

Implementation of Blended Learning during COVID-19

Subjects: **Education & Educational Research**

Contributor: Santiago Batista-Toledo , Diana Gavilan

Blended learning (BL) is a teaching model that combines face-to-face activities in the classroom with activities outside the classroom through the introduction of technology that is computer-based, distance, or mobile learning, among others. There are several BL models to adopt, depending on the importance and extent to which the technology is used. It brings great benefits to the learner and involves teachers in the design of new teaching methods.

blended learning

synchronous learning

asynchronous learning experience

COVID-19

higher education

The COVID-19 pandemic precipitated a profound change in the global educational system, transforming the way in which education was delivered. According to UNESCO ^[1], 81.8% of students globally, at different academic levels, were affected by the total or partial closure of education centres. Initially, due to the lockdown, the education centers were forced to shut down, thereby shifting teaching to online platforms and resulting in an increase of up to 200% in the use of educational applications ^[2]. As the health situation improved, students gradually moved back to face-to-face classrooms, giving rise, in many cases, to the teaching model known as blended learning (BL), which combines face-to-face and online learning strategies.

BL allowed a partial return to the desired 'normality,' respecting the current sanitary measures of social distancing and seating capacity. However, BL also posed a challenge to the actors involved in the learning process—teachers, students, and institutions—given the infrastructure and organization required to successfully carry it out.

In universities, the implementation of BL has been prolonged more than in other levels of education, such as primary and secondary since higher education seemed to be less vulnerable to the need to return to the face-to-face teaching model. Information technology has changed the role of faculty members and the teaching–learning process itself ^[3]; therefore, in higher education institutions, students were prone to combine face-to-face instruction with on-line instructional resources, understanding the physical presence of the professor as a complementary form of communication ^[4]. This has had a more visible impact, affecting the characteristics linked to the essence of universities, such as student mobility, research, and knowledge transfer ^[5].

In addition, BL has had an impact on several aspects of university life, such as teaching, learning, social relations, costs, and the use of technology, all of which have turned the educational community into a true laboratory of innovation. This new educational context and the existence of new health crises resulting in situations like the one

we have experienced make it necessary to study and understand how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the educational framework, as well as its academic implications (performance, costs, quality of teaching, etc.). This will make it possible, firstly, to determine the real viability of this teaching model in educational and organizational terms and, consequently, to develop measures and policies that will favor its correct functioning in the future.

In fact, as can be seen in **Figure 1**, in a survey conducted in 2020 in 29 countries around the world about the future of higher education, a majority of the participants stated that they considered teaching in universities would be carried out under the BL modality five years from now [6]. The survey showed that the respondents considered blended and online teaching as normal and key, which emphasizes the importance of understanding this type of modality.

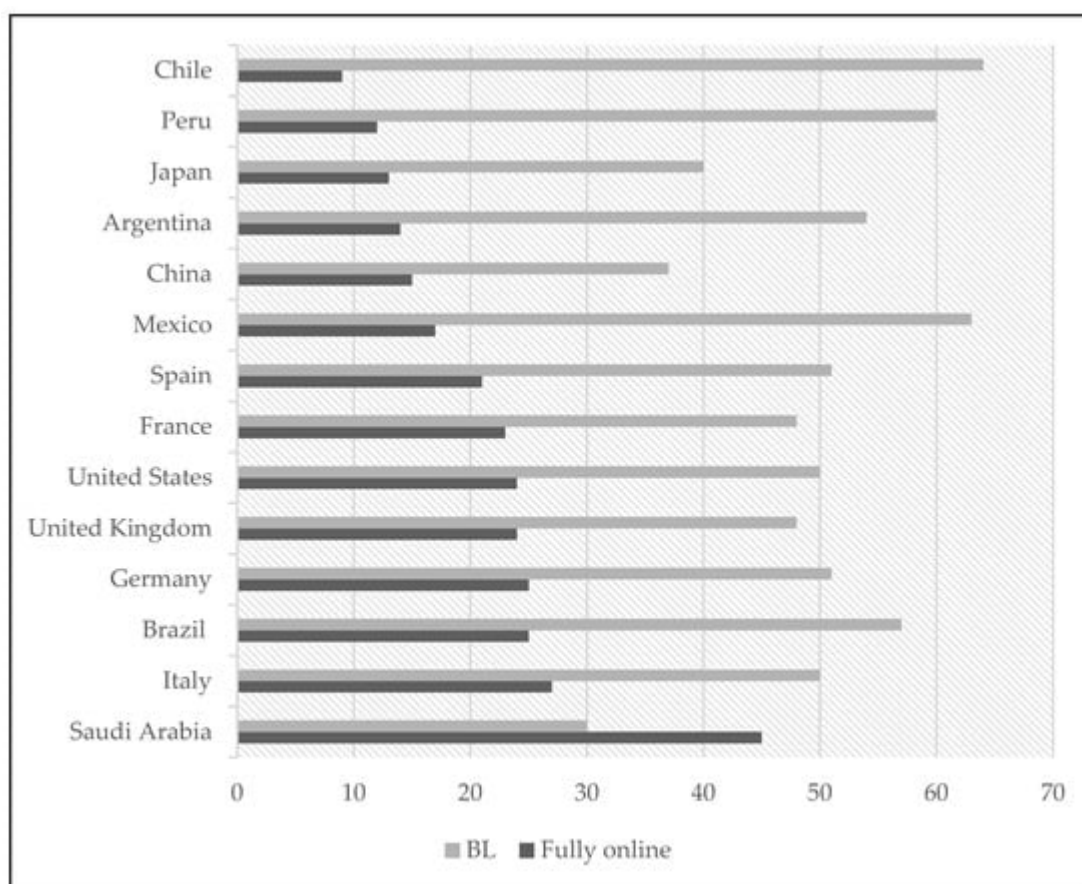


Figure 1. Sample of responses from the survey about the teaching modalities that will be used in the future for higher education.

It is also worth mentioning the different measures that were adopted by the countries considered. In general terms, universities extended deadlines for assignments or exams and modified evaluation methods. For instance, in Argentina, an online portal was developed with content for teachers and students, and in Spain, computer resources were purchased for vulnerable families. In the field of research, United Kingdom and United States created platforms to promote collaboration and inter-university research on COVID-19 [5].

The objective of this study is to show the impact of BL implementation in higher education during the pandemic. Although BL has had a gradual implementation, the pandemic forced universities to implement this type of teaching immediately to the whole community of higher education. Therefore, it is of interest to analyze the impact of BL in the experience of students and professors during COVID-19. To this end, the results of numerous academic studies are collected from the perspective of the experience of students, professors, and universities. It concludes with the challenges posed by BL during the pandemic and in the post-pandemic future. In this regard, this chapter conceptualizes the BL model, its dimensions, and the way it may be implemented. Moreover, it describes the consequences of BL experienced by both teachers and students during the COVID-19 pandemic. Finally, the technical and infrastructural implications that universities have faced while implementing BL are presented, as well as the challenges institutions will face in managing an adequate BL approach that meets their needs. To this end, the research carried out during the pandemic between 2020 and 2022 is analyzed. Understanding what the experience of BL has been like until now is crucial for the development of measures and policies favoring its correct functioning in the future.

References

1. UNESCO. Seguimiento Global de los Cierres de Escuelas. 2022. Available online: <https://es.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse> (accessed on 7 July 2022).
2. World Economic Forum. La pandemia COVID-19 ha Cambiado la Educación Para Siempre. Así es Como. 2020. Available online: <https://es.weforum.org/agenda/2020/05/la-pandemia-covid-19-ha-cambiado-la-educacion-para-siempre-asi-es-como/> (accessed on 7 July 2022).
3. Connick, G.P. Issues and Trends to Take Us into the Twenty-First Century. New Dir. Teach. Learn. 1997, 1997, 5–12.
4. Jusoff, K.; Khodabandelou, R. Preliminary Study on the Role of Social Presence in Blended Learning Environment in Higher Education. Int. Educ. Stud. 2009, 2, 79–83.
5. Conferencia de Rectores de las Universidades Españolas. La Universidad Frente a la Pandemia. 2020. Available online: <https://www.crue.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/La-Universidad-frente-a-la-Pandemia.pdf> (accessed on 10 July 2022).
6. La Educación del Futuro Será Online? Available online: <https://es.statista.com/grafico/23692/encuesta-educacion-superior-online-o-presencial/> (accessed on 8 September 2022).

Retrieved from <https://encyclopedia.pub/entry/history/show/73829>