Pakistan Journal of Distance & Online Learning
Volume: V, Issue I, 2019, 189-208

A Qualitative Study on Practices and Issues of Blended Learning in Higher Education

Irshad Hussain[*]
Abid Hussain Shahzad[**]
Rafaquat Ali[***]

Abstract

This qualitative study explored the practices and issues related to blended learning in university. It adopted purposive-cum convenient sampling technique. The researchers collected qualitative data from 30 university teachers and 60 undergraduate students through focused group interviews. The researchers did thematic analysis of the data keeping in view objectives of the study. It demonstrated that university academia and undergraduate students use online resources in support of face-to-face instruction. They get videos, PowerPoint presentations, and handouts of textual materials from such sources including YouTube, repositories, search engines and databases. Generally, they use blended instruction for every lesson and in teaching learning process. They use social media for communication and interaction purpose. The study affirmed that the blended learning involves undergraduate students actively in teaching learning process. Blended learning activities create an 'edutainment' environment and involve more senses of the students to promote and sustain their motivation to learn. It also promotes opportunities of collaborative learning i.e. pairing & sharing, and learning in their circles. Lack of university support in adopting online and blended learning formally, lack of sophisticated technology and policy guidelines of the university, authenticity of learning resources and information, and time management appeared to be the main issues of blended learning. However, in spite of these issues, the university academia and students appeared to be eager to embrace blended learning even under tight academic calendar and credit [hours] scheme having too space in the timetable and academic calendar to adopt it formally.

Keywords: blended learning, edutainment, traditional classroom, knowledge construction, pedagogical innovation, internet tools

[*] Associate Professor, Department of Educational Training, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Pakistan. Email: irshad.hussain@iub.edu.pk
[**] Assistant Professor, Department of Education, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Pakistan. Email: abid.hussain@iub.edu.pk
[***] Assistant Professor, Department of Education, Bahawalnagar Campus, Bahawalnagar, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Pakistan. Email: rafaquatiub@yahoo.com

Introduction- The Opening

The human history is associated with innovations and inventions (Hussain, & Cakir, 2015; Hussain, 2005) which generally are viewed as technological developments; and have impacted on all aspects of human life (Hussain, Çakir, Ozdemir, & Tahirkheli, 2017) including education & training (Hussain, 2012; Hussain, & Durrani, 2012). In education & training such an innovation can be viewed in the form of "blended learning" which embraces online or e-learning along with teaching or instruction in the traditional classroom (Oliver & Trigwell, 2005; Dziuban & Moskal, 2004; Staker & Horn, 2012). It appears as a dynamic concept that is gaining wider acceptance (Futch, & Dziuban, 2005) with an acceleration; and is becoming versatile (Carman, 2005) in higher education institutions (Bliuc, Goodyear, & Ellis, 2007; Mortera-Guiterrez, 2006) even in developing countries including Pakistan in the form of virtual or online education (Hussain, 2007, 2012). Access to higher education seems to be a main challenge for developing countries (Hussain, 2008; Hussain & Adeeb, 2009) and to meet this challenge; the universities have started using modern technologies for providing students flexible opportunities of participation in higher education. However, apparently, academicians are taking initiative of blended learning individually but under the institutional support for long-term sustainability (Bower, Dalgarno, Kennedy, Lee, & Kenney, 2015). After examining "seven cases of synchronous blended learning" Bower, et al. (2015) predicted invisible collaborative technologies for blended leaning to happen by asserting that, "Ideally in the years to come, rich-media collaborative technologies will become so invisible that students and teachers interacting from different locations will feel as though they are in the same room" (p.15). Blended learning encompasses and relies on technology in a traditional classroom.

Singh and Reed (2001) viewed that "blended learning focuses on optimizing achievement of learning objectives by applying the [right] learning technologies to match the [right] personal learning style to transfer the [right] skills to the [right] person at the [right] time" (p.2). Stacey & Gerbic (2009) documented various combinations of technology and pedagogy to be used in classroom and distance education. The emerging learning technologies like podcasting, social media, e-portfolios, blogs, wikis, and internet based audio and video communication are enhancing capacity of blended learning. Blended learning provides an effective experience to continue learning process in

different ways i.e. combining hands-on on-site training with virtual learning, instructor-led webinars and online leaning & assessment tools.

Literature Review

Instructional Use and Benefits of Blended Learning

Blended learning is generally aligned with instructional needs of learners and allows them to have an access to latest sources of knowledge and best practices in instruction and pedagogy according to their pace and convenience (HP Development Company, 2016). Through their qualitative study, Garcia, Abrego, and Calvillo (2014) explored perceptions of graduate students and the reasons of adopting blended instruction in a Master's Program of Hispanic University in South Texas. The study demonstrated benefits of blended learning by asserting that "the hybrid [blended learning] model allows for greater flexibility, social interaction and engagement among students, and deeper learning experiences that otherwise might not occur in other instructional delivery methods" (p.11).

Blended learning as an innovation in pedagogy seems to widen the academic horizon of students having more opportunities of innovative learning experiences. It also enhances their learning and learning achievement (Carman, 2005). Hence, it as a form of online or e-learning can be used at different levels of education (Hussain, 2007). However, as university students are adults; they are self and socially motivated with their own choice and pace of study (Hussain, 2012, 2014) can use it in a better way. The study of Melton, Bland, and Chopak-foss (2009) compared learning performance and satisfaction of students in a blended course delivery and traditional classroom teaching in health education. The results demonstrated a significant difference ($p < 0.01$) between scores of satisfaction of blended (54.986) and classroom (49.788) teaching. The overall grades of students studying through blended instruction appeared to be higher ($p=0.048$) significantly than their counterparts. In overall, the study indicated blended course delivery to be preferred choice of students over lecturing in classroom merely. Similarly, the study of Davidson (2009) reported a successful transformation in teaching an undergraduate medical course by using blended and team learning that emerged as an innovation in instructional strategy. Even so, Futch and Dziuban (2005) at University of Central Florida, examined the perspective of institution, faculty and students in adopting blended learning. The study reported overall satisfaction of

students to be high along with high level of their interactions with faculty and fellows. Convenience and flexibility appeared to be the reasons for getting into blended learning courses; and for many students it appeared to be a platform of active learning. However, a downward trend in satisfaction levels among younger students was reported accompanying by problems of technology, time management and course organization.

Likewise, Rosen and Stewart, (2013) at Texas Educating Adults Management System (TEAMS) described that the blended learners performed better than those who attend a traditional classroom only, and also than those who had 50% plus of their contact hours in distance education mode. The report further describes that,

In 2009-2010, 66% of hybrid [blended] learners completed at least on[e] level, compared to 53% each for distance and traditional classroom learners; in 2010-2011, 76% of hybrid learners had level completions, compared to 60% each for distance and traditional learners; in 2011-2012, hybrid learners "still had the highest percentage of completion (73%), but distance learners outperformed traditional classroom learners for the first time (60% for traditional classroom learners; 66% for primarily online learners) (p.5).

It was strengthened by the U. S. Department of Education (2010) as it found online students to be performing modestly better, than their counterparts who studied the same courses through classroom instruction. In higher education courses it can be used effectively as it has power to enhance learning (Stacey & Gerbic, 2008, 2009) and learning achievement of students; and lowers dropout rates in comparison with online and traditional courses (Dziuban & Moskal, 2004) and instruction. It is more effective than traditional mode of education and it enhances students' retention and satisfaction (So & Brush, 2008; Harker & Koutsantoni, 2005) level to continue and complete studies.

Blended learning appears at an upward continuum as more and more institutions are adopting it formally for instructional purpose. Some of the universities and professional organizations seem to have realized the significance of blended learning including Pennsylvania State University, and University of Central Florida and prepared guidelines, handbooks for faculty and students. Similarly, the initiatives of professional organizations like the Learning Initiative by the EDUCAUSE and Sloan-C, University of Central Florida (UCF), and American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) are contributing towards blended learning through research and best practices in the area (McGee & Reis, 2012). They are also providing services to support blended

learning (Chan, 2011). The synthesis of annual reports of the U.S. Higher Education on the state of online education, Allen, Seaman, and Garrett (2007) mentioned penetration rates in online and blended courses during [semester] fall 2004 to be 79.4% for undergraduate level, 74.5% for graduate level and 35.1% for continuing education in public sector institutions. Size of institution appears as a key determinant to embrace blended learning as "blended course offerings increase dramatically as institutional size increases" (p. 8). The Lane Community College offers some of its courses through online and hybrid [blended learning] mode with encouraging completion and success rates (Brau, Christian, Hill, McNair, Sandoz, & Taylor, 2010).

According to Bath and Bourke (2010) the Griffith Institute for Higher Education at the University of Griffith believes in creative use of technologies to enhance quality of education and learning of students. It decided to embrace blended learning by integrating emerging technologies with classroom instruction across the institution. It was based on the philosophy that "quality learning occurs when there is coherence and alignment between the technology, course environment, learning objectives, teaching and learning activities, and assessment demands of a course" (p. 69). It used Wikis, Web discussion forums, webcasting, online tests and surveys, e-portfolios, and LAMS (Learning Activity Management System) as tools for blended learning and instruction.

Problems and Issues of Blended Learning

As blended learning combines traditional classroom with online instruction; there emerges a complexity in terms of variety and diversity of learning environments, learning design(s) and as well as [learning styles of] the students (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004; George, Walker & Keeffe, 2010; Vaughan, 2007) and narrow awareness. Similarly, cultural and technological diversity along with experiences of the Net-Generation create problems for blended learning and its success (Stacey & Gerbic, 2008; Elizabeth Stacey & Gerbic, 2008, 2009). Likewise, after reviewing research experiences of university students in blended learning, Bliuc et al. (2007) suggested that it needs to be focused on interrelationships of various learning modes traditional, online etc. The study of Meyer, Wohlers, & Marshall, (2014) demonstrated students' satisfaction with blended learning due to its flexibility. However, they reported their problems and wished their tutors to be trained in using technology in instructional process (Meyer et al., 2014).

Although different studies (Paechter & Maier, 2010; Dziuban, Hartman, & Moskal, 2004; Ellis, Pardo, & Han, 2016; Graham, 2008; Kuo, Belland, Schroder, & Walker, 2014; Motteram, 2006; Paechter & Maier, 2010; Staker, 2011; Stockwell, Stockwell, Cennamo, & Jiang, 2015; Kiviniemi, 2014; Means, Toyama, Murphy, & Baki, 2013) have regarded blended learning a paradigm shift in teaching learning process and described it use, benefits and potential but it (LaBanca., Worwood, Schauss, LaSala, & Donn, 2013) "can unknowingly incorporate ineffective pedagogical strategies that do not promote creative and critical higher-order thinking skills" (p.28-29). Furthermore, they questioned the ability of teachers, availability of students-centered classrooms, instructional planning, coping with individual differences, diverse learning experiences [and learning styles] and purposeful interactions of students. Even so, Geiter, (2015) highlighted issues in online learning [education] regarding retention of students, readiness of college or university to embrace it and problems of "developmental education pedagogy" (p. xiii). Also Futch and Dziuban (2005) reported in their study a lower level of satisfaction among younger students due to problems of technology, time management and course organization.

Rationale of the Study

The innovations in information and communication technologies (ICTs) seemingly brought about a revolution in the field of education &training (Hussain, 2005) like other areas of social sciences. It seems to have opened up new avenues of imparting education by facilitating instructional delivery. Therefore, new methods and techniques of instruction and instructional delivery are emerging with emergence of new technologies and technological tools. Blended learning (also called often blended instruction) is an innovation in instructional delivery on account of ICTs particularly, Internet and its related technological tools or application (apps). Blended learning seems to be an emerging concept in developing countries with greater instructional potential. Different studies (given in the preceding section) have addressed different aspects of blended learning but its practices and issues in higher education in Pakistani context yet need to be explored. This study is an attempt in this area.

Context of the Study

It was a qualitative study which was conducted to explore the current

practices and issues of blended learning. It was carried out at the Islamia University of Bahawalpur in the disciplines of Social Sciences, and Art and Humanities. The study consisted on university academicians and undergraduate students as its subjects who were using blended learning for at least one course either by blending classroom teaching with online instruction, or other digital and e-learning resources.

Focus of the Study

This qualitative research focused on to exploring the current practices and issues of blended learning in undergraduate university education specifically the undergraduate classroom of traditional university.

Research Questions

The following were the research question of the study;

- What are the practices of blended learning in undergraduate university education?
- How university academicians and undergraduate students are using blended learning?
- Why blended learning is adopted for undergraduate university education?
- What are the benefits of blended learning in an on-campus university's undergraduate classroom?
- What are the main issues and problems of blended learning in an on-campus university's undergraduate classroom?

Research Design

It was a qualitative study that focused on to elicit the views of university academicians and undergraduate students on current practices and issues of blended learning in university education. Its nature was elaborative and/ or descriptive and addressed the phenomenon in an explanatory way. In other words, it was a non-experimental research and "Non-experimental research is used in studies which aim at describing or description of individuals or situation" (Polit, Hungler, & Beck, 2001; 178); and a [qualitative] descriptive study describes a phenomenon narratively which "is designed to provide a picture of a situation as it naturally happens" (Burns & Grove, 2003; 201). Generally, an

explanatory study is used in social sciences for opinion surveys. Even so, it is used to explore the views of the respondents on current practices and issues for conclusive narratives. Hence, the researchers adopted it for eliciting opinions of university academicians and undergraduate students about the phenomenon being explored.

Population(s), Sampling and Sample(s) of the Study

This study was delimited to the academicians and undergraduate students from social sciences disciplines at the Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Pakistan. University academicians and undergraduate [Bachelor Studies Programs] students from the disciplines of social sciences were the population(s) of this study. It adopted convenience-cum-purposive sampling procedure(s) due to two underlying causes;

i. it was a small scale research managed by researcher's own sources. It had limitations in terms of time and resources. Therefore, convenience sampling procedure which "is a form of non-probability sampling and is used in exploratory studies and cuts the expenses" (Hussain, Cakir & Candeğer (2018, p.286) was used.
ii. the university academicians and undergraduate students who were using blended learning for at least one course; they were invited to participate in the survey. Hence purposive sampling procedure which "serves purpose of the study" (Hussain, Cakir & Candeğer (2018, p.286) was administered.

The researchers called on the both groups of the respondents with their consent in their departments individually and briefed them about the study –its nature and objectives. A total of thirty (30) academicians (20 male and 10 female) and sixty (60) undergraduate students (30 male and 30 female) who were using blended learning; agreed to join the survey voluntarily.

Research Tools

It was a qualitative survey carried out for eliciting opinions of the respondents on practices and issues of blended. Two interview schedules/ interview protocols to be used as research tools (one for university academicians and other for undergraduate students separately) were prepared after literature review and in the light of nature and research questions of the study. Expert's opinion helped researchers in finalizing the tools. Five main research questions in in three areas i.e. practices and the ways the academicians and students use blended learning; reasons

and gains of using it, and its issues and problems in university education. A thorough proofreading of the tools was done and thus finalized.

Administration of Research Tools –the Survey

The researchers contacted with both groups of the respondents and developed professional rapport with them. In this way they gained trust & confidence of the respondents which is necessary for exploratory-qualitative studies. The respondents were briefed about nature and objectives and procedure of the survey. The researchers also obtained consent of the respondents. The researcher assured the respondents about secrecy of their information. The researchers and the respondents settled time for interview in small groups according to their mutual convenience. The researchers used focused group interview technique to elicit opinions of the respondents. The researchers administered interview protocols on twenty (30) university academicians and fifty (60) undergraduate students for getting deeper understanding of the phenomenon. The interviews were conducted in groups (each group consisted on six participants) separately for both types of the respondents i.e. university academicians and undergraduate students. There were five (05) groups of academicians and ten (10) groups of undergraduate students. The researchers developed professional rapport with respondents. They interviewed in a pleasant atmosphere. They wrote notes of their responses. The researchers also observed non-verbal cues and body language particularly, the facial expressions of the participants/ respondents.

Practice of Research Ethics

In the light of Belmont Report, Social Science research ethics were observed i.e. safety, freedom of expression, and privacy (Polit, Hungler, & Beck, 2001:75) of the information.

Data Analysis and Findings of the Study

The responses of university academicians and students collected through focused group interviews were grouped thematically individually (for academicians and students respectively) according to main questions of the study. The results were extracted from thematic analyses individually for academicians and students respectively; along

with observation notes of non-verbal cues, and body language including facial expressions of the respondents. The theme-wise similar results were merged in a comprehensive form which are described in this section.

i. Practices of Blended Learning in Higher Education –How University Academicians and undergraduate Students use it?

As blended learning is technology-based instruction and it requires some form of modern technologies and technological tools or application often referred to as apps. Recently, internet based online learning; virtual learning or online resources are being used in traditional classrooms – blended learning. Both groups of the respondents affirmed that they use their university internet resources, social media and other related apps to disseminate and have information and learning materials.

Both of the groups of the respondents appeared to be aware of the concept of blended learning; and said that they were using it in traditional classrooms. The academicians explained, "We use online resources in support of our face-to-face instruction. We get videos, PowerPoint presentations, and handouts of textual materials from such sources. We get our subject-related materials from different web sources including YouTube, repositories, search engines and databases". The academicians further elaborated, "Generally, we use blended instruction for every lesson and involve our students in teaching learning process. We prepare activities and offer to our students for their active learning. We spare time for such activities and monitor performance of the students". The academicians also showed their interest in using social media as they said, "We social media for communication and interaction with students and colleagues. We update schedules of assignments and other academic activities".

Almost, the similar views were of the undergraduate students. Almost all groups of the students said, "Our teachers spare sometime for using online resources generally near the end of class time. Our subject teachers guide us how to use technology for learning purpose and how to locate our required relevant materials from different sources". They further explained, "We use online resources including YouTube for preparing assignments, class presentations and get help for getting through the examination(s)". The undergraduate students also viewed, "blended learning is an interesting process of learning. We complete activities with interest. We can share and communicate by using social media more easily and with flexibility".

Both of the groups of the respondents valued benefits of blended learning and were of the opinion that it enhances opportunities of interaction of university academia and students. The responses of both of the groups of the respondents demonstrated their positive attitude towards blended learning & instruction in traditional classroom.

Similarly, in their response on the use of technologies and technological tools or applications, the university academicians and students revealed that generally, they use free of cost websites and/ or Internet resources in traditional classroom as blended learning. They unanimously were of the opinion that amongst others social media serves their communication purpose in a better way, as it is free of cost. The Facebook appeared to be the most favorite website which they preferred to use for communication, sharing of experiences and information.

ii. Benefits of Blended Learning –Why Blended Learning in Higher Education?

The respondents explained that the use of blended learning promoted opportunities of involvement of university students in learning activities for their deeper understanding of the concepts or phenomena. Both groups of the respondents asserted that the use of blended learning contextualizes their learning activities, it allows students to apply their learning skills & knowledge, facilitates them in handling & using learning materials and analyzing their learning outcomes.

The academicians explained, "We use blended learning approach to extend individual support to the learners. The learners feel comfortable and pleasure while using technology-based learning materials for meeting their individualized learning needs; and according to their own pace". They also asserted, "Blended learning creates interest and motivation among students by involving their more senses. Thus they are engaged to optimum level of their potential in learning activities. They learn according to their mental capacities. They can blend their knowledge and information with learning activities and situations".

Even so, it was observed from the body language of undergraduate that they were eager and keen on using blended learning activities. Almost all groups of the students said, "We feel pleasure in using blended learning. It allows us opportunities of getting information and learning from different sources under the guidance of our subject teacher(s). We cross match and cross-fertilize such collected information to arrive at some solid conclusion". Further they explained, "We can share information and collaborate in learning activities within our circles".

Similarly, they described that blended mode of learning offers activities in an 'edutainment' way to boost up their learning process by involving more their senses, offering interesting learning materials and having flexibility. They determined that it [blended learning] promotes opportunities of collaborative learning in terms of pairing sharing, group learning, learning from others and facilitating other in learning process.

The university academicians and students also acknowledged that they use blended learning because of its innovative nature that allows access to modern learning materials and latest developments in pedagogy. In overall, the views of the respondents clearly indicated that the use of blended learning is in its fledgling stage.

iii. Issues and Challenges of Blended Learning in Higher Education

It is generally believed that one may face problems in embracing innovations and inventions; and adopting blende learning as an innovation in instruction one also faces problems. All of the respondents unanimously described their problems that they face in embracing blended learning. They were of the view that in embracing blended learning they face problems related to technology, time management in the class, tight academic calendar, lack of expertise, and diversified learning styles in the same class. They also raised voices about internet and its connectivity.

Institutional support plays an important role in taking initiatives and embracing innovations. Blended learning is an instructional innovation. University academia and students need support, recognition and appreciation of the university authorities to adopt it properly. Appreciation and acknowledgement build morale of the faculty as well as the students. Institutional encouragement creates eagerness and enhances performance of the faculty and learning achievement of students. The respondents mentioned different issues and challenges which they we facing in using blended learning.

The academicians described, "Availability of the technology is a main issue for us. Sophisticated technology is scarcely available. Failure of electricity and poor internet service also case problems. We need policy guidelines on/ or about using blended learning. We need space for blended learning in the timetable. We face issues in meeting the academic calendar by hook or by crook. Using blended learning we become overburdened. Hence we face challenges of time and time management".

Regarding students and their learning they further explained, "We face issues of lack of Digi skills of students. Many students need to learn

how to use technology. At the same time students become loaded cognitively with much information. It causes issues of genuineness and authenticity of the information and materials".

Similarly, majority of the undergraduate students from each of the groups said, "Huge information and material in different forms is available for use. However, authenticity and credibility of such information and materials is a big issue for us. Although blended learning is a useful and interesting activity but it takes more time as we have to work for extra time".

Both groups of the respondents unanimously described that university provides too support to adopt blended learning in traditional classroom formally. They asserted that they have to follow the academic calendar and complete credit hours according to the timetable of the respective courses/ or classes. They further revealed that their contact hours have already been defined which they have to complete by lecturing and/ or demonstrating through multimedia/ projector in the traditional classroom.

Moreover, they explained that their [traditional] university provides internet facility only; but they have to use modern technologies including web-resources as additional instructional and learning sources to augment and support their classroom instruction. According to them they do so to engage students in learning process and meet the standards of quality education. It was affirmed by both of the groups of the respondents that their routine timetable too allows them to use internet resources during the class time.

In responding to the question, "Is appropriate technology available in the university to incorporate blended learning into traditional classroom"? Almost all of the respondents of the both groups i.e. university academia and students showed their concern about the availability of the latest technology. They revealed that the university has provided only internet technology and desktop computers. Internet usually creates problems of connectivity and low bandwidth. However, they themselves manage this problem by having their own modern laptops and internet devices –EVO.

All of the respondents in both of the groups (university academicians and students) showed their eagerness to adopt blended learning in their traditional classroom. The responses and body language of the respondents demonstrated their interest and keenness in blended learning and with its open acceptance. However, due to strict academic calendar and too space in timetable to embrace blended learning in traditional classroom, it is in its growing stage at a traditional university.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study demonstrated useful results which are supported by some previous studies. It is obvious from the study that blended learning is used by academia and students but it is in its fledgling state in Pakistan with an upward continuum because of its instructional benefits and due to embracing modern technologies, its tools or applications (apps). It is used to enhance learning performance of the learners. It is supported by different studies like Staker and Horn (2012); Stacy and Gerbic (2009); Oliver and Trigwell (2005); Hussain (2005); Carman (2005); and Singh and Reed (2001) which asserted that modern technologies enhance academic performance of students and the aim of blended learning as technology-led learning is to optimize learning achievement of students.

This study revealed that university academia and undergraduate students use online resources in support of face-to-face instruction. They get videos, PowerPoint presentations, and handouts of textual materials from such sources including YouTube, repositories, search engines and databases. It is in line with the findings of the study of Stacy and Gerbic (2009); US Department of Education (2010); Futch and Dziuban (2005); and Dziuban and Moskal (2004) that such resources are useful for completion of the studies.

They use social media for communication and interaction purpose. The use of blended learning actively involves undergraduate students in teaching learning process. Blended learning activities create an 'edutainment' environment and involve more senses of students to promote and sustain their motivation to learn. More or less alike results were revealed by Hussain, Cakir, and Candeğer (2018); Sajjad, Hussain, Rana, and Ramzan (2017); and Hussain (2005). Similarly, the finding of this study that blended learning promotes opportunities of collaborative learning i.e. pairing & sharing, and learning in groups corresponds to the results of the study of Hussain, Çakir, Ozdemir and Tahirkheli (2017); Bowr, et a. (2015); and Hussain (2007).

In this study, the lack of university support in adopting blended learning formally, lack of sophisticated technology and policy guidelines of the university, authenticity of learning resources and information, and time management appeared to be the main issues of blended learning. It was affirmed by some other studies like Geiter (2015); Hussain (2005; 2007); Futch and Dziuban (2005) which highlighted such issues. However, in spite of these issues the university academia and students appeared to be eager to embrace blended learning even under tight academic calendar and credit [hours] scheme having too space in the timetable and academic calendar to adopt it formally.

References

Allen, I. E., Seaman, J., & Garrett, R. (2007). Blending in: The extent and promise of blended education in the United States. *Methodology,* 1–29.

Bliuc, A.-M., Ellis, R. A., Goodyear, P., & Piggott, L. (2011). A blended learning Approach to teaching foreign policy: Student experiences of learning through face-to-face and online discussion and their relationship to academic performance. *Computers & Education, 56*(3), 856–864. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2010.10.027.

Bliuc, A. M., Goodyear, P., & Ellis, R. A. (2007). Research focus and methodological choices in studies into students' experiences of blended learning in higher education. *Internet and Higher Education, 10*(4), 231–244. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.iheduc.2007.08.001.

Bower, M., Dalgarno, B., Kennedy, G. E., Lee, M. J. W., & Kenney, J. (2015). Design and implementation factors in blended synchronous learning environments: Outcomes from a cross-case analysis. *Computers and Education, 86,* 1–17. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2015.03.006.

Burns, S. N., & Grove, S.K. (2003). Understanding nursing research. 3rd ed. Philadelphia: Saunders Company.

Carman, J. M. (2005). Blended Learning Design : Five Key Ingredients. Blended Learning Design: 5 Key Ingredients, (August), 1–10. https://doi.org/10.1109/CSSE.2008.198.

Chan, H. (2011). Blended Learning Product Dependencies. Socratech Seminars. Retried from https://socratechseminars.wordpress.com/?s=Blended+Learning+Product+Dependencies on 18 October 2017.

Christian, S., & Hill, B. (2010). Success and Retention in Online and Hybrid Courses Lane Community College Online Teaching and Learning Project Phase I.

Davidson, L. K. (2009). Educational innovation in an undergraduate medical course implementation of a blended e-learning, team-based learning model. A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Education in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Master of Education. Canada, Queen's University Kingston Ontario.

Dziuban, C. D., Hartman, J. L., & Moskal, P. D. (2004). Blended Learning. Internet, 2006(7), 1–44. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2923.2010.03653.x.

Dziuban, C. D., & Moskal, P. D. (2004). Blended Learning. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2923.2010.03653.x.

Ellis, R. A., Pardo, A., & Han, F. (2016). Quality in blended learning environments-Significant differences in how students approach learning collaborations. *Computers and Education, 102,* 90–102. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2016.07.006.

Futch, L. S., & Dziuban, C. (2005). A study of blended learning at a metropolitan research university, 168.

Garcia, A., Abrego, J., & Calvillo, M. (2014). A study of hybrid instructional delivery for graduate students in an educational leadership course. *International Journal of E-Learning & Distance Education, 29*(1), 1-15. Available online at: http://ijede.ca/index.php/jde/article/view/864/1534.

Garrison, D. R., & Kanuka, H. (2004). Blended Learning: Uncovering its tranformative potential in higher education. Internet and Higher Education, 7, 95–105.

Geiter, D. W. (2015). Identifying Factors Contributing to Student Retention and Persistence in Online deved © (Developmental Education) Courses. An unpublished Dooctoral Dissertation, Illinois , Benedictine University Lisle.

George-Walker, L. De, & Keeffe, M. (2010). Self-determined blended learning: a case study of blended learning design. *Higher Education Research & Development, 29*(1), 1–13. https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360903277380.

Graham, C. R. (2008). Blended Learning Models. Encyclopedia of Information Science and Technology, 375–382. https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-60566-026-4.ch063.

Harker, M., & Koutsantoni, D. (2005). Can it be as effective? Distance versus blended learning in a web-based EAP programme. ReCALL. https://doi.org/10.1017/S095834400500042X.

HP Development Company, L.P (2016). Blended learning experience by HP: Optimize learning results with minimum cost and time away. 4AA6-3595EEW.

Hussain, I. (2005). A study of emerging technologies and their impact on teaching learning process. An unpublished PhD thesis. Islamabad, Allama Iqbal Open University.

Hussain, I. (2007). A study of student's attitude towards virtual education in Pakistan. *Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education, 8*(2), 69–79.

Hussain, I. (2008). Role of Distance Education in Promoting Access in Pakistan. Asian Journal of Distance Education (AJDE); 6(2), 42-46.

Hussain, I. (2012). Study on instructional paradigms of virtual education in Pakistan: A learners' perspective. *Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology, 11*(2), 178–186.

Hussain, I. (2014). Dual mode offering as viable approach for promotion of higher education in Pakistan. *Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education, 15*(3), 215–227.

Hussain, I., & Adeeb, M. A. (2009). Role of mobile technology in promoting campus-wide learning environment. *Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology, 8*(3), 48–57.

Hussain, I., and Çakir, Ö. (2015). Use of social networking for collaborative learning: a networked paradigm of learning. A paper presented in 9th International Computer & Instructional Technologies Symposium (ICITS-2015); organized by Anadolu University at Sandıklı Thermal Park Hotel, Turkey, Afyonkarahisar, May 20-22.

Hussain, I., Cakir, O., & Candeğer, Ü. (2018). Social Media as a Learning Technology for University Students. *International Journal of Instruction, 11*(2), 281-296.

Hussain, I**.** Çakir, O., Ozdemir, B., and Tahirkheli, S. A. (2017). Getting closer being apart: living in the age of information and communication technologies. *New Horizons, 11*(1), 145-160.

Hussain, I. & Durrani, M. I. (2012). A study on the role of web technology in enhancing research Pursuance among university academia. *Journal of Educational Technology; 9*(3); 32-40.

Kiviniemi, M. T. (2014). Effects of a blended learning approach on student outcomes in a graduate-level public health course. BMC *Medical Education, 14*(1), 47. https://doi.org/10.1186/1472-6920-14-47.

Kuo, Y. C., Belland, B. R., Schroder, K. E. E., & Walker, A. E. (2014). K-12 teachers' perceptions of and their satisfaction with interaction type in blended learning environments. *Distance Education, 35*(3), 360–381. https://doi.org/10.1080/01587919.2015.955265.

LaBanca., F., Worwood, M., Schauss, S., LaSala, J., & Donn, J. (2013). Blended Instruction : Exploring Student-Centered Pedagogical. CT: Education Connection.

McGee, P., & Reis, a. (2012). Blended course design: A synthesis of best practices. *Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks, 16*(4), 7–22.

Means, B., Toyama, Y., Murphy, R., & Baki, M. (2013). The Effectiveness of Online and Blended Learning: A Meta-Analysis of the Empirical Literature. Teachers College Record, 115(30303), 1–47.

Means, B., Toyama, Y., Murphy, R., Bakia, M., & Jones, K. (2010). Evaluation of evidence-based practices in online learning: a meta-analysis and review of online learning studies. U. S. Department of Education, Center for Technology in Learning.

Melton, B. F., Bland, H. W., & Chopak-foss, J. (2009). Achievement and Satisfaction in Blended Learning. *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, 3*(1). https://doi.org/10.20429/ijsotl.2009.030126.

Meyer, S., Wohlers, S., & Marshall, B. (2014). Blended learning : student experiences. In B. Hegarty, J. McDonald, & S.-K. Loke (Eds.), Rhetoric and Reality: Critical perspectives on educational technology. Proceedings ascilite Dunedin 2014 (pp. 89-98).

Mortera-Gutierrez, F. (2006). Faculty best practices using blended learning in e-learning and face-t-face instruction. *International Journal of E-Learning, 5*(3); 313-337.

Motteram, G. (2006). "Blended" education and the transformation of teachers: A long-term case study in postgraduate UK higher education. *British Journal of Educational Technology, 37*(1), 17–30. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8535.2005.00511.x.

Oliver, M., & Trigwell, K. (2005). Can "Blended Learning" Be Redeemed? *E-Learning, 2*(1), 17. https://doi.org/10.2304/elea.2005.2.1.2.

Paechter, M., & Maier, B. (2010). Online or face-to-face? Students' experiences and preferences in e-learning. *Internet and Higher Education, 13*(4), 292–297. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.iheduc.2010.09.004.

Polit, D., Hungler, B., & Beck, C. T. (2001). Essentials of nursing research: Methods, Appraisal and Utilization. 5th ed. Philadelphia: Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.

Rosen, D. J., & Stewart, C. (2013). Blended learning for the Adult Education Classroom. Essential Education.

Singh, H., & Reed, C. (2001). A white paper: Achieving success with blended learning. Centra Software, (March), 1–11. https://doi.org/10.1.1.114.821.

So, H.-J., & Brush, T. A. (2008). Student perceptions of collaborative learning, social presence and satisfaction in a blended learning environment: Relationships and critical factors. *Computers & Education, 51*(1), 318–336. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2007.05.009.

Stacey, E., & Gerbic, P. (2008). Success factors for blended learning. In Ascilite 2008 Melbourne (pp. 964–968). Retrieved from http://www.ascilite.org.au/conferences/melbourne08/procs/stacey.pdf?WT.qs_osrc=ASK-159690110.

Stacey, E., & Gerbic, P. (2008). Success factors for blended learning. Success Factors for Blended Learning, 964–968. Retrieved from http://www.ascilite.org.au/conferences/melbourne08/procs/stacey.pdf.

Stacey, E., & Gerbic, P. (2009). Effective Blended Learning Practices: Evidence-Based Perspectives. ICT-Facilitated Education, Information Science Reference, (November), 2–4.

Staker, H. (2011). The Rise of K–12 Blended learning. Innosight Institute, 21(May), 18. https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccq043.

Staker, H., & Horn, M. B. (2012). Classifying K-12 Blended Learning. Innosight Institute, (May), 22. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-007-9037-5.

Stockwell, B. R., Stockwell, M. S., Cennamo, M., & Jiang, E. (2015). Blended Learning Improves Science Education. *Cell, 162*(5), 933–936. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cell.2015.08.009.

Tham, R. & Tham, L. (2013). Challenges Facing Blended Learning in Higher Education in Asia. *International Journal on E-Learning, 12*(2), 209-219. Waynesville, NC USA: Association for the Advancement of Computing in Education (AACE). Retrieved September 20, 2018 from https://www.learntechlib.org/primary/p/36166/.

Vaughan, N. (2007). Perspectives on blended learning in higher education. *International Journal on E-Learning, 6*(1), 81–94. Retrieved from http://www.editlib.org/p/6310/.

Winston, J. (2014). Special Issue on Technology, Education and Cultural Diversity. *Journal of Educational Technology, 11*(3).

Citation of this Article:
Hussain, I., Shahzad, A. H., & Ali, R. (2019). A qualitative study on practices and issues of blended learning in higher education. *Pakistan Journal of Distance and Online Learning, 5*(1), 189-208.