

Teachers' and Students' Perception about Blended Learning: A Case Study of the University of Okara

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Abstract

The study was designed to investigate the perception of teaching faculty and learners regarding blended learning, i.e. the mixture of classroom and computer-equipped learning. The population of the study was comprised of students and teachers of university of Okara. The researchers used purposive sampling technique to collect the data. The interview protocol was used to collect the data. The interview protocol was drafted and finalized in the light of expert opinion. Total 15 (7 teachers and 8 students) interviews were conducted. The participants were personally contacted by the researchers and finalized the time for interview. The study concluded that the participants have sufficient understanding and know-how about blended learning. The way of teaching was adopted to disseminate educational information and up-to-date knowledge to the students sitting at home. As it was a newly adopted method so it has many procedural pros and cons thus it was the need of us to explore the perception of the teachers as well as students.

***Keywords:** Blended learning, students' perceptions, Computer Assisted Learning, E-learning*

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Introduction

Perception stands for the sensory impression of incoherent and unified thoughts mainly supported by incomplete and unproven data. Perception is associated with reality for several smart functions and guides human behavior generally. It is common sayings that perception is bitterer than reality. Clarkson, Hirt, Jia, and Alexander (2010) stated that Perception is more important than reality. If someone perceives something to be true, it is more important than if it is true. In the present era of science and technology and particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, the social and economic systems of the countries are drastically changed. The COVID-19 pandemic not only influences the social economic system of the world but also the education system. Slowly and gradually physical classrooms have been replaced by online learning. Most institutions have introduced blended learning. Now the question arises what is blended learning?

Blended learning is the mixture of face-to-face learning with computer-facilitated learning. According to Graham (2006), blended learning system syndicates face-to-face instruction with digital gadgets. Moreover, it is may be defined as the combination of classroom/face-to-face learning skills with online education skills (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004). It is revealed that the integrated learning program (blended learning) includes face-to-face instruction and computer mediation instructions (Graham, 2006). A thoughtful integration of classroom face-to-face learning and online learning experiences" In the light of all above definitions, it is concluded that it is the mixture of face to face with online mode (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004). It continues to create a learning program that allows people, anywhere, to memorize without going to classes. It is a technique through which it is operated to syndicate grade reading, classroom reading, one-on-one lectures, and create TV programs to permit scholars to graduate short of going to full-time university.

The blended learning has made it easier to complete a degree in this technological era, because it allows the motivated those students to study who have no access to obtain degree due to time and resources constraints. It also allowed people to learn while working for different organizations. For the past many years, blended Learning has meant face-to-face with online learning. In this regard, e-learning modules can be a great opportunity for students. The e-learning modules and the training programs allow the students to continue to embed their reading, and refresh what they have read, or expand their thinking about the subject being studied (Allen, 2016). Through e-learning modules, several organizations offer the best eLearning options in the online marketplace.

The recent development of new strategies and social planning has led to the development of creative approaches. These methods have removed the feedback in the studio settings where the use of new materials has a positive impact on mixed orders. Mixed order/instructions include a combination of different ways of preparing and doing new things as needed to teach (Ganzel, 2001). The interactive exhibition allows educators to teach by combining different modes of delivery, different types of teaching and learning structures.

It is a very common idea now that classroom instructions are incorporated with the web-based process and digital learning tools (Bonk, Olson, Wisher, & Orvis, 2002). Moreover, before this, Singh and Reed (2001) described the integration of education as teaching and learning including a combination of online and offline learning, independent and collaborative learning, formal and informal learning, and a combination of agreeing and exit groups. According to Smith (2001), mixed learning is a teaching strategy that combines distraction teaching and composing with traditional education. Later on, Garrison, and Vaughan (2008) stated that it is time to integrate teaching through face-to-face instructions with the online learning method. In the same way, Lin, and Hooft, (2008) described that face-to-face teaching can be combined with new learning material, i.e., mixed media, emergency recording, web conferences, etc. Furthermore, Snart (2010) reported through empirical evidence that mixed learning is the combination of viewpoint in line-to-face contact.

Literature Review

The history of long-distance studies can be traced back to Sir Isaac Pitman as he introduced the elementary education course. His course was short-lived. Pitman sent short texts to his readers about the postcards sent and that they needed to take them back so that they could be standardized and corrected. At that time, computer and mobile devices were irrelevant, and would not have been a reality for nearly a century; effective testing-related experiments were still an important part of the process. Modern computer training can be traced back to mini-computers and mainframe coaching of the '60s and '70s. It was the first time that training could be referred to countless employees within the organization while they should not rely on written material and face-to-face training.

With the advent of technology and power, businesses started using CD-ROMs to provide multimedia content like video and music. This distribution style can carry a lot of data; therefore, it is ideal for students in the early stages of reading development. Until recently, computer science has never been able to deliver complete and rich learning

technologies for eLearning. There are instances when it has taken the role of in-person training entirely. This generally correlates with the introduction of LMS, even though it did not give the same level of performance as current alternatives. It was essential for organizations to be able to monitor student progress, and these technologies allowed them to observe e-learning course completion, enrollment data, and user performance in the read-only memory network. We are now in a period of exciting learning. As technology advances, a growing number of businesses and private educational institutions are beginning to see the advantages of a learning strategy tailored to the individual. Students now have a wide range of tools and programs at their disposal from in-room conferences to webinars and online lessons. There are no limitations on how and when businesses may provide training to their employees, and online students can take part in online communities and e-learning communication courses from anywhere on the globe. Slowly but surely, the fusion of classroom instruction and technology-based learning is creating new and inventive methods to enhance classroom education while also fostering learning that is both pleasurable and very practical. During the first two decades of the twentieth century, there was a well-established system for changing old school rooms to new technology. Face-to-face and computer-mediated training are part of the integrated learning program (Tutty & Klein, 2008). Learning in the classroom and online should be combined strategically. Combining online and face-to-face instruction is what we mean when we say "mixed learning. (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004). At this time, many types of blended are being used in different perspectives.

Flex Blended Learning

It mentioned earlier that in blended learning, the teachers syndicate traditional method of teachings with on line method. As for as the flex blended learning is concerned, it imparts most part of the curriculum online. It provides the opportunity of personalization and teachers are available to supports the learners. Sometimes students/learners go through a different schedule created within learning styles. The students are fully learning in the brick-and-mortar field without any preparation assignments through the recording of teachers. In this model, different adults support the face-to-face and necessarily and flexibly by the small groups activities such as cohesive outside appraisal, and interior combined interpretation and individual teaching (Ferirman, 2013).

The 'Flipped Classroom' Blended Learning

The flipped classroom approach is an instructional strategy which enhances students/learner's engagement. In this type of learning, through modern technology lectures are delivered in place of regular class room activities. According to Bergmann and Sams (2012) the flipped classroom enhances student's collaboration, active participation in the period of class room time.

Individual Rotation Blended Learning

This model permits the learners/students to move around channels. It is based on merely/only on personal timetables used by the instructor or software system law. It is compatible with the standard circuit models in which learners/students only alternate the actions recorded in the schedule. The Integrated Energy Learning Demonstrated: customizing learners/students learning as resolute by personal agendas has the possible to meet the desires of each learner (Feririman, 2013).

Face-to-face workshop

A staple in nearly all learning scenarios, the choice to incorporate face-to-face workshops is common. These can comprise brief bite-size workshops or longer, profound plunging sessions that amplify having a gathering of individuals in a room together. This works best if the travel time and fetched are constrained and individuals are co-located, or near-located to one another.

Virtual workshops

Virtual workshops give the same benefits as a face-to-face workshop, but short travel. Learners are given the alternative to memorize together, associate, share thoughts, and work on challenges, but in a virtual, live stage such as Zoom, Cisco WebEx, or Microsoft Groups. This can be best in case where learners are disparately found to spare on travel time (Feririman,2013).

Models of blended learning

Teachers have produced six models of emulsified learning, and teachers and/or colleges choose from among them primarily based on their distinctive student characteristics. The types of emulsified Learning are recapitulated as follows:

Face-to-Face Driver Model

The above-cited model hopefully works most finely in most school rooms where the student's works at multiple levels of performance and efficiency. Generally, most of the students may join online classes. Students who are at the highest of their grade level are provided with the appropriate skill. The beauty of online classes is that students can acquire all the skills needed to master the skills and adopt a method that supports them to develop their memory for learning the content (Driscoll, Jicha, Hunt,

Tichavsky, & Thompson, 2012). ESL students can improve their skills by improving their English reading, writing, and speaking skills, and by adopting this technique, students can acquire it more quickly.

The Rotation Model

The Rotation model is the opposite of the educational institutions of teachers who have been bullied for a long period. There is a recruitment program for those students who have face-to-face time with their instructors to go to online work. This model seems to be very popular in the junior classrooms where teachers have already used them and fits well with the old learning centers (Thompson, 2016). It can also be utilized positively, in junior classes, where students are classified according to reading and numeracy levels. Therefore, students who simulate play in math but not in reading can have face-to-face time with their reading instructors before switching to mathematical learning channels. Teachers are a measure that can give students additional help as per their desire.

The Flex Model

The above-cited model greatly depends on online tutorial deliverance with lecturers serving as facilitators, not as an instructor or monitors of instruction. The model under discussion seems to be most fit and undefeated within the subsequent setting. Substitute college surroundings within the bulk of the scholar population are taken into account to be at-risk. Ancient room settings have historically not been undefeated for these students. Alternative college settings within which students filed of interest in work-study programs are placed in a very part-time schooling program (Thompson, 2016). As a rule, the grade level for the flex model is a secondary choice.

Online Lab School Model

In this model, students travel from physical campus to college toward a complete online education deliverance system in all subjects. No certified academics are available, but, instead, paraprofessional administrators direct. This is usually a good choice in the following situations: high school students would like to be flexible thanks to other activities (work, raising children). High school students prefer this choice to develop at a speedy rate than those on the old college campus.

Statement of Problem

Due to the pandemic, it was not possible to open educational institutions and conduct face-to-face classes. Almost the operational activities of all organizations remain suspended for many months. Thus, it was mandatory to open the new gate to meet the requirements of suspended activities so the universities adopted a blended learning mechanism to restart and continue the suspended educational activities. The way of teaching was

adopted to disseminate educational information and up-to-date knowledge to the students sitting at home. As it was a newly adopted method so it has many procedural pros and cons thus it was significant to explore the perception of the teachers as well as students. The study was designed to investigate the perception of students and teachers regarding blended learning and to assess the problems faced during blended learning along with technological gadgets used during the process of blended learning.

Research questions

1. What is the perception of teachers and students regarding blended learning?
2. What kind of problems do teachers and students face during blended learning?
3. What kind of technological gadgets was being used in the process of blended learning?

Methodology

This study proceeded from a constructivist paradigm, which argues that reality is constructed by individuals who experience the world from their vantage points. There are multiple realities and no single universal exists (Hatch, 2002). In the present study, an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) approach was used. Methodologically, IPA is well-suited to research questions where researcher focuses on the experiences of a participant under research, the issues under study are complex, and the researcher wishes to identify something about process and change (Smith, 2004). IPA is also referred to in the literature as a hermeneutic phenomenological approach. Hermeneutics refers to the interpretation of language or text used by an observer. In this context, it is the researcher interpreting and analyzing the language used by the participant to describe his or her lived reality (Sloan & Bove, 2014).

The population of the study was consisted of teachers and students of university of Okara. Thus, purposive sampling technique was used. The purposive sampling provides a chance to choose a sample to shared specific measures and fulfilled the major aims the research. Therefore, the research was executed in sequence/stepwise. At the first step, the researchers got contact to selected sample of teachers and students. At the second step, the students' opinion was sought out. In the usage of IPA, no specific rule is applied about sample size. In generic, the strength/number of interviews may be ranged from 14 to 15. It is empirically observed that term saturation is applied in such cases or such type of study in hand (Fusch, & Ness, 2015). That's why the researchers gather information from 15 well conversant respondents (both 7 teacher and 8 students) by conducting interview. The researchers requested the

participants/interviewees to share primary data through stories, thoughts and feelings.

It is recommended by the experts (Merriam & Grenier, 2019) that most used data collection procedure in IPA is to request participants/interviewees to share primary information on the base of their experiences to ease their thoughts and feelings about the targeted phenomenon. The researchers collected the data through the interview protocol which was validated through experts' opinion. Moreover, the researchers finalized the sample through purposive sampling technique. The researchers personally visited to the selected sample/candidates. During the interview process, the researchers used one to one mode along with tape recorder to record the response. The participants were informed at the outset that their information would remain confidential. So, all procedural and ethical considerations were strictly observed during the interview process. The process of data collection was continued until the required amount of information gathered. The duration of one interview was 10-15 minutes.

Findings

The purpose of the present qualitative study was to investigate the comparison of teachers' and students' perceptions of blended learning. In the first theme, "blended learning" the researcher explores the understating and perspective of teachers and students about blended learning. In the answer to the question, "Have you any idea about blended learning?", it was found that the teachers have sufficient understanding about blended learning. The teachers revealed that through blended learning, we combine multiple methods into powerful educational learning and experiences that benefit our students. Blended learning allows us to reach outside the classroom walls for guided learning experiences and meaningful interactions. The same was the response of students as well.

In the second theme, i.e. "Use of technology", it was found that the use of technology was one of the most important aspects of integrated/blended learning. The study revealed that understanding and use of technology was the most significant and unavoidable phenomenon in blended learning. Recent researches have also shown that creating technological awareness is an important aspect of integrated learning. Teachers and students both are in this favour that technological awareness and usage is the important segment of blended learning. After building a library on common resources, the teacher can expand it to meet the most frequent needs, and advise students or individual groups on these useful resources. In integrated/blended learning, the use of technology in the classroom always

expands and enhances our teaching and learning practice. Both teachers and students are in favour of existing best practices and empowering new approaches.

It was explored in the third theme, "Visual Platform", integrated/blended learning increased flexibility due to the removal of time limits and space for standard classroom planning. The asynchronous power of online conversations allows students to have more time to think "in-depth" before giving their opinions. The online chat environment helps to encourage discussion among students, creating a platform for knowledge building. Through online discussions learning can be transformed from one-way teaching to a more collaborative learning approach. Online discussions can make it easier to learn collaboratively when students participate in sharing information and ideas by interacting with other students. In addition, online chat provides a lasting record of one's thoughts on recent readers' thoughts and arguments, by automatically saving the messages sent to the conversations. Online chat technology can also track the frequency of each student's entry into the classroom. This is best practice used by the teachers for blended learning and also liked by the learners.

The fourth theme is "Effective communication and collaboration" are the two most important requirements of common skills for successful students. In the study at hand, the integrated/blended learning environment also supports mathematical thinking and creative problem solving which empowers and support students' communication skills. The theme was vigorously supported by students.

According to the fifth theme "Role in Teacher Development", the study found that Information and Communication Technology (ICT) facilitated the rapid expansion of online and integrated courses. Online teaching and learning (in part) are one of the fastest-growing fields in the field of digital and computer assisted education. According to both teachers and students, the online learning programs whether, in whole or in part, often due to their low cost, make learning and education available to those who cannot attend face-to-face teaching learning opportunities. Offering online courses can be seen as a new way of organizing teaching and learning arrangements that passes through a large distance learning platform.

In the sixth argument, it is revealed both by the teachers and students that unlike face-to-face courses, online courses are more common where students who are professionals and pursuing their career during professional life. These online courses bring benefits to non-traditional students, such as parents and professionals, who need a flexible plan to pursue their education. Contrary to this, successful students in face-to-face lessons should listen attentively and participate in class, take good notes,

and read and do full lessons. But demonstrating in the classroom goes a long way until it is completed. While in an online community, a lecturer standing in front of you telling you everything you need, it enables you to pass the next exam or future writing assignments. It is evident that successful online students should also be encouraged, trained, guided, and manage time well.

In the "challenges to mixed learning", the researcher sheds light on the challenges that students and teachers face such as the challenges of overcoming the notion that integrated learning is not as effective as in-house home-based learning. Therefore, the following challenges have arisen, i.e. manage and monitor participant progress. When learning technology is introduced, attention is often paid to the use of technology, while the design of relevant content is left with very little time and budget to make a successful program. Challenges in teaching structure include-

1. Observe how you teach, not just what you teach
2. Aligning the best delivery system with operational objectives
3. Keeping donations online working together rather than just "talking"
4. Ensuring stakeholder commitment and adherence to "inanimate" materials
5. Ensuring that all components of the mixture are combined

The challenges that respondents faced by students engaging in extracurricular learning were accompanied by in-class challenges, particularly in the absence of key digital knowledge and skills. However, the most popular answers were the lack of proper internet service and the lack of updated hardware. Other challenges other than doing integrated home reading activities are inconvenience/self-discipline and a lack of time and/or time management skills.

Discussion

The term blended/integrated/mixed learning refers to the instructions that include both in-person and online components. Face-to-face training and computer-based instruction are both parts of the integrated learning program. Face-to-face reading in the classroom is combined with an online learning environment with care. Using both online and face-to-face learning, mixed learning is a hybrid approach. Combined reading is now more talked about than ever before. Fast forward to the next century and many colleges have moved us to a real understanding of blended Learning. The e-learning modules and the training programs allow the students to continue to embed their reading, refresh what they have read, or expand their thinking about the subject being studied. The integrated Energy

Learning and customizing learners/students learning has the possibility to meet the desires of each learner (Ferirman, 2013). They work to integrate grade reading, classroom learning, and individual tutorials, and they also do TV programs to allow students to graduate without going to a full-time university. Similarly mixed instructions include a combination of different ways of preparing and doing new things as needed to teach (Ganzel, 2001). The benefits, in this case, were enormous, as it made education and learning more accessible, allowing more people who wished to learn. It is beneficial for those students/learners who may not have the time or money to go to university full-time. In this study, our main objective was to investigate student and teacher perceptions of integrated learning. Both teachers and students were agreed that blended learning is not only the need of time in COVID-19 like situation but it is obligatory in future digital world. The researchers found that integrated/blended learning is now more talked about than ever before. They continue to develop a learning program that allows people, anywhere, to memorize without going to classes.

Conclusion

In the light of study results, it may be concluded that the ideas of teachers and students about integrated/blended learning are important. It contributes to our understanding of the role of integrated learning in education. The current study highlighted the key features and technologies used in integrated learning. The study at hand also concluded that integrated learning creates a learning curve which allows people anywhere to memorize without going to classes using technology. Through the lens of both teachers and students, technology is changing rapidly and by the growing number of private learning organizations, it is hoped that universities would understand the advantages of a learning strategy which is tailored to each student. Students now have a wide range of tools and applications at their disposal including in-room conferences, webinars, and online lessons. Companies may teach their staff at any time and students can engage in online communities and eLearning communication courses from anywhere in the globe, regardless of their location. Both the teachers and students are opined that face-to-face instruction is gradually being supplemented with technology-based learning in innovative and creative ways that makes learning fascinating and entertaining.

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