



FACTORS LECTURERS MAINTAINING BLENDED LEARNING DURING THEIR TEACHING AND LEARNING: A CASE STUDY ON VOCATIONAL UNIVERSITIES

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Abstract

Abstract: The COVID-19 pandemic profoundly impacted teaching and learning, prompting a significant shift in methods and approaches. Post-pandemic education now integrates hybrid and online modalities, emphasizing digital literacy for lecturers and students. This research was to investigate the factors lecturers maintaining blended learning in their teaching and learning. It used qualitative research by using case study design. Data were collected by using semi-structured interview through the interview question. Content analysis was used to analyze the data. The research shows that there are some factors causing the lecturers maintaining blended learning during their teaching and learning such as increasing the use of digital learning software, having time flexibility, improving the personalized learning, and creating a comfort atmosphere in teaching and learning. by conducting this research, it is expected that the method and instrument could give the new strategy for other researchers to collect and analyze the data. Then from the research findings, it could give information for the other researchers about the causing factors for preserving the blended learning by the lecturers on their teaching and learning

Keywords:

Blended Learning, Teaching and Learning, Vocational Universities

A. INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic profoundly impacted teaching and learning, prompting a significant shift in methods and approaches. Post-pandemic education now integrates hybrid and online modalities, emphasizing digital literacy for lecturers and students. Flexible learning approaches, such as asynchronous and differentiated instruction, address diverse needs and pandemic-related gaps. Mental health and well-being are prioritized through social-emotional learning programs and counseling services. Efforts to ensure equity and accessibility, such as bridging the digital divide and fostering inclusive pedagogies, have gained momentum (Damaiyanti et al., 2021). Assessment practices are being reimaged, favoring formative methods and alternative evaluations like projects and digital portfolios. Lecturers benefit from professional development in digital tools and hybrid strategies, while curricula focus on core competencies and real-world interdisciplinary learning. Lifelong learning has become central, emphasizing critical thinking, problem-solving, and adaptability through micro-learning and certifications. Despite challenges like maintaining engagement, managing workloads, addressing learning loss, and ensuring sustainability, the pandemic has set the stage for a more resilient, equitable, and innovative educational system (Riza et al., 2020).

Even now, many of the teaching and learning methods adopted during the pandemic continue to be utilized and adapted in educational settings. The integration of digital tools, such as learning management systems and video conferencing platforms, has become a staple in classrooms, enabling both in-person and remote learning options. Hybrid learning models, which combine face-to-face instruction with online components, offer flexibility and cater to diverse learning preferences. Asynchronous learning, where students can access resources and complete tasks at their own pace, remains a popular approach for fostering independent learning. Teachers also continue to employ innovative assessment methods, like project-based evaluations and digital portfolios, to better gauge students' understanding and skills. These methods, developed to address the challenges of remote learning, have demonstrated lasting benefits, such as increased accessibility, adaptability, and student engagement, making them valuable tools in the evolving landscape of education (Alhloul & Kiss, 2022).

Universities, particularly vocational institutions, have embraced the challenge of enhancing teaching and learning to meet the demands of a rapidly changing world. These institutions recognize the importance of equipping students with practical skills and industry-relevant knowledge to thrive in competitive job markets. Vocational universities have adopted innovative approaches, such as integrating technology into hands-on training, offering hybrid courses that blend theoretical learning with practical application, and fostering partnerships with

industries to provide real-world experience (Natsir et al., 2022). They are also rethinking curricula to include emerging fields like digital automation, green technology, and sustainable practices, ensuring graduates are prepared for future challenges. By emphasizing flexible learning pathways, personalized instruction, and continuous skill development, vocational universities are not only addressing current educational challenges but also preparing students to be adaptable and resilient in their professional journeys (Syakur et al., 2020).

Chen, (2017) also indirectly informs that vocational universities have adopted a blended approach to education, combining offline and online learning to enhance the teaching and learning experience. This dual method allows students to benefit from the hands-on, practical training essential in vocational studies while also leveraging the flexibility and accessibility of digital platforms. Offline sessions are often dedicated to laboratory work, workshops, and real-world simulations that require physical presence and direct interaction with tools and equipment. Meanwhile, online learning complements this by providing lectures, tutorials, and resources that students can access at their own pace, fostering independent learning and theoretical understanding. Wijayanti et al., (2022) also added that hybrid model not only accommodates diverse learning styles but also prepares students for the digital and interconnected nature of modern industries. By integrating these methods, vocational universities ensure a holistic education that balances technical expertise with the adaptability required in today's dynamic workforce.

Blended learning offers several advantages that make it an effective approach in modern education. By combining online and offline methods, it provides students with greater flexibility in how and when they learn, accommodating different schedules and learning paces. This approach also allows for a more personalized learning experience, as students can access online resources to revisit challenging topics and reinforce their understanding. The offline component ensures that hands-on activities, group interactions, and practical applications are not neglected, fostering collaborative skills and real-world competence. Additionally, blended learning leverages technology to create interactive and engaging content, enhancing student motivation and participation. It also enables educators to track student progress more effectively through digital tools and adapt teaching strategies to meet individual needs. Overall, blended learning bridges the gap between traditional and digital education, offering a balanced and versatile framework for teaching and learning (Yendra et al., 2018).

While blended learning has many advantages, it also comes with certain disadvantages that can pose challenges for both educators and students. One significant issue is the digital divide, as not all students have access to reliable internet connections or the necessary devices, creating inequalities in learning opportunities. The online component of blended learning can also lead to reduced

social interaction and a sense of isolation for some students, as they miss the full benefits of face-to-face engagement. Additionally, the self-discipline and time management required for online learning can be difficult for some learners, potentially resulting in lower participation or incomplete assignments. From an educator's perspective, implementing a blended learning approach demands significant time and effort to design, manage, and balance both online and offline components effectively. Moreover, technical issues, such as software malfunctions or platform inaccessibility, can disrupt the learning process and cause frustration. Finally, assessments in blended learning environments may be more challenging to standardize, with potential discrepancies between the skills demonstrated online and those in a physical setting. These disadvantages highlight the need for careful planning, adequate resources, and support systems to ensure the success of blended learning initiatives (Chernysheva, 2021).

Actually, there are many researchers conducted the study on blended learning. Abroto and seka Andrean, (2021) analyzed the use of blended learning methods in improving student learning motivation. The research used library research. The research finds that blended learning can be done with several steps called 1) preparing the syllabus and Learning Program Plan (RPP), 2) making a draft assessment 3) determining suitable methods, and 4) implementing the learning process that takes place effectively. With this, the teaching and learning process can take place well and produce an educated generation, who are able to compete and answer future challenges, as well as excel. Second is Islami & Nikensari (2023) who analyzed of the application of Blended Learning which refers to the Project-Based Learning (PjBL) model. The research was conducted by using Quasi- experimental research was designed to measure the comparison of student learning outcomes in experimental classes and control class. For the data analysis, it used covariance (ANACOVA). The research shows that students in both research classes showed significant learning outcomes. Thus, it can be concluded that students who study statistics using the PjB2L model learn better than students who study using the conventional or direct blended model. Third is Utami et al., (2024) who conducted the study the need to develop a blended learning model that can enhance and facilitate students with hearing impairment communication in learning. Data was collected through qualitative approaches. The research shows that a blended learning model must be established that considers the demands of deaf students for them to adapt communication in their learning.

Based on the information above, there are some research gaps and novelties that could be derived from this research. First is that most of the researches conducted the research at the school and universities. However, for this research the research prefers conducting the research on vocational universities. Second is that this research used qualitative research by using case study design.

Third, data of the research were collected by using semi-structured interview towards interview questions and it also was analyzed by using content analysis from the interview transcription from the participants.

Conducting the research on blended learning will give much significance for the other researches and other academicians. Methodologically, the method and instrument could give the new strategy for other researchers to collect and analyze the data. Then from the research findings, it could give information for the other researchers about the causing factors for preserving the blended learning by the lecturers on their teaching and learning. At last, this research question was that what the factors causing the lecturers maintaining the blended learning during teaching and learning are.

B. METHODOLOGY

For the study on blended learning, the researchers adopted a qualitative research approach to gain an in-depth understanding of the subject. By employing this methodology, they aimed to explore the experiences, perceptions, and insights of participants engaged in blended learning environments (Sharma, 2019). Qualitative research provided a flexible framework that allowed the researchers to gather rich, descriptive data through interviews, observations, and document analysis. This approach was particularly suitable for capturing the complexities and nuances of how blended learning strategies are implemented and experienced in various educational settings. The focus on qualitative methods enabled the researchers to uncover patterns, interpret meanings, and generate insights that might not have been accessible through quantitative approaches (Khoiriah et al., 2023).

This research was categorized as descriptive research, emphasizing the detailed depiction and analysis of blended learning as it occurs in its natural context. By adopting a descriptive approach, the study aimed to systematically interpret the characteristics, processes, and outcomes of blended learning practices. The focus was on providing an accurate representation of the phenomena without manipulating the environment or variables. Through this approach, the researchers sought to capture the essence of blended learning experiences, highlighting patterns, relationships, and key elements that define its implementation. Descriptive research was particularly well-suited for offering insights that can serve as a foundation for further exploration or the development of practical recommendations for educators and policymakers (Creswell et al., 2007).

Furthermore, the researchers selected a case study research design as part of their qualitative approach. This design was chosen to provide a detailed and contextualized exploration of blended learning within a specific setting or group. By focusing on a single case or a small number of cases, the researchers aimed to

delve deeply into the unique dynamics, challenges, and successes associated with implementing blended learning strategies (Gerring, 2007). The case study design allowed for a comprehensive analysis by incorporating multiple data sources, such as interviews, observations, and document reviews, which enriched the findings and ensured a holistic understanding of the phenomena. This method was particularly effective in capturing the real-world application and impact of blended learning, offering valuable insights that could inform future educational practices and policies (Crowe et al., 2011).

Data for the research were collected using semi-structured interviews, a flexible and effective method within the interview technique. Sariani et al., (2022) explained that this approach allowed the researchers to prepare guiding questions while also giving participants the freedom to express their thoughts and experiences in their own words. By using semi-structured interviews, the researchers were able to maintain focus on key areas of interest related to blended learning while remaining open to new and unexpected insights. This method facilitated a deeper exploration of participants' perceptions, experiences, and attitudes, providing rich, qualitative data that could be analyzed for patterns and themes. The combination of structure and adaptability made semi-structured interviews particularly valuable for capturing the complexity and diversity of blended learning practices. Participants of this research were 5 selected English department of PNP using blended learning on their teaching and learning process.

The research instrument used in this study was a set of interview questions specifically designed to gather detailed insights into blended learning practices. These questions were carefully crafted to align with the research objectives and ensure a comprehensive exploration of the topic (Kemal, Edwar, Sri Imelwaty, 2024). To enhance the reliability and validity of the instrument, the interview questions were reviewed and validated by experts in the field of education. This validation process ensured that the questions were clear, relevant, and capable of eliciting meaningful responses. By incorporating expert feedback, the researchers ensured the instrument's ability to accurately capture the nuanced experiences and perspectives of the participants, ultimately strengthening the overall quality of the study.

The collected data were analyzed using content analysis, a qualitative method that enabled the researchers to systematically interpret and categorize the information obtained from the semi-structured interviews. This approach involved identifying recurring themes, patterns, and meaningful insights within the participants' responses. Through content analysis, the researchers were able to organize the data into coherent categories that reflected key aspects of blended learning practices. The process allowed for a detailed examination of the participants' experiences and perceptions, ensuring that the findings were grounded in the data. By employing this method, the researchers could extract

valuable insights and draw well-supported conclusions about the implementation and impact of blended learning in the studied context (Kuckartz, 2019).

C. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Conducting the research factors causing lecturers maintaining blended learning during their teaching and learning has derived some research findings. Here are the following causing factors.

Increasing the Use of Digital Learning Software

One of the reasons lecturers maintain blended learning in their teaching practices is the increasing use of digital learning software. With the rapid advancement of educational technology, a wide array of digital tools and platforms has become available to support teaching and learning processes. These tools, such as learning management systems, virtual classrooms, and interactive applications, enhance the delivery and accessibility of educational content. By integrating such software into their teaching, lecturers can create more engaging and interactive learning experiences, cater to diverse learning styles, and provide students with opportunities for self-paced learning. Additionally, digital learning software allows for real-time feedback, personalized learning paths, and the seamless sharing of resources, all of which contribute to improved learning outcomes. As a result, the growing reliance on these technologies has made blended learning an indispensable approach for modern education.

This condition has already been approved by some lecturers where they commented that *“during the covid 19 and pandemic, we had much digital software and those are still maintained until today”*. Another lecturer also clarified that *each learning now must be based on digital things such as attendant list and learning sources*. One of the lecturers explained that *“beside offline learning, offline attendant list, we still must fill out some digital application for supporting our teaching and learning activities*. From the information above, it can be highlighted some information where using digital tools or facilities has been one of the requirements right now for lecturers to improve their teaching and learning activities.

Having Time Flexibility

Another key reason for lecturers maintaining blended learning is the time flexibility it offers to both lecturers and students. Blended learning allows educators to structure their courses in a way that balances face-to-face sessions with online components, enabling greater adaptability in scheduling. This flexibility is particularly beneficial for lecturers who need to manage diverse professional responsibilities, such as research, administrative tasks, and teaching across multiple courses. Similarly, students can benefit from the ability to access

course materials, complete assignments, and participate in discussions at their own convenience, accommodating various personal and academic commitments. The asynchronous elements of blended learning, such as recorded lectures and online forums, empower students to learn at their own pace and revisit content as needed. This adaptability in time management enhances the overall teaching and learning experience, making blended learning a preferred approach for many educators and learners alike.

That information was also supported by some participants. One of them said that “*teaching process is not so difficult right now because if we missed for the offline teaching, we can substitute it by using online learning.*” Other participant also described that “*because in our university, around 30 % the students have outside learning with industrial institution, we sometimes learn by using online learning because we can set up the time.*” Next participant also said that “*allowing the lecturers for blended learning, it gives a flexible time to teach the students, if the offline meeting is cancelled*”. From the above information, it is concluded that the lecturers have flexible time to teach or to replace the teaching process for students, although they still have to follow the designed regulation from the university.

Improving the Personalized Learning

Blended learning can significantly improve personalized learning by providing a flexible framework that caters to individual student needs, preferences, and learning paces. In a blended learning environment, students have access to both face-to-face instruction and online resources, which allows them to engage with content in ways that work best for them. Online platforms and learning management systems often offer adaptive learning technologies that can tailor the learning experience to each student's strengths and areas for improvement, providing personalized pathways through the course material.

Additionally, blended learning enables students to revisit content, participate in online discussions, and complete assignments at their own pace, which supports individualized learning. This flexibility ensures that students who need extra time or prefer a slower pace can do so, while those who excel can advance more quickly. Instructors can also use data from online assessments and student interactions to monitor progress, identify gaps in knowledge, and offer targeted interventions, further enhancing the personalization of the learning experience. Overall, blended learning fosters a more student-centered approach, promoting greater engagement and improving learning outcomes for diverse learners.

The information is clarified by some lecturer's information during their interview. One of them stated that “*by having blended learning, the lecturers and student can access the online learning sources any time and any place*”. The other lecturer also confirmed by her saying that “*we still use blended learning to help the*

student to access the learning sources anytime they wants, if the offline materials are still not clear. At last, the lecturer also said that “ the lecturers and students will not miss any meeting or learning because it can be replaced toward blended learning. From the information above, it can be seen that the lecturers still use blended learning because they can share the materials and replace the missed meeting whenever the agreement is reached both lecturers and students.

Creating a Comfort Atmosphere in Teaching and Learning

Blended learning can create a more comfortable and supportive atmosphere in teaching and learning by combining the best aspects of traditional in-person interactions with the flexibility and convenience of online learning. This hybrid approach reduces the pressure often associated with traditional face-to-face classroom settings, allowing students to engage with content and participate in discussions at their own pace. For instance, shy or introverted students may feel more comfortable sharing their thoughts in online forums or through written assignments, where they can take time to formulate responses, compared to speaking in front of a class.

Lecturers, too, benefit from the flexibility of blended learning, as it allows them to structure lessons that cater to different learning styles, use various multimedia resources, and provide individual feedback without the constraints of a rigid schedule. The ability to adapt the pace and mode of delivery ensures that students feel more in control of their learning experience, leading to reduced stress and greater engagement. Moreover, the availability of recorded lectures and online resources offers students the opportunity to review materials as many times as needed, creating a sense of comfort and mastery. In this supportive environment, students are more likely to engage deeply with the content and participate actively, fostering a positive and effective learning atmosphere.

From the information above, there is information that can support the following above. For example, one of the lecturers stated that “ *by having blended learning, both lecturers and students get interactive atmosphere because they can arrange teaching and learning process easily.* Other lecturer said that “ *teaching and learning process give active interactions between lecturers and students because the learning model can be adjusted by both sides.* Another lecturer explained that “ *we very like blended learning because we can share unlimited source to our students about the course or topic learned.* From the information above, it can be concluded that lecturers get comfort atmosphere when they practice blended learning on their teaching and learning.

There are some research findings that could be derived from the above information related the use of blended learning by lecturers during teaching and learning, such as increasing the use of digital learning software, having time flexibility, improving the personalized learning, and creating a comfort atmosphere

in teaching and learning. There are some researchers supporting the findings of the research. First is Norbutaevich, (2020) who commented on his research that education and especially public education using smart technology, is more important than ever. He clearly emphasizes that the use of technology is a must for today because every academic accesses using digital learning or software.

Second is Müller & Mildenberger (2021) blended learning also claims not only to enrich classroom learning but also to redesign the learning environment with higher degrees of freedom for learners. Students should be able to study more independently of time and place and determine content and learning pace individually. From the research findings, it shows that time flexibility in blended learning could make the student learn independently and in other words, it gives more times and spaces for the students to access the learning sources by sending the teaching materials to the online digital learning by the lecturers into a software or program.

Third is Makhambetova et al., (2021) who inform that personalized learning have proved to be effective teaching and learning methods for medical students. Students believe that personalized learning in vocational education is a tool for enhancing academic achievement and motivation and highly assessed modern methods of personalized learning strategies: critical thinking technology, case-studies, level differentiation technology, project-based learning. This research findings also strengthen the information that the use of technology both lecturers and students could increase or improve the process of teaching and learning. It is because both lecturers and students get the freedom to learn their course and for the lecturers they have their own way to learn and teach about the course within their appropriate assignments or task for their students.

Futch et al., (2016) also stated on their research findings that it was found that “comfort” emerged as a mediating factor for student success, with “organization,” “communication,” and “support” acting as supporting themes. These findings will be reported as pedagogical strategies and scalable best practices for the design of blended courses that promote student success .

from the information above, it means that comfort atmosphere plays important factors both lecturers and students to reach the learning outcome well.

D. CONCLUSION

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, vocational universities have embraced blended learning as a key component of their teaching and learning practices. This approach, combining online and face-to-face methods, was initially implemented as a necessary adaptation to ensure the continuity of education during the health crisis. Despite the official end of the pandemic, lecturers in these institutions continue to utilize blended learning, recognizing its long-term benefits. They have found that this hybrid model not only enhances flexibility but also

improves accessibility and engagement for students. By maintaining blended learning, lecturers can cater to diverse learning preferences, integrate advanced digital tools, and create a more dynamic and effective educational environment. This continued adoption reflects a shift in teaching paradigms, showcasing how pandemic-driven changes have shaped the future of education.

DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors do not have conflict of interest on writing this article to the journal.

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