

**Exploring the Policy-Practice Gap in Blended Learning: Challenges and Perspectives of
Public and Private University Faculties in Dhaka**

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A thesis submitted to the BRAC Institute of Educational Development in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Education in Educational Leadership & School Improvement

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Declaration

It is hereby declared that

1. The thesis submitted is my original work while completing the degree at Brac University.
2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate reference.
3. The thesis does not contain material that has been accepted or submitted for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.
4. I have acknowledged all main sources of help.

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Ethics Statement

I, Senjuti Shonima Nadi, hereby consciously assure that for the manuscript titled “Exploring the Policy-Practice Gap in Blended Learning: Challenges and Perspectives of Public and Private University Faculties in Dhaka” the following is fulfilled.

- This material is my own original work, which has not been previously published or submitted elsewhere.
- All sources used in this manuscript are appropriately identified and cited. Text that is literally copied must be identified as such by using quote marks and providing suitable references.
- All the participants of this research willingly participated in this research.
- The participants’ identities who have participated in this research are confidential, protected and will not be revealed at any point.
- The findings are suitably contextualized in relation to previous and present research.

Abstract

Blended learning, combining face-to-face teaching with digital instruction, has become a central focus in higher education reforms worldwide. In Bangladesh, national efforts—particularly by the University Grants Commission—have encouraged universities to adopt this approach. However, the gap between policy directives and everyday classroom practice remains wide. This study explores how faculty members at public and private universities in Dhaka experience and implement blended learning within this evolving policy landscape. Using a qualitative case study method, the research draws on interviews with faculty to uncover key challenges, including limited policy awareness, infrastructural shortcomings, lack of training, and high teaching loads. Despite these barriers, many faculty members adapt creatively—balancing online tools with in-person sessions, especially in theory-heavy courses. The findings highlight a readiness to embrace blended learning, provided that institutions offer stronger support systems and clearer implementation strategies. The study concludes that aligning national policy with institutional realities and faculty needs is essential for sustainable integration of blended models. It offers practical recommendations to bridge this policy-practice gap, including targeted investment in infrastructure, tailored professional development, and clearer communication of guidelines. These insights contribute to the ongoing conversation about digital learning in developing contexts and provide a pathway for more effective implementation in Bangladesh’s higher education sector.

Key words: Blended learning in higher education, policy-practice gap in blended learning

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my beloved husband, AKM Saleh Ahmed Anik, a faculty member in the Department of Architecture at North South University. His ongoing journey as a committed educator—who seamlessly integrates blended learning into his teaching practice—has been one of the primary inspirations for this study. Without his unwavering support, encouragement, and motivation, the completion of this research would not have been possible.

I will always be indebted to him for his patience, belief in my work, and the strength he gave me throughout this journey.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Background of the study

Blended learning is defined as the integration of traditional face-to-face instruction with online learning experiences. It has gained widespread recognition as an effective pedagogical approach (Graham, 2019; Means et al., 2013). This model enhances flexibility, increases student engagement, and provides opportunities for personalized learning (Boelens et al., 2017). As the availability of digital tools is on the rise, online platforms have further accelerated the adoption of blended learning across different educational contexts (Hrastinski, 2019).

In recent years, the integration of technology into education has gained significant attention worldwide. Bangladesh too is following this global trend. This teaching approach combines traditional face-to-face education with online learning, which has emerged as a key strategy to enhance learning experiences and address the evolving needs of students (Joher, 2022; Hani, 2023). The government of Bangladesh has introduced policies advocating for the use of blended learning in higher education to improve educational quality and accessibility (University Grants Commission [UGC], 2022). However, despite the push for blended learning in policy, a significant gap exists between policy intentions and the actual practices within university classrooms (Rahman et al., 2023).

The aim of this research is to explore the policy-practice gap in blended learning in higher education institutions in Dhaka, focusing on both public and private universities. Faculty members, as key stakeholders in implementing blended learning, are often at the forefront of this challenge. According to Hani (2023), faculty members' perceptions and readiness significantly impact the adoption of blended learning. This study will explore the perspectives of university faculty regarding the challenges they face in adopting blended learning. It will also explore their views on the alignment (or lack thereof) between national policies and classroom practices (Rahman et al., 2023).

It has been highlighted in previous studies that there are several barriers to the implementation of blended learning. This includes technological infrastructure, teacher training, and student readiness (Hossain et al., 2023). Even though these factors are widely acknowledged, there remains a need for a deeper understanding of how national policies are interpreted and applied at the faculty level teaching (Joher, 2022). By investigating these issues, the study aims to explore the gap between policy and practice in blended learning in Bangladesh's higher education system, offering recommendations for improving its effectiveness.

1.2 Research Topic

This study focuses on the policy-practice gap and challenges of blended learning implementation in Dhaka's public and private universities. While national policies in Bangladesh, such as the University Grants Commission's Blended Learning Policy, advocate for the integration of blended learning in higher education, there remains limited empirical research examining how these policies are practically implemented in university classrooms (University Grants Commission [UGC], 2022; Hossain, 2017; Ali & Ahsan, 2022). To bridge the gap between policy goals and actual teaching practices, it is crucial to understand the barriers faced by faculty members and the discrepancies between policy goals and actual teaching practices. I aim to contribute to the broader discourse on the implementation of educational policies and technology integration in higher education in developing countries by examining these challenges (Rahman et al., 2023; Hossain et al., 2023; UGC, 2022).

1.3 Statement of the problem

Despite the global rise in the adoption of blended learning in higher education (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004), its effective implementation in Bangladesh—particularly within public and private universities in Dhaka—continues to face significant challenges due to infrastructural limitations, policy-practice gaps, and faculty preparedness issues (Ali & Ahsan, 2022; Hossain, 2018; Islam & Talukder, 2021). National policies such as the *National Policy on Blended Learning in Higher Education* (UGC, 2022) highlight the importance of integrating digital tools and flexible learning methods into academic curricula. However, the actual practice of blended learning in Bangladesh's higher education institutions often falls short of policy expectations due to numerous challenges, such as inadequate faculty training, limited technological infrastructure, resistance to pedagogical change, and insufficient institutional support (Ali & Ahsan, 2022; Hossain, 2018; Islam & Talukder, 2021). A significant gap persists between national policy aspirations and their real-world implementation in university classrooms, which adversely impacts the quality of education and hinders the effective integration of technology into teaching and learning—an issue particularly critical in developing countries like Bangladesh (Rahman & Panda, 2017; Molla & Licklider, 2021).

Bridging the gap between policy and practice in blended learning calls for a closer look at the real experiences of university faculty—those who are on the frontlines of making it work. Their day-to-day challenges, frustrations, and creative solutions offer invaluable insights into where current policies may fall short. In this research, I aim to shine a light on those lived experiences by exploring the obstacles I hear about from faculty members in both public and private universities in Dhaka as they work to implement blended learning in their classrooms.

Understanding the challenges that educators encounter in implementing blended learning is essential for informing policy decisions and designing effective institutional support systems that

facilitate meaningful technology integration (Ali & Ahsan, 2022; Islam & Talukder, 2021; Hossain, 2018). When these challenges go unaddressed, they don't just affect individual classrooms—they risk undermining the broader goals of national education policies and can hold back students from accessing richer, more engaging learning experiences (Angrist & Dercon, 2023). This issue isn't unique to Dhaka; similar disconnects between policy and practice have been observed across other developing countries, where efforts to promote digital learning often struggle to take root in everyday teaching (Turner & Young, 2018). By exploring these gaps more closely, this study hopes to offer meaningful takeaways for policymakers, educators, and researchers who are working to make blended learning more effective and practical in real-world settings.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

This study aims to investigate the policy-practice gap and the challenges faced by public and private university teachers in Dhaka regarding blended learning. The objectives are to:

- Examine national policies on blended learning for primary education in Bangladesh.
- Identify the gaps between blended learning policies and their implementation in classrooms.
- Explore the challenges that teachers encounter in implementing blended learning.
- Analyze how teachers integrate blended learning in public and private universities.

Research questions:

1. What are the national policies regarding blended learning in public and private universities in Bangladesh?
2. What are the gaps between these policies and actual practices in public and private universities in Dhaka?
3. What challenges do faculty members in public and private universities in Dhaka face when implementing blended learning?
4. How do faculty members practice blended learning in public and private universities in Dhaka?

1.5 Significance of the study

This study matters because it can offer fresh, practical insights into how blended learning is actually being put into practice across Bangladesh's higher education system. As this teaching approach gains traction globally, it's important to look closely at how it's taking shape in public and private universities in Dhaka. By digging into the gap between policy and practice, this research will explore how national guidelines are playing out in real classrooms—and where things might not be lining up as intended (Rahman & Panda, 2017; Hossain, 2017). The goal is

to highlight where policies could be better tailored to fit what educators are really experiencing on the ground, especially when it comes to challenges like limited infrastructure, uneven digital access, and varying levels of teacher readiness (Ali & Ahsan, 2022; Hossain, 2018). By listening to the voices of faculty who are navigating these challenges, the study also hopes to help university leaders create more focused training and support systems that meet their actual needs (Islam & Talukder, 2021). In the end, the findings aim to offer realistic, actionable ideas for improving how blended learning is adopted across universities in Bangladesh, while also adding to the larger conversation about education policy and digital teaching tools in developing countries (Molla & Licklider, 2021).

1.6 Definition of key terms

- **Blended Learning:**
An educational approach combining traditional face-to-face classroom teaching with online learning activities, integrating digital tools, resources, and platforms to enhance engagement and learning outcomes (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004; Ali & Ahsan, 2022).
- **Policy-Practice Gap:**
The difference between educational policies and their implementation in classroom practices, often due to challenges in aligning ideal goals with the realities of teaching and learning (Hossain, 2017; Rahman & Panda, 2017).
- **Higher Education:**
Post-secondary education provided by universities and colleges. In this study, it specifically refers to public and private universities in Dhaka, Bangladesh, with a focus on the implementation of blended learning (Islam & Talukder, 2021).
- **Challenges of Blended Learning:**
Issues such as technological infrastructure, teacher training, student engagement, and the adequacy of online content. In Bangladesh, these challenges are compounded by resource limitations and disparities between public and private universities (Molla & Licklider, 2021; Ali & Ahsan, 2022).
- **Digital Tools in Education:**
Technologies like learning management systems (LMS), educational apps, and interactive platforms that facilitate teaching and learning processes, enhancing the educational experience in blended learning settings (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004).
- **Educational Policy:**
Guidelines, regulations, and frameworks established by governments to shape and govern the structure and delivery of education, including policies on technology integration in teaching and learning (Rahman & Panda, 2017; Hossain, 2018).

1.7 Summary

This study sets out to understand the gap between what national policies say about blended learning and what's actually happening in university classrooms across Dhaka's public and private institutions. Although there's a strong push to bring digital tools into higher education, many faculty members still face real-world hurdles—ranging from outdated infrastructure and limited training opportunities to challenges in keeping students engaged. By taking a closer look at these everyday struggles and how closely classroom practices align with policy goals, this research hopes to offer meaningful insights. The aim is to support both educators and policymakers in finding practical ways to close this gap, so blended learning can truly benefit students and improve the quality of higher education in Bangladesh.

Chapter 2

Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

2.1 Overview

Blended learning is changing the way we think about education by combining the strengths of in-person teaching with the flexibility of digital tools. Around the world, it's been linked to better student engagement, more tailored learning experiences, and stronger academic performance (Means et al., 2013). In Bangladesh, efforts to embrace this approach have been shaped by national policies that aim to modernize education through technology. The University Grants Commission (UGC) has introduced guidelines to support this shift, calling for a balanced mix of classroom and online learning experiences (UGC, 2022). However, even with these well-intentioned policies in place, putting blended learning into practice—especially at the primary level—continues to face serious roadblocks.

2.2 Blended Learning

2.2.2 Theories Regarding Blended Learning

Blended learning is supported by several key educational theories and pedagogies:

- **Constructivist Learning Theory** (Vygotsky, 1978; Piaget, 1950) emphasizes active learning and social interaction.
- **Community of Inquiry (CoI) Framework** (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2000) highlights cognitive, social, and teaching presence in blended learning.
- **Connectivist Learning Theory** (Siemens, 2005) stresses the role of technology in forming knowledge networks.
- **Flipped Learning Model** (Bergmann & Sams, 2012) involves pre-class online learning followed by in-class application.
- **Experiential Learning Theory** (Kolb, 1984) promotes learning through experience and reflection.
- **Self-Determination Theory** (Deci & Ryan, 1985) focuses on motivation through autonomy and competence.

2.2.3 Blended Learning in Higher Education

Blended learning—where in-person teaching is combined with online activities—has become a widely embraced approach in higher education around the world (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004). It offers students greater flexibility, allowing them to learn at their own pace and on their own

schedule, while also creating a more personalized and student-focused experience (Dziuban et al., 2015; Misra, Mishra, & Panda, 2025). Universities have been experimenting with different blended models, like flipped classrooms, rotation systems, and flex formats, to boost student engagement and improve learning outcomes (Turyamureeba, 2024). In fact, several studies have shown that these blended environments often lead to better results than traditional teaching methods, with students reporting higher satisfaction, better retention, and stronger academic performance overall (Ramapela, 2025).

2.2.4 Blended Learning practices worldwide in higher education

Blended learning has gained strong recognition in higher education around the world, largely because it brings together the best of both worlds—traditional classroom teaching and the flexibility of online learning. Universities globally are turning to blended learning not just for its convenience, but because it helps boost student engagement, improve learning outcomes, and increase overall satisfaction (Dziuban et al., 2015). There isn't a one-size-fits-all model either; approaches like the flipped classroom, rotation model, and flex model have been used to suit different learning styles and institutional needs (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004). What makes blended learning especially effective is how it supports a more personalized experience—students can move through material at their own pace, work together in online spaces, and get timely feedback from instructors. This shift makes learning more centered around the student and their individual journey (Means et al., 2013).

2.2.5 The pedagogical shift needed for blended learning

Putting blended learning into practice isn't just about adding technology to the classroom—it calls for a real shift in how teaching and learning are approached. At its core, blended learning encourages active participation, student collaboration, and the thoughtful use of technology to create richer, more varied learning experiences (Graham, 2013). When done well, it strikes a balance between in-person interaction and digital tools, helping students take more ownership of their learning while developing critical thinking skills (Horn & Staker, 2014). Research shows that this learner-focused, tech-supported approach can lead to better educational outcomes—especially when instructors are properly trained and supported in designing and running blended courses (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004; Ali & Ahsan, 2022). Still, making this shift isn't always easy. Teachers may be hesitant to change their methods, tech infrastructure might fall short, and not all institutions provide the kind of pedagogical support needed to make blended learning work (Means et al., 2013). So, while blended learning holds a lot of potential, realizing that promise depends on tackling these real-world challenges head-on.

2.3 Policies for Blended Learning

2.3.1 Overview

Policies act as guiding frameworks that help individuals and organizations work toward specific goals. They usually come together through a process that starts with recognizing a need, followed by setting clear objectives and figuring out practical ways to meet them (Béland, 2016; Howlett et al., 2017).

Educational policy is a subset of public policy that pertains to the planning, development, and implementation of initiatives that govern the educational system (Ball, 2017). Educational policies are designed by governments, educational bodies, and other relevant stakeholders to guide the functioning of educational institutions and to influence how education is delivered, accessed, and evaluated (Levin, 2019). These policies can be broad, covering national strategies for improving educational quality and access, or they may focus on more specific areas such as curriculum development, teaching practices, or the integration of technology in learning environments (Alexander, 2018).

2.3.2 Policies in the contexts of Blended Learning

When it comes to blended learning, educational policy plays a key role in shaping how technology gets woven into everyday teaching and learning (Ali & Ahsan, 2022). Policies that encourage the use of digital tools in classrooms are often designed to improve access to technology, provide training for teachers, and establish standards for using both online and offline resources effectively (Hossain, 2018). But how well these policies work on the ground depends on a number of factors—like how much support schools receive, whether the resources are actually available, and how ready both teachers and students are to embrace new ways of learning (Islam & Talukder, 2021).

Creating education policy is no easy task. It's shaped by a mix of social, economic, and political influences, and policymakers have to juggle the needs of many groups—students, parents, educators, and the broader community—while also dealing with practical issues like budget limits, infrastructure gaps, and uneven access across different regions (Ball, 2017). As technology continues to evolve, there's a growing need for policies that not only support the use of digital tools but also ensure they genuinely improve access and learning quality, especially in countries like Bangladesh where educational inequalities still exist (Rahman & Panda, 2017).

2.4 Blended Learning in Bangladesh

2.4.1 Higher Education System in Bangladesh: Role of Public and Private Universities

In Bangladesh, the higher education landscape is largely guided by the University Grants Commission (UGC), which oversees both public and private universities across the country. Over the past few decades, the sector has grown rapidly to keep up with the rising demand for tertiary education. By 2024, Bangladesh is home to more than 50 public and over 100 private universities (UGC, 2022), all playing a crucial role in developing a skilled workforce and supporting the nation's broader development goals.

Public universities are state-funded and tend to offer more affordable education. They're often seen as prestigious academic institutions, but they also face ongoing struggles—limited infrastructure, bureaucratic delays, and political disruptions that can interfere with the academic calendar and overall quality (Joher, 2021; Hossain, 2018).

Private universities, on the other hand, have stepped in to fill the gap left by public institutions' limited capacity. These are mostly self-financed and privately managed, allowing them more flexibility in shaping their curricula, class schedules, and use of technology (Molla & Licklider, 2021). Most are located in urban areas, especially Dhaka, and typically serve students who can afford higher tuition. Still, they're not without challenges—some face issues with maintaining consistent academic standards, hiring qualified faculty, and balancing educational goals with commercial interests (Ali & Ahsan, 2022).

Together, these public and private institutions form the backbone of Bangladesh's higher education system, each serving different segments of society and responding to a wide range of educational needs.

2.4.2 Contextual Differences Between Public and Private Universities in Educational Practice

While both public and private universities in Bangladesh play important roles in higher education, they operate in very different environments—differences that directly shape how teaching happens and how students learn.

Public universities often serve a larger and more diverse student body, including many from rural or economically disadvantaged backgrounds. But these institutions frequently struggle with outdated infrastructure, limited access to technology, and a general lack of digital readiness among both students and faculty (Hossain, 2018; Joher, 2021). On top of that, their bureaucratic systems can make it difficult to adopt new teaching models like blended learning in a timely way (Islam & Talukder, 2021).

Private universities, on the other hand, usually have better facilities, more advanced ICT resources, and more flexible administrative systems. Thanks to greater investment in digital tools and regular training for faculty, they're often better positioned to implement blended learning successfully (Ali & Ahsan, 2022). In many cases, faculty in private institutions are not only trained in e-learning technologies but also encouraged—sometimes even incentivized—to use them in their teaching (Molla & Licklider, 2021).

The learning culture also differs between the two. Private universities tend to be more student-focused, using digital platforms, continuous assessments, and flexible course formats. Public universities, by contrast, still lean heavily on traditional lecture-based teaching, and their efforts to modernize are often held back by systemic inertia and limited resources (Hossain, 2018).

Understanding these contrasting realities is key when looking at how blended learning is being implemented—and why the gap between policy and practice still exists—in Bangladesh's higher education system.

2.4.3 The Shift Toward Blended Learning in Bangladesh Since COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic marked a major turning point for higher education in Bangladesh, pushing universities—almost overnight—toward blended and hybrid learning models. Before the crisis, technology use in classrooms was limited and often uneven, especially in public universities. But when campuses suddenly had to shut down, institutions were left with no choice but to shift to emergency remote teaching. This unexpected shift, while challenging, became the foundation for more long-term, sustainable approaches to blended learning (Hasan et al., 2023).

The pandemic didn't just disrupt routines—it exposed deep-rooted issues in the system. Both public and private universities faced problems with digital infrastructure, teacher training, and overall readiness. Still, the experience sparked a shift in mindset among educators, students, and decision-makers alike. Universities began investing in tools like learning management systems (LMS), online exams, and platforms such as Zoom and Google Meet. Private institutions managed the transition more easily thanks to better infrastructure and greater administrative flexibility, while public universities faced tougher obstacles, especially when it came to students lacking devices or reliable internet access (Mahmud et al., 2023).

According to Mahmud et al. (2023), the pandemic also pushed educational leaders to look beyond Bangladesh for solutions, drawing inspiration from global examples—like Japan's blended learning models—to improve local strategies. This encouraged institutions to revisit how they design courses, assess students, and prepare faculty for a tech-integrated future.

Hasan et al. (2023) point out that what began as a reactive response to a crisis has since evolved into a more thoughtful, long-term strategy. Blended learning is no longer seen as just a backup plan—it's being embraced as a flexible, accessible, and future-ready model. That said, major

challenges remain, such as digital inequality, differences in digital skills, and the need for deeper pedagogical changes.

In the end, while COVID-19 brought immense disruption, it also sparked meaningful change. It accelerated the digital transformation of higher education in Bangladesh and set the stage for blended learning to become a lasting part of university life, especially in cities like Dhaka.

2.4.4 Blended Learning Policy of Bangladesh: Themes, Structure, and Analysis

Recognizing the growing importance of technology in education—especially in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic—the University Grants Commission (UGC) of Bangladesh rolled out the National Blended Education Policy in 2021. This policy was designed to steer the shift in higher education toward a more blended model of learning. Its goal is to create a clear and inclusive roadmap for both public and private universities, aiming to improve access, ensure quality, and promote equity across the country’s higher education system.

2.4.5 Historical Background

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, there was no clear national strategy in place for promoting blended learning in higher education across Bangladesh. While a few private universities had started experimenting with digital tools and online components in their courses, public universities continued to rely almost entirely on traditional classroom teaching. The pandemic—and the sudden closure of campuses—highlighted just how unprepared the education system was for a shift to remote instruction. This disruption made it clear that a more sustainable, technology-supported model was urgently needed.

In response, the University Grants Commission (UGC) began working closely with academic institutions, ICT experts, and policymakers to develop a structured plan. This led to the formulation of the **National Blended Education Policy** in 2021, which was officially published in 2022, marking a major shift in how the government approached digital learning and innovation (UGC, 2022).

2.4.6 Key Themes and Objectives

The policy revolves around several important themes:

- **Pedagogical Innovation:** Encourages moving beyond one-way content delivery toward more interactive, student-centered learning supported by technology.
- **Curriculum Design:** Promotes a mix of live (synchronous) and self-paced (asynchronous) learning elements to create flexible course structures.

- **Technology Infrastructure:** Highlights the need for robust platforms like LMS, reliable internet, and access to digital devices for students and faculty.
- **Faculty Development:** Stresses the importance of ongoing training, digital literacy support, and pedagogical guidance for instructors.
- **Assessment and Evaluation:** Suggests rethinking how students are assessed, incorporating a balance of formative and summative evaluations tailored to blended formats.
- **Quality Assurance:** Recommends setting up institutional systems to ensure academic standards, maintain integrity, and support accreditation in blended settings.
- **Equity and Accessibility:** Aims to ensure that students from all backgrounds have equal access to quality education, regardless of their geographic or economic status.

2.4.7 Policy Framework and Vision

At its core, the policy views blended learning not as a temporary fix but as a long-term strategy to transform higher education in Bangladesh. It sets out to reduce urban-rural disparities and better equip graduates for global competition (UGC, 2022). A phased implementation plan is suggested—starting with pilot programs in selected departments—while allowing institutions the flexibility to choose the tools and platforms that best suit their context, as long as they follow national guidelines.

Universities are expected to take the lead in adapting course delivery and setting up the necessary tech infrastructure, while the UGC remains responsible for funding, capacity-building, and oversight. Though performance indicators and feedback mechanisms have been included in the monitoring framework, some researchers argue that the policy would benefit from clearer metrics to track its real impact (Joher, 2021).

2.4.8 Challenges and Opportunities

Despite the strengths of the policy, putting it into action is proving to be a significant challenge. Many institutions still deal with outdated infrastructure, untrained faculty, and inconsistent access to devices and internet services. Coordination between the UGC and individual universities also remains an issue.

Still, the policy opens up valuable opportunities for rethinking how higher education is delivered in Bangladesh. It offers a path toward modernization, aligned with global trends in digital learning.

2.4.9 Ongoing Barriers to Blended Learning Implementation

Even though blended learning holds a lot of promise, implementing it successfully continues to be difficult, especially in a developing country like Bangladesh. One major challenge is faculty resistance. Many instructors are hesitant to shift from familiar classroom routines to tech-based teaching methods, often because they're unfamiliar with the tools or unsure how to design effective blended courses (Hossain, 2018; Ali & Ahsan, 2022). A lack of digital literacy only makes this problem worse, leaving some educators unsure of how to use online platforms or navigate virtual learning environments effectively (Islam & Talukder, 2021).

The issue isn't limited to people—it's also about infrastructure. Many public universities still struggle with slow internet, aging computers, and power outages, all of which make it difficult to run a smooth blended learning program (Molla & Licklider, 2021). On top of that, institutional support is often lacking. Training programs are scarce, and faculty members don't always get the help they need to adapt to new teaching methods (Joher, 2021).

When the pandemic forced a sudden switch to online learning, it exposed just how unprepared many universities were. The transition highlighted not only the need for better tech infrastructure but also a broader shift in teaching approaches (Ali & Ahsan, 2022). It became clear that both students and teachers needed more support to navigate digital learning environments—and that the gap between what national policies envisioned and what was actually possible on the ground was still quite wide (Rahman & Panda, 2017).

While national efforts like *Digital Bangladesh* have tried to push forward ICT integration in education, many policies still struggle in practice due to resource shortages, outdated methods, and institutional inertia (Hossain, 2018). Some private universities have made notable progress thanks to better resources and more flexible structures, but public institutions continue to face significant hurdles (Joher, 2021; Ali & Ahsan, 2022).

2.4.10 Bridging the Policy-Practice Gap

To make blended learning truly work, a more systematic and coordinated approach is needed. That means investing in digital infrastructure, expanding training programs for faculty, boosting digital literacy among students and teachers, and encouraging a more open, innovative institutional culture (Ramapela, 2025; Misra et al., 2025). Recent research emphasizes the importance of aligning national policy with on-the-ground realities through both top-down and bottom-up strategies (Ali & Ahsan, 2022; Joher, 2021). If universities can address these core issues, they'll be better equipped to create meaningful blended learning environments that improve the overall quality of education and make learning more accessible for all.

2.5 Policy-Practice Gap

2.5.1 Definition of Policy-Practice Gap

The policy-practice gap refers to the discrepancy that often arises between formulated policies and their actual implementation in practice. This gap emerges when policies are developed with certain objectives, standards, or reforms in mind, but the actions on the ground fall short of these intended outcomes. The divergence may result from various systemic, organizational, cultural, or individual-level factors, including insufficient resources, lack of stakeholder engagement, poor communication, or resistance to change (Barrett, 2004; Pressman & Wildavsky, 1984).

Barrett (2004) points out that the gap between policy and practice isn't just about poor execution—it often stems from the real-world complexity of putting ideas into action. Turning policy into practice is rarely a straightforward process; it's shaped by the unique circumstances and challenges faced by those tasked with making it happen. Pressman and Wildavsky (1984) also note that as policies move through different layers of administration, the original goals can get watered down or misinterpreted, sometimes resulting in outcomes far from what was originally intended.

To really understand this policy-practice divide, it's important to see that designing a policy and implementing it are two different but closely connected steps. Bridging that gap effectively means involving the right people early on, being flexible as challenges come up, creating strong systems of accountability, and maintaining open lines of communication between those who make the policies and those who put them into practice (Lipsky, 1980; Matland, 1995).

2.5.2 Policy-Practice Gap in Education

The gap between what education policies aim to achieve and what actually happens in classrooms is a well-known challenge in many education systems. This disconnect—commonly referred to as the policy-practice gap—stems from a mix of systemic, administrative, and everyday practical hurdles (Barrett, 2004; Fullan, 2007). While policymakers may introduce reforms with the best intentions—to improve access, quality, or equity—these reforms often look quite different by the time they're implemented on the ground.

A key reason behind this is what Lipsky (1980) described as “street-level bureaucracy.” In other words, teachers and other frontline educators are the ones who ultimately decide how a policy plays out in real time. Pressed for time, working with limited resources, or juggling competing demands, they often have to adapt—or even set aside—certain policy directives to keep their classrooms running smoothly. As a result, policy implementation can vary widely from one school to another.

Matland's (1995) ambiguity-conflict model helps explain why some policies are particularly prone to uneven interpretation. When a policy is vague or controversial, teachers, administrators, and school leaders may each understand and apply it differently, which leads to inconsistent results. Without proper training or clear communication, it becomes difficult for everyone to stay aligned on what the policy is actually asking for.

Spillane, Reiser, and Reimer (2002) offer another layer of insight, emphasizing that educators interpret policies through the lens of their own beliefs, experiences, and existing knowledge. What one teacher sees as a helpful reform, another might view as impractical or irrelevant—simply because of the context they work in. This cognitive angle highlights how personal perspectives shape the way policies are enacted.

Beyond interpretation, there are also structural challenges that can get in the way. A lack of professional development, inadequate funding, and poor infrastructure can all prevent even the most well-intended policies from taking root. When the system isn't equipped to support change, meaningful implementation becomes difficult. That's why many researchers now argue for more "implementation-sensitive" policy making—approaches that involve educators in the planning process, provide continuous support, and build in feedback loops to help policies evolve as needed (McLaughlin, 1998; Honig, 2006).

In short, closing the policy-practice gap isn't just about issuing directives from the top. It's about building shared understanding, providing the right tools and training, and creating flexible systems that allow schools to adapt reforms to their specific contexts.

2.5.3 Policy-Practice Gap in Blended Learning: A Global Perspective

Blended learning has become a widely adopted approach in education, offering a mix of online and face-to-face methods that aim to make learning more flexible and engaging. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, many governments and institutions around the world began incorporating blended learning into their policies. However, despite this growing support, there's still a noticeable gap between what these policies promise and what actually happens in classrooms and lecture halls (Boelens et al., 2017; Porter et al., 2014).

A big part of this disconnect comes from the gap between policy design and the everyday realities of educators. Too often, blended learning policies are created without involving the teachers and administrators who will have to implement them. As a result, those on the ground are left trying to interpret broad, top-down directives without the tools or support they need to turn them into effective teaching practices (Laurillard, 2012). While policies may encourage digital innovation, many educators still lack the training or confidence to use new technologies effectively in their teaching (Davis et al., 2018).

Infrastructure is another major stumbling block. Studies show that even in well-resourced countries, reliable internet, up-to-date digital tools, and tech support aren't always available across all institutions (Kirkwood & Price, 2014). In under-resourced or rural areas, the gap between what the policy envisions and what's actually possible becomes even wider due to limited funding and inadequate digital infrastructure (Barteit et al., 2020).

Resistance from teachers and slow institutional change also contribute to the policy-practice divide. When blended learning feels like a top-down initiative that adds pressure without clear benefits, educators are more likely to push back—especially if it clashes with their teaching styles or adds to their workload (Porter et al., 2016). On top of that, many institutions lack the leadership, training opportunities, and incentives needed to support long-term engagement with blended teaching (Graham et al., 2013).

Another issue is that policy documents often lack clarity. They may speak broadly about blended learning without laying out the specific steps, goals, or methods for assessment (Alammary, 2019). This kind of ambiguity leaves educators and administrators unsure of how to move forward, resulting in uneven or half-hearted implementation across institutions.

To address these challenges, researchers have stressed the importance of grounding policy in real-world contexts and making the development process more inclusive. That means involving educators from the beginning, adapting strategies to fit the specific needs of institutions, and providing long-term support for teacher development (Trust et al., 2017). Without these elements in place, blended learning policies risk becoming little more than symbolic gestures, lacking the practical foundation needed for lasting change.

In short, while the global momentum behind blended learning is strong, making it work in practice is still a complex task. Bridging the policy-practice gap means taking a closer look at infrastructure, teacher readiness, institutional culture, and the clarity of policy guidelines. With the right support and a more collaborative approach, blended learning can move beyond vision statements and actually transform teaching and learning in meaningful ways.

2.5.4 Policy-Practice Gap in Blended Learning in Bangladesh's Tertiary Education

In recent years, Bangladesh has made some important strides in shaping policies to support digital learning and blended education at the university level. The University Grants Commission (UGC) has led much of this progress, particularly through the launch of the *Blended Learning Policy for Tertiary Education* in 2021. This policy encourages universities to combine online and in-person teaching methods with the goal of making education more accessible, flexible, and effective (UGC, 2021). But despite this forward-looking approach, putting blended learning into practice across universities—both public and private—has proven to be a much tougher challenge. A noticeable gap has emerged between what the policy sets out to achieve and what's actually happening on the ground.

Several studies point out that while many universities have officially adopted blended learning policies, the way they are being implemented in classrooms often falls short. As Joher (2021) observes, this gap is especially visible when comparing private and public institutions. Private universities, with their better access to ICT resources and more adaptable administrative setups, have generally done a better job of rolling out blended learning models. In contrast, public universities continue to face a range of obstacles, including outdated infrastructure, rigid academic structures, and slow-moving bureaucracies (Hossain, 2018; Islam & Talukder, 2021).

One of the biggest challenges has been faculty readiness. Many university instructors—especially those in public institutions—haven't received the training or support they need to confidently design and deliver blended courses (Ali & Ahsan, 2022). Even though the national policy emphasizes training and institutional backing, these efforts have often been patchy and underfunded. There's also a cultural barrier: in some cases, educators view blended learning as extra work rather than a meaningful improvement to their teaching (Molla & Licklider, 2021).

The issue goes beyond people—it's also about infrastructure. To make blended learning work, institutions need fast, stable internet, access to devices, and reliable learning management systems. Unfortunately, these essentials are still lacking in many public universities, especially outside the major cities (Joher, 2021). But it's not just a tech problem; many universities don't have a clear roadmap for turning policy goals into practical classroom strategies (Rahman & Panda, 2017).

The COVID-19 pandemic brought all of these challenges into sharp focus. When universities had to suddenly shift to online teaching, the cracks in the system became even more obvious. While the crisis did push institutions to explore blended learning more seriously, it also highlighted how unprepared many were to do so effectively (Islam & Talukder, 2021; Ali & Ahsan, 2022).

To close the gap between policy and practice, researchers and education experts suggest a more holistic approach. This would include long-term investment in digital infrastructure, structured faculty development programs, clear institutional guidelines, and most importantly, involving educators in the policymaking process (Hossain, 2017; Ramapela, 2025). Without this kind of coordinated, multi-level effort, blended learning policies run the risk of staying on paper rather than driving real change in the classroom.

2.5.5 Previous Research on Blended Learning in Dhaka's Universities

Research on how blended learning is playing out in Dhaka's universities paints a rather mixed picture. As Joher (2021) points out, while some private universities in the city have made real progress in rolling out blended learning programs, public universities continue to face several roadblocks. These challenges range from limited institutional support and a lack of proper faculty training to inadequate access to necessary technology. Joher (2021) also notes that students in public universities often struggle with staying engaged and motivated during online

learning sessions, making it even harder to implement blended models successfully. All of this suggests that, despite policies promoting blended learning, there's still a noticeable gap between the official vision and what's actually happening in the classroom.

2.6 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study illustrates the dynamic relationship between national blended learning policies, theoretical foundations, and the actual practices within public and private universities in Dhaka, Bangladesh. It serves as a guiding lens for analyzing the policy-practice gap and understanding how macro-level policies are interpreted and operationalized at the institutional and classroom levels.

1. Theoretical Foundations of Blended Learning

The framework draws on key educational theories that inform the design and implementation of blended learning:

- **Constructivist Learning Theory** (Vygotsky, 1978; Piaget, 1950): Emphasizes active, social learning and learner-centered environments.
- **Community of Inquiry (CoI) Framework** (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2000): Focuses on the intersection of cognitive presence, teaching presence, and social presence in a blended environment.
- **Connectivism** (Siemens, 2005): Highlights the importance of digital networks and non-linear learning paths in knowledge construction.
- **Flipped Learning Model** (Bergmann & Sams, 2012): Promotes asynchronous engagement with content followed by synchronous application.
- **Experiential Learning** (Kolb, 1984): Stresses learning through experience, reflection, and application—especially relevant to practice-based disciplines.

These theories collectively inform the pedagogical rationale behind blended learning, supporting the shift from teacher-centered to student-centered modalities.

2. National Blended Learning Policy Context

At the policy level, the framework incorporates the **National Blended Education Policy 2021** developed by the **University Grants Commission of Bangladesh (UGC, 2022)**. Key policy components embedded in the framework include:

- Pedagogical innovation and faculty development
- Digital infrastructure and platform access
- Curriculum design for hybrid delivery
- Equity, access, and quality assurance

These policy provisions provide the formal foundation for implementing blended learning across institutions. However, they also reveal ambiguities in scope, discipline-specific guidance, and implementation metrics, which are essential to analyze in relation to actual teaching practices.

3. Institutional and Classroom-Level Practices

This component of the framework addresses how faculty and students experience, interpret, and adapt to blended learning in practice. It examines:

- **Instructional design patterns**, such as the division between theoretical and practical course delivery modes
- **Technological infrastructure and access disparities** between public and private universities
- **Faculty training and professional support mechanisms**
- **Student engagement, motivation, and access to digital resources**

These elements reflect the real-world constraints and creative adaptations that shape how blended learning unfolds within classrooms and campuses.

4. Policy-Practice Gap Analysis

The framework centers on the **policy-practice gap**, conceptualized through:

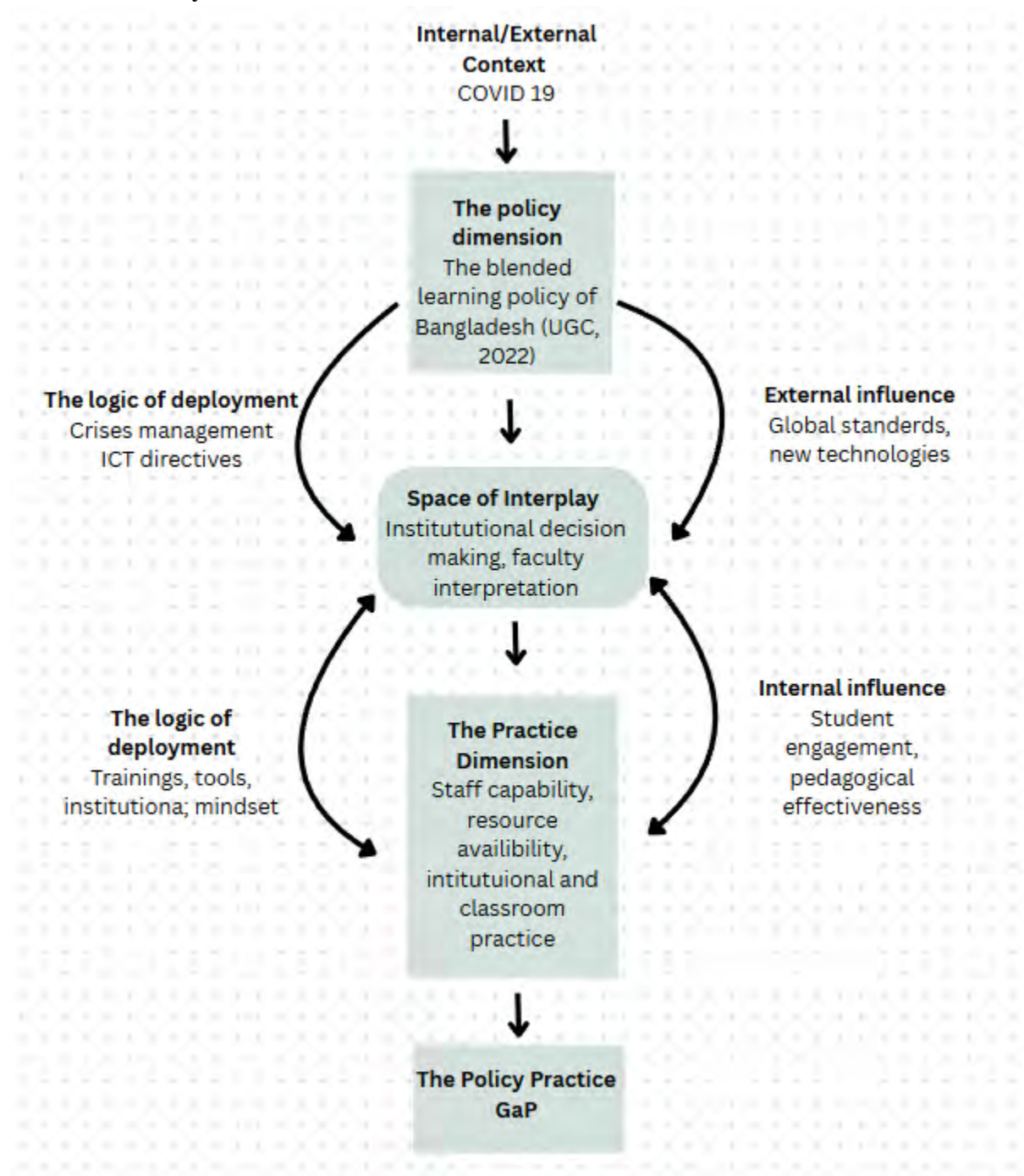
- **Barrett's (2004)** interpretation of implementation failure due to contextual and systemic constraints
- **Matland's (1995)** ambiguity-conflict model for understanding inconsistent enactment of policy

- **Lipsky's (1980)** street-level bureaucracy, emphasizing discretionary decision-making by educators

By triangulating these theoretical and empirical components, the framework supports an in-depth analysis of where and why misalignments occur between policy design and classroom reality.

Figure 1: Visual Summary of Conceptual framework

Visual Summary:



2.7 Summary

While blended learning holds promise for enhancing primary education in Bangladesh, addressing the infrastructural, professional, and policy-practice challenges is essential.

Understanding and incorporating teachers' perspectives can provide valuable insights into developing effective implementation strategies that align with both national policies and classroom realities.

Chapter 3

Methodology

3.1 Overview

In this study, I adopted a qualitative research design to explore the policy-practice gap in the implementation of blended learning in public and private universities in Dhaka, Bangladesh. I chose a qualitative approach because it allows for an in-depth exploration of the experiences, perspectives, and challenges faced by teachers and students, offering valuable insights into the contextual and nuanced dimensions of blended learning (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Patton, 2002). I used a qualitative approach, focusing on the context of Dhaka to examine how national policies are translated into actual classroom practices and the obstacles that arise in the process (Yin, 2018).

3.2 Research Approach

Qualitative Approach. I used a qualitative methodology to gain rich, contextualized insights into the implementation of blended learning in universities located in Dhaka (Creswell & Poth, 2017). This approach aligned well with my objective of understanding the lived experiences and subjective interpretations of key stakeholders.

3.2.1 Rationale for Choosing Qualitative Approach A qualitative approach was selected for its strength in uncovering complex social processes and lived experiences. This methodology allowed for a deep exploration of how national policies on blended learning are interpreted and implemented by university faculty, and how these processes affect both teachers and students. Given the study's emphasis on meaning-making, context, and interpretation, qualitative methods were deemed appropriate (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Yin, 2018).

3.2.3 Research Site The study was conducted in Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh. Dhaka was chosen because it hosts a diverse range of public and private universities, making it an ideal location to compare institutional responses and variations in blended learning practices (Stake, 1995).

3.3 Participants and Sampling

3.3.1 Sample and Sampling Procedure A purposive sampling strategy was employed to identify participants directly engaged with or knowledgeable about blended learning implementation. This approach ensured that participants were selected based on their relevance to the research objectives and their ability to provide rich, experience-based insights (Cohen et al., 2018).

Participants:

- 8 University Teachers: I conducted interviews with five teachers from private universities and three from public universities. I selected them because of their active involvement in blended learning implementation and their informed perspectives on policy-related challenges.
- 5 Students: I carried out structured interviews with five students from both public and private institutions. Their insights helped me understand how blended learning impacts learners in terms of engagement, accessibility, and learning outcomes.

Table 1: Sample and Sample size

Participant Type	Public Universities	Private Universities	Total
University Teachers	3 (University of Dhaka, Sher-E-Bangla Agricultural University)	5 (North South University, BRAC University, East West University, Asian University)	8
University Students	2 (University of Dhaka)	3 (North South University, BRAC University, Independent University Bangladesh)	5

3.4 Data Collection Methods

3.4.1 In-depth Interviews:

I conducted Faculty One-on-one interviews either in person or virtually with university faculty members who were actively involved in blended learning implementation. These interviews allowed participants to share their experiences, interpretations, and perspectives based on real classroom practices. This approach enabled the collection of rich, qualitative data shaped by the participants' lived experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

A total of eight university teachers participated—five from private universities and three from public universities. An interview guide was developed in two parts. Part A gathered demographic

information including age, gender, academic qualifications, years of teaching experience, and training in blended learning. Part B contained 15 open-ended questions organized around three key areas: (i) Teachers' perceptions of blended learning (e.g., How do you define blended learning? What does it mean in your institutional context?) (ii) Practices and strategies in implementing blended learning (e.g., What digital tools do you use in your classroom? Can you describe how you blend online and offline methods?) (iii) Opportunities and challenges in implementing blended learning (e.g., What kind of institutional support do you receive? What barriers do you face?)

Probing questions such as "Can you give an example?" or "Can you explain that further?" were used to gain deeper insights. Each interview lasted approximately 45–60 minutes and was recorded with participant consent.

3.4.2 Structured Interviews:

I conducted structured interviews with five students from both public and private universities. The goal was to gather consistent, comparable responses about their experiences with blended learning. These interviews followed a predefined guide consisting of both closed and open-ended questions (Joher, 2022).

The student interview guide focused on three core areas: (i) Access to digital resources (e.g., What devices do you use for blended classes? Do you face any connectivity issues?), (ii) Engagement with blended courses (e.g., Are you more engaged in online or in-person sessions?), and (iii) Perceived learning outcomes and challenges (e.g., What do you find difficult about blended learning? How do you cope with those difficulties?).

Each structured interview lasted around 30–45 minutes and was recorded with verbal or written consent. The consistency in structure ensures comparability while still allowing space for participant reflections.

3.4.3 Data Collection Procedure

I conducted all interviews through digital platforms, based on participant availability and preference. Faculty interviews lasted approximately 45–60 minutes, while student interviews lasted 30–45 minutes. All interviews were audio-recorded with participant consent, then transcribed and anonymized for analysis.

3.5 Data Analysis

Data analysis in this study followed the six phases of thematic analysis outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). I chose this approach to derive meaningful themes grounded in participant experiences. I conducted the analysis manually through color coding of printed transcripts.

1. Familiarizing with the data: To immerse in the data I read and re-read all interview transcripts. I also listened to the recordings repeatedly to understand the tone, emphasis, and implicit meanings. In the margins of transcripts I took initial notes.
2. Generating initial codes: I colour-coded meaningful segments of data on hard copies of transcripts. These codes were related to the research questions. For example:

Table 2: Interview Extract and Initial codes

Interview Extract	Initial Codes
“In the context of blended learning, we still face several limitations from our institution. For instance, when I attend online classes, frequent power outages or unstable internet connections often prevent me from participating fully or commenting in real-time.” (KIHS_AUB)	Connectivity issues, Institutional constraint
“Another interesting thing was the class attendance. In offline classes, the attendance never reaches up to 100%. However, in online classes, we used to see that everyone was present. But as we never had the same control over our classes as the offline ones to ensure everyone’s engagement and focus, we were not able to measure the student participation properly. So, the attendance was good, but the class performance was questionable.” (NA_NSU)	Student attendance, Student engagement
“I am not familiar with the policy at all. I have only followed the directives of my university regarding this matter.” (SI_NSU)	Policy familiarity, Institutional directions
“To be very honest, so far I have gone through the blended learning policy, I did not find it to be that much enough and detailed for having such a kind of shift in our education system.” (NC_BRACU)	Benefits of policy
“Blended learning allows flexibility, better documentation, and ongoing communication.” (SL_DU)	Pedagogical effectiveness

“I would also find great value in professional training on adaptive teaching strategies—especially on how to improvise in the classroom. Teaching is dynamic, and with evolving content and student needs, the ability to respond creatively and effectively in real time is critical. Unfortunately, we’ve never been trained in that. We’ve mostly learned by doing—without guidance, without structured feedback.” (SL_DU)

Need for professional development, Institutional constraints

“If we had our own LMS—one not dependent on Google—it would be far more efficient and tailored to our needs. Google Classroom does not offer integrated administrative tools, and we often have to rely on multiple workarounds to manage teaching and communication.” (MMA_SEBAU)

Infrastructural constraints

3. Searching for sub-themes: I grouped the codes into broader sub-themes. For instance:

Table 3: Codes and Sub-Themes

Codes	Sub-Themes
Connectivity issues, Institutional constraint, Infrastructural constraint	Technological limitations
Policy familiarity, Benefits of policy, Institutional directions	Partial familiarity or total unfamiliarity of policy and information
Need for professional development training	Lack of training and support
Student engagement, Student attendance, Pedagogical effectiveness	Distraction and low motivation

4. Reviewing sub-themes: I reviewed each sub-theme by mapping it against the full data set to ensure internal consistency and distinctiveness. Sub-themes were refined or merged based on coherence with participant narratives.
5. Defining and naming themes: I consolidated sub-themes into major themes such as “Infrastructure and Access Disparities,” “Awareness and interpretation of policy,” and

“Student Engagement Issues.” Each theme was precisely defined and aligned with research objectives. For example:

Table 4: Sub-Themes and Corresponding Themes

Sub-Themes	Themes
Technological limitations	Infrastructure and Access Disparities
Partial familiarity or total unfamiliarity of policy and information	Awareness and Interpretation of Policy
Lack of training and support	Pedagogical and Logistical Barriers
Distraction and low motivation	Student Engagement Issues

6. Producing the write-up: I elaborated the themes and their supporting evidence in the results and discussion chapters with participant quotes.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

I followed standard ethical procedures throughout the research process. I secured ethical approval from the appropriate university review board. I obtained informed consent from all participants, assured them of confidentiality, and reminded them of their right to withdraw at any time. All data were anonymized, and recordings and transcripts were securely stored (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

3.7 Limitations

- My research was geographically limited to Dhaka, so the results may not be generalizable to other regions in Bangladesh.
- I could not include government policymakers in the study, as they did not agree to be a part of this study despite my continuous effort to include them.

- I was unable to conduct focus group discussions due to participant availability issues.
- As a qualitative study, my findings are not intended for statistical generalization but rather for deep contextual understanding (Yin, 2018).

3.8 Trustworthiness and Rigor

I took several measures to ensure the trustworthiness of this qualitative study. My focus was on establishing reliability, validity, and ethical rigor throughout the research process, drawing on strategies outlined by Merriam and Grennier (2019). These included data triangulation, peer review, member checking, and maintaining an audit trail.

Triangulation: I collected data from multiple sources—teachers, students, and institutional settings—and used both in-depth and structured interviews. This helped me to develop a fuller and more nuanced understanding of how blended learning is implemented and experienced by different stakeholders.

Peer Review: I regularly discussed my research methods, tools, and initial findings with a colleague who works in educational development. These discussions helped me to critically assess whether my data collection methods aligned well with my research questions. My supervisor also provided feedback at key stages of the research, which was instrumental in refining my approach.

Member Checking: To make sure participants' voices were accurately represented, I shared selected interview summaries with a few faculty members who had participated in the study. Their feedback allowed me to adjust interpretations where necessary and confirmed that I had not misrepresented their views.

Audit Trail: I kept a thorough record of each step in my research journey—from conducting the literature review and designing interview tools, to carrying out the interviews and analyzing the data. Before finalizing the tools, I piloted one interview and made revisions based on that experience. After data collection, I manually coded the transcripts and developed themes step by step. Finally, I revisited my findings in light of existing literature to explore areas of convergence and divergence.

Through these strategies, I aimed to ensure that my research process was as transparent, ethical, and rigorous as possible.

Chapter 4

Results

4.1 Overview

In this chapter I have presented the findings of the study based on the interview transcripts of eight faculty members from both public and private universities in Dhaka, as well as responses from five student participants. I have organized the analysis according to the four primary research questions and framed around key themes and subthemes extracted through thematic analysis. Policy-practice gaps have been interpreted with reference to the UGC's 2022 Blended Learning Policy (University Grants Commission [UGC], 2022).

4.2 Thematic Analysis

Through a careful and repeated process of coding the interview and survey data, I identified eight main themes and sixteen subthemes. These themes closely reflect the concerns and insights shared by participants and are directly linked to the research questions guiding the study. In the next section, I present each theme and its related subthemes, along with examples from the data and a discussion of the corresponding gaps between policy and practice.

Figure 2: Theme Map

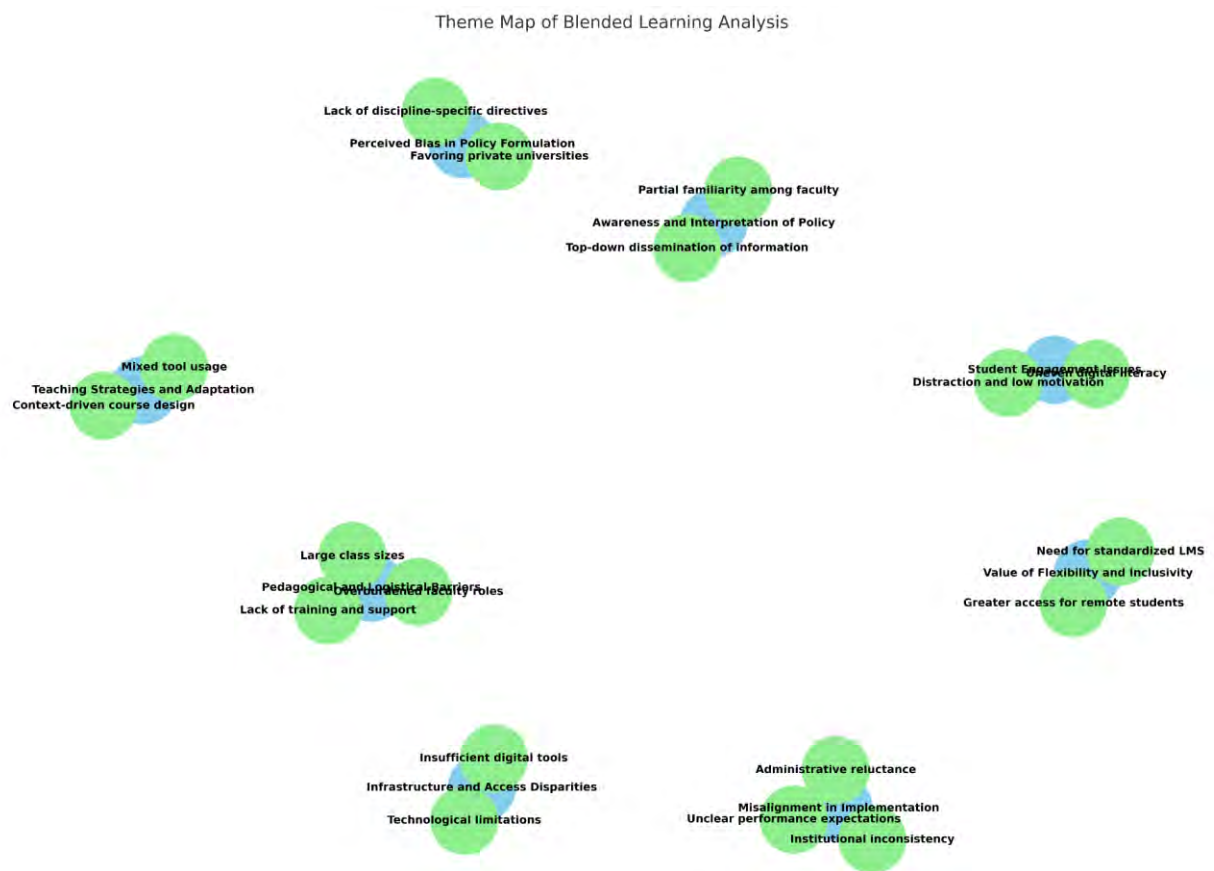
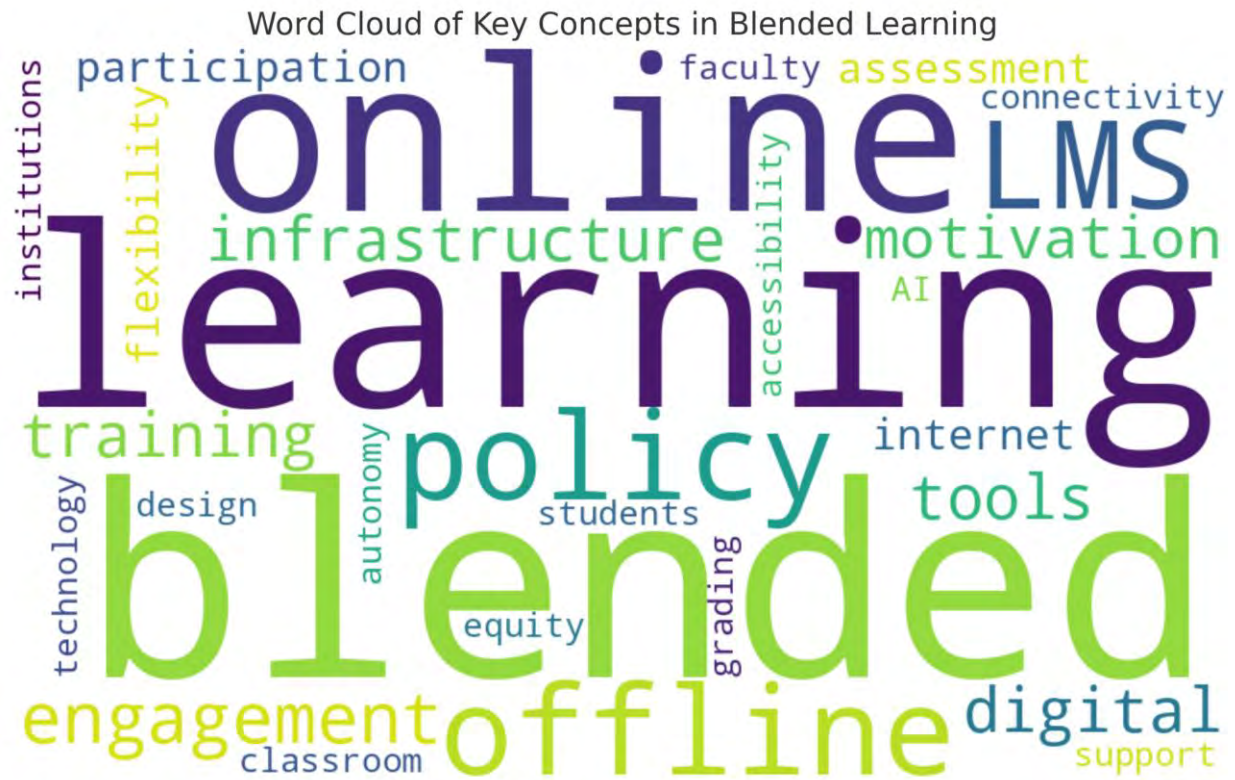


Figure 3: Word Cloud of Key Concepts



Theme 1 Awareness and Interpretation of Policy

Subthemes

- **Partial familiarity among faculty** Some faculty members (e.g., NC_BRACU, NA_NSU) reported receiving fragmented or incomplete information about the policy directives.

One of the teachers said, “The tertiary level blended learning policy you are talking about, we were informed about some parts of it, from time to time. The university authority didn’t inform us about the whole thing at once. They had let us know about some parts of it, whenever we needed through email. I can say with certainty that whenever UGC told us to follow something, we did it thoroughly.”

Another one said, “Not in detail, but we somewhat have to work with the curriculum and we have to work with the UGC. So, definitely, I have some ideas but I found it not detailed enough to help the full fledged blended learning opportunity in Bangladesh.”

- **Top-down dissemination of information** Most participants learned about the policy through administrative memos or occasional emails, without structured briefings or

orientation.

- **Total unfamiliarity of information** Three participants stated they were unaware of the policy's existence altogether, despite already practicing blended learning in their classrooms.

One teacher said, *"There is a policy? I didn't know that. I haven't come across any formal documentation or guidelines. It hasn't been something our department has introduced or discussed in detail either."*

Another one said, *"I am not familiar with the policy at all. I have only followed the directives of my university regarding this matter. If they have followed the guidelines from UGC before instructing us how to deal with this, then I guess I have followed the policy without even knowing it."*

Policy-Practice Gap

Although Section 7.1 (Readiness of Universities) of the policy emphasizes that institutions must be organizationally prepared to implement blended learning—requiring administrative systems that support such initiatives—participants' responses reveal a lack of structured communication. Faculty members were often left without clear guidance or formal orientation on the policy, suggesting a disconnect between institutional responsibility and actual practice (UGC, 2022, p. 7).

Theme 2 Perceived Bias in Policy Formulation

Subthemes

- **Favoring private universities** MMA_SEBAU criticized the policy for facilitating private-sector interests. This participant said, *"This policy is a farce too. It was made to benefit the private universities during the COVID time. From my experience teaching at and observing public universities, there appears to be significantly less institutional interest in blended learning compared to private institutions. Private universities have adopted it more readily—largely because they rely heavily on part-time faculty. These part-time instructors usually teach online classes in the evening. So, it was made for their benefits, so that they can earn more from online courses, where the students can buy degrees with their money, not earning it with merits. Also, in many private universities, there is a tendency—among some faculty members and administrators—to view education as a commercial opportunity. This often leads to the creation of a 'landing line' or income-generating mechanism, sometimes through specific subjects or programs. This becomes the first and most critical issue—where the commercialization of education*

overshadows its academic integrity and foundational purpose. This policy only helps such things to accelerate.”

- **Lack of discipline-specific directives** Teachers in applied fields (e.g., architecture, agriculture) felt underrepresented.

One teacher who teaches architecture said, “I would like to answer this question from the perspective of my own subject. The core courses we run from the first years to fifth years, the students have to give a lot of presentations. Whenever we have to teach students about any case study, we take help from presentations too. Here, scale plays a great role. Mostly for practical classes, we take our students out to practical fields, so that we can make them realize the original scale of architectural structures. So, for online classes, we have to show these in a digital form with the help of PPT slides. So, to make them understand the scale becomes a bit challenging. Sometimes, the students fail to compare these scales in real life and that makes things very difficult for us. However, for the theory courses I have found that online classes and offline classes mostly play the same role. But for practical classes, this is not that much of a helpful pedagogical approach.”

Policy-Practice Gap

While Sections 7.2 (Adopting appropriate pedagogy) and 7.5 (Content selection and assessment strategy) of the UGC policy emphasize the importance of tailoring curriculum and content to fit specific program needs and discipline contexts, participants—particularly from applied fields such as architecture and agriculture—perceived the policy as lacking concrete, discipline-sensitive implementation. Despite the policy’s stated intent for curriculum flexibility and course-specific adaptation, the actual roll-out appeared overly generalized, failing to reflect the pedagogical complexities of practice-oriented fields (UGC, 2022, pp. 7–9).

Theme 3 Infrastructure and Access Disparities

Subthemes

- **Technological limitations** Unstable internet and minimal tech tools were frequently reported. One teacher stated, *“In the context of blended learning, we still face several limitations. For instance, when I attend online classes, frequent power outages or unstable internet connections often prevent me from participating fully or commenting in real-time. Currently, I’m using my university’s account for accessing digital resources, but due to technical issues like lack of printer access, limited physical setup, or lack of preparation time, I’m unable to utilize all available features.”*

- **Insufficient digital tools** Public universities relied on platforms like Google Classroom without robust features.

One teacher who have been teaching in a prominent public university for 24 years expressed her frustration by saying, *“The learning management system we currently use is Google Classroom. While it serves its purpose to some extent, it lacks many features that a dedicated institutional platform could offer. If we had our own LMS—one not dependent on Google—it would be far more efficient and tailored to our needs. Google Classroom does not offer integrated administrative tools, and we often have to rely on multiple workarounds to manage teaching and communication. Additionally, one of the most frustrating limitations we face is the absence of an automated system for submitting grades. As of now, we still have to record grades manually on paper, submit physical copies, and then process them through tabulation sheets using Excel or similar programs. There is no centralized digital platform for uploading and managing grades, which makes the entire process unnecessarily tedious and inefficient.”*

Policy-Practice Gap

Although Section 7.3 (Technological support) of the UGC policy mandates that universities ensure technological infrastructure, seamless internet access, and platform support for both faculty and students, participants described persistent deficits—particularly in public institutions. Reports of unstable connectivity, limited LMS functionality, and inadequate digital tools suggest that infrastructure-readiness expectations have not translated into practical, equitable access on the ground (UGC, 2022, pp. 8–9).

Theme 4 Misalignment in Implementation

Subthemes

- *Institutional inconsistency:* Faculties only implement blended modes during crises. One teacher from a public university stated, *“We had to do it in the COVID time; now we don’t do it anymore. Although the term “blended learning” is used, most of the classes were conducted online, with only a few held face-to-face. This model was primarily introduced right after the COVID-19 pandemic. After that, we realised it didn’t work for us. So, in our university, we did not formally adopt blended learning as a long-term strategy. Rather, online classes were conducted out of necessity, in response to an emergency context during the pandemic.”*

Another teacher from a private university stated, *“To be honest I am not practicing blended learning in my classroom right now, not particularly at the moment, because I feel my institution does not encourage taking classes online. If I have to miss a class, I usually have to schedule a makeup session that takes place offline. So, I don't really have a lot of opportunities to introduce or maintain blended learning in my current educational institution. But I did use this modality in my previous institution, Daffodil University during the COVID time.”*

- **Unclear performance expectations** Engagement was difficult to evaluate. A teacher from a public university said, *“In the early days of the pandemic, when we were all still adjusting, I remember hosting Facebook Live sessions with students—not necessarily for teaching, but to help them feel less isolated and more connected. Many of them were stuck in different parts of the country and felt emotionally detached. These sessions served more as informal check-ins rather than formal instruction. We also created Facebook groups for each class to maintain a sense of community. Later, we transitioned to platforms like Zoom. While it allowed for more structured classes, poor internet connectivity and bandwidth issues significantly impacted teaching and learning. Students were frequently disconnected, and the quality of interaction suffered. That’s when I started incorporating PowerPoint presentations—not just to organize content, but also to hold their attention. Speaking into a tiny camera box without visual feedback from students made it difficult to stay engaging, so the slides helped add structure and focus. To keep students engaged, I occasionally gave small tasks during class to ensure they were not distracted or multitasking. However, engagement was still a challenge. Students often joined late or explained they had no way of knowing what was going on. I vividly remember one student who had to attend class outside, near a corner of her home where she could barely access the internet. The environment was beyond our control—people passing by, noise, distractions—and that impacted both their attention and my ability to assess engagement effectively.”*

Another teacher from a private university said, *“Blended learning typically offers clear insights into student outcomes. However, personally, I didn’t experience significant advantages. One key issue was the limited peer interaction. Another challenge was cognitive overload—I sometimes felt mentally overwhelmed due to having to process multiple types of content simultaneously, while also struggling with time constraints and fragmented attention from students.”*

- **Administrative reluctance** Resistance due to large class sizes and inequality in student access.

Policy-Practice Gap

Although Section 7.1 (Readiness of universities) outlines that institutions must revise rules, ensure administrative readiness, and sustain blended learning beyond emergencies, participants reported that implementation remained ad hoc—triggered primarily by crises like COVID-19. Additionally, Section 5 (Benefits and challenges of blended learning) highlights the importance of flexibility in delivery, yet rigid administrative policies, large class sizes, and unequal student access continue to hinder consistent adoption (UGC, 2022, pp. 3-7).

Theme 5 Pedagogical and Logistical Barriers

Subthemes

- **Lack of training and support** A majority expressed lack of exposure to blended pedagogy. A teacher from a private university said, *“To be very honest, I always personally feel that it would be great if I could have different kinds of training on technologies. Not only that, if I get the opportunity to train myself in different kinds of assessments, (that would be very helpful). Because whatever I’m doing in my blended learning teaching, I’m doing it by myself. I’m learning by doing. It would be really helpful for me to have the opportunity to have training where I can have the opportunity to learn, to make interactive powerpoint slides, to know about using different kinds of platforms, to have interesting and interactive activities in the class. If I get the opportunity to learn how to get the attendance in the class in a very different way, that would be really really helpful. So I feel like in terms of technology, all the teachers lack the expertise. Whatever the teachers are currently doing, we are all doing it by ourselves. We are doing research to build our capacity by ourselves. It would be really helpful if we could have the training on technology and how to use it and assessments as well.”*

A teacher from a public university said, *“In terms of professional development that would genuinely support my teaching today, particularly in integrating blended learning methods, I would appreciate training in areas such as data analysis tools and education technology platforms. Since I teach research methodology, which involves substantial data handling, having software-based training would be extremely valuable. Demonstrating these methods live in class is difficult, especially without access to computers for every student. A computer lab model would be ideal, but such infrastructural investment feels out of reach at the moment. I would also find great value in professional training on adaptive teaching strategies—especially on how to improvise in the classroom. Teaching is dynamic, and with evolving content and student needs, the ability to respond creatively and effectively in real time is critical. Unfortunately, we’ve never been trained in that. We’ve mostly learned by doing—without guidance, without structured feedback.”*

- **Overburdened faculty roles** SL_DU and MMA_SEBAU (public universities) noted manual grading and no support staff. One of them said, *“Moreover, we do not have teaching assistants to help with grading, so everything—from preparing questions to marking scripts—falls entirely on the faculty. This often becomes physically and mentally exhausting. If we had an institutional system in place to automate and streamline grade submission, it would truly be life-changing. This is a longstanding need, and it continues to be a major source of frustration for us.”*
- **Large class sizes** Some had to manage over 200 students in a single session.

Policy-Practice Gap

Section 7.2 (Adopting Appropriate Pedagogy) stresses that faculty should undergo experience-sharing sessions and receive adequate institutional support for teaching in blended environments. It also calls for redesigning teaching strategies to accommodate student diversity. However, findings from this study indicate that most faculty had limited or no exposure to blended pedagogical training and lacked institutional support, such as teaching assistants or reduced teaching loads—revealing a clear gap between policy recommendation and implementation (UGC, 2022, p. 7).

Theme 6 Student Engagement Issues

Subthemes

- **Distraction and low motivation** Students reported poor concentration in remote settings. One student said, *“I feel less motivated in blended learning classes because I cannot see any one in-person which fails to provide a classroom environment.”* Another one said, *“It hardly gets my full concentration, I am easily distracted with the components of my environment.”*
- **Uneven digital literacy** Student capabilities with online tools varied widely. One teacher from a private university stated, *“We often attempt to include online quizzes and activities, but syncing these with offline class schedules is difficult. For example, attendance check-ins within ten seconds, or unexpected assignment deadlines, can become a major challenge for students. Many are unable to submit on time, and some who do often face technical or comprehension issues.”*

Policy-Practice Gap

Section 7.2 (Adopting Appropriate Pedagogy) emphasizes the importance of tailoring learning environments to accommodate diverse student needs—including physical challenges, cultural differences, and socioeconomic barriers—and encourages collaborative strategies for better engagement (UGC, 2022, p. 7). However, the findings reveal that practical mechanisms for ensuring sustained student engagement—particularly in terms of digital readiness and motivational support—remain largely underdeveloped and inconsistently applied across institutions.

Theme 7 Teaching Strategies and Adaptation

Subthemes

- **Context-driven course design** Most teachers used online for theory and in-person for practice-based courses.
- **Mixed tool usage** Platforms like Padlet, Mentimeter, and Canvas were used inconsistently.

Policy-Practice Gap

Section 7.4 (Ensuring Effective Design and Support) underscores the need for clear content and site design, intuitive navigation, and LMS support tailored to user experience (UGC, 2022, p. 9). Despite this, the absence of standardized LMS frameworks across institutions has resulted in fragmented implementation, with inconsistent platform use and limited institutional guidance on effective integration of blended tools into course delivery.

Theme 8 Value of Flexibility and Inclusivity

Subthemes

- **Greater access for remote students** Particularly for working professionals and international students. One teacher from a private university said, *“If I think about the positive sides of it, students are definitely getting benefits from this opportunity. Because, 70% online classes are helping them to accommodate their time while coming back from their office. I’m taking the masters classes. So, it’s really helpful for the students to do their classes from Cox’s Bazar or Chittagong or any other places. My students belong to international areas as well. For example, I have students from Afghanistan and Syria; so it’s a great opportunity for them to pursue their degrees and try to achieve the knowledge as well from this online modality.”*

- **Need for standardized LMS** Many called for a single platform to manage assessments, content, and attendance.

Policy-Practice Gap

Section 7.7 of the UGC policy calls for ensuring equal opportunity in access to technology and promoting inclusive learning environments, particularly by addressing digital divides and supporting students with special needs (UGC, 2022, p. 12). However, participant feedback revealed fragmented LMS systems and inconsistent digital infrastructure, resulting in disparities that hinder the inclusive and flexible learning experience envisioned by the policy.

Policy Directive	Observed Practice	Gap
Institutions must ensure clear communication of blended learning policies to faculty (Policy Sections 7.1.i, 7.4)	Faculty reported fragmented or no communication about the policy; awareness was inconsistent across institutions.	Communication practices did not reflect policy expectations for clarity and consistency.
Institutions should allow discipline-specific customization in pedagogical approaches (Policy Section 7.2.i)	Teachers in applied fields felt the policy lacked specific guidance for their disciplines and was overly generic.	Although policy allows flexibility, implementation did not reflect discipline-specific pedagogical needs.
Institutions must develop technological infrastructure for blended learning (Policy Section 7.1.ii)	Public universities lacked stable internet and robust platforms; many used basic tools like Google	Substantial gaps in infrastructure contradict the policy's readiness requirement.
Blended learning requires flexible delivery methods and administrative support (Policy Section 7.2.i)	Blended learning was used only during emergencies; large class sizes and inequality limited adoption.	Institutional policies remained rigid, contradicting the flexible approach encouraged by the policy.
Institutions should ensure faculty training and workload support (Policy Sections 7.2.i, 7.1.iii)	Most teachers lacked training; faculty were overburdened with manual work and lacked support staff.	Faculty development and logistical support provisions were not adequately implemented.
Blended learning should foster student engagement through inclusive strategies (Policy Section 7.7.i)	Students struggled with motivation and digital literacy in online settings.	The policy emphasizes inclusivity, but lacks actionable strategies for fostering student engagement.
The policy emphasizes inclusivity, but lacks actionable strategies for fostering student engagement.	Teachers applied theory online and practiced offline but lacked standardized LMS support.	Absence of institutional LMS standards undermines adaptability in blended teaching.

Ensure inclusivity and equal access in blended learning with centralized technological systems (Policy Sections 7.1.ii, 7.7.ii)	Remote students benefited from flexibility, but institutional support for inclusivity and LMS standardization was inconsistent.	Inclusivity goals were stated, but not matched by robust implementation mechanisms and infrastructure.
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4.3 Summary of Policy–Practice Gaps

Table 5: Themes, Policy Sections, and Gap Analysis

Themes	Policy Sections	Gap Summary
Awareness and Interpretation of Policy	Section 7.1 (p. 11)	The policy requires universities to align institutional rules and communication with UGC guidelines. However, faculty responses show fragmented or absent policy awareness.
Perceived Bias in Policy Formulation	Section 7.2 (p. 11)	The policy supports context-sensitive pedagogy, but lacks clarity or application to field-specific needs such as architecture or agriculture.
Infrastructure and Access Disparities	Section 7.1.ii & 7.3.i (p. 11–12)	Infrastructure support is emphasized, yet many public universities face insufficient tools and unstable internet.
Misalignment in Implementation	Section 7.6.i–iii (p. 12)	The policy recommends structured management and reporting, but participants reported reactive implementation and administrative hesitation.
Pedagogical and Logistical Barriers	Section 7.2.i & 7.3.iii (p. 11–12)	Though faculty support and training are prescribed, lack of structured development and staff support persists.

Student Engagement Issues	Section 7.7.i–ii (p. 12)	While the policy emphasizes equity and flexibility in access, engagement strategies for varied digital literacy remain unclear.
Teaching Strategies and Adaptation	Section 7.2.ii–iii & 7.4 (p. 11)	The policy supports innovation, but teachers report inconsistent LMS tools and absence of standard practices.
Value of Flexibility and Inclusivity	Section 7.1 & 7.7 (p. 11–12)	Inclusivity and equal access are emphasized, yet disparities in LMS standardization and infrastructure remain.

Chapter 5

Discussion

This chapter takes a closer look at the findings shared in Chapter 4, placing them in conversation with the existing literature and the broader landscape of blended learning in higher education. The discussion is organized around the study's four research questions and highlights key contradictions, points of alignment, and implications for policy and practice in Bangladesh's tertiary education sector.

5.1 Understanding of National Policies Regarding Blended Learning

The study reveals a patchy understanding of the UGC's blended learning policy among faculty members, with awareness levels varying significantly from one institution to another. This mirrors Rahman and Akter's (2021) observation that policies rolled out from the top often fail to engage educators in meaningful ways. While a few participants mentioned some familiarity with the guidelines, many admitted to relying solely on their university's instructions—pointing to a clear communication gap. This concern connects directly to Section 5.3 of the UGC policy, which emphasizes the need for clear and consistent dissemination of strategic directives.

Interestingly, some faculty from public institutions felt the policy leaned in favor of private universities, a sentiment that echoes Rahman's (2022) critique of how commercialization influences higher education reform. Participants also pointed out that the policy doesn't speak directly to the unique needs of practice-heavy disciplines like architecture or the social sciences—an omission that has been flagged in other regional studies as well (Islam et al., 2022).

5.2 Gaps Between Policies and Practices

One of the most noticeable contradictions emerging from this study lies in the difference between the policy's stated commitment to equitable digital infrastructure (UGC, 2022, Section 6.1.2) and the real-life barriers many institutions continue to face. Limited internet access, unreliable platforms, and uneven device availability remain common problems, especially in public universities. These challenges are not unique to Bangladesh—global studies, including OECD (2021), have similarly pointed to infrastructure as a critical barrier in the Global South.

The study also found that many universities still operate within rigid structures, despite the policy's call for more flexible, student-centered learning environments (UGC, 2022, Section 4.2). Faculty members often described institutional resistance to change—largely tied to concerns about resource constraints—which makes the shift toward blended learning more difficult. These dynamics reflect broader patterns across South Asia, as noted by Bali and Sharma (2021), where the implementation of innovative models is often slowed by traditional administrative cultures.

5.3 Challenges in Implementing Blended Learning

Pedagogical and logistical hurdles continue to stand in the way of successful blended learning implementation. Faculty, especially those in public universities, reported being overwhelmed with responsibilities—from grading and advising to administrative duties—with little to no institutional support. This aligns with the findings of Sarker and Hossain (2021), who also highlighted the heavy workload of university instructors.

A particularly pressing issue was class size. Managing large cohorts—often over 200 students—was cited as a major obstacle, particularly in maintaining student engagement and providing personalized support. This concern is not new; Alam and Moniruzzaman (2020) have similarly noted how high student-teacher ratios limit the effectiveness of blended teaching approaches.

On the student side, feedback was mixed. Some appreciated the added flexibility that came with online components, while others struggled with technical issues, focus, and motivation. These challenges echo the findings of Tadesse and Muluye (2020), who observed similar problems with student engagement in digitally mediated learning environments, especially where socio-technical barriers are present.

5.4 Faculty Practices in Blended Learning

Despite the hurdles, many faculty members demonstrated adaptability by tailoring their teaching modes to fit course content. Theoretical courses were more commonly taught online, while practical or hands-on classes were kept in person. This adaptive strategy is in line with the recommendations of Bonk and Graham (2012), who argue for modality-specific instructional design.

Some instructors also tried out tools like Padlet, Google Classroom, Mentimeter, and Canvas. However, the level of usage and success varied from one institution to another. One of the recurring frustrations was the absence of a unified, institution-specific learning management system (LMS). Even though the UGC policy (Section 6.2.1) supports the use of digital platforms, the lack of standardized systems continues to complicate the teaching process. These gaps highlight the need for a dual approach: providing both top-down infrastructure investment and bottom-up professional development.

Faculty also saw potential in blended learning to make education more inclusive—particularly for working students and those studying from abroad. But the consensus was clear: unless core challenges around infrastructure, training, and policy clarity are addressed, these benefits will be difficult to sustain in the long run.

5.5 Synthesis and Implications

This research adds to the growing understanding that blended learning, while promising, faces deep-rooted structural challenges in Bangladesh. Faculty and students are not resistant to the model itself—in fact, many are open to it—but their day-to-day experiences are shaped by how ready their institutions are, what kind of resources they have, and how clearly policies are communicated and applied.

To truly close the gap between what's written in policy and what happens in practice, universities need to reframe blended learning as a long-term shift in pedagogy—not just a temporary response to crisis. Moving forward, it will be essential for policy revisions to take a more participatory approach—bringing faculty into the conversation, providing targeted training that speaks to real classroom needs, and ensuring that every institution has the infrastructure it needs to succeed.

Chapter 6

Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1 Conclusion

This study set out to explore the gap between policy and practice in how blended learning is being implemented across public and private universities in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Through a qualitative case study approach, I looked at how faculty members and students perceive and navigate blended learning in the context of national guidelines issued by the University Grants Commission (UGC).

What emerged from the research was a layered and often conflicting picture. On one hand, participants recognized the potential of blended learning to offer greater flexibility, improve access to education, and support a more inclusive academic environment. On the other hand, they also pointed to several challenges—ranging from poor infrastructure and vague policy guidelines to institutional inertia and inconsistent support systems—that made actual implementation difficult.

One of the most noticeable findings was the disconnect between what the UGC policy advocates and what's actually happening in universities. While the policy calls for better digital infrastructure, flexible teaching approaches, and support for faculty development, many teachers admitted they hadn't even seen the policy. Others said they received little to no institutional guidance to help them apply it in meaningful ways. This gap is even more apparent in hands-on disciplines like architecture and the social sciences, where the lack of field-specific guidelines leaves educators without a clear path forward.

Students, too, had mixed experiences. Some appreciated the ease and flexibility of online classes, but many others struggled to stay focused, motivated, or even connected due to internet issues. Faculty members shared similar stories—many of them had taken matters into their own hands by moving theoretical content online while keeping practical sessions in person, tailoring their approach as best they could to fit the circumstances.

Yet, despite all these challenges, one hopeful thread ran through nearly every conversation: a willingness to embrace blended learning—if the right support is in place. Both faculty and students seemed open to the model and recognized its value, but they also made it clear that without addressing the deeper systemic and institutional hurdles, blended learning can't reach its full potential. In the end, it's not the intention behind the policy that's in question—it's how well it's being carried out and supported on the ground.

6.2 Recommendations

Based on the study findings, I propose the following actionable recommendations to bridge the gap between blended learning policy and practice in the Bangladeshi higher education context:

6.2.1 Improve Infrastructure and Access

- Allocate targeted funding to public universities for stable internet, LMS platforms, and digital classroom tools.
- Partner with telecom companies to provide subsidized or free mobile data for students and faculty accessing online education.

6.2.2 Expand and Localize Faculty Training

- Offer discipline-specific training modules for faculty, especially for practice-based fields.
- Promote peer-learning communities within universities to share blended learning strategies and tools.
- Integrate digital pedagogy courses into faculty development programs.

6.2.3 Strengthen Policy Awareness and Communication

- Ensure that UGC policy guidelines are actively shared through workshops, faculty orientation programs, and departmental briefings.
- Translate policies into concise, accessible formats with implementation checklists.

6.2.4 Standardize Digital Tools and Assessment Methods

- Encourage universities to adopt a centralized LMS with features for grading, attendance, and interactive content.
- Develop guidelines for AI-integrated assessments, protecting academic integrity while embracing innovation.

6.2.5 Foster Inclusive and Student-Centered Practices

- Develop support services such as online academic counseling, technical help desks, and digital learning workshops.
- Gather regular feedback from students on blended learning experiences to refine practices.

6.2.6 Institutionalize Blended Learning

- Move beyond crisis-driven adoption and embed blended learning into long-term academic planning.
- Revise university strategic plans and course outlines to reflect hybrid delivery models.

6.3 Final Thoughts

Blended learning in Bangladesh stands at a pivotal juncture. As universities navigate post-pandemic realities, there is an urgent need to institutionalize flexible and inclusive teaching models. Policies alone are not enough—they must be translated into actionable practices, supported by infrastructure, training, and community-driven innovation.

I hope that this research will contribute to a deeper understanding of blended learning challenges and inspire constructive dialogue among policymakers, educators, and institutional leaders. With collaborative effort, blended learning can evolve from a reactive necessity into a transformative opportunity for the future of higher education in Bangladesh.

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Appendices

A. Consent Letter for participants

Date:

Dear Participant,

I am writing to invite you to participate in a research study titled *“Addressing the Policy-Practice Gap in Blended Learning: Challenges and Perspectives of Public and Private University Faculties in Dhaka.”* This study is being conducted as part of my research at BRAC University under the supervision of Nazmin Sultana. The goal of this study is to explore the challenges and perspectives regarding the implementation of blended learning in higher education in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research is to understand the experiences of teachers, students, and government officials involved in blended learning and identify the barriers and challenges they face in its implementation.

What Participation Involves

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to take part in one or more of the following activities:

- An in-depth interview (20-30 minutes) Or
- A structured interview (10-15 minutes)

Confidentiality and Privacy

Your participation is completely voluntary, and all information you provide will be kept confidential. You will be assigned a unique code, and personal identifiers will be removed from the data. No personal information will be used in any report or publication resulting from this study. The data will be stored securely and only accessed by authorized researchers.

Risks and Benefits

There are no known risks associated with your participation in this study. Your participation will help improve understanding of blended learning implementation and could contribute to the development of better policies and practices in higher education in Bangladesh. However, there is no direct compensation for participation.

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any time without any negative consequences or loss of benefits. Should you decide to withdraw, your data will not be used, and you may do so without providing a reason.

Contact Information

If you have any questions or require further information, please feel free to contact me at senjuti.nadi@teachforbangladesh.org or 01823072759.

Consent

By signing below, you confirm that you have read and understood the above information, and that you agree to participate in this study voluntarily. You also acknowledge that you have had the opportunity to ask questions about the research, and you are free to withdraw at any time.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Senjuti Shonima Nadi
Thesis student
BRAC University

Participant's Signature:

[Participant's Name]
[Date]

Researcher's Signature:



B. Interview questions for University Teachers

1. Eligibility Questionnaire for Research Participation

Thank you for your interest in this study on blended learning implementation. Please answer the following questions to determine your eligibility.

1. Are you currently teaching at a public or private university in Dhaka? (Yes/No)
2. Do you have experience implementing blended learning in your courses? (Yes/No)
3. Have you been involved in any decision-making or policy discussions related to blended learning? (Yes/No)

1. IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS (For Teaching Staff)

Objective: To gather insights into the experiences, perceptions, and challenges of university faculty in implementing blended learning

Demographic Information:

- Name (Optional):
- Age:
- Gender:
- Academic discipline:
- Years of teaching experience:
- University (Public/Private):

Section A: General Perceptions and Understanding of Blended Learning

1. How would you define blended learning?
2. How long have you been implementing blended learning in your classroom?
3. How familiar are you with the national policies on blended learning in Bangladesh?
4. How does blended learning affect student engagement and learning outcomes?
5. How do you feel about blended learning as an effective pedagogical approach for your discipline?

Section B: Challenges in Implementing Blended Learning

6. How do you design blended learning courses? What are the main challenges you face in implementing blended learning in your courses? Can you share some examples?

7. Do you believe national policies on blended learning have been helpful in your teaching? Please state your reason behind your response.

8. In your opinion, what specific support or resources would help you implement blended learning more effectively?

Section C: Policy and Practice Alignment

9. What do you think about whether the policies on blended learning align with your daily teaching practices or not? Please elaborate.

Section D: Integration of Blended Learning

11. How do you currently integrate online learning tools into your courses? (e.g., LMS, video lectures, online assessments, discussion forums)

12. What types of professional development or training would help you improve your ability to integrate blended learning into your teaching?

C. Structured Interview Questions for University Students

Eligibility Questionnaire for Research Participation

Thank you for your interest in this study on blended learning implementation. Please answer the following questions to determine your eligibility.

1. Are you currently enrolled in a public or private university in Dhaka? (Yes/No)
2. Have you participated in courses that use a blended learning format (both online and in-person)? (Yes/No)
3. Do you have access to the necessary technology (e.g., internet, devices) for blended learning? (Yes/No)

Demographic Information:

1. Age: _____
2. Gender: _____
3. Year of study: _____
4. Program of study: _____
5. University type:
 - o Public
 - o Private

Section A: Experience and Perception of Blended Learning

1. How often do you engage with online learning components in your courses?
2. How would you rate the quality of blended learning in your courses?
3. How well do you think blended learning integrates with face-to-face instruction?
4. Are you satisfied with your overall experience in blended learning courses? Please state the reason for your response.

Section B: Challenges and Barriers

5. What are the main challenges you face when participating in blended learning?
6. How easy is it for you to access the online learning tools and resources provided for blended courses?
7. How much support do you feel you receive from your professors in blended learning courses?

Section C: Technology and Learning Outcomes

8. How confident are you in using the technology required for blended learning?
9. Do you feel that blended learning has improved your academic performance? Please state the reason behind your answer.

10. How do you feel about the balance between online and face-to-face learning in blended courses?

