

Developing Blended Instructional Model in Higher Education Institutions

Eun-JooOh*

*Kyungil University, Korea

E-mail : eoh1@daum.net

1. Introduction

Blended instruction is described in many different ways, focusing on instructional delivery formats, instructional tools, and architectures. Yet, the common major elements in the definitions are a combination of classroom and online instruction. According to the literatures (Khine and Lourdasamy, 2003; Marsh, McFadden, & Price, 2004) blended instruction originally started from the concept of distance education, particularly online instruction; a small portion of classroom. However, in practice, it is commonly found that online instructional components are merged with classroom instruction as an integral part of the classroom instruction. Within the defined combination of classroom and online instruction, many different approaches are found in the use of instructional proportion, technology tools, and instructional strategies. Yet, definitions of blended instruction often focus on one aspect of blended instructional architectures and thus, do not sufficiently explain the phenomenon of blended instruction. This study attempted to find common practices of blended instruction and develop the model of the instructional method.

2. Research Methods

The target population of this study was a group of faculty members who worked for the doctoral research universities. 133 faculty members from 30 universities participated in this study. The extensive doctoral research universities were taken as a research population for this study since those universities are perceived to be pioneers in the research and practices of distance learning. An online survey questionnaire and informed consent form were developed by the investigator. Four experienced researchers in instructional technology examined the survey instruments to confirm the validity of the questions and reliability of the survey item.

3. Findings

When examining the responses to question asking about the courses that they have taught or currently teach, the most commonly selected instructional delivery method used by faculty was “face-face-to instruction with supplementary online instructional components (64.4%). The second most commonly selected method was face-to-face instruction only (59.8%), and a combination of classroom instruction with online instruction (31.8%) was ranked third. Other instructional delivery methods, such as completely synchronous or asynchronous online were also reported to be used, however, a relatively small number of faculty reported use of these formats. <Table 1> presents a visual representation of responses.

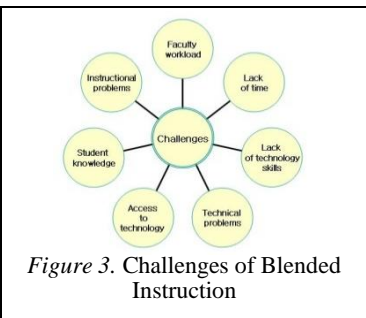
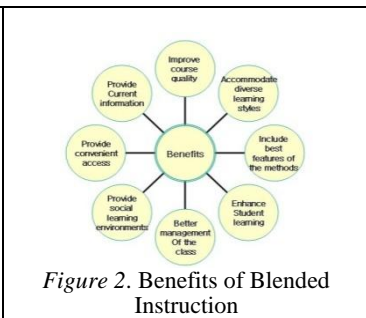
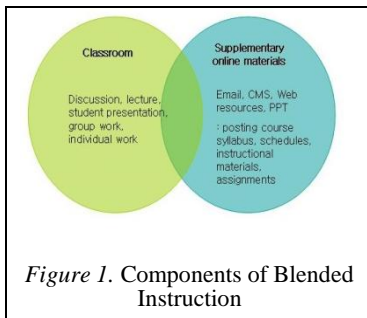
[Table 1] Instructional delivery formats

I currently teach one or more courses in the following formats. (Check all that apply.) (n=132)	Frequency	Percent
Completely synchronous online instruction	6	4.5%
Completely asynchronous online instruction	14	10.6%
Combination of synchronous and asynchronous online instruction	12	9.1%
Blended instruction in which more than 50% of the instruction is delivered online with the remainder being face-to-face instruction	16	12.1%
Blended instruction in which less than 50% of the instruction is delivered online with the remainder being face-to-face instruction.	26	19.7%
Face-to-face instruction with supplementary online instructional components	85	64.4%
Face-to-face instruction	79	59.8%
Others		

Advantages of blended instruction were discussed by the faculty from three different perspectives, institution, learning, and instruction. From an institutional perspective, the university did not need to be concerned about constructing new buildings. They could maximize revenue from existing assets when increasing the number of

blended courses. From a student perspective, the blended course format provided students with more options for their learning modalities. From an instructional perspective, (a) information related to the course is current and accessible so that student can have more flexibility and enjoy various teaching resources available on the course website; (b) instruction provides optional learning methods for students; (c) some shy students can participate in the class more readily; (d) students still feel like they have a "connection" to the professor because of the face-to-face instruction; (e) blended instruction provides students with opportunities to learn in a social learning environment but also with opportunities for self-paced and student directed learning; (f) multiple methods are more effective than a single method; (g) students have convenient access to course materials and it is easy for them to see what was covered and when; and (h) more authentic experiences, civility, and better (deeper) communications are available for students.

Data indicate that blended instruction has been adopted by many of the participating universities. The most common format for blended instruction in the universities surveyed was blended instruction that adds online instructional components to classroom instruction. Within this format, Online Course Management Systems (CMS) and multimedia presentation tools were the most common technology for course delivery, and "discussion" was the most common instructional activity. However, within the participating universities, there appeared to be a great deal of experimentation in the use of mixed media and activities. Instructional approaches such as: proportion of each instructional modality; use of technology and teaching strategies based on course characteristics; instructional needs; instructors' individual choices; and, institutional participating institutions were diverse in both the extent to which online and classroom methodologies were employed and in what ways they were employed. The most common reason given for use of blended instruction was convenience of the faculty member and students. The challenges to faculty who are involved in blended instruction are (1) the extra workloads, (2) lack of technology skills and technical problems, (3) students knowledge and access to technology, and (4) instructional problems. Current blended instructional practices found in this study can be depicted as below;



4. Conclusions

Blended instruction is implemented in many diverse ways, but it is still not applied in various ways. At the present time, the emphasis of blended instruction is on instructional delivery format itself and therefore activities using a variety of instructional media within the format are minimal. Uploading syllabi, making lecture notes available online, and communicating with students are the most popular ways of using blended instruction. More sophisticated technologies are not yet fully utilized in blended instruction, yet, as concluded, there is currently a great deal of experimentation in the use of mixed media. Based on the findings of this study, in the future a combination of instructional activities utilizing multiple media within the delivery format is likely to be a common form of blended instruction and blended instruction will be an important component of higher education institutions.

5. References

[1] Khine, M.S. & Lourdasamy, A. (2003). Blended learning approach in teacher education: combining face-to-face instruction, multimedia viewing and online discussion. *British Journal of educational Technology*. 34 (5), pp. 671-675.

[2] Marsh II, G.E., McFadden A.C., & Price B.P. (2004). *Blended Instruction: Adapting conventional instrument for large classes*. The University of Alabama, Institute for Interactive Technology.