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## Hybrid Learning: Paradigm Shift to Enhancing Instructional Practice in Technical and Vocational Institutions in Kenya

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### **Abstract:**

*Hybrid learning is an approach to learning that combines the face-to-face model of learning with the blended mode of learning. It involves student covering some learning hours offline by going through the instructional materials prepared in advance by tutors which is then complemented by in class activities that are conducted synchronously. This model is important as it enables students to enrich their learning experiences in the process of teaching and learning. The purpose of this paper was to discuss how hybrid learning has resulted to a new paradigm shift that has revitalized instructional practices in technical and vocational institutions in Kenya. The paper is anchored on a desktop review to analyze the benefits of hybrid learning, distinguishing between hybrid learning and blended learning and differentiating the various hybrid learning models. The paper recommends that Technical and Vocational Institutions make deliberate efforts to invest in infrastructure fabric which is critical in the uptake of hybrid learning. It also recommends frequent re-tooling of trainers who are instrumental in the uptake process.*

**Keywords:** Hybrid learning, instructional practices, offline learning, online teaching

### **1. Conceptualization of Hybrid Learning**

Hybrid learning is a new approach to learning that is increasingly attracting scholars' attention in recent times. This has been conceptualized as a type of learning where some students attend classes in person while others join the same class virtually from another location. In this model, educators can teach students in person and remotely using video conferencing software and hardware like Zoom Meetings or Microsoft Teams App (Farhang Mossavar-Rahmani, 2010). An educator using hybrid learning can use online exercises and a pre-recorded video instruction concurrently to support in-person classroom learning. This idea concurs with McCotter-Jacobs, 2021/02/, who defines hybrid learning as a model that uses online components for teaching and learning that replaces face-to-face classroom time. Doering, 2006 conceptualizes hybrid learning as blending and mixing of the learning environments: face-to-face classroom instruction and online environment. In a more recent study by Worldwide technology 2020, hybrid learning has been conceptualized as the combination of traditional face-to-face instruction with additional offline or distance learning techniques, such as experiential learning and digital course delivery. In addition, Narashihma jagakuman 2021, posits that hybrid learning allows students to gradually move to a self-directed style of learning by replacing a component of in person learning. This is geared towards enriching student learning experiences in addition to fostering accountability in how students utilize their time outside the normal contact hours.

It is critical to note that Hybrid learning combines both the best parts of online learning and face-to-face learning to make education attainable and flexible to students and this enriches student learning experiences. The basis for Hybrid learning is that face-to-face learning is crucial in the learning process, and online learning is a must to be embraced since we are in the digital era; thus, the need to combine the two enriches the learning experiences (Alan Masson, 2010). Additionally, hybrid learning integrates online learning with traditional in-person learning activities in a planned pedagogical manner (Tabor, 2007). Consequently, online technology does not only supplement the learning process but improves it as a whole and consequently sustains students interests in learning.

### **2. Differences between Blended Learning and Hybrid Learning**

Research has shown that many scholars often use the two concepts interchangeably. However, there is a thin line that distinguishes the two concepts. Educators use online media to deliver their notes, lectures, and related course materials in blended learning. The student then reviews these materials at their own free time at their own pace (Tabor, 2007). The classroom periods turn into hands-on work periods where the teacher, who will have already delivered his lecture digitally, will now field questions, engage in class-wide discussions, or offer other means of support. The main

difference between the two models is the location of the learning. The students must meet at a particular place in blended learning, either in class or an education center, since in-person learning is an essential aspect of blended learning. In contrast, hybrid learning allows students and teachers to decide from where they can learn (Tsoi, 2011). However, with hybrid learning, the requirement is that learners attend the class either remotely and physically.

Therefore, blended learning involves students working on online exercises as they watch instructional videos on their own time. This model employs in-person teaching concurrently with learning methods. Further Hybrid learning involves the educator engaging in in-person education and online learning simultaneously. In this method, the teaching methods supplement the face-to-face instructions. Hybrid learning is an approach which allows a group of students physically in class and another group in remote to take a class at the same time while blended learning is a model that requires all students to be in class at the same time and in addition the students are provided with extra materials to learn and use asynchronously. Blended learning serves to compliment in-person learning while hybrid learning is meant to replace a certain component of in person learning.

The advantages of hybrid learning over blended learning is that while blended learning requires all student to be physically in class to have a live interaction with their tutors, hybrid learning gives room to the students to decide when to attend the physical class and when to take the classes from their place virtually and still experience the same synchronous interaction with their tutors. This allows tutors to easily plan for the physical space and saves transport costs for students who live a far distance. This also allows student living abroad to take their courses without having to travel which also saves on costs and hence fosters flexibility in learning.

### **3. Benefits of Hybrid Learning as an Instructional Approach**

Hybrid learning ensures observance of time management since the model allows students to control their lectures and learn more efficiently. With hybrid learning, the educator can record their course, and the remote students can watch it (Farhang Mossavar-Rahmani, 2010). The in-person students can attend the synchronous class, while the more independent remote students schedule the lecture in their available time. The recorded address helps the trainees to catch up more quickly (Tsoi, 2011). Recording lectures offers flexibility in time management. According to Flynn, 2021 hybrid learning improves flexibility and customization of classes, accessibility of learning and use of tools for courses. Further Flynn observes that hybrid learning facilitates all round better teaching and learning environment for both educators and students,

Hybrid learning allows for the participation of remote students just like the face-to-face student participates. This ensures that students are able to collaborate as opines Flynn, 2021 who posits that Hybrid learning ensures that students have better control of their time and are able to collaborate more. This gives opportunity to students who have the challenge of work and family dynamics which then allows them to learn from any location. This form of learning helps the students who cannot afford in-person learning. Hybrid learning has consequently become the solution for students abroad who undertake the process of learning remotely, for instance, in cases where we have the ongoing Covid 19 pandemic (Alan Masson, 2010).

Hybrid learning helps both the educators and students use resources efficiently while tutoring or using technology (Tsoi, 2011). Tutors can use platforms like the online grading system to help their students remotely in the same way they interact with the in-person student.

### **4. Application of Hybrid Learning as a Mode of Delivery**

Hybrid learning is being adopted by many countries in the globe. In U.S.A a study by the Institute of International Education (IIE) reveals that most students enrolled to universities after the 2020 fall season are learning using hybrid model. This has been attributed by the need to ensure that learning continues during the COVID-19 pandemic period. The study revealed that of the reporting institutions only 5% are planning to offer an exclusive in person learning, 5% opting for virtual learning while 87% of the institutions are planning to adopt the hybrid model. This hybrid model will limit in-person instruction to a tune of 20% and only allowing in-person instruction for certain classes such as practicals and labs. The research has also proven that hybrid model has been of great benefit to the international students who have remained enrolled while still in their countries and cannot make it to the U.S.A for their courses.

In the Netherlands hybrid model is also being adopted where learning processes are being merged with work processes to aid knowledge integration. This has been driven by changes in educational practice, change of roles, resources and alteration of locations. With the coming of the COVID-19 pandemic many students have continued with their studies and have not opted for the deferring option due to the efficiency of the model. The implication in this context is that hybrid learning has the potential to sustain continued learning under all circumstances.

Hybrid learning is a new concept in Malaysia which works best for the herding community in ensuring that students from the herder's community do not drop out of school. This has potential to retain students in schools despite the sedentary lifestyle that they engage in and hence the flexibility of this mode of learning makes it an asset for such communities. Great emphasis is being laid on face to face meetings when students are meeting their counsellors for guidance. Other schools are providing alternative avenues for students to submit their work. University students are using synchronous services including the google drive allowing lectures to review their work easily. In addition to reducing school dropout's hybrid learning plays critical role of saving of lives during this pandemic.

In Germany Combining a hybrid and an online teaching environment in a technology mediated textbook-bound context has turned out to offer interesting and motivating learning potential for students. In this context, lessons learnt are that the design should be not too open but not too restrictive as well as not too optional but not too compulsory which essentially means flexibility. Tools used should be aligned with learning needs as well as communicative goals. Finally,

there is still a way to go in order to motivate students to profit from the full potential of multimodality (Lamy & Flewitt, 2011).

Most of the African countries have still not adopted hybrid learning but still are practicing the traditional methods despite its immense potential to support learning. How the upsurge of the COVID-19 pandemic has forced many institutions to go for alternative models of learning propels them to think of hybrid learning as a viable alternative for their learning. A major challenge in the implementation of hybrid learning is a lack of adequate infrastructure in most parts of African countries to support the model of delivery.

## 5. Why The Paradigm Shift to Hybrid Learning?

The hybrid format allows the school to switch from face-to-face to online format when needed, thus ensuring minimal disruption to trainees' learning. Learning is recorded as such anytime the student has missed anything during the lesson, they can go through the class to understand it better. The model allows educators and trainees to engage with experts worldwide seamlessly, thus bringing authenticity to class. Learning is not interrupted during snowy days. The model ensures continuity with fewer disruptions. The model is now receiving innovative co-curricular activities and experiences to engage learners across time and space (Holy Trinity School, 2021).

Kenyan Universities have embraced blended learning and therefore they miss out on the potential benefits of hybrid learning which then disadvantages the students. Educators use online media to deliver their notes, lectures, and related course materials in blended learning. The student then reviews these materials at their own free time at their own pace. The classroom periods are transformed into hands-on work periods where the teacher, who will have already delivered his lecture digitally, will now field questions, engage in class-wide discussions or offer other means of support.

## 6. Various Models of Hybrid Learning

### 6.1. The Differentiated Model

In this model, class attendance by students in this model is synchronous. One can design differentiated activities for students at home and in person. The model employs both synchronous and asynchronous communication tools for students at home and in person. With this approach, the students who connect remotely log into the video conferencing platforms the in-person students take their seats (Farhang Mossavar-Rahmani, 2010).

For a traditional lesson. One can apply the following steps:

- Warm-up: The virtual and in-person students work on an introduction you have placed on the learning management system as you take the attendance.
- Direct Instruction: The students attending the class online watch a pre-recorded video from the link shared in the video chat. The students in the video conference are to remain muted. The same video is played for the in-person student, thus ensuring both students have access to the same video content.
- Guided Practice: Students meet together as a whole class. Students who are remotely at home use a wireless microphone and hook up a computer speaker so that when they speak for the entire group in class, the virtual students in a similar manner can hear what in-person students can say.
- Independent Practice: The students working online will move to the break-out rooms to practice the learning. The in-person students meet in small groups. The students write in a shared document to monitor accountability.
- Closure: Students fill at the online form for closing remarks.
- Much as the model may separate in-person and online students, they will interact in the learning management system.

The model is used in Holy Trinity School and consequently the critical question is what best practices can be borrowed from this model to enrich the teaching and learning processes in higher institutions of learning.

### 6.2. The Split A/B Model

The model works best in situations where half the students are required to stay at home at all times. Group A meets in person on Monday and Tuesdays as Group B joins the class remotely in this model. On Wednesday, the whole group can learn remotely. On Thursday and Friday, Group A learns remotely as Group B joins the brick-and-mortar class (Tsoi, 2011). In this model, students take the lecture notes given to them by the educator, read an article provided, or get an assignment at home. When they meet in person, they might do a lab to reinforce the ideas. The trainees may engage in guided practice or do small group intervention instruction. The model is used in Stonington Public School (Alan Masson, 2010).

### 6.3. The Virtual Accommodation Model

This model is applied when a small group of students prefers to learn remotely compared to a larger group attending the physical classes. The model requires one student to volunteer and ensure that the students in remote can see the tutor. The student acting as a liaison can use a video chat and a computer to accomplish the task. The volunteer is required to sit near the tutor during direct instruction. A flipped video can still be done to aid in passing information to students in remote. Assignments can be placed in the LMS.

From the models described above it is evident that institutions have already started embracing the hybrid model which serves to imply that it enhances student learning. Since there is no one model that can suffice the complete teaching process, the researchers in this paper have proposed a step-by-step guide which will support learning institutions to transform their curricular into the hybrid approach. The model comprises the following;

- Critical analysis of the curriculum to determine which learning content can be transformed into hybrid learning content, this review will assist the trainers to interact with all the learning outcomes and decide how best they will be delivered
- Identification of the learning content that will be transformed by the trainers
- Capacity building of the trainers on how to come up with hybrid content
- Actual development of the hybrid content which will be used for teaching and learning
- Reviewing the content developed to ensure that it addresses all the gaps
- Sharing the developed content with the shareholders so that they buy in during the process of implementation
- Coming up with the complete guide which will then be used in the institutions of learning to develop hybrid content.

## 7. Discussion

Hybrid learning being a new approach to delivering the curriculum has gained momentum in the recent past due to uncertainties that have affected the educational sector. The model has significant benefits which institutions can reap to remain afloat in the curriculum delivery process. Institutions have been slow in the uptake of this model of delivering the curriculum due to the cost implications that come with it. This means that institutions have to make intentioned decisions of allocating more resources to supporting this very important mode of instructional delivery.

## 8. Recommendations

In the light of the above discussion, the following recommendations are made that will inform both policy and practice in the uptake of hybrid learning:

- Technical and Vocational institutions will need to invest in the infrastructure fabric which is a key determinant to the uptake of the hybrid model in the teaching and learning, this will ensure preparedness in the uptake of the same
- The institutions must design purposeful capacity building programs to support the trainers to acquire relevant expertise needed to embrace the hybrid model of curriculum delivery.
- Those institutions should organize frequent re-tooling of trainers in the hybrid delivery process. This is due to the dynamic nature of technology which the members need to be abreast with.

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