

Trend of Blended Learning in University Education: A Study in the Faculty of Engineering, University of Peradeniya

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Blended Learning is learning which is facilitated by several teaching modes and techniques in an effective way. This paper presents survey results related to the evaluation of the present status and the future trend of blended learning in the Faculty of Engineering. This survey was conducted on 856 students who actively accessed the Faculty of Engineering e-Learning System (FEeLS) during the period January 2011 to June 2011. The survey response rate was 30%. Several environmental constraints caused the low response rate. The sample (142) was selected using a stratified random sampling method. The three batches of E09, E08 and E07 were considered as strata.

The survey result shows 73% of the respondents prefer to continue their studies with the combination of a live, active, efficient, up-to-date and easily accessible e-learning environment plus traditional classroom teaching. Only 2% rejected online learning while the others were more biased towards online-based learning. More than 60% of the respondents prefer to use online forum discussions, online feedback forms, online assignment submissions, online content repositories, Wikis, digital libraries and online notice boards. However, nearly 60% of them prefer to have their exams in the traditional way rather than by online quizzes. Further, more than 75% students believe it is easy to contact lecturers or instructors through online forums or messages. 98% of the respondents indicated that learning with combined modes will enhance their learning satisfaction.

The most preferred existing feature of the FEeLS is online notes. This feature obtained the highest rank among the features available in the system such as Forums, References, Quizzes, etc. There are nine learning techniques, namely; Digital Libraries and Content Repositories (A), Online Simulations (B), Web-casting and Video Streaming (C), Cell Phones and Other Mobiles (D), Wireless Technologies (E), Pod Casting and iPods (F), Weblogs and Online Diaries (G), Wikis (H), Language Training and Support Tools (I). These were used to evaluate trends of blended learning. The students' votes for the above techniques are depicted in Figure 1.

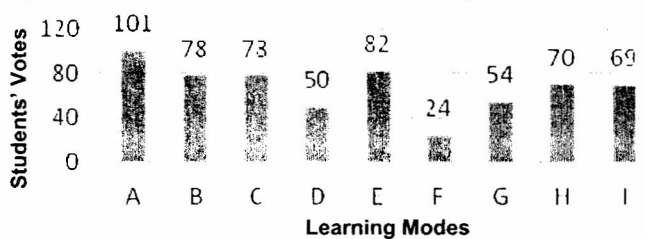


Figure 1. Students' votes for given learning techniques

The results of this survey show that the students' prefer to learn in a blended learning environment. They prefer to learn through the latest web technology. Thus, there is a need of extending this study to evaluate and understand the importance of the blended learning process and its capability of enhancing the quality and efficacy of the university education system. It will definitely help to introduce a competitive, remarkable, efficient university education system for Sri Lanka.