Empirical Article

The Pedagogical Frontiers of Urban Higher Education: Blended Learning and Co-Lecturing

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Abstract
Teachers of urban higher education institutions often explore new methods of teaching using innovative techno-pedagogical approaches. This study reports on postgraduate students’ perceptions of the blended learning mode of delivery, co-taught by two lecturers concurrently during the “Qualitative Research” elective course offered for the Master of Educational Leadership program, in a reputed Malaysian university. A qualitative action research methodology was adopted for this study with students’ comments captured through Padlet. Results indicate that students have very positive perceptions of their experiences gained through blended learning and co-lecturing. The findings of this action research study provide evidence of the meaningful and personalized learning experiences reported by students, gained through the collaborative blended mode of delivery. The results also provide more thoughtful reflections for teachers to draw on students’ feedback and possibly

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adapt their teaching practices to better accommodate students learning needs.

**Keywords**
urban education, students, teachers

**Introduction**

The evolution of web technology has begun to change the culture of teaching and learning practices in urban higher education institutions. In universities, lectures are typically led by single lecturers and the lecturer’s teaching delivery becomes the center of focus for students (Staker & Horn, 2012). Traditional lectures are very much associated with textbooks, confined to curriculum and sparingly use technology to facilitate teaching practices. Such lecturer-centric classrooms tend to have lower levels of student engagement and a lesser enthusiasm for student engagement in an active learning experience (Zainuddin & Halili, 2016). Evidently, when students pay less attention during lectures, it can cause boredom, restlessness, and can even provoke unnecessary disruptive behavior among coursemates (H. Jang et al., 2016).

In this digital age, the pervasive advances of web technologies have had a profound impact on the scholarly reflections of teaching and learning processes, particularly in urban higher education institutions. With the emergence of new forms of media and learning mechanisms, blended learning has developed as technical-driven that has profoundly changed students learning experiences as they engage in technology-rich higher education enterprises (Anderson, 2007; Conole & Alevizou, 2010; Lim & Wang, 2017). Blended learning arose as a hybrid learning model that relates to the fusion of instructor-led simulations blended with synchronous web-based tools. It may be conceptualized as an educational planned framework where a portion of face-to-face classroom time is replaced by appropriate online activities (Dziuban et al., 2015). Blended learning has become known for its extensive use of integrating technology-based resources into traditional face-to-face teaching practices. With the added use of blended learning approaches, digital technology has begun to revolutionize the evidence-based pedagogical practices by maximizing students’ gains and increasing teacher effectiveness (Brooke, 2015).

The traditional lecturing approach, which primarily focuses on the lecturer as the knowledge provider, is becoming irrelevant in today’s digital age (Wang & Heffernan, 2010). The impact of techno-pedagogies has begun to outshine the typical classroom instructional model, which is predominantly
based on either outdated “chalk-and-talk” sessions, or a totally PowerPoint-aided lecture. In today’s urban educational environment, technology-based learning is being sought after instead, and as a result, synchronous blended practices are increasingly being adopted in higher education institutions. This seems to compel students to keep pace with the moving trend of pedagogical innovation (Brown et al., 2015).

Blended learning is increasingly being the preferred choice, especially among the new millennial students of urban higher education (Conole & Alevizou, 2010). At the same time, the efficiency of blended practices is also known to empower lecturers’ when they adopt innovative styles of delivery, while attempting to integrate their classroom instruction with technological resources (Brooke, 2015). In 2015, the Malaysian Higher Education Ministry recognized the pressing need for implementing tech-pedagogy infused with web technologies into all Malaysian postgraduate programs. In effect, the 2015 launch of the Higher Education Blueprint has set educational targets aimed at converting 70% of the conventionally taught postgraduate courses into a blended teaching and learning model of delivery by the year 2025 (Ministry of Education, 2015). In a technology-driven world where Malaysia is currently known to have the seventh highest internet penetration rate in Asia, the proliferation of ubiquitous technology readily extends the pedagogical frontiers of urban education. These robust cyber infrastructures provide the means for facilitating blended learning initiatives that are found to revolutionize the praxis of teaching and learning within a well-supported dynamic learning environment. To align their development efforts to the “National eLearning Policy” (Dasar e-Pembelajaran Negara), the Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education has been highly supportive of mobilizing blended learning practices in higher education institutions, as it attunes to this national agenda of provisioning quality education for all (Lim & Wang, 2017).

Collaborative team teaching and co-lecturing is yet another emerging frontier of innovative pedagogy that this present action research study attempts to explore (S. J. Jang, 2008). The co-lecturing model is increasingly being known for its immeasurable learning benefits for students (Nierergarten, 2013; Sharratt & Planche, 2016). As lecturers pair up and partake in a co-lecturing module, students are being exposed to a variety of teaching methods and styles. Clearly, the benefits are many, and students are at an advantage of improving their understanding of what is being taught to them in a co-lectured classroom. A number of empirical findings demonstrate the positive outcomes that students gain from a co-teaching environment, such as an increase in students’ self-esteem and confidence, better social interaction
among peers and their teachers, as well as a general improvement in their academic performance (S. J. Jang, 2008; McLoughlin & Lee, 2007).

Based on existing evidence regarding the uptake of mainstream Web 2.0 tools in academia, together with the combined phenomena of co-lecturing, the hype of techno-pedagogy and collaborative teaching spurred interest among academicians at this urban higher education institute, who pioneered the initiative of incorporating blended elements of web technology into their collaborative team teaching classrooms. Co-lecturing partnerships were formed as lecturers paired up according to their specialization and expertise, and shared instructional responsibilities for their respective taught modules. In doing so, the Qualitative Research elective course was remodeled by harnessing on Web 2.0 functionalities to stimulate students’ interest and enhance their learning experience. The present action research study sets out to elicit the views and perceptions of master’s students regarding the newly introduced blended technology practices taught by two lecturers concurrently. Based on reflective discussions, we planned and developed a semester-long curriculum jointly for the incumbent Qualitative Research elective course. We introduced an innovative technology-based curriculum design that blended online with face-to-face offerings. At the end of every class session, students were requested to shares their views and comments about the quality of their blended learning experience in a co-taught classroom. They posted their feedback on an online virtual wall known as “Padlet” (formerly known as Wallwisher). Padlet is a Web 2.0 free application that works as an online bulletin board for people to post sticky notes on, without their identity being revealed. As the purpose of this action research was to obtain constructive feedback for the continuous improvement of this taught course, specially created shared links enabled students to access and post their individual comments about each teaching session. The purpose and objectives of this hybrid research study is to analyze and report on the students’ evaluations of the Qualitative Research elective course, offered at the Institute of Educational Leadership, while aiming to address students’ critiques and suggestions for a more enhanced delivery of the Qualitative Research course at this institute.

The Web 2.0 Hype

The technological advances and the use of internet technologies that triggered off the e-learning revolution have since been driving the Web 2.0 social tech revolution. The term Web 2.0 is interchangeably used with “social media,” because of the hyperbole surrounding the hype of social media. The very first-generation Web 1.0, which weaved through
the historical trail of the World Wide Web (www), took off as the exciting frontier for the pioneering web surfers of the dot.com era (Anderson, 2007). Surfing the net then, was a popular pastime and the internet was known for its search functionality of static webpages, interlinked by hyperlinks (Bleicher, 2006). This was the period when people were concerned over the expected “bubble burst,” but instead, the www had taken radical departures from the days of HTML tag codes and has since been transposed and dynamically evolved, and now encompasses new applications and platforms that have redefined users’ digital experience (O’Reilly, 2007). The second generation web, dubbed “Web 2.0,” has become much more full featured and is known for its continuous manifestations of online applications and services. In recent years, the typology of Web 2.0 tools has expanded exponentially with the surge of wide-reaching technological affordances like blogs, video streaming, social media applications, podcasting, live chats, and online forums. The popularly known online social networking (OSN) activities like Facebook, Wikipedia, Twitter, YouTube, and Blogs have currently become the major form of social interfaces, with users taking ownership of these interactive media (Hamid et al., 2011; Simões & Gouveia, 2011). Through the widespread use of these social mediators, web applications have been increasingly leveraged upon in academia and have been more widely applied in many higher institutions worldwide (Poon, 2014). Although OSN technologies are gaining momentum in classroom activities, it also provides insights into the concept of technology appropriation in the context of urban education. They are beginning to be more receptive toward the potential use of Web 2.0 tools in providing revolutionized ways of establishing technology appropriation as a new form of learning in these urban higher education institutions.

Present day Gen Y millennials (born after 1980) consider web technology to be integral to their lives (O’Flaherty & Phillips, 2015). Web 2.0 tools has made it possible to transcend students’ learning curve, as it holds good potential for creatively enhancing the learning landscape for this vulnerable student community. Various web applications that have explored the use of wikis, blogs, and podcasts have made the learning interactive and engaging, far from being a passive receptacle (Hamid et al., 2011). The functionality of web-based learning tools is helping to foster innovative teaching and learning practices. In addition, the academic community has developed an appreciation for visually engaging media-animated learning tools where they can have ease of access. Clearly, by envisioning what the learning should look like, urban education institutions are opting for the blended teaching and learning approach to create a more personalized and authentic learning experience for students. The new trend in emerging technologies coincides with
the exponential increase in students’ needs and demands, understood to be part of their DNA (Docebo, 2016).

**Trending Toward Blended Learning**

Blended learning has become a buzzword in urban higher education settings. The move toward implementing blended learning strategies in the higher education context has become more prominent in recent years. The 2015 Horizon Report documents the emergent trend of blended learning that integrates digital technologies and “in-person” pedagogy (Johnson et al., 2016). In Hao (2016), blended learning is understood as the “inverted classroom” or the “reversed instructional model” that combines face-to-face live instructions with online learning activities and has been regarded as a viable method for delivering higher education programs. One of the salient features of blended learning practices adopted in the classroom is the convergence of synchronous technologies with a face-to-face learning environment, all happening in real time (Dzakiria et al., 2013; Warden et al., 2013). According to Johnson et al. (2016), blended learning helps enhance students’ classroom experience and extends their learning through the innovative use of technology-enhanced web tools. This contemporary model is generally useful for enabling personalized learning across a diverse group of students, while taking the student experience to a whole new level. The working definition of *blended learning* as described in Hoic-Bozic et al. (2016) is the combination of multiple approaches to learning, combining several different delivery methods such as collaboration software, web-based courses or computer communication practices and traditional face-to-face instructions. There are also several terminologies used to describe blended learning, such as “digital hybrid learning,” “technology-mediated instruction,” “web-enhanced instruction,” and “mixed-mode instruction” (Hoic-Bozic et al., 2016; Miller, 2016). No matter what definition of term it is categorized under, *blended learning* has gained the attention of educators, who have taken a keen interest in implementing blended learning in their classrooms. Consequently, Staker and Horn (2012) reported on four blended learning models especially suited for the education sector, whereas McDonald (2012) pointed to the differing blended learning patterns adopted in higher education, which include supplementary learning, interdependent learning, and adaptable learning. Supplementary learning is popular with adult students who perceive blended learning as a combination of face-to-face and online components, whereas interdependent learning is more complimentary, as it builds on the synergistic coherence of the course content, peers, and teachers, while allowing students to engage in a two-way communication with other students and their teachers. For adaptable learning, students feel that
they benefit by being able to connect traditional learning approaches to that of an online learning platform (Graham et al., 2014; Halili & Zainuddin, 2015; McDonald, 2012).

The blended teaching-learning model has shifted the digital landscape dramatically. In this landscape, urban higher education institutions are repositioning themselves at the forefront, poised to help teachers cultivate technology-based teaching and promote digital literacy among students. Blended learning systems depict the best of both worlds, by incorporating both the traditional face-to-face learning and computer-mediated instructional elements (Johnson et al., 2016). This approach inclines toward problem-based learning, with an emphasis on improving students’ critical thinking for problem-solving (Zainuddin & Halili, 2016). Urban higher education institutions are actively on the lookout for innovative ways of providing rich and diverse learning opportunities that could further engage students and improve academic quality. As a result, these institutions are seen to place more emphasis on encouraging deeper learning approaches that can transform the culture of being lecturer-centered to that of being student-centered (Ruck, 2012). Classroom sessions using blended learning approaches commonly integrate hands-on class activities with selected web tools, with the view of transforming learning spaces into a Web 2.0 environment. To accommodate new pedagogies for active learning, learning spaces are being re-configured to promote student–lecturer interactions in environments that facilitate synchronous discussions (Sun & Wu, 2016). According to Szeto and Cheng (2016), blended learning has contributed toward establishing strong interaction between students and teachers, as well as among students themselves.

**Collaborative Teaching**

Co-teaching is a teaching delivery involving two or more professionals, to a group of students within a classroom setup (Van Oordt et al., 2014). Collaborative teaching or co-lecturing occurs within a single physical environment or classroom space, whereby lecturers work in tandem to lead, instruct, and mentor groups of students (Mavropalias & Anastasiou, 2016). The co-teaching model is viewed as a shift from the usual “stand-alone-and-deliver” approach and is emerging as an improved pedagogical strategy used to address the educational needs of students in a classroom. Van Oordt et al. (2014) reports that besides special education, collaborative teaching has gained little attention particularly as a suggested teaching approach for addressing postgraduates’ diverse learning preferences in higher education institutions. According to Herrmann’s theory of whole-brain thinking (1989), co-teaching jointly with alternating teaching styles can increase whole-brain
learning and student engagement as a result of whole-brain teaching generated between the teachers (Van Oordt et al., 2014). By working side-by-side in a real classroom environment, synchronous activities like classroom discussions and students’ queries, as well as asynchronous activities like online forums and live chats may be co-facilitated by co-teaching partners. Of late, teachers’ roles have changed to that of being classroom instructional guides and coaches, seen to address students’ questions and promote dialogue regarding subject matter, while recognizing students’ needs in their areas of study (Oliver & Stallings, 2014). At the same time, by working together as practitioners of the field, lecturers and teachers can learn from each other. Co-lecturing is a more rewarding teaching approach which gives lecturers the opportunity to learn while co-teaching with and from a respected colleague (Sharratt & Planche, 2016). Co-lecturers should possess a sense of ownership over their teaching delivery, while also be willing to share the teaching stage fairly (Nierergarten, 2013). For the successful implementation of co-lecturing practices, the two lecturers should be provided with the necessary trainings to prepare them for their role in a collaborative co-lecturing arrangement.

There are many positive outcomes that result from a co-teaching model, where teachers are both collectively responsible for introducing innovative teaching materials. As a matter of promoting the scholarship of teaching and learning, this study adopts a blended learning model juxtaposed with a co-lecturing model for the delivery of a postgraduate elective course at a premier Malaysian university. Two lecturers adopted blended learning practices as part of their teaching delivery in a blended learning, co-taught classroom.

Method

In this article, we used action research as the methodological approach to explore blended teaching and co-lecturing practices co-taught by two primary researchers of this study. They both held PhD’s in Educational Leadership and assumed senior lecturer positions at the premier university where they taught the Qualitative Research elective course to a group of eight master’s students registered on the Master in Educational Leadership program. The other three researchers took turns to assume observer roles keeping a record of field notes that were used to triangulate with the students feedback gathered over the 12-week class sessions. As practitioners of blended learning approaches, we decided to use action research methodology to contextualize the research process and present the student’s feedback to illustrate their understanding of how our teaching delivery impacted their learning. It caters to the applied knowledge of personal reflection,
collaborative thinking, and continual process improvements. In addition, it is also aligned with our considerations of purpose, appropriateness, modality, and sustainability across lessons, programs, and the institution (Dzakiria et al., 2013). Action research is directed toward the continuous improvement of teaching practices that undergo cycles of action and reflection (Cohen et al., 2000; Warden et al., 2013). This type of research facilitates reflections on the cycles of action as it is happening while attempting to improve their practice (Foreman-Peck & Murray, 2008). In Cronjé (2009), action research is described as an organized research procedure in which data are collected, reflections are carried out, and new action cycles are formulated based on relevant literature and the author’s experience with the former cycle. Action research has a chartered purpose and a strong following in educational research. It involves reflective practices on the part of the course implementers, whereby indicative findings of the research cycle are given due consideration. With action-based research, we can reflect upon our teaching practices and proactively envision innovative ways of improving the learning environment. In this research context, the professional collaboration of the two lecturers was explored around the scholarship of co-teaching and learning using blended components of web technology. Evidence drawn from the pedagogical practices enables us to formalize our understanding as we gain further insights on how web technologies can be innovatively used in the formative stages of blended learning lessons. Studies have used this approach to evaluate the educational interventions on the use of Web 2.0 technologies (Brown et al., 2015; Conole & Alevizou, 2010; Johnson et al., 2016). With an emphasis on intervention and change, action research has been selected for investigating the enabling interventions of blended practices in co-taught classrooms. In terms of the process of research, we modified and adopted the model of action research as illustrated in Figure 1.

The appropriateness of qualitative research in the study of blended learning environments is increasingly seen by practitioners as the methodology that works best at portraying the intensifying impact of the learning curve derived by combining the advantages of traditional classroom teaching and online technology (Dziuban et al., 2015; Noman et al., 2017). This study emanates predominantly from a qualitative standpoint witnessed through the qualitative evidence gathered from the participants of this study. The majority of the evidence was obtained through students’ online reflections posted on Padlet, and student interviews conducted at the end of the semester. Padlet was the specifically chosen Web 2.0 tool, used in this study, as an online notice board for students to post their comments, feedbacks, and reflections about their class activities. It is an internet-enabled application with a user-friendly interface. This free online media does not require any software
installation, nor does it require users to sign up an account before using it. The flexibility of this multimedia “graffiti wall” enables users to add notes and creatively illustrate their ideas using texts, images, videos, and drawings. Padlet is commonly used by teachers in their collaborative in-class activities that support the blended learning approach. Teachers create and share the link with students who are then able to access a particular Padlet wall, double-click its interface and post texts according to the text-box layout preselected by their teacher (Kostka & Lockwood, 2015). In this study, students participated in weekly online postings on Padlet, where they critique the teaching and learning practices of the Qualitative Research course. Their constructive feedback, which formed part of our reflective discussions and deliberations, will be given due consideration for improving the subsequent Qualitative Research course sessions.

Findings

The findings of this study are discussed in light of the students’ perceived hands-on learning through the blend of online spaces and face-to-face traditional instruction as well as the diverse teaching styles gained through co-lecturing. This is evidenced by the argument raised in Khodabandelou et al. (2017) that perceived learning is a valid measure of students’ learning. The Qualitative Research course was designed for collaborative teaching between two lecturers teaching in tandem using blended learning strategies aimed at
obtaining tangible outputs. Their teaching practices were synchronized with a blend of online resources used to facilitate their face-to-face joint curriculum, highlighted in Table 1.

In this project, students’ feedback of their teaching-learning activities were obtained during their face-to-face interview sessions, as well as from their synchronous Padlet posts. Padlet enabled a quick method of gathering feedback and responses from students through the various links created by the lecturers at http://padlet.com. The feedback and students reflections gathered from Padlet were largely about students’ learning experiences and their general impressions of the collaborative class activities, the lecturers teaching practices and how they felt about their learning progress. In general, video lectures, video-recorded students’ presentations, the LMS Spectrum and Padlet represent the various web technologies leveraged upon to enhance the blended learning environment and maximize the classroom experience for both students and instructors of this course. The following section

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Table 1. Findings of the Study.</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Teaching Practices and Blended Learning Activities</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Face-to-face class sessions between students and a pair of lecturers were held bi-weekly over 36 hr of student learning time.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Both lecturers taught concurrently for every class session.</td>
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<td>Lecturers alternate turns to present course content to students.</td>
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<tr>
<td>As part of the blended teaching practices, relevant YouTube videos were posted by the lecturers onto “Spectrum” (the Learning Management System of the university).</td>
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<td>Student presentations were video-recorded and uploaded onto Spectrum, to enable students to repeatedly watch and evaluate their individual presentations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interactive discussions on selected topics were held as a two-way dialogue between students and lecturers. Lecturers also provided more elaborate explanations from different perspectives, for the benefit of students struggling with conceptual understandings of this subject.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Besides face-to-face classroom discussions, live chats through Spectrum provided an added experience for students who learnt to communicate using a varied form of synchronous platform.</td>
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<td>Students also engaged in flipped classroom experiences (out of class) as they engaged in online forums among themselves through Spectrum, and communicated through WhatsApp group chats. This represented an asynchronous communicative platform that also added value to students learning experience of this course.</td>
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<tr>
<td>As for students’ reflections of their classroom activities, these were captured on Padlet.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lecturers further populated Spectrum with additional learning materials for students’ learning purposes.</td>
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presents the two broad key findings associated with the students’ perceptions about co-lecturing and blended learning approaches introduced in the Qualitative Research class of the 2016/2017 academic year.

**The Empirical Insights of Co-Lecturing**

There are two parts to present in this article interchangeably. The first section highlights students’ own experience and their learning outcomes achieved through the whole semester. The second section is intermingled with students’ quotations that highlight our reflections to what is being said from their data. As mentioned, co-lecturing allowed students to interact with our different personalities and a myriad of pedagogical practices. An apparent and consistent finding regarding co-lecturing is that the students of this study reported that they learned and gained knowledge from us simultaneously:

I feel that the concurrent teaching was really effective. This is because when both lecturers teach, we are able to obtain information from two different lenses. (Individual transcript of Student A, from Padlet analyses software)

Both of them always add on information to each other when they are lecturing us. (Individual transcript of Student G, from Padlet analyses software)

We can also learn that sometimes lecturers have different views on certain topics. (Individual transcript of Student C, from Padlet analyses software)

Face-to-face co-lecturing taught alternatingly also allowed us to demonstrate different teaching styles and approaches to deliver the module content while facilitating in class discussions:

It allows us to get different perspectives from two points of views. Apart from that, the co-lecturing also helped me to learn more and it provided me with more explanations. (Individual transcript of Student B, from Padlet analyses software)

Different points of views expanded the spectrum of my understanding. (Individual transcript of Student A, from Padlet analyses software)

The change of voice and their different teaching styles is refreshing. (Individual transcript of Student D, from Padlet analyses software)

We noticed that students have also enhanced their understanding and critical thinking of the subject they learned, having obtained rich information and resources. They acknowledged that our opinions and arguments shared were
an explicit way of obtaining firsthand knowledge on a topic from two subject experts concurrently:

Both lecturers complement each other’s knowledge. Every lecturer has their own set skills and experience. As a result, it creates a high-level teaching session. In the end, students benefit more when rich content is shared during these sessions. (Individual transcript of Student E, from Padlet analyses software)

It is very interesting to see how the lecturers respect and rationalize their opinions. (Individual transcript of Student H, from Padlet analyses software)

I like two lecturers teaching because each lecturer can back up the other lecturer to ensure that the learning time can be maximized. (Individual transcript of Student D, from Padlet analyses software)

Co-lecturing also allowed us to reflect upon our practices and modify our teaching styles to cater best for the students’ needs:

Also, the difference in teaching styles can help lecturers have an almost immediate insight on the impact their teaching on students. This reflection can help them improve their teaching style to better suit the students’ learning needs. (Individual transcript of Student F, from Padlet analyses software)

We found that co-lecturing is regarded as a more comfortable option for teaching delivery, and it reduces exhaustion that arises through single-handed lecturing of continuous teaching sessions:

Co-lecturing prevents fatigue among lecturers and boredom as each of them bring in different approach and delivery. (Individual transcript of Student C, from Padlet analyses software)

Students also expressed their satisfaction of having established good relations with us and their peers. They felt that they experienced higher levels of interaction with us compared with a single lecturer classroom experience. Students also reported that we are engaged with them during their class activities, and this developed a conducive classroom experience for them:

This co-lecturing allows more personalized interaction between lecturers and students. I feel very comfortable and the study environment is more relaxing. (Individual transcript of Student H, from Padlet analyses software)

What I like most about the QR Course is that both lecturers always give us useful group activities where we can discuss and learn together. (Individual transcript of Student F, from Padlet analyses software)
During our mock interview class activity our lecturers gave us useful tips on how to improve our interviewing skills . . . so it is a rich experience for us. (Individual transcript of Student B, from Padlet analyses software)

Besides the benefits that co-lecturing brings, students also shared an awareness of the interprofessional relationship that was established among us. During teaching and learning activities, class discussions include scholastic arguments to address students’ questions:

Different lecturers have different points of view and it is great to see both of the lecturers sharing their opinions during their teaching. (Individual transcript of Student G, from Padlet analyses software)

The lecturers’ explanation given was in-depth and good, with a lot of presentations and hands-on activities that were informative. (Individual transcript of Student D, from Padlet analyses software)

Some students acknowledged that we motivated them in their learning activities while engaging with them during class sessions. This was very useful in building students’ confidence for presenting and participating in class activities. Students also related to the relaxed atmosphere they felt during classes, which was an added advantage to their learning experience:

This course is more relaxing than other courses taught by single lecturers. Maybe because of two lecturers there is a difference. They both are very understanding. They also gave us encouragement throughout the sessions and this gives us more confidence. I have learnt a lot of new things in this class. (Individual transcript of Student A, from Padlet analyses software)

I felt more confident about this subject after the two lecturers taught me in this course. It gave me a new perspective of the course in terms of understanding the whole process of qualitative research. (Individual transcript of Student H, from Padlet analyses software)

Having two lecturers made the classroom atmosphere more exciting. They both motivate us and this makes us interested to learn more. (Individual transcript of Student E, from Padlet analyses software)

After taking this subject, I am more confident in conducting qualitative research. (Individual transcript of Student C, from Padlet analyses software)

**The Uptake of Blended Pedagogy**

Computer-mediated blended technology is the ongoing current trend that promotes active learning (Shieh, 2012). It has revolutionized instructional
practices while helping students stay engaged and alert during their class sessions. Students of this Qualitative Research class acknowledged that blended learning and co-teaching approaches helped them overcome feelings of boredom that was inevitably experienced during long teaching and learning hours:

When they alternate their teaching with other classroom activities, such as watching a short video clip, we are able to have better concentration as the change is refreshing. (Individual transcript of Student B, from Padlet analyses software)

When our mind begins feeling tired from trying to consistently comprehend large amounts of information, the variation of class activities allows our mind to pick up pace once again. (Individual transcript of Student A, from Padlet analyses software)

We have also observed that blended learning stimulates the interest of students in their visual and spatial learning styles. Thus, we find that they could relate better with pictures, imagery, sound, music, and kinesthetic elements, associated with physical movement. Evidently, our perceptions were correct and supported by the following statements:

The classes are interactive sessions that caters for all learning styles . . . visual, auditory and kinesthetic. (Individual transcript of Student H, from Padlet analyses software)

This is an amazing class . . . very theoretical and also practical based. There is a balance between face to face interaction and online activities, which makes the class very engaging. (Individual transcript of Student F, from Padlet analyses software)

In addition, students also shared their views on their rich learning experience gathered through the video lectures they watched in class and the interactive class discussions that followed these video sessions:

Had a very interactive learning today, as we need to watch a short video and try to pick up the important words from it. We had to force ourselves to pick up and think fast to get the main idea of the video. This was a new learning experience for me. (Individual transcript of Student C, from Padlet analyses software)

The video watching sessions were useful to allow for in-depth understanding. (Individual transcript of Student E, from Padlet analyses software)

After watching the video clip, the storyboard activity exposed us to different media and helped us in mastering new knowledge. (Individual transcript of Student G, from Padlet analyses software)
When we reflect on the process of curriculum delivery, the blended learning model has effectively promoted peer interactions among coursemates, as testified by the students who perceived an increase in peer interaction as a result of blended learning. This was a newly introduced web-based learning delivery that made students feel positive about the flexibility and convenience they gained through their online learning experience, intermingled with hands-on activities and face-to-face group discussions held in class:

There were a range of useful activities where we engaged closely as a team. (Individual transcript of Student F, from Padlet analyses software)

Because the activities were largely task-based, we were able to develop social relations among our peers. (Individual transcript of Student A, from Padlet analyses software)

We all learnt from each other, through discussions and brainstorming. (Individual transcript of Student H, from Padlet analyses software)

As two heads are better than one, the students acknowledged that their class discussions and group activities actually enriched their learning, enhanced teamwork, and established a good relation among peers:

A short sharing session like this will bond a motivational relationship with everyone. (Individual transcript of Student C, from Padlet analyses software)

We further interviewed the students by asking about their learning outcomes in terms of attitudes. They reported that they felt more confident engaging in class discussions and sharing their own ideas and that their team members helped build their confidence in presenting and using online apps:

I feel more confident to talk and use web tools during group activities. (Individual transcript of Student G, from Padlet analyses software)

I’m more willing to share my ideas and opinion when I present together with my team members. (Individual transcript of Student B, from Padlet analyses software)

I enjoy teamwork because it gives me more confidence with using web technology. (Individual transcript of Student E, from Padlet analyses software)

Through the sharing and exchanging of ideas with peers, students felt that the blended learning modality also enhanced their understanding of the subject, especially during group activities and online forums with coursemates:
My coursemates helped me to better my understanding of blended learning. It also allowed me to share my new knowledge with my coursemates as well. (Individual transcript of Student H, from Padlet analyses software)

The interactive class sessions are very useful for me . . . I received sharing from all the participants based on their life and working experiences. So, I can link what is happening in my organization with the input I received in the classroom. (Individual transcript of Student D, from Padlet analyses software)

In one of the learning activities, a mock interview simulation exercise held as a group exercise, and we found that it gave students the opportunity to practice runs before their real interview. Some students notified that the interview simulation exercise enabled them to pilot their interview protocol with peers during the class session. At the same time, the lecturers provided useful feedback that helped students assess their individual strengths and weaknesses with regard to their interviewing skills:

What I liked the most was piloting my interview protocol with all the classmates. (Individual transcript of Student F, from Padlet analyses software)

After the mock interview, I learnt what my weakness were and how it could be improved. (Individual transcript of Student A, from Padlet analyses software)

Each and every one of us realizes that our interviewing skills can still be improved. The comments from the lecturers will be helpful when we conduct our real interview. (Individual transcript of Student C, from Padlet analyses software)

To engage all students and to maximize their learning experience, we capitalized on the inclusive blended learning activities with their peers. Interestingly, we found out that this benefited some students who felt more comfortable to share their ideas and fully engage when they are in smaller group discussions. These students felt that they had made much progress by learning from other students:

I am a slow learner, but after the group work I can understand very clearly the learning outcome of each session. (Individual transcript of Student G, from Padlet analyses software)

I take time to learn and study, but after I join this course I met with my group members, who are so nice to share and discuss with me everything they learnt and know about this course. (Individual transcript of Student D, from Padlet analyses software)
As we are given the chance to share our ideas with a smaller group of class, it was easier to participate more confidently and learn slowly about blended learning activities. (Individual transcript of Student H, from Padlet analyses software)

With the use of technological tools, this blended program enhanced students’ engagement in interactive class activities. These blended strategies generated a meaningful learning experience for all students, allowing them to fully engage in class discussions and group presentations. Students responded positively about their interactive class sessions and their involvement in these activities:

Lots of sharing was done with the interactive approaches used in the class. I think nobody was left out in the interactive approaches, especially when sharing our opinions . . . We learnt a lot from these activities. (Individual transcript of Student E, from Padlet analyses software)

This blended learning programme motivated me to engage in all learning activities. (Individual transcript of Student B, from Padlet analyses software)

All students are actively involved in this course sharing their own views. (Individual transcript of Student H, from Padlet analyses software)

For me, this blended learning programme has been interactive, participatory, engaging, and involving. (Individual transcript of Student F, from Padlet analyses software)

Everyone was actively involved in all the class activities. (Individual transcript of Student A, from Padlet analyses software)

**Students’ Recommendations for Improved Instructions**

Following this semester-long action research project, an action plan has been revised based on the series of recommendations and suggestions shared by students. In addition, it is for the purpose of informing and improving the niche offerings of this blended learning, co-lectured course. These recommendations serve as a guide and a form of intervention accepted by us as means of instilling continuous evaluation and improvement of our teaching practices. Students’ suggestions are an added means of bolstering a course in line with meeting high-quality teaching standards. It also adds value toward reinforcing the structure of the course. Besides, these recommendations will also compel lecturers to reflect upon the suggestions put forth and hone in on their respective teaching practices for considering improvised strategies for
their continued co-lecturing using blended learning. From the very first class, students spoke of our deliberate attempts to initiate an engaging session with all students. This informal introduction helped build a good rapport and set a conducive learning atmosphere, which students were appreciative and highly supportive of:

I love how the class was started. It began with a short introduction by the lecturers and from everyone in the class and I think it is amazing to have a very short sharing session for the coming classes to learn more from each other. (Individual transcript of Student C, from Padlet analyses software)

This was a positive note concerning the professional enthusiasm of the lecturers, which boosted their morale and professional learning. Complementary comments such as these further inspire other lecturers to implement practices well received by students. As they continue to sustain their professionalism, lecturers are encouraged to identify more ways of motivating students’ interest and extending their learning experience.

Soliciting student recommendations about the co-lecturing and blended learning practices implemented in the Qualitative Research course is indeed a valuable means of improving instructional practices for future lessons. However, with the newly introduced blended teaching and learning model for this particular course, we tend to focus on devising our lesson plan to incorporate relevant web resources and align their online and classroom activities seamlessly. Unintentionally, the lecturers overlooked informing the students of the Course Syllabus that outlines the structure of the Qualitative Research Course. This should have been addressed on the first day of class. We were thankful that this matter was raised by some of the students who expressed their legitimate concern about the course structure and assessment criteria:

I felt that the structure of the course could have been much clearer. The outcome at the end of the course could have been explained earlier. (Individual transcript of Student H, from Padlet analyses software)

I would suggest that the expectations of the course to be clearly outlined from the first class itself. For example, it is important that the percentage of each assignments, class work and soft skills to be clearly explained and posted in Spectrum. (Individual transcript of Student D, from Padlet analyses software)

Also, every course that we have taken as part of our Masters programme had a final assignment and presentation at the end. In most courses, the expectation for this final assignment was highlighted in the first class itself. I truly appreciated having this information as I was able to plan backwards to meet the expectations and deadlines. (Individual transcript of Student G, from Padlet analyses software)
Perhaps, a more structural timeline or timing can help in the flow of lessons. (Individual transcript of Student A, from Padlet analyses software)

I would suggest that a class rubric be given at the beginning of the class. (Individual transcript of Student F, from Padlet analyses software)

Furnishing students with a clear lesson plan, course objectives, and assessment criteria is among the recommendations clearly outlined by the students for the impending Qualitative Research classes using blended learning with co-lecturing.

There was also a suggestion from adult students’ for more hands-on online activities, rather than face-to-face lecturing:

I would suggest more hands-on class activities especially with Coding and ATLAS.ti. (Individual transcript of Student D, from Padlet analyses software)

I prefer if we had more time spent on building our research instruments and pilot testing them. (Individual transcript of Student B, from Padlet analyses software)

Practitioners Reflections

Throughout this course, we immersed ourselves in the entire teaching and learning experience where we continuously engaged in a cyclic “action-reflection-action” recursive thought process. As practitioners of this action research, we grew to feel like agents of change. We reflected upon the qualitative evidence captured through Padlet, as it shed light on the immediate benefits gained from the perspective of students, as well as some of their suggested areas for course improvement. We also found that Padlet provided us the opportunity to engage in reflective practices, as it opened up a communicative space for robust discussions on practice improvement. What started off as reflective practice has resulted in a stimulus for further improvement in this action research initiative. Future uptakes of the Qualitative Research course will continue to adopt the action research model and advance through the similar iterative circuit of reflections and actions, for continuous improvement of this elective course.

Conclusion

Blended learning has surfaced as a relatively new modality of social learning. Driven by social media and mobile technology, the integration of Web 2.0 tools combined with classroom teaching is popularly filling up the modern learning classrooms. In reality, the benefits of a blended learning co-taught
course augurs well with the ever-increasing number of millennial students who clearly opt for interactive media-driven eLearning experiences (O’Flaherty & Phillips, 2015). With the current advancement in technology, concepts like lifelong learning has gained widespread popularity because learning can take place anytime, anywhere, and in any internet-enabled setting. This may be a possible pull factor that indicates students’ preference for blended learning. In this study, there is ample evidence to suggest that blended learning emerged as the contemporary educational approach preferred by the students of this study. Students also favored the co-lecturing instructional model, newly introduced as an intervention to gauge how receptive students were to the concept of a co-taught classroom. Executed in partnership among teaching colleagues, co-lecturing was the support strategy used in this Course, aimed at accommodating students’ diverse learning preferences.

Our study set out to elicit and document the views of students’ perceptions regarding blended teaching and learning practices used in a co-taught classroom. Specifically, this article explored action research as the prevalent methodology used to inform the scholarship of teaching and learning in an urban higher education institution. The comments and constructive feedback gathered from the current cohort of postgraduate students provided the empirical evidence that signify how a co-taught Qualitative Research course using blended teaching practices, be further improved for better delivery of its future offerings. The qualitative evidence was found to contain constructive comments of the entire teaching–learning experience. Results from this study indicate that students have very positive perceptions of their learning experiences regarding the blended teaching practices adopted in their co-taught classroom. What was recognized as most beneficial by students were the co-teaching instructions and use of class time for hands-on activities and knowledge-sharing. Evidence showed that students gained largely from the adaptive instructional strategies provided by their lecturers in their student-centered classroom settings. They also favored having developed peer interactions through interactive class activities. Interpretation of these results suggests that co-lecturing using blended learning technologies is a useful strategy for gaining student buy-in and that the Qualitative Research course may be further tailored to create that meaningful active learning experience that resonates with students’ needs and interest. This study concludes that blended learning co-taught classrooms appeals more readily to the diverse group of students, especially in urban higher education. The findings thus far seem to suggest that co-lecturing would very likely be the way forward for more lecturers to consider as a worthwhile and effective teaching approach that appeals to postgraduate students. This article concludes with our reflections on students’ critiques and their suggestions for improvement, and our
goal-setting aim to step up the course design and develop a detailed action plan for this forthcoming taught course.

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