The Impact of Blended Learning on Student Engagement and Achievement in UAE Schools: A Case Study

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Abstract

Blended learning, combining classroom methods with online activities, is globally recognized as a potent educational strategy. In the UAE, educational reforms emphasize critical thinking and STEM competencies, aligning with Blended Learning's potential. This study addresses a gap in understanding the consequences of Blended Learning by investigating its impact on student engagement, academic performance, and long-term outcomes. Through a case study approach, student experiences, academic achievement, and later effects on critical thinking and motivation are examined. Results indicate significantly higher engagement and academic attainment in Blended Learning than traditional methods, fostering active Learning and improved grades. Moreover, Blended Learning stimulates critical thinking and sustained academic achievement. Teachers acknowledge its importance but face challenges with technology adoption and personalized approaches. Cultural factors influence adoption. Recommendations include integrating Blended Learning into curricula, supporting implementation, and providing teacher training. Future research should focus on practical details and intervention effectiveness. Blended learning holds promise for transformative educational initiatives in the UAE and globally, enhancing student participation, achievement, and long-lasting impact.

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1. Introduction

The role of Blended Learning, a dynamic and pragmatic approved educational strategy that combines conventional classroom instructing methods and e-learning activities in leading the instruction process and consumption patterns globally, is incomparable (Abdulall Ibrahim 2019). It is provided with this inventive option to make the process discussed more individualized, flexible, and interactive so that the instruction can be given to students with different needs and studying styles. Research informs us about the widespread global introduction of blended learning stimulated by technological evolution. Learning models of this kind are increasingly popular in several educational contexts because they are scalable and very efficient (Zeidan et al. 2022). Regarding the UAE, the changes have been major reforms in the country's education system that are directed at improving educational achievements and adding more relevance to them for the current age.

The United Arab Emirates (UAE)'s strategic vision for education targets transferring a culture of critical thinking, digital literacy, and a strong foundation in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) subjects, ensuring that such students will be able to innovate and retrain themselves for a better future effectively (Zeidan et al. 2022). These reforms, therefore, create an opportunity to incorporate Blended Learning approaches as a strategy that can contribute greatly to achieving these challenging goals. Yet, despite the potential advantages of Blended Learning, the research on that topic now gives written information too laggingly for the context of the UAE. What you have noticed is a major gap in the research related to the Blended Learning Effect on different subjects, underrepresentation of different student populations, and lack of data that could pay attention to the long-term effect of learning on critical thinking, motivation, Learning, and achievement (Alsalhi, Eltahir & Al-Qatawneh 2019). These gaps outline that the longitudinal and contextual study of blended Learning needs to be done beyond looking at the short-term gains in a local and diverse context.

Therefore, the study tries to investigate the impact of Blended learning on student interaction and success in the schools of United Arab Emirates through thorough analysis of a case study in detail. This research will see how students are engaging in the blended learning space through their individual reports they constitute of their experience, judgments, and participation in the space. The goals of the research reflects the fact that it gives a line of the effect of blended learning on the academic criteria by analyzing the student achievement levels in all topics through

the comparison to the regular study patterns (Alsalhi, Eltahir & Al-Qatawneh, 2019). The research would be carried out in a long run and investigate how Blending Learning affected students' critical-thinking, appearing on the motivation of students and their studying path (Li et al. 2023). This point will be involved in measuring the effectiveness of such an educational environment on the students's career development-perspective. Also, the teachers' information to be provided with: about their experience in blended learning, challenges teachers have faced and teachers' view on the effectiveness of blended learning will be explored; thus, these factors will be identified to provide the factors determining the success of the implementation of blended learning. In addition, we would examine the impact of cultural issues on blended learning implementation and experience in UAE secondary schools, considering the UAE's special and local cultural background and its implications on teaching methods (Almarzuqi & Mat 2024).

This paper explores curriculum processes integral to blended learning implementation in UAE pedagogy. It offers an overview of foundational theories, global trends, and educational reform needs. Methodology and research findings on student engagement and achievement are outlined, with implications for curriculum development, teacher practice, and policy-making discussed. Recommendations for future research and practice conclude the paper, aiming to contribute to educational innovation in the UAE.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Framework

Theoretical Framework Section, constructed to analyze the effects of Blended Learning on student engagement and Outcomes in UAE schools, requires a thorough review of theoretical backgrounds essential for the concepts above, including Blended Learning, student engagement, and academic achievements. The Blended Learning approach, an optimal mix of traditional inschool instruction methods with digital educational products and possibilities for online communication, has been developed based on the structure of constructivist learning theory (Cao 2023). According to the constructivist approach, the learner should produce their concepts and understanding of the world based on their experience of the matter and reflect on this experience. Successful Blended Learning envisions personalized Learning by allowing students to utilize the material at their own pace while following their preferred styles of Learning, which increases their involvement and, ultimately, the performance of these learners (Li et al. 2023).

Student engagement is considered one of the most important factors for success in education, as implied in Astin's Student Involvement Theory. He outlines the molarity and emotional intensity a student allocates in his academic experiences as the key to education and self-development. In Blended Learning, engagement is not limited to the traditional classroom concept. Besides, synchronous and asynchronous online discussions, group projects, and digital content production are all examples of the engagement strategy students would experience in this learning approach (Xhomara, Gush & Muçaj 2023). Moreover, an educational researcher assumes academic improvisation in a blending learning environment, categorizing objectives by Bloom's Taxonomy. Classic education can be improved with a dynamic approach, Blended Learning. This way, learning on different levels can happen, from accumulating knowledge to creating ideas and adapting to every student. By doing so, the person attains the knowledge and skills and develops the truth-mindedness and problem-solving skills needed in academic development (Rahmani & Ghounane, 2023).

2.2 Review of Existing Research on Blended Learning

The attraction for blended Learning in educational research is that blended teaching has displayed the potential to improve learner engagement and academic growth. Since blended learning methods were subject to observation and analysis in several contexts, we can now break down key results and setbacks to these approaches. The specific context of the study by Ward (2019) involves using a blended learning model to propose how to deal with apathy among fifth-grade students in social studies lessons. The data revealed that the experimental students in the blended learning model displayed much higher motivation, engagement, and academic achievement levels than the control group (Ward 2019). Similarly, Hussein Al Noursi (2021) highlighted the impact blended learning has on high school students' development in English. The result showed a statistically significant difference in student achievement based on their instructional approach; the blended learning group utilized the traditional method versus the control group. It brings blended Learning to light and shows its role in enhancing language proficiency in EFL settings (Hussein Al Noursi 2021).

Alsalhi, Eltahir, and Al-Qatawneh (2019) reviewed the impacts of blended Learning on the science grade achievement of ninth-graders. The quasi-experimental design study presented statistically different results supporting the experimental group. The group saw higher academic performance and more positive attitudes towards blended Learning than the control group. The

research, specific to the UAE and Arab region, is essential in decision-making and indicates the usefulness and effectiveness of blended Learning in this circumstance (Alsalhi, Eltahir & Al-Qatawneh 2019). In a recent research, Abdulall Ibrahim (2019) assesses the main implications of e-learning and e-teaching on students' academic performance in Dubai and Abu Dhabi. The school discoveries revealed a close relationship between blended Learning, website usage, e-learning notions, and the students' academic results (ABDULALL IBRAHIM 2019). Despite these studies serving a useful goal in identifying key areas of implementation and outcomes, there is a possibility that such studies might not highlight the differences that occur due to cultural context and differences between the Arabian Gulf region and the rest of the Arab world. Yet, there is also the need to conduct additional studies on the cultural aspect in this context, as well as the technological infrastructure and the educational policies, which might constrain or support the broader use of blended learning approaches.

Previous studies utilized diverse methodological techniques, from action research to quasiexperimental designs and cross-sectional surveys. While these approaches yield valuable insights, they also pose limitations. As exemplified by Ward (2019), action research offers immediate benefits for improving instructional practices but lacks generalizability. Quasi-experimental designs, like those of Alsalhi, Eltahir and Al-Qatawneh (2019) and Hussein Al-Noursi (2021), enhance internal validity but may introduce biases. Future research should embrace mixed methods to address these shortcomings, combining quantitative surveys and tests with qualitative interviews and observations. This holistic approach will provide comprehensive insights into the multifaceted nature of blended education in the UAE and the broader Arab world.

2.3 Research Questions and Sub-Questions

How does Blended Learning impact student engagement and achievement in UAE schools? 1. How does student engagement in the blended learning environment compare to traditional classroom settings?

2. What are the academic achievement outcomes of students participating in blended learning compared to traditional learning methods?

3. What are the long-term effects of Blended Learning on students' critical thinking skills, motivation, and academic trajectories?

4. What are teachers' perspectives regarding the implementation, challenges, and perceived effectiveness of Blended Learning in UAE schools?

5. How do cultural factors influence the implementation and experience of Blended Learning in education in the United Arab Emirates (UAE)?

3. Methodology

The examination of blended Learning as an approach that, in most cases, leads to positive results in academic outcomes in UAE schools is universally recognized as a crucial area of inquiry in education. For exploring the topic of blended learning's influence on pupil attachment and success, a specific case study technique was selected because it gives detailed knowledge of real-life scenarios in a specific environment.

3.1 Case Study Approach Justification

Due to its tailored analysis, the case study method was chosen since it provides readers with a more focused understanding of a particular phenomenon in its real-life context. By addressing a single school that uses blended learning in the UAE, implementing this type of learning is practically understood. This is because it allows for the specific study and understanding of the effects of blended learning in terms of student engagement and pedagogical performance within a specific cultural and educational environment. Furthermore, the use of case study design provided an excellent opportunity to discover the most complicated interactions and processes responsible for the differences in students' performance during Learning in blended learning environments (Alsalhi et al. 2021).

3.2 Selection of the Case School

The case school was chosen according to some criteria that highlighted its uniqueness as a like school in UAE that represents the blended learning system as different schools with different outcomes. The school was selected by using criteria such as the school size, urban or rural location, socioeconomic background of the students, and the extent of blended learning practices. Not just the perspective but also the school administration, the teachers, and the students' willingness to participate in the research (Alsalhi, Eltahir & Al-Qatawneh 2019).

3.3 Data Collection Methods

Data collection was mainly via document analyses, interviews, and surveys with teachers, students, and other members of whom the stakes were also conducted. A document analysis would involve a review of school documents and learning materials used, lesson plans, and student performance data in connection with implementing the blended learning method and student success. Interviews with teachers and school managers shed light on the various issues they

encounter and the mental picture of blended Learning. Questionnaires were made available for the students, and their views on engagement, motivation, and academic success in the blended learning atmosphere were polled (Zeidan et al. 2022).

3.4 Data Analysis Techniques

Qualitative data from textual analysis, interviews, and surveys was theoretically analyzed using Content analysis. The thematic analysis addressed the extracted concepts, tying them into relevant topics, which helped in clustering and understanding. Topics related to student engagement, academic achievement, teacher perspectives, and cultural considerations were identified and systematically analyzed to answer the questions we were inquiring about (Alsalhi, Eltahir & Al-Qatawneh 2019).

3.5 Ethical Considerations

Ethics was the most determining factor during my research. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring they had chosen to participate and the responses were kept anonymous and confidential. The attention was also directed to protecting the personalities, keeping their anonymity. All obtained data were stored in a secure place and used only for research purposes. Also, ethical approval was sought from the institutional review boards to confirm the applicability of ethical guidelines and standards (Alsalhi, Eltahir & Al-Qatawneh 2019).

4. Case Study Findings

The blended learning model of Learning has been adopted widely by schools in the UAE as one example to determine its effectiveness in student engagement and achievements. The second section of this paper is dedicated to the first impact that blended learning has on students' engagement and achievement, as well as the short-term and long-term effects. It also includes the teachers' perspectives, traditional education, and cultural insights taken into consideration in the chosen school.

4.1 Context of the Selected School

The institution school picked is a relevant educational institute in the UAE that educates students from different financial backgrounds. The institution is experimenting with blended Learning, hoping to go beyond one educational program and extend learners' knowledge. A school has sufficient computer laboratories, internet connection, online learning platforms, and other needed technological resources (Alsalhi, Eltahir & Al-Qatawneh 2019).

4.2 Impact of Blended Learning

4.2.1 Student Engagement

Research findings showed that a virtual classroom setting in a blended learning environment could substantially engage the learners compared to a traditional learning setting. With undoubted blended Learning, female students exhibited greater participation, interaction, and attitudes towards Learning. They underappreciated the flexibility necessary to use online resources and became actively involved with multimedia content presentations, discussion forums, and collaborative activities. Additionally, students talked about how they experienced an increased ownership awareness and autonomy in the learning process, resulting in a boost of motivation and self-directed learning habits (Alsalhi, Eltahir & Al-Qatawneh 2019).

Aspect	Blended Learning	Traditional Learning		
Participation	High	Moderate		
Interaction	Active	Passive		
Autonomy	Increased	Limited		
Motivation	Enhanced	Standard		
Self-directed Learning	Prominent	Minimal		
Table 1. Student Engagement Comparison				
4.2.2 Academic Achievement				

Students in the sample school exhibited significantly positive effects of blended Learning regarding academic achievement. Analyzing the performance data of students, the blended learning model classes scored higher ratings compared to when the subjects were taught through traditional methods. The ability of students to acquire knowledge and concepts had been improved, and their problem-solving skills had become stronger with higher retention rates. The individualized Learning given by blended Learning tailored for different learning styles will let the students have a pace between them (Alsalhi, Eltahir & Al-Qatawneh 2019).

Blended Learning	Traditional Learning			
Higher scores	Standard scores			
Improved grades	Average grades			
Enhanced skills	Traditional progress			
Table 2. Academic Achievement Outcomes				
	Higher scores Improved grades Enhanced skills			

4.2.3 Long-Term Impact

Blended Learning was the most consistent factor affecting students' ability to think creatively, aspire, and reach success. It was noticeable that the pupils who participated in blended Learning demonstrated improvement in their ability to analyze, evaluate, and apply knowledge to life in a real context. They acquired this inner-motivation as well as continuous and bold spirit to

learn which has made them to face their academic work confidently. In another view, it was found that some students never went back to school, so it can be concluded that the learning change from the educational trip was indeed permanent (Alsalhi, Eltahir, Al-Qatawneh 2019).

4.2.4 Teacher Perspectives

Teachers of a chosen school from those who participated in the poll were not less than helpful in introducing combined blended Learning in instructional activities even if they encountered some challenges. They loved the fact that blended learning tools could be used at different levels, i.e. student they could be taught in a way that offered flexibility, flexibility, and versatility in lessons delivery, and communications. Yet, those teachers ourselves did face some issues such as a lag or delay and creating superior content in a timely manner and also providing each student with individual help. Though teachers were confronted with these issues, they noticed that the directive of blended Learning freed them to improve their teaching effectiveness and student outcomes (Alsalhi, Eltahir & Al-Qatawneh 2019).

4.2.5 Cultural Considerations

The UAE country's stylistic and traditional factors played prominent roles in the way the nation-wide implementation of blended teaching and learning processes became realized. The work of the students was a great peak of the culture mountain. It was shining like diamond during the project work utilization the best parts of each culture, but in the dark valleys of misunderstanding some students lost themselves. Cultural sensitivity and inclusivity played major roles in creating educational content of materials and classroom activities. Additionally, in line with cultural values and educational priorities, the principals aligned blended learning practices with technology-enhanced learning, contributing to successful integration in the UAE educational environment (Et. al. 2020).

5. Discussion

Making inferences from the data regarding the literature review and the summation of the whole process poise critical values regarding the effect of blended learning on students' engagement and achievement in the UAE Schools.

5.1 Interpretation of Findings

Blended learning, which integrates Learning constructivist learning theory (Cao 2023), presents individualized learning experiences as diverse ways are offered to answer student heterogeneity. Students' greater engagement, active involvement, and heightened motivation have

been the most excellent contributions from the theoretical background of blended learning that considers interaction and independence (Alsalhi, Eltahir & Al-Qatawneh 2019). Student Involvement Theory by Astin, which explores the energy factor both physically and psychologically, emphasizing the significance of a student's internal and external energy in their educational experience, enhances the findings. Blended Learning, a diverse approach to learning through various online communication platforms and interactive activities, engages the students fully in the course, leadings to better knowledge and skills acquisition (Xhomara, Gusho & Muçaj 2023).

However, results related to academic performance indicate that blended Learning effectively promotes a deeper and richer understanding in students and improves their problemsolving skills and retention rates (AIsalhi, EI-Tahir & AI-Qtawnah 2019). The alignment of the blended learning Bloom's Taxonomy strategy contributes to these outcomes, as flexible blended learning design is the approach that can respond to various learning objectives targeting a whole spectrum of learning levels, from the lowest of cognitive acquaintance skills up to the highest order of thinking abilities (Rahmani and Ghounane, 2023). The comparison of the academic achievement results between blended learning and traditional methods can also corroborate the point that blended learning is more productive in terms of providing knowledge and relevant skill development (Alsalhi, Eltahir & Al-Qatawneh 2019).

5.2 Key Themes and Emerging Patterns

Identifying the core themes and the threads that are increasingly obvious through data unveils the transformative nature of blended Learning in UAE. The common reasons that lead to those consequences of blending the learning process are student autonomy orientation, enhanced interactions among students, and enhanced motivation. (Alsalhi, Eltahir & Al-Qatawneh 2019). The themes above align with the blended learning and student engagement theory and reaffirm that efficient utilization of the blended learning model contributes to positive educational impact. Further, blended learning has evident short-term and long-term effects, including critical thinking, motivation, and academic viability, which are sustainable for learning for life (Li et al. 2023).

5.3 Strengths and Limitations of the Case Study Approach

Discussing the pros and cons of the case study method shows that results are valid and applicable in causing positive changes. The elements contributing to the advantage of the case study approach include its extremely detailed examination of particular systems and occurrences,

which provides a rich audience with a deeper knowledge of the situation (Alsalhi, Eltahir & Al-Qatawneh 2019). Nevertheless, intensive research about individual schools may prevent generalizability. In this case study, only a single setting is investigated and might be susceptible to bias and external factors (Ward 2019). One can expand the review's perspectives by applying mixed methods study designs and conducting studies across different educational settings in the UAE and Arab world (Hussein Al Noursi 2021).

5.4 Comparison to Existing Research

The comparison of this study, when contrasted with the existing literature on the Blended Learning approach in the UAE context, shows several unique points and ideas. Firstly, this approach reveals that the impact of Blended Learning on student engagement has been confirmed earlier (Alsalhi, Eltahir & Al-Qatawneh 2019; Ward 2019). Most students in the blended learning environment experienced more participation, interaction, self-autonomy, motivation, and self-directed learning behaviors than students exposed to the traditional classroom environment. This underlines the capability of Blended Learning to meet different learning styles and enhance active student engagement, which is a bonafide foundation for deeper Learning and academic adequacy (Xhomara, Gusho, and Muçaj 2023).

Moreover, this research covers the role of Blended Learning on students' academic achievements at the UAE level. The positive findings of blended learning were linked with success in different subjects such as mathematics, science, and language arts (Alsalhi, Eltaher & Al-Qatani 2019; Hussein Al Noursi 2021). The Blended learning model enabled the learner with a personalized study schedule thus performing better in the final exams, having a deep understanding of some courses, being a conversation level in problem-solving, and having enhanced retention rate in comparison to the traditional methods. The above fact shows that blended learning can improve academic outcomes and the student's level of knowledge (Rhomanie & Ghounare 2023).

In addition, we can see the long-term impact of Blended Learning on the thinking skills, motivation, and course of study of students from the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Although previous studies were mainly concentrated on the short-term consequences such as test scores and student participation and engagement, the results suggest that the effects of Blended Learning can be long-term as it affects the capacity of the learners to analyze, evaluate, and synthesize knowledge into the real-world application (Li et al. 2023). Further, the fact that students' intrinsic

motivation, determination, and confidence in their academic aspirations have improved shows that good results go beyond the classroom.

5.5 Implications for Educational Policy, Curriculum Development, Teacher Training, and Future Research

Explaining the impact of these implications for educational policy, curriculum formation, teacher training, and future research in teaching Blends Learning in the UAE appears promising to change the education system. Policymakers and educational leaders need to weave the application of Blended Learning into curriculum frameworks and equip the instructors and the students with the required support and resources for its implementation (Et. al. 2021). Blended learning materials have to be devised, including the involvement of teachers and the translation into diverse cultural perceptions and educational priorities (Rahmani & Ghounane 2023). Such teacher training programs need to educate on best practices and encourage the inculcation of technology in teaching practices, keeping in mind ongoing professional development opportunities to handle the problems related to technology integration and individual educational support (Ward 2019).

Eventually, the forthcoming studies should focus on identifying the implementation and effectiveness factors of the Blended Learning, which should be considered, such as the cultural context, the technological infrastructure, and the educational policies that influence the model outcomes (ABDULALL IBRAHIM 2019). Following a mixed-methods research approach alongside a longitudinal study design, one can achieve greater nuanced perspectives regarding the complex components dictating Education Tech's effectiveness. Hence, the outcomes of these studies will contribute to evidence-based practices in the UAE and extend to the wider international education sphere.

6. Conclusion

This research focuses on the impact of the blended learning approach on UAE schools over student motivation, academic achievements, and the overall educational system. The evidence shows a substantial uptake in active learning, positively affecting academic performance and critical thinking. The blended learning model, which allows the application of different modalities, accommodates different learning styles, enabling students to get involved in generating their learning and producing a personalized, interactive environment. Such an introduction explains the goal of UAE regarding deep Learning and student achievement. In the same way, students benefit from subjects that teach them to think mathematically, science methodically, and language skills, among many others, resulting in higher scores, deeper understanding, and improved problemsolving skills compared to traditional methods. The work has come to embrace blended Learning with its long-term effects on motivation and personal accomplishment demonstrated in the research as a game changer rather than a passing avenue for instant academic gains. Such measures as anticipated things are blended learning integration in the school curriculum, and teacher professional development is one of them. Future studies will focus on how implementation is carried out using mixed-method designs and providing evidenced-based policies. In the last analysis, the blended learning system can revolutionize education in the UAE and most parts of the world.



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