independent and technically competent
- Enhances good physical and mental development of kids
- Introduces young minds to newer innovative learning methods like LMS
- Improves social behavioural and interactions skills
- Enhances better communication between teachers and children
- Early childhood education methods degree motivate teachers to teach better by implementing latest teaching techniques
- Channels brain development of kids in a right manner
- Attend to the needs of children individually
- Children enrolled in early education programs tend to have higher IQ scores than kids enrolled directly into kindergarten without formal education

### Disadvantages of Early Childhood Education

- The technology implemented to teach can sometimes mislead and misguide kids
- Few educational institutions maintain the student to teacher ratio inappropriately, which restricts development
- Lack of proper curriculum, student management strategies and syllabus effects kids
- Absence of right teaching and learning methods in early childhood education centres show negative side effects.

### 4. Methods

The purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between blended learning and student engagement in an early childhood classroom. Data was collected and students were observed during a pivotal time during the day, small groups. The teacher researcher found small groups was a time during the day where students were not participating as much. Behaviours were escalating in students who did not want to go to the three specific small groups, making it difficult for the teacher researcher and para-educator to teach their lessons.

### 5. Participants

This action research project was implemented in an all-inclusive half-day preschool program. Data collection took place in both the morning and afternoon classes resulting in a total of 35 participants in the study, ranging in age from three to five year-olds. The morning class consisted of seven boys and eight girls, with two of whom are three year-olds with individualized plans.

### 6. Data Collection

The focus of this action research project was to determine what impact blended learning has on student engagement. Data collection was recorded on a table and later put into an Excel document.

Student engagement, disengagement, disruptions, and absences were recorded. As well as other interruptions, like fire drills, tornado drills, guest speakers, field trips, etc.

## 7. Findings

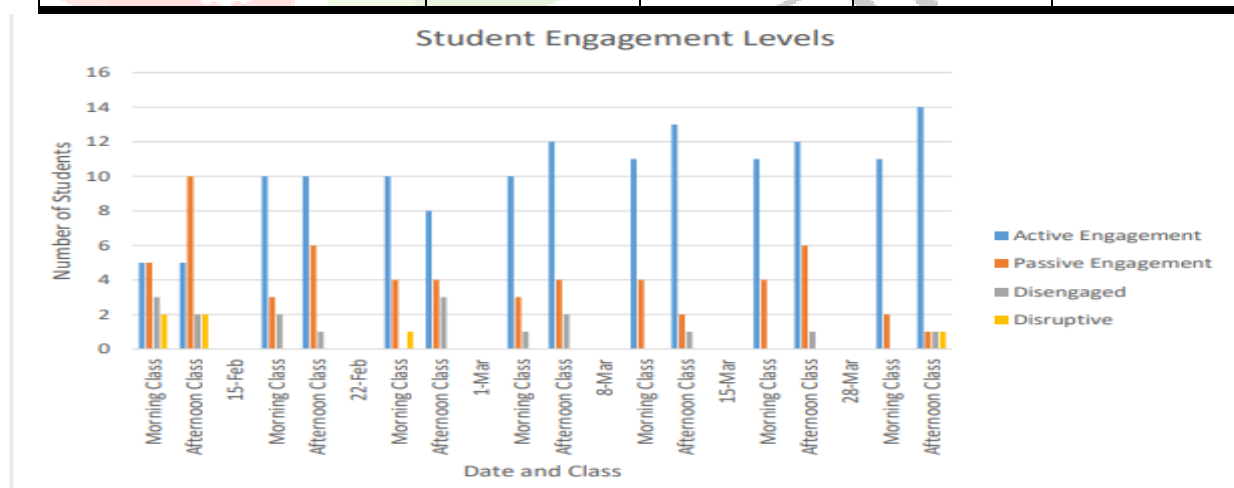
### Data Analysis

For the action research, the teacher researcher focused on a mixed methods approach to data collection, using both quantitative and qualitative data to drive the changes in instruction. Quantitative data focused on tallying up which students are actively engaged, passively engaged, disengaged, or disruptive. Qualitative data focused on how the students were responding to the blended learning atmosphere. The data was collected through observations from the teacher, paraprofessional, and other staff members. Data from both morning and afternoon classes, were recorded on a log, put into an Excel spreadsheet, and plotted on a graph to be analyzed more efficiently.

Table 1 shows the number of students who were actively engaged, passively engaged, disengaged, or disruptive during small groups, starting with a data collection before blended learning was implemented into the classroom.

**Table 1**

Number of Student Engagement	Active Engagement	Passive Engagement	Disengaged	Disruptive
8-Feb Morning Class	5	5	3	2
Afternoon Class	5	10	2	2
15-Feb Morning Class	10	3	2	0
Afternoon Class	10	6	1	0
22-Feb Morning Class	10	4	0	1
Afternoon Class	8	4	3	0
1-Mar Morning Class	10	3	1	0
Afternoon Class	12	4	2	0
8-Mar Morning Class	11	4	0	0
Afternoon Class	13	2	1	0



*Figure 1: Total number of student engagement levels during small group time.*

Figure 1 displays the data collected from Table 1 on a bar graph. The blue column represents how many students were actively engaged in the small group of their choosing. The red-orange column represents how many students were passively engaged in what they were doing, the gray column represents how many students were disengaged during small group time, and the yellow column represents how many students were disruptive during small groups.

## 8. Discussion

### Summary of Major Findings

The findings of this study present blended learning have a positive effect on student engagement in an inclusive preschool classroom. This correlates found the positive relationship between blended learning and student engagement in the classroom. The data shows when students were given a choice of what small group they wanted to go to and for how long, the number of students who were actively engaged increased as the study went on.

### Limitations of the Study

One of the limitations of the study was the size of the study. The teacher researcher only used her classroom in the study, reaching 35 students in all. Another limitation of the study was the inclusive classroom the study was conducted in. Both classes were made up of general education students, special education students, and students who were in the process of evaluation.

## 9. Implementation of Blended Learning in Indian Education System

Implementing blended learning needs a full dedication on the part of educational authorities and managements of educational institutes. It needs a well-planned design that include all from individuals top to bottom of the educational hierarchy. For preparing educational institutes for blended learning we will need to increase educational budgets, For changes in attitudes of parents, community, teachers and students awareness programmes, seminars, discussion forums should be organised.

## 10.Future Research

An area of future study and research would be to collect data from two different classrooms, with one classroom being a control group and the other classroom taking part in the new instruction. By collecting data from two classrooms, this would give the opportunity to compare and contrast a blended small group learning time with a more traditional three-group small group learning time.

Throughout all the research reviewed for this literature review, the most common area of concern mentioned was the need for professional development that specifically addresses blended learning.

## 11.Conclusion

Student engagement is a key component to a classroom. Without it, the classroom cannot run effectively or efficiently. Teachers are finding their classroom dynamics are changing. They have more diversity amongst their students academically, socially, behaviourally.

Blended learning provides an avenue for teachers to individualize their students' learning. With it, they can provide more lessons that are tailored to their students' needs and offers teachers a way to help capture every student's attention. It also gives students the ability to choose what they want to work on first, for how long and where they want to complete their work.

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