

A	Course Structure	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
D	Learner Autonomy	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1-	Blended learning helps learners to carry out their academic tasks more efficiently.					
2-	Blended learning may enhance my status among my friends in the local community.					
3-	Blended learning courses are more motivating to learners than traditional ones.					
4-	Blended learning encourages learners to take responsibility for their own learning.					
5-	Blended learning helps learners become self- knowledgeable.					
6-	Blended learning helps learners feel self- confidence.					
E	The Quality of Instructional Methods	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1-	Blended learning helps learners to further their education in the future.					
2-	I prefer blended learning activities offered through electronic meetings since they pose questions that need a high degree of thinking.					
3-	Carrying out the required electronic activities bores learners too much.					
4-	Due to the long time of preparation and great effort that blended learning requires, I feel dissatisfied.					
5-	I prefer attending virtual class meetings more than attending face- to- face meetings					
6-	The services that the university provides in BL courses are satisfactory.					
7-	I am satisfied with the activities I am inquired to do in BL environment.					

Attitudes Measurement

A	Course Structure	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1-	Blended learning offers the possibilities to efficiently manage the time.					
2-	Blended learning is not efficient as a learning style.					
3-	Blended learning helps me in my job.					
4-	Deadlines in Blended learning activities cause me to fail or do poorly.					
5-	I am satisfied with the way of allotting scores to the different activities (assignments, quizzes, exams etc.)					
B	Course Interface	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1-	Blended learning encourages learners to pursue through information using websites.					
2-	I get more information in the area of my study through blended learning than through traditional courses.					
3-	I feel happy when I learn a course through blended learning.					
4-	I enjoy modern tools and equipment (computer, internet...etc.) required by blended learning.					
C	Interaction	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1-	I feel isolated from the instructor who is not always available to help.					
2-	Blended learning should not be compulsory at universities.					
3-	Blended learning should be the medium of instruction at Q.O.U.					
4-	Blended learning should not prevail in the long run.					



Appendix (1)

A questionnaire Measuring Q.O.U. Students' Attitudes towards Blended Learning

- **Program:**
Education Agriculture Social Services
Technology & Applied Sciences
Administrative & Economic Sciences
- **Level:**
First Second Third Fourth
- **Sex:**
Male Female
- **Age:**
18- 22 23- 27 28- over
- **Status:**
employee non employee
- **How can you describe your skill of using a computer?**
poor moderate good excellent
- **My overall grade is (choose one of the following) :**
fair good v. good excellent
- **What kind of English Language user are you?**
fair good v.good excellent
- **Have you had a blended learning course (s) yet?**
Yes No

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activities that promote S- S and S- T interaction, which expands students' knowledge.

2. From the researchers' modest experience in teaching blended courses, it is recommended that instructors enrich their virtual meetings with video shows, images, pictures, audio files...etc.
3. Blended learning instructors and students should always be motivated towards this learning model.
4. Blended learning must be adopted at QOU gradually.
5. Learners complain about the time limits and constrains of the blended learning course activities. This issue should be taken into consideration by blended course designers.
6. Experienced instructors in technology should be chosen to teach blended courses.

10.2 Recommendations for Future Research:

1. In the present research, the instrument was adopted from several previous studies and developed by the researchers to identify QOU learners' attitudes towards BL. Although the validity and reliability of the instrument were tested, it is recommended that this instrument be applied in other settings that use the blended learning model, which will help create a more validated instrument.
2. The current study is one of the rare studies conducted in Palestine. By conducting other studies in blended learning environments, more accurate interpretations of the results could be reached, especially in terms of attitudes and their relationship with other variables.
3. This research measured undergraduate learners' attitudes towards blended learning. It is good to conduct research that measure graduate learners attitudes and compare the findings here with those of graduate learners.
4. The perceptions of faculty members are important to be studied and to be compared with those of the learners.

9 Conclusion:

The current study has come up with the following findings:

1. In spite of the difficulties and obstacles they face, QOU learners have positive attitudes towards BL.
2. No difference existed in their perceptions of BL components, i.e. course structure, course interface, learners' autonomy, interaction and the quality of instructional methods.
3. There were no statistically significant differences between QOU learners due to the programmes they belong to in their perceptions of BL.
4. QOU learners' sex was not a significant factor impacting their attitudes towards BL. Both males and females see it equally as an important and useful learning environment.
5. Being freshmen, sophomores, juniors or seniors did not affect QOU learners' attitudes towards BL.
6. No statistically significant differences due to QOU learners' levels of achievement existed in their perceptions of BL. High achievers and low achievers indicated the importance and usefulness of BL as a learning model.
7. QOU learners' competency in English (fair, good, very good or excellent) was not a significant factor affecting their attitudes towards BL.
8. Computer literacy and experience in using the internet were significant variables affecting QOU learners' towards BL.
9. Poor users of computer and less experienced learners in the internet indicated satisfaction in BL environment, particularly in course structure, course interface and quality of instructional methods more than experienced users of computer and internet.

10.1 Recommendations for Practicing Blended Learning:

In the light of the study findings, the researchers set the following recommendations:

1. It is recommended that QOU instructors take into consideration to plan

Domain		Sum of squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Interaction	Between Groups	2.045	3	.682	1.943	.123
	Within Groups	85.611	244	.351		
	Total	87.656	247			
Autonomy	Between Groups	9.012	3	3.004	3.602	.014
	Within Groups	203.510	244	.834		
	Total	212.522	247			
Quality	Between Groups	2.143	3	.714	2.411	.007
	Within Groups	72.284	244	.296		
	Total	74.427	247			
Total	Between Groups	3.584	3	1.195	5.105	.002
	Within Groups	57.101	244	.234		
	Total	60.685	247			

It is clearly noticed in table (8) that there are statistically significant differences at the level (0.01) due to the subjects' skills in computer and experience in the internet in their perception of BL ($F=5.105$ and $Sig. = 0.002$). The differences were plain particularly in two domains i.e. course structure ($F= 4.651$ and $Sig.= 0.004$) and course interface ($F= 6.961$ and $Sig.=0.00$). However, no statistically significant differences emerged in the other domains i.e. interaction ($F= 1.943$ and $Sig. = 0.123$), learner's autonomy ($F=3.602$ and $Sig. = 014$) and teaching practices quality ($F=2.411$ and $Sig.= 0.067$).

Strangely enough, the differences were in favour of those whose use of computer and whose experience in the internet is poor. They showed satisfaction towards the ways scores are allotted to the blended learning activities and that blended learning helps them in their jobs. Poor users of computer and less experienced learners of internet revealed that BL encourages them to pursue through the information using websites, and that they enjoy modern tools and equipment required by BL such as computer and the internet. There was also statistically significant difference in favor of poor users of computer and less experienced learners in the internet in the quality of instructional methods, ($F= 2.411$ and $sig. = 007$). The learners showed high degree of satisfaction towards teaching methods and practices adopted by instructors in BL environment. This is perhaps because teaching practices in this way are more interesting for them than those in traditional ways.

With reference to table (7), it can be noticed that there were no differences due to the subjects' competency in English Language (fair, good, very good, excellent) in their attitudes towards BL, ($F=1.252$ and $Sig.= 0.289$). Accordingly, learners' competency in English was not a significant factor affecting their attitudes towards BL. All participants with their different levels in English either fair, good, very good or excellent agreed that BL environment was a good one for them. Thus, the sixth hypothesis was totally refuted. The researchers expect that the results here refer to the fact that the terms used in the Moodle and virtual classes i.e. BL environment were translated into Arabic. Hence, learners found no difficulty in identifying these terms and dealing with BL environment.

8.7 The Seventh Hypothesis:

There are statistically significant differences attributable to the respondents' skills in computer and experience in the internet in their attitudes towards blended learning.

No doubt, dealing with BL environment requires computer literacy and experience in the use of internet since they are bases for BLE. In the light of this fact, it was assumed that the learners who are excellent or, at least, good at computer and experienced in the use of internet would have more positive attitudes towards BL than those who are poor in computer programmes and less experienced in the use of internet.

For the purpose of testing the seventh hypothesis, One Way ANOVA test was used. The results in concern are presented in table (8) below.

Table (8)
Differences in QOU attitudes towards BL due to their skills
in computer and experience in the internet

Domain		Sum of squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Structure	Between Groups	2.652	3	.884	4.651	.004
	Within Groups	46.385	244	.190		
	Total	49.037	247			
Interface	Between Groups	20.159	3	6.720	6.961	.000
	Within Groups	235.560	244	.965		
	Total	255.720	247			

Due to the fact that the language of modern technology is English, it was expected that the learner's knowledge of English language affects their perception of BL. BL environment, particularly virtual classes and the Moodle require that the learner, at least, should have the minimal knowledge of the terms used in this environment.

In order to test the sixth hypothesis, One Way ANOVA was used. The data being statistically treated, they are summarized in the table below.

Table (7)

Differences in QOU attitudes towards BL due to their competency in English

Domain		Sum of squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Structure	Between Groups	1.264	4	.316	1.607	.173
	Within Groups	47.774	243	.197		
	Total	49.037	247			
Interface	Between Groups	5.960	4	1.490	1.450	.218
	Within Groups	249.760	243	1.028		
	Total	255.720	247			
Interaction	Between Groups	1.081	4	.270	.759	.553
	Within Groups	86.575	243	.356		
	Total	87.656	247			
Autonomy	Between Groups	2.246	4	.561	.649	.628
	Within Groups	210.276	243	.865		
	Total	212.522	247			
Quality	Between Groups	1.477	4	.369	1.230	.299
	Within Groups	72.950	243	.300		
	Total	74.427	247			
Total	Between Groups	1.226	4	.306	1.252	.289
	Within Groups	59.460	243	.245		
	Total	60.686	247			

Domain		Sum of squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Interface	Between Groups	2.502	3	.834	.804	.493
	Within Groups	253.217	244	1.038		
	Total	255.720	247			
Interaction	Between Groups	.589	3	.196	.550	.649
	Within Groups	87.067	244	.357		
	Total	87.656	247			
Autonomy	Between Groups	2.315	3	.772	.896	.444
	Within Groups	210.206	244	.862		
	Total	212.522	247			
Quality	Between Groups	.246	3	.082	.269	.847
	Within Groups	74.181	244	.304		
	Total	74.427	247			
Total	Between Groups	.498	3	.166	.673	.569
	Within Groups	60.187	244	.247		
	Total	60.685	247			

Table (6) shows that there were no statistically significant differences due to the subjects' overall grade in their attitudes towards BL ($F= 0.673$ and $Sig.= 0.569$). Therefore, the fifth hypothesis was strongly refuted. The study subjects regardless of their level of achievement showed positive attitudes towards BL environment in general. That is to say, they were highly motivated towards the adoption of such a model of learning.

Gülbahar and Madran (2010) came up with the conclusion that the courses which are designed for the BLE contribute to the achievement of the students with surface learning approach. In other words, Gülbahar and Madran found a strong relationship between BL courses and learners' achievement in the course. The results reached by Gülbahar and Madran disconfirm with those of our study.

8.6 The Sixth Hypothesis:

It is assumed that learners' competency in English is a significant variable which affects the learners' attitudes towards blended learning.

representing the four levels of QOU in their responses to the questionnaire (F= 1.756 and Sig.= 0.156) . That is to say, learners' academic level, being freshmen, sophomores, juniors or seniors did not affect their attitudes towards BL. In other words, the fourth hypothesis was strongly refuted. All the participants agreed on the importance of BL as a non- traditional style of learning in promoting learners' autonomy, learner- learner and learner-academic supervisor's interaction, the use of technology in learning and the quality of the teaching practices in such a type of learning.

In this respect, Shehab (2007) found out that learners' educational level was a significant factor, particularly in learner- learner interaction and course interface. However, learner's academic level was not a significant factor affecting their perception of learner- teacher interaction, the structure of the course material, learner's autonomy and the quality of teaching practices. Therefore, our results match those of Shehab in most of domains of the questionnaire. Thus, there is a partial agreement between the results reached in this study and in Shehab's.

8.5 The Fifth Hypothesis:

Learners' achievement level is expected to be a significant variable affecting their attitudes towards blended learning.

The subjects of the present study were asked in the questionnaire about their overall grade or GPA (fair, good, very good or excellent) which indicates their academic achievement and which may affect their views of BL model. High achievers were expected to have positive attitudes towards BL than low achievers do.

To test this hypothesis, One Way ANOVA test was used. The results are summarized in the following table.

Table (6)
Differences in QOU attitudes towards BL due to their overall grade

Domain		Sum of squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Structure	Between Groups	.209	3	.070	.348	.791
	Within Groups	48.829	244	.200		
	Total	49.037	247			

8.4 The Fourth Hypothesis:

Learners' academic level is a significant variable which impacts their attitudes towards blended learning.

As mentioned earlier in table (1), the subjects were chosen from the four different levels; 96 i.e. (38.70%) from the first level, 57, i.e. (22.98%) from the second level, 51 i.e. (20.56%) from the third level and 44, i.e. (17.74%) from the fourth level.

The researchers assume that learner's level is one of the variables affecting their perceptions of blended learning. To test this hypothesis, One Way ANOVA test was used. The results related are presented in the table below.

Table (5)

Differences in QOU attitudes towards BL due to their academic level

Domain		Sum of squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Structure	Between Groups	.246	3	.082	.411	.746
	Within Groups	48.791	244	.200		
	Total	49.037	247			
Interface	Between Groups	7.695	3	2.565	2.523	.058
	Within Groups	248.025	244	1.016		
	Total	255.720	247			
Interaction	Between Groups	.326	3	.109	.304	.823
	Within Groups	87.330	244	.358		
	Total	87.656	247			
Autonomy	Between Groups	3.866	3	1.289	1.507	.213
	Within Groups	208.656	244	.855		
	Total	212.522	247			
Quality	Between Groups	1.174	3	.391	1.304	.274
	Within Groups	73.253	244	.300		
	Total	74.427	247			
Total	Between Groups	1.282	3	.427	1.756	.156
	Within Groups	59.403	244	.243		
	Total	60.685	247			

The results presented in table (5) above revealed that there were no statistically significant differences between the four groups of the subjects

is assumed that gender is a variable that affects the learner's style. To test the third hypothesis, the researchers tended to use the T test. The results are summarized in the following table:

Table (4)

Gender Differences in the Learners' Attitudes towards BL

Category	Gender	N	Mean	Standard deviation	T value	Sig.
Structure	Male	97	2.88	0.39	- 0.58	0.11
	Female	151	2.91	0.48		
Interface	Male	97	2.51	1.03	1.07	0.611
	Female	151	2.37	1.00		
Interaction	Male	97	2.69	0.62	- 0.63	0.101
	Female	151	2.74	0.54		
Autonomy	Male	97	2.50	0.97	0.37	0.76
	Female	151	2.46	0.90		
Quality	Male	97	2.89	0.53	1.60	0.36
	Female	151	2.78	0.56		
Total	Male	97	2.69	0.49	0.67	0.83
	Female	151	2.65	0.50		

The results presented in table (4) above show that there were no statistically significant differences attributable to QOU learners due to their sex in their view of blended learning in general, ($T = 0.67$ and $Sig. = 0.83$). Both males and females agreed that blended learning environment is a good learning environment and an important style of learning due to the advances in technology the world is witnessing. No significant differences either occurred in the subjects' responses due to their sex in either of the different categories of the study instrument i.e. course structure, course interface, student- student and student- teacher interaction, learner's autonomy or the quality of instructional methods. It is safe to say that the third hypothesis was totally refuted.

The results obtained here do not match with Gülbahar and Madran's (2009) who found that there were differences in the students' satisfaction levels based on gender and that the majority of students showed that they considered themselves to be autonomous and equal in the blended learning environment. However, these results agree with those of Shehab (2007). She found that age and gender were insignificant factors in the learners' overall perception of blended learning.

Table (3)**Differences in QOU Attitudes towards BL due to their Programmes**

Domain		Sum of squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Structure	Between Groups	.422	4	.105	.527	.716
	Within Groups	48.616	243	.200		
	Total	49.037	247			
Interface	Between Groups	7.162	4	1.791	1.751	.140
	Within Groups	248.557	243	1.023		
	Total	255.720	247			
Interaction	Between Groups	.874	4	.218	.612	.655
	Within Groups	86.783	243	.357		
	Total	87.656	247			
Autonomy	Between Groups	5.260	4	1.315	1.542	.191
	Within Groups	207.261	243	.853		
	Total	212.522	247			
Quality	Between Groups	.839	4	.210	.693	.598
	Within Groups	73.588	243	.303		
	Total	74.427	247			
Total	Between Groups	1.408	4	.352	1.443	.220
	Within Groups	59.277	243	.244		
	Total	60.685	247			

With reference to the results presented in table (3) above, there are no significant differences between the means of learners' responses due to their belonging to a programme or another and the domains of the questionnaire and also its totality, ($F= 1.443$ and $Sig.= 0.220$). The results obtained here strongly disconfirm the second hypothesis. It can be elaborated that QOU learners who participated in responding for this study tool and who belong to the five different programmes at university are highly motivated towards blended learning. All of them have already had blended courses, which make them familiar with such a type of learning.

8.3 The Third Hypothesis:

Gender is a significant variable in QOU learners' attitudes towards blended learning.

Research in different areas came up with the fact that the learners' gender is one of the variables that affect their learning. In the present research, it

students in terms of knowledge and ‘usefulness’.” In addition, Abdulrasool, Mishra, and Khalaf (2010) noticed that blended learning styles find better acceptance amongst teachers and students if compared to traditional teaching. Moreover, Wan Ahmad , Shafie and Janier (2008) reported that the results of their study showed that students demonstrate positive perceptions using the blended learning approach.” Zhao (2008) also found that Chinese students’ attitudes towards blended e- learning were positive.

It can be inferred that QOU learners looked at the different domains of BL nearly on the same footing. They agreed that all are important in the BL environment. The subjects agreed that they are satisfied with BL since it offers the possibilities to manage their time and helps them in their jobs. They also indicated that they feel happy when learning a course through BL since they enjoy the use of computer and internet in learning, get more information when studying through blended learning and that it encourages them to pursue through information using technology. For interaction with the instructors, the subjects showed that the instructors are always available to help them and they recommended BL to be the medium of learning at QOU. The subjects also pointed out that BL helps them to carry out their academic tasks more efficiently and encourages them to take responsibility for their own learning which helps them become self- knowledgeable and self- confident. Concerning the quality of instructional methods, the subjects mentioned that activities offered through electronic meetings pose questions that need a high degree of thinking, which makes them satisfied with such activities.

8.2 The Second Hypothesis:

There are statistically significant differences attributed to the learners’ belonging to a program in their attitudes towards blended learning.

The researchers thought that belonging to a programme may affect the subjects’ perception and views of BL. Technology and Applied Sciences Programme learners seem to be the most motivated learners in comparison with others belonging to the other programmes towards the adoption of BL. This is due to the fact that they are the most users of computer and internet services.

To test this hypothesis the one way ANOVA test with (0.05) significant level was used. The results related are presented in table (3) below.

8.1 The First Hypothesis:

Al- Quds Open University learners have positive attitudes towards blended learning.

Due to the fact that QOU has been racing towards adopting untraditional education models since the year 2007, academic supervisors, tutors and learners found themselves involved in e- learning and blended learning environments. This in turn, no doubt, affected their ways and styles of teaching and learning. Accordingly, the researchers assumed that the learners must have been motivated towards blended learning. To test the first hypothesis a T test one- sample was used. The results obtained are summarized in the following table:

Table (2)
QOU Learners' Attitudes towards BL

T- test One Sample					
N	M	Stand. Dev.	DF	T- value	Sig. (2- tailed)
248	3.33	0.152	247	10.531	0.00

With reference to table (2) , it was found that there is a significant difference between the total mean of the questionnaire and the tested value. The mean of the participants' responses was (3.33) which is lower than the T value = (10.531) . Thus, the first hypothesis was strongly confirmed. Hence, it can be said that QOU learners do have positive attitudes towards blended learning. The results obtained in this section are not strange in spite of the obstacles the learners face in such a model of learning. It is obvious that the respondents are highly motivated towards BL since their perceptions were positive.

It is worth mentioning that the results obtained here are in agreement with those of George- Palilonis and Filak, Yilmaz and Orhan, Ireland, Jillian and others, Abdulrasool, Mishra, and Khalaf, Wan Ahmad , Shafie and Janier, Zhao, Shehab, Ausburn and many others. For instance, George- Palilonis and Filak (2009) found out that though the blended model was in no way different from the traditional course in terms of engagement and attachment, students in the blended sections were significantly less negative about the course material, personal achievement, technology, and their emotional reactions than their traditional counterparts. Similarly, Ireland (2009: 124) stated "Using a blend of teaching and learning methods was generally a positive experience for

contained two sections: Section One was used to identify learners' demographic and experiential data such as the program to which he/she belongs, age, educational level, gender, and computer and internet experience as factors that may influence learners' attitudes towards BL and as the independent variables of the study. Section Two was a questionnaire developed by the researchers using a Likert- type instrument to collect data about learners' attitudes towards BL.

Validity of the questionnaire was insured by being presented in its first version to a panel of experts who reviewed it. Modifications having been made, the questionnaire occurred in its present version. Moreover, the internal consistency of the study instrument was also computed. Accordingly, the questionnaire was judged to measure what it is designed for.

In addition, the reliability of the questionnaire was measured using split-half method and Alpha Chronbach.

7.3 Data collection procedures:

- The researchers distributed the instrument of the study on the Moodle so that every learner who registered a blended learning course during the second semester of the academic year 2009/2010 could complete it.
- Suitable statistical techniques were used to analyze the data which the study instrument provided using the statistical package for social science program (SPSS) .

8. Results, Discussion and Conclusion:

This section deals with analysis of data, presentation of results and discussion and interpretation of these results. It attempts to answer the research questions. It also tests whether the hypotheses of the study will be retained or rejected. The statistical tests adopted in this study are: the T- test One Sample used to show the difference in means between the whole sample and the hypothetical mean- T value, One Way ANOVA, which is adequate for presenting differences between more than two independent groups and Scheffe test to identify the most effective factor. The frequencies measure was also used to show the frequencies of different variables. It is worth mentioning, the significance level for these statistical measures was set at the conventional (0.05 and 0.01) levels. Results will be presented and discussed in terms of the study hypotheses.

Table (1)
Distribution of Subjects according to their Program,
Educational Level & Sex

Program	Level	Gender		Total	%
		Male	Female		
Education	First Level	18	39	57	22.9
	Second Level	8	24	32	12.8
	Third Level	4	12	16	6.5
	Fourth Level	4	10	14	5.6
	Total	34	85	119	47.8
Agriculture	First Level	0	2	2	0.08
	Second Level	1	0	1	0.04
	Third Level	0	0	0	0.00
	Fourth Level	1	2	2	0.08
	Total	2	4	6	2.4
Social Services	First Level	5	7	12	4.8
	Second Level	2	2	4	1.6
	Third Level	11	8	19	7.6
	Fourth Level	1	4	5	2.0
	Total	19	21	40	16.0
Technology & Applied Sciences	First Level	1	5	6	2.4
	Second Level	4	4	8	3.2
	Third Level	2	3	5	2.0
	Fourth Level	5	4	9	3.6
	Total	12	16	28	11.2
Administrative & Economic Studies	First Level	9	10	19	7.6
	Second Level	6	6	12	4.8
	Third Level	7	4	11	4.4
	Fourth Level	9	5	14	5.6
	Total	31	25	56	22.5
Grand Total		98	151	249	100

7.2 Instrumentation:

A questionnaire was designed to help gaining valid data about the concerned phenomenon, i.e. to measure Q.O.U learners' attitudes towards BL. The researchers' literature reviewing helped them a lot in this area. It was designed to be electronically filled through the Moodle. The questionnaire started with an instruction cover page that summarized the purpose of the study and gave some directions on how it could be completed. The instrument

- ◆ Identifying the statistically significant differences in Q.O.U learners' attitudes towards blended learning in the light of the following variables:
 - a- gender, b- the learners' achievement level, c- educational level, d- computer literacy and internet experience, e- competency in English, and f- the programmes to which the subjects belong.
- ◆ Exploring whether the blended learning environment is a suitable and a comfortable one for the learners of QOU.
- ◆ Identifying the obstacles QOU learners face in the BL settings.

7. Research methodology:

The researchers used a mixture of research methods in this study, which suits its purposes. First, this is a survey study that provided information about QOU learners' attitudes and their level of satisfaction with blended learning. Second, it is a comparative study that investigated relationships between demographic and experiential variables and learners' attitudes. There was a concern about whether or not perceptions are related to the demographic

and experiential characteristics. Finally, it is a correlational study that investigated relationships among the perception dimensions, and the effects of these dimensions on satisfaction with blended learning. However, the major approach used for the purpose of investigating the learners' attitudes was the descriptive analytical approach.

7.1 Population and sample of the study:

The population of the study consisted of the whole QOU learners who registered for blended learning courses in the second semester of the academic year 2009/2010. Their number exceeded 5000 male and female learners (Hamayel, 2010: 8) . The sample of subjects was randomly drawn from the present study population. The study instrument was electronically distributed to the whole population. Only 249 learners, i.e. (5%) of the total number of the population responded to the questionnaire. After analyzing the completed questionnaires, the researchers found that the different variables of the study were included. Table (1) below shows the distribution of the subjects, according to their programme, educational level and gender as three independent variables.

- ◆ Designing the present study instrument.
- ◆ Justifying the results of the current study.

4. Research Questions:

Given the goal of identifying QOU learners' attitudes towards blended learning, the following research questions were addressed:

- ◆ Do Al- Quds Open University learners have positive or negative attitudes towards blended learning model?
- ◆ Are there any differences in their perceptions of the different BL components, i.e. course structure, course interface, interaction, learner's autonomy and the quality of instructional methods?
- ◆ Are learners' field of study, sex, academic level, achievement level, competency in English and skills in computer and experience in the internet significant variables affecting their attitudes towards blended learning?

5. Hypotheses of the study:

- ◆ Q.O.U Learners have positive attitudes towards blended learning.
- ◆ There are statistically significant differences attributed to the learners' belonging to a program in their attitudes towards blended learning.
- ◆ Gender is a significant variable in QOU learners' attitudes towards blended learning.
- ◆ Learners' academic level is a significant variable which impacts the learners' attitudes towards blended learning.
- ◆ Learners' achievement level is a significant variable affecting their attitudes towards blended learning.
- ◆ It is assumed that learners' competency in English is a significant variable which affects the learners' attitudes towards blended learning.
- ◆ There are statistically significant differences attributable to the respondents' skills in computer and experience in the internet in their attitudes towards blended learning.

6. Purpose and objectives of the study:

The study aims at achieving the following objectives:

- ◆ Investigating Q.O.U learners' attitudes towards blended learning in general and the different domains of blended learning in particular.

the internet, and employment status) . In addition, the interrelationships between the perception dimensions were examined.

Shehab developed an instrument to measure the perception dimensions and satisfaction with blended learning. Those were two questionnaires i.e. satisfaction questionnaire and perception questionnaire adapted from instruments used in previous studies (Walker, 2003; Koochang & Durante, 2003; Huang, 2002; Laanpere, 2005) . The instrument was administered to a sample of 779 AOU- BH undergraduate learners. Findings indicated that the overall learners' perception of blended learning at the Arab Open University- Bahrain Branch was positive. Age and gender were found to be insignificant factors in the learners' overall perception. Learners' educational level was a significant factor for learner- learner interaction and course interface. The relationship between learners' experience with the internet and the perception dimensions was found to be significant. Learners who had more experience with the internet expressed significantly higher positive perception of the blended learning program. The more internet experience the learner had, the more autonomy he/she could practice in a blended learning course.

Due to the importance of BL as a new learning and teaching method widely used nowadays all over the world, a considerable number of studies have been conducted to investigate its effectiveness. For instance, Ushida (2005) surveyed over 30 students studying an FL in online courses in the USA. The students' attitudes were examined within a socio- educational framework. In addition, Shehab (2007) conducted a research on the undergraduate learners' perceptions of blended learning at the Arab Open University in Bahrain. Moreover, George- Palilonis and Filak (2009) carried out a study exploring student reflections on a blended learning course in the visual communications classroom in the USA. In Turkey, Korkmaz and Karakus (2009) in their study, attempted to determine the impact of blended learning on student attitudes towards Geography course and their critical thinking dispositions and skills. Finally, another study was conducted in Turkey by Yilmaz and Orhan (2010) to explore the views of pre- service English teachers in blended learning environment in respect to their learning approaches. However, up to the researchers' knowledge, non of such studies tackled this area in Palestine.

Having stated a number of previous studies on BL, the researchers gained a lot of useful information which helped in:

- ◆ Formulation the research questions and hypotheses.

environment in respect to their learning approaches. Their study was an attempt to investigate whether the academic performance and satisfaction levels of the pre- service English teachers varied in respect to their learning approaches in a blended learning environment. It was found that pre- service English Language teachers were in general highly satisfied with the blended learning environment. In addition, it can be stated that the courses designed for the blended learning environment contribute to the students' academic achievement.

However, in the USA, George- Palilonis and Filak (2009) conducted a study exploring student reflections on a blended learning course in the visual communications classroom. The study shed light on the effectiveness of a blended model in the context of students' enjoyment, engagement, and perceived learning outcomes. The researchers explained how a blended model has been introduced in a required, 100- level visual communication course through a longitudinal study that followed 174 students through two versions of the same course, one that used blended learning strategies and one that participated in a more traditional method of course delivery. In combining an analysis of statements made by the participants in weekly journals (n=13,552) and the data gathered through a survey (n=174) , the reactions between the two groups were compared. Additionally, qualitative data from the journals was used to fully explicate the reactions students had to the course.

The results revealed that the blended model was in no way different from the traditional course in terms of engagement and attachment. Journal data revealed students in the blended sections were significantly less negative about the course material, personal achievement, technology, and their emotional reactions than their traditional counterparts. Additionally, statements made by students regarding the issue of fear of the course and problems regarding technology substantially faded over the 15- week semester. The findings indicate that students are able to adapt well to the technology and processes that make blended learning different from traditional classroom learning.

A more related study to ours was carried out by Shehab (2007) in Bahrain. Shehab (2007) focused in her research on the undergraduate learners' perceptions of blended learning at the Arab Open University- Bahrain Branch. The research also focused on factors that influence learners' perceptions and examined the relationships between learners' perceptions and their particular demographic characteristics (age, gender, educational level, experience with

learning FL in particular. Recently, there has been an increase in the number of researches on attitudes towards blended learning from the students or teachers' perspectives. Research on blended learning has noted many positive results. Studies have found that adult learners prefer blended course designs because they offer opportunities for personalization, self- direction, variety, and learning communities (Ausburn, 2004) and that student engagement and satisfaction in a blended course was higher than in previous, traditional versions of the same course (Cooner, 2005) . In this part the researchers review related studies that shed the light on the suitability of blended learning.

For instance, in the USA, learners' attitudes towards learning in online courses were also the concern of many researches. One of the relevant studies was that of Ushida (2005) who surveyed over 30 students studying an FL in online courses. The students' attitudes and motivation were examined within a socio educational framework. The results showed that the students tended to have relatively high anxiety about language online courses at the beginning of the semester. However their motivation towards FL study was relatively positive and stable during the course.

In Turkey, Korkmaz and Karakus (2009) , in their empirical study, attempted to determine the impact of blended learning on student attitudes towards Geography course and their critical thinking dispositions and skills. An experimental pattern with pretest- posttest control group was used in their study. The study group consists of a total of 57 students (28 in the experimental group and 29 in the control group) at Kirsehir High School. The experimental group was subjected to hybrid learning through the Geography web page, while the traditional learning model was used for the control group. The Geography Attitude Scale, and the California Critical Thinking Disposition Inventory with Cronbach Alpha values of 0.92 and 0.88, respectively were used. The data were then subjected to percentage, arithmetic mean, t- test, ANOVA, Scheffe and Pearson correlation tests and the results were interpreted (p less than 0.05) . As a results: Blended learning model contributed more to student attitudes toward geography course when compared to the traditional learning model; blended learning model contributed more to student critical dispositions and levels when compared to the traditional learning model; and there was a positive correlation between student attitudes toward geography course and their critical thinking dispositions and levels.

A very recent study in Turkey by Yilmaz and Orhan (2010) was carried out to explore the views of pre- service English teachers in blended learning

3. Computer Use and Internet Experience:

No doubt, modern technologies affect the learner's abilities, ways of thinking and achievement. A considerable number of studies attempted to investigate this relationship. For instance, Koohang and Durante (2003) found that experience with the internet has a significant effect on learners' perception of BL. In this study that included 106 undergraduate learners, learners who had more experience with the internet indicated significantly higher positive perception of the blended learning program. Besides, Koohang and Weiss (2003) in another study conducted with 89 graduate students in a blended learning environment, found that prior experience with the internet was a significant factor for courseware usability and Web- based instructional design. It was also found that learners who experience a distance- learning situation for the first time may indicate to the teacher a discomfort with the learning situation (Simonson et al., 2006) .

4. Employment Status:

The learner's being employed or unemployed may affect his preference and choice of the learning style. To the researchers' best knowledge a learner who is employed would prefer online meetings to FTF ones since the former gives them opportunity to study at their own free time, place and pace as well. They would avoid time and place constraints of learning. Wagner, Werner and Schramm (2002) investigated students' perception of online courses and found that there was a significant relationship between student employment status and their perception of online courses. Full- time employed learners would normally opt for the online course to others. They also found that the relationship between employment status and perception of the effectiveness of the delivery method was nearly significant. They attributed this relationship to the flexibility that the online education provides for employed students. It was also found that employment was not a significant variable affecting the learner's attitudes towards interaction with instructors which is one of BL components. Furthermore, the perception of employed students of online communication with other learners was significantly higher than unemployed students.

3. Related Studies:

A very large number of researches have been carried out in different parts of the world to investigate attitudes towards learning in general and

therefore he/she may have a positive attitude which will lead him to do well in the course material.

To sum up, attitudes are seen as psychological and social basis for sustaining motivations. Thus, positive attitudes towards e- learning system could sustain positive motivation. According to Gardner and Lanbert (1972: 7) “individual motivation to learn L2 is controlled by his attitudes toward the other group in particular or by his orientation to learning itself”.

2.3 Factors Affecting Learners' Attitudes toward Blended Learning:

This paper gives attention to the relationship between learners' attitudes and certain demographic and experiential factors (Age, Gender, Educational level, Computer use and Internet experience, and Employment status) .

1. Age & Gender:

Koohang and Durante (2003) found that learners from different age and gender equally perceived that the web- based distance learning activity portion of their blended programme promoted learning. Meyer (2003) , interestingly, found that gender differences appear in online exchanges just as they would in regular situations. Males were more likely to control online discussions, posed more questions, expressed more certainty in their opinions and were more concrete, whereas females were more empathetic, polite and agreeable. The females also supplied the niceties that maintain relationships such as ‘please’ and ‘thank you’. This finding may only indicate that the learners take their normal personalities, judgments and beliefs about others into the online setting. In other words, They are consistent in their online interactions, despite expressing themselves in a different form.

2. Educational Level:

In the current research, this demographic variable reflects the number of credit hours completed by QOU learners. To the knowledge of the researchers, only a few previous studies examined the relationship between the learners' educational level and attitudes towards BL since the latter is a recent technology.

A virtual classroom usually includes email and chat rooms, so the learner can talk to his/ her classmates and instructor just like one would in a real classroom. Virtual classroom is seen to meet the learners' needs. It is an easier and more convenient way to attend classes. Learning through this technology is flexible, economical and efficient. The students are not limited to courses offered in their geographic locality. The learner can choose when to attend the meetings since those are recorded and sent to the learners.

[http://www.scribd.com/doc/9066601/Virtual- Classroom](http://www.scribd.com/doc/9066601/Virtual-Classroom)

Since it is widely thought that there is a strong connection between attitudes and behavior, measuring attitudes has an important role in analyzing the students' behaviors, then what is attitude? How does it affect individual's behaviors?

2.2 Attitudes:

It is not easy to set a proper definition for this concept; however, it is psychologically defined as a hypothetical construct that represents an individual's degree of like or dislike for an item. (Baker, 1992: 10) . Attitude is generally a positive or a negative view of a person, place, thing or event. It is sometimes hard to determine one's attitude toward an item; a person can be conflicted toward an object since he/she may possess a positive or a negative attitude toward an item at the same time. Attitudes are considered the most important and critical factor that determines one's success. However, Wenden (1991: 23) sets a definition for the term "attitude". He assumes that this concept includes three components i.e. cognitive, affective and behavioural. The cognitive aspect is made up of the beliefs, ideas or opinions. The affective one refers to emotions and feelings towards an object and the behavioural refers to intentions towards the object.

Although there are many definitions of attitudes, there is general agreement that a person's attitude towards an object or an issue constitutes propensity on his/her part to approve or disapprove of this object or issue and accordingly to behave in a related manner. For example, the learner who is not able to use computer programmes and internet may have a negative attitude towards e- learning and even towards the course material he is exposed to. Yet, the learner may realize that he/she can not get along without e- learning;

The successful implementation and use of BL requires understanding of the strengths of different mediums; how learners engage in this type of learning process; how they use information from each different medium and how they can handle online and face- to- face) teaching methods in a combined form (Mortera- Gutierrez, 2006) .

Three major components of blended learning that can be integrated in face- to- face and online environments are learning activities, the students, and the teacher. As reported by Osguthorpe and Graham (2003: 229) , “If balance and harmony are the qualities that are sought for in blended environment, one must first identify precisely what is to be mixed together”. This depends on the contents of a course, characteristics of student’s needs, individual differences and others.

The impact of blended learning development as an alternative learning system replacing both the traditional and pure e- learning systems, no doubt, affects the students’ characteristics. The successful blended learning must have certain qualities such as motivation, patience, self- discipline, easiness in using computer programmes. These factors have a direct impact on the learner’s attitude toward blended learning. Thus, the attitude can be positive if blended learning fits the learner’s needs or negative if he/she can not adapt to it. In brief, their attitudes towards blended learning are influenced by the advantages and disadvantages of BL.

There seems to be disagreement on specifying the blend. Specifying the blend seems to be a controversial issue in different parts of the world. What would be the ratio of face- to face meetings and that of virtual class meetings is unsolved. Whereas Brazil says that 80% of the ODL course should be offered in Face- to Face mode, Malaysia says 20%. Then, restricted policies are required to solve this dispute. Al- Quds Open University, however, adopts a more realistic policy where 50% of the meetings should be offered face- to- face and the other 50% should be offered electronically through virtual class technology.

Virtual class technology is an a computerized classroom in an online learning environment. “Virtual” is used here to characterize the fact that the course is not taught in a classroom face- to- face but through some substitute mode that can be associated with classroom teaching. It consists of a mixture of synchronous and asynchronous events. It can also be defined as special application of computer and network technologies to the task of education.

e- learning are Internet and web technology which allow the transfer and transmission of information at any time in any place to many people.

2.1 Blended Learning BL:

Electronic learning, in spite of the many advantages it has, includes a number of disadvantages, which led to the emergence of a new learning system which is a hybrid of both online learning and traditional learning. The new hybrid of both the two systems of learning is widely known as blended learning. As its name suggests, blended learning combines together online learning with traditional methods of learning. Thorne (2003: 2) states “It represents an opportunity to integrate the innovative and technological advances offered by online learning with the interaction and participation offered in the best traditional learning”. It is apparent that this system of learning is an attempt to decrease and minimize the constraints that arise with the wide and frequent use of modern technologies. It tries to offer solutions for the problems accompanying online learning. Thorne (ibid) elaborates that blended learning is the most logical evolution in learning since it suggests smooth and attractive solutions to the challenges and drawbacks of e- learning as well as it suggests solutions to the learners’ needs.

Blended Learning is a method to organize the learning environment that is facilitated by the effective combination of different modes of delivery, models of teaching and styles of learning, and is founded on transparent communication amongst all parties involved in a course (Heinze and Procter, 2006) . In addition, Garnham and Kaleta (2002) , Young (2002) and Sands (2002) defined it as ‘courses in which a significant portion of the learning activities have been moved online, and time traditionally spent in the classroom is reduced but not eliminated’. One of the commonest definitions is that of Osguthorpe and Graham (2003: 227) : “BL environment is used to try to maximize the benefits of both FTF and online methods- using the web for what it does best, and using class time for what it does best”.

The integration or combination of different learning/ teaching methods is of profound importance for the achievement of the blended learning environment. Reay (2001) emphasized that blended learning is not just adding online materials to a conventional training environment; it must be relevant, and demand a holistic strategy taking the best characteristics of all learning interventions. The selected techniques should be appropriate to the subject.

ODLC has set standards for assuring the quality of blended learning courses. The tutor or academic supervisor is provided with criteria and procedures that help design and develop BL courses. Standards provided to the academic supervisors should assure a good general form of BL courses, a good design of the different study units, a good design of electronic activities, a good design of asynchronous discussions and good tutoring practices of BL courses. In addition, other criteria and procedures are suggested to assure the quality of virtual class VC meetings in terms of good preparation for the VC meeting before the session and supervision of the VC meeting during the session. Help and support is always provided to tutors who supervise BL courses and for learners who attend them through the technical support department which belongs to ODLC. In addition, tutors supervising or designing BL courses are rewarded.

The University has conducted a variety of training courses targeting both the academic supervisors and the learners in their own educational regions. These courses aimed at raising the learners and academic supervisors' awareness towards computer programmes, virtual classes technology and the different types of e- learning environments existing at QOU.

2. Literature Review:

The rapid development in information technology has influenced educational process and therefore caused substantial changes in the traditional educational systems. Information technology comprises adopting technology and modern pedagogical techniques in academic institutions and creating an alternative educational system that suits the students. Such a system of learning is mainly based on internet services which facilitate communication and ensure transmission of different types of information needed for learning and include systems for evaluating knowledge gained and achievement. Due to evolution in IT, BL is becoming more and more the common learning environment.

Regarding e- learning, a considerable number of definitions has been advanced, all of which emphasize the use of modern technologies in the education process. The following are typical definitions. For instance, Nichols (2003) defines the term e- learning as “the use of various technological tools that are either Web- based, Web- distributed or Web- capable ... for the purpose of education”. As noted from Nichol's definition, the main components of

1. Introduction:

The preceding few decades and the present one have been concerned with the notion of computer assisted learning CAL. Only recently have Palestinian academic institutes adopted the use of computer and technology in the teaching- learning process. It was in the late 1990s and the early 2000s when computer was introduced at some private schools and universities as a means for carrying out educational activities. Here one may wonder whether educational practice can actually benefit from computer use or not. As an answer for this question, Schwartz et. al. (1992) reported that computer use in the educational process appears attractive to students. He added that students working with computers may contribute to positive feelings about learning language skills. Such feelings can be attributed to a variety of factors amongst which is the ease with which students use computer and hence their attitude becomes more positive. They become more motivated and work with greater concentration (Dirkznager and Mol, 1987) .

Al- Quds Open University, the first Palestinian academic institution which adopted open learning system has been delivering a variety of blended learning courses since the academic year 2007/2008. Blended learning courses provided by QOU through virtual classes VCs and very recently Moodle attempt to avoid the constraints of space, time and cost associated with traditional instruction. This system avails the possibility for university students whose time is often occupied with their jobs, duties ... etc. to attend their courses freely.

Blended learning courses at QOU are provided to the learners through any of the four types: e- activities, e- assignment, video streaming and electronic templates. Each semester a number of courses are handled electronically, and another number is added the next semester. For instance, thirty courses were presented electronically through the first semester of the academic year 2010-2011. Eight of them were through e- activities, other eleven were through e- assignments, eleven were through video streaming and only two through electronic templates. The aforementioned courses represent all the academic programmes of QOU excluding agriculture programme. (Open and Distance Learning Center, QOU) .

Abstract:

The starting point for the present study was a group of questions regarding outcomes of the blended learning courses. Would learners feel satisfied with such a model of learning? How would they react toward blended learning courses? The aforementioned questions which constitute the rationale for this study involved measuring QOU learners' attitudes toward the blended learning courses.

A questionnaire was designed to gather valid data about the concerned phenomenon, i.e. to measure Q.O.U learners' attitudes towards BL. The researchers' literature reviewing helped them a lot in this area. It was designed to be electronically filled through the Moodle. Worth mentioning, the questionnaire was distributed to the whole learners who were enrolled in blended learning courses at QOU in the second term of the academic year 2009/2010. Only 249 learners responded to the study instrument. This number which was drawn randomly and which represents 5% of the total number of the study population constitutes the study sample.

The current study revealed that QOU learners have positive attitudes towards BL. Moreover, no statistically significant difference existed in the learners' perceptions of BL components, i.e. course structure, course interface, learners' autonomy, interaction and the quality of instructional methods due to their gender, programme, academic level, achievement, and competency in English. Nonetheless, computer literacy and experience in using the internet were significant variables affecting QOU learners' attitudes towards BL.

Key terms: Attitudes, blended learning BL, QOU.

ملخص:

كانت نقطة الانطلاق لهذه الدراسة مجموعة من التساؤلات حول مخرجات و جدوى المقررات المطروحة بنمط التعلم المدمج. وقد شكلت التساؤلات التالية الأساس المنطقي لإجراء دراسة تقوم بتقصي اتجاهات الدارسين بجامعة القدس المفتوحة نحو التعلم المدمج. والتساؤلات هي: هل يشعر الدارسون بجامعة القدس المفتوحة بالرضا عن هذا النمط من أنماط التعلم؟ وما هي ردات فعلهم نحو المساقات بنمط التعلم المدمج؟ ولجمع بيانات تصلح لقياس اتجاهات دارسي جامعة القدس المفتوحة نحو التعلم المدمج قام الباحثان بتصميم أداة الدراسة وهي عبارة عن استبانة أفاد الباحثان في تصميمها من مراجعتهما و اطلاعهما على الأدب السابق.

وقد صممت الاستبانة حيث يتم الإجابة على بنودها عبر نظام المودل. تجدر الإشارة إلى أن أداة الدراسة تم توزيعها على جميع الدارسين المسجلين لمقررات بنمط التعلم المدمج بجامعة القدس المفتوحة في الفصل الثاني من العام الدراسي ٢٠٠٩/٢٠١٠. وقد أجاب على الاستبانة بشكل صحيح ٢٤٩ دارسا و دراسة فقط ، و يمثل هذا العدد الذي اختير عشوائيا ٥% من مجتمع الدراسة.

كشفت الدراسة عن أن اتجاهات الدارسين بجامعة القدس المفتوحة نحو التعلم المدمج كان ايجابيا و لم تظهر فوارق ذات دلالة إحصائية في اتجاهات الدارسين نحو عناصر التعلم المدمج تبعا لمتغيرات النوع و البرنامج الأكاديمي و مستوى التحصيل و الكفاءة في اللغة الانجليزية. و قد برزت فوارق ذات دلالة إحصائية في اتجاهات الدارسين نحو عناصر التعلم المدمج تبعا لمتغيري استخدام الحاسوب و الخبرة في استخدام الانترنت.



Al- Quds Open University Learners' Attitudes towards Blended Learning (BL)

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