

# The Design and Practice of Online and Offline Blended Teaching Approach for Undergraduate Students: Based on a Course “Local government studies”

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**Abstract.** Blended teaching has become a popular trend in university education. This paper aims to design and implement a blended teaching mode for an undergraduate course on local government studies, incorporating both online and offline elements. The strategies employed include preparing appropriate resources and problems for students, designing plans for recalling prior knowledge, self-learning new knowledge, and addressing pre-class assignments, as well as arranging in-class activities to activate new knowledge, deliver key points, and summarize and integrate what students have learned. The implementation process involves pre-class learning, in-class learning and discussion, and post-class assignments and feedback, integrating the characteristics of flipped classrooms and online and offline learning models into three stages. This research offers practical implications for other university courses seeking to adopt blended teaching.

**Keywords:** Blended learning; online; offline; teaching design; undergraduate course

## 1 Introduction

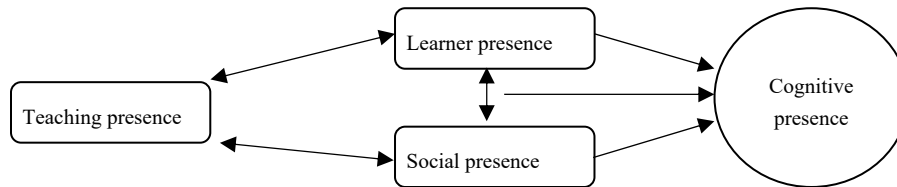
With the emergence of innovative information technologies and the movement of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), blended or hybrid teaching methods combining online and offline elements have emerged<sup>[1]</sup>. Constructing blended teaching and flipped classrooms that prioritize student development thus has become a significant policy measure in the field of education<sup>[2-4]</sup>. While the COVID-19 pandemic has prompted a paradigm shift towards blended teaching modes, it is expected that it will continue to prevail in the post-pandemic era.

In order to design an effective course with online and offline teaching approach, we first discuss the core features and conceptual elements of blended learning, explore the appropriate strategies to design an online and offline blended teaching class, and employ them in our teaching reform project, i.e. “Local government studies”. We believe that, although our design strategies and implementation practices are based on an undergraduate course in the Chinese context, the lessons learned can be extensively helpful to other courses.

## 2 Designing Strategies of Blended Teaching

In order to design a successful blended teaching mode, we need to theoretically understand the factors influencing the success of online education<sup>[5]</sup>. The construct combining teaching pres-

ence, social presence and learner presence significantly contribute to a successful blended teaching (Fig.1).



**Fig. 1.** Theoretical relationships between teaching, social, and cognitive presence

Source: adapted from Shea & Bidjerano (2010) [5].

Based on previous blended teaching research and practices [1] [5-11], we divide the blended teaching activities into three stages, preparations, students learning via online & offline approaches, and in class teaching activities combining online and offline elements (Fig.2.). During the preparations before class, learning materials for all students based on the core content of the course should be provided by the teacher; additionally, problems for students to think about, to discuss about and address should also be provided. During students learning stages, three aims are to be made, including recalling prior knowledge, learning new knowledge and addressing assigned problems. During in-class teaching period, the teacher should focus on activating new knowledge, delivering lectures and holding detailed discussions, and finally summarizing and integrating all the knowledge points related to the core contents. The "review – presentation - new knowledge – experience – reconstruction – communication – enhancement - reflection" teaching strategy was used. Additionally, the flipped classroom teaching model was adopted to combine "classroom time" with "out-of-class time", as well as online and offline elements.

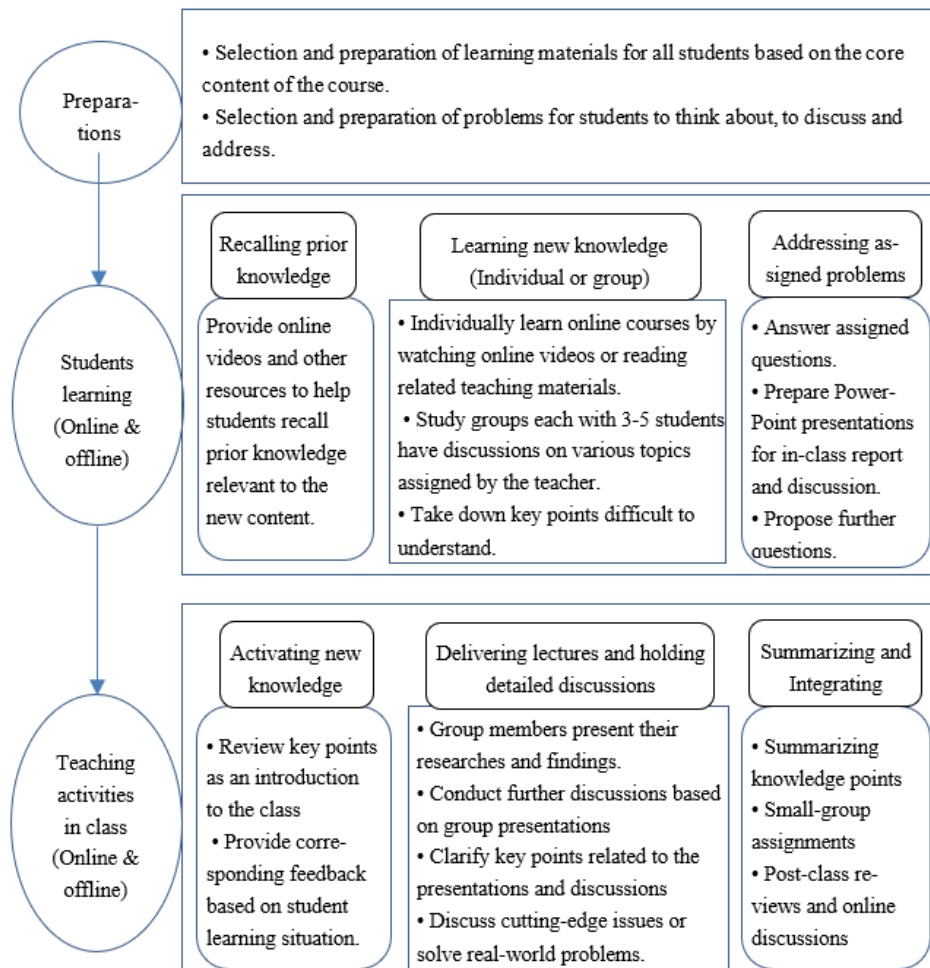


Fig. 2. Strategies to design an online and offline blended teaching class

Source: the authors.

### 3 The Implementation Practice of Blended Teaching for the Course "Local Government Studies"

#### 3.1 What to Blend: Selection and Development of Learning Resources and Tools

##### 3.1.1 Utilization of Existing Online Courses

This includes incorporating relevant chapters of "Contemporary Chinese Political System" from the Alliance Platform resources into the course (<http://www.gdhkmooc.com/portal>), as well as utilizing the Chinese University MOOC national quality course "Local Government

and Politics"(https://www.icourse163.org/course/0302CCNU023-1206424806).

Students are required to complete independent online learning and watch content on the Alliance Platform, which accounts for approximately 360 minutes: 10 videos with a total duration of 113 minutes, 10 task nodes requiring approximately 100 minutes, and 5 documents and other materials requiring approximately 150 minutes.

### **3.1.2 Self-learning on digital platforms such as the Alliance Platform, course WeChat groups and Bilibili**

A total of 63 materials were uploaded to the Alliance Platform, including 19 videos, 39 documents, and 5 other materials. Additionally, related videos on Bilibili (such as understanding grassroots governments), estimated time consumption of 50 minutes.

Overall, the student's online learning and self-study time, including group discussions and ppt production, is at least 1010 minutes, accounting for approximately 49% of the total course hours (54 class hours).

## **3.2 How to Blend: Teaching Design and Implementation**

- Before class, students were assigned to log in to the Alliance Platform to watch the teaching videos, or related teaching contents were uploaded in advance to Rain Classroom, WeChat groups, etc., or network connections were provided to enable students to learn in advance, ensuring that they have acquired the necessary knowledge before class. For some topics, such as how the division of public affairs power affects the behavior of local governments in China, group discussions were arranged, requiring students to prepare PowerPoint presentations for classroom reporting and discussion.
- During class, group members presented their findings on the division of public affairs power of Chinese local governments.
- Teachers organized students for discussion and learning. Firstly, a discussion-based teaching method was used, conducting small-group discussions, which better stimulated students' learning enthusiasm. Teachers could also better understand the students' understanding of the knowledge and adjust the teaching progress and depth in a timely manner. Secondly, online in-class tests were conducted interactively with students, allowing teachers to grasp their mastery of knowledge points and explain the questions that they answered incorrectly, thus enabling students to have a deeper understanding of the knowledge points.
- Teachers provided comprehensive lectures, emphasizing key points based on the problems raised by students during their presentations. In-class learning is a process of digesting knowledge, where teachers act as guides, focusing on answering students' questions encountered during the learning process. During the teaching process, more attention was paid to the interaction with students to help them better understand the knowledge points.
- To deepen students' understanding of knowledge points and consolidate what they had learned, small-group assignments were assigned after each chapter. Students conducted post-class reviews and interactions in the form of online discussions on the Alliance Platform to further strengthen their knowledge. Assignments or reviews done after class were discussed in the next class, enhancing students' abilities to analyze and solve problems.

## 4 Conclusions

A blended teaching design may encourage more active learning and engagement of undergraduates with particular topics and learning resources [1]. By adhering to the teaching philosophy of "student-centered", incorporating the construct of teaching presence, social presence and learner presence, the project adopts a blended teaching model of online and offline interaction to create conditions and provide resources for students to study their topics. Students can share and feedback their learning experiences and doubts in a timely manner. They can also use digital platform resources to review anytime and anywhere to meet the learning needs of students with different backgrounds. Students can provide timely feedback for teachers to improve teaching quality and effectiveness. Overall, as shown in Fig.3, a pyramid model of designing online and offline blended teaching is established.

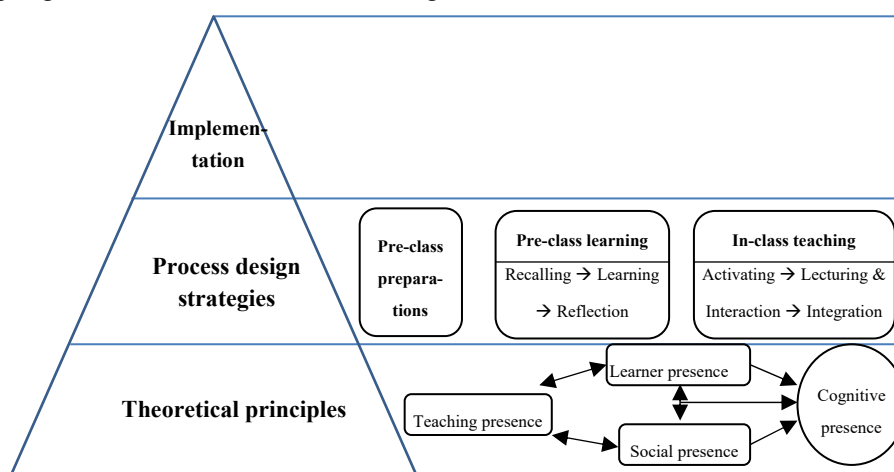


Fig. 3. A pyramid model of online and offline blended teaching

Source: the authors.

It is worth to note that, it is not easy to promote a more student-centered approach to learning and teaching while meeting the competing demands within a designated time [1]. In the context of the school's unchanged requirements for classroom teaching hours, how to appropriately control students' online autonomous learning time to avoid increasing their extra workload will be a difficult problem to solve in the future.

Finally, despite that our design strategies and implementation practices are based on an undergraduate course, Local Government Studies, in the Chinese context, the lessons learned are not limited to that course, and the practical strategies can also be applied to other courses and other contexts.

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