

The Optimum Blend: Affordances and Challenges of Blended Learning For Students

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to elicit students' perceptions regarding the most facilitative and most challenging features (affordances and barriers) in a blended course design. Following the phenomenological approach of qualitative inquiry, data were collected from ten undergraduate students who had experiences in a blended learning environment. Data were collected from the students' weekly reflection papers, interviews with students, and documents, and analyzed by structurally and texturally describing the resulting experiences and perceptions. The findings of the study indicate that used together, online and face-to-face course structures offer several opportunities and challenges for students. The participating students mentioned interaction and communication opportunities, increased motivation, increased opportunities to voice their opinions, and reinforcement of learning as the affordances in the blended learning environment. The barriers included increased workload, cultural and technical barriers, and the inter-dependence of the two environments. Implications and suggestions are offered for instructors in higher education settings.

Keywords: *Hybrid instruction; challenges of blended course; benefits of blended learning; blended learning environment.*