A Qualitative Study of Blended Learning in a Malaysian Tertiary Institution

Victor Ong, Sheila Cheng & Dr. Cho Cho Wei, HELP International College of Technology, MALAYSIA
• **Blended learning** describes “courses that combine face-to-face classroom instruction with online learning and reduced classroom contact hours” (Dziuban, Hartman & Moskal, 2004).
Blended learning usually define a situation where different delivery methods are combined together to deliver a particular course.
In Malaysia, this is evident at tertiary institutions such as Open University Malaysia and Wawasan Open University, where part-time students learn via three modes:

1. self-managed learning
2. face-to-face interactions, and
3. virtual discussions.
• And even in other private colleges and universities, which collaborate with foreign partners (e.g. Southern New Hampshire University degree programmes at HELP International College of Technology), online learning is already a familiar and common feature with our full-time students.
• The fact is blended learning is beneficial.
• Sharpe *et al* (2006) gave these reasons for the adoption of blended learning in tertiary institutions: the desire to widen participation, enhance the learning process and flexibility of provision, computer aided assessment and encouraging technological adoption.
• Blended learning is certainly a worthy proposition.
• It is well-known that blended learning can prop and augment meaningful educational experiences (Garrison and Kanuka, 2004), besides promoting itself as a cost- and resource-effective methodology (Twigg, 2003).
• However, even among proponents of blended learning, one primary question is constantly being asked: Which components of a blended learning approach are more appropriate and in what context?
Therefore, this paper hopes to address the said question by examining a set of qualitative data (perception of blended learning, attitude towards technology, effectiveness and efficiency of blended learning) through a spider-web model with data drawn from cohorts of Business students currently engaged in blended learning.
• By comparing students’ learning experiences, we intend to find out if a blended learning approach facilitates effective and efficient learning, and which methods do Malaysian students prefer.
Blended Learning at Open University Malaysia

MACRO LEVEL

Self-managed Learning
(Specially designed modules)

Face-to-Face Learning
(Actual Classroom)
(1 Tutor: 30 Students)

Online Learning
(Virtual Classroom)

MICRO LEVEL

Module blended with other resources
References
Articles
Book chapters from Digital Library

Module blended with peer support

Module blended with support from tutor and other experts

Discussions
Online Content

Asynchronous
Discussion forums
Email list

Synchronous
– Chat

Learning Objects
Links
PDF documents
PowerPoint
Other documents

Teaching Strategies
(Lecture, discussions, exercises, presentations)
Consultations - personalized

No. of Meetings
3 or 5 times (10 hours)
8 times
Twice (personalized)

Classroom Environment
Formal classroom
Computer Lab
Science Lab

Source: Abdullah Sanusi Ahmad (2003, p 6), an excerpt from Zaiton Osman, Abtar Kaur, et al (2009), Learning Skills for Open and Distance Learners, OUM.
• We surveyed 189 students; these students are all enrolled on the 4+0 Southern New Hampshire University and 3+0 Edith Cowan University’s undergraduate programmes at HELP International College of Technology, Malaysia.
• We identified 10 methods by which students are engaged in blended learning: Lecture PowerPoint, online exercise, activity-based exercise, software, video, movie, telephone, short messaging, email, and student PowerPoint.

• The data from the said surveys are reproduced as follows:
Usage of Blended Learning Methods

- LecPpt: 97
- StuPpt: 64
- OnliEx: 72
- Email: 69
- SMS: 19
- Tel: 29
- Vdo: 43
- SfWare: 49
- ActBExe: 49
Effectiveness of BL

- EffPpt: 76
- EffeEmail: 75
- EffeSMS: 22
- EffeTel: 15
- EffeMov: 27
- EffeVdo: 30
- EffeActBExe: 51
- EffeStWare: 49
- EffeOnli: 71
Best Way of Learning from Student

- PPt
- Mov
- Tel
- SMS
- Vdo
- Act
- Others
- email
• In conclusion, these methods:
  1. Represent learning tools
  2. Source of enrichment for students’ learning.
Malaysian students, especially those studying at HICT have shown their preference for PowerPoint, email, online activities, video and movies – this collection of methods make up what we label as *blended learning*. 
• Research by Bersin & Associates (2003) find that blended learning programmes are perhaps the highest impact, lowest cost way to facilitate learning.

• Blended Learning really solves the problem of speed, scale, and impact.

• It works very well at HELP International College of Technology, Malaysia.