International Journal of Education, Information Technology And Others (IJEIT)
https://jurnal.peneliti.net/index.php/IJEIT
Vol. 4, No.1, April 2021

Students Perception on Blended Learning

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Article Info
Article History:
Received : March 28, 2021
Revised : April 8, 2021
Published: April 2021
e-ISSN: 2623-2324
p-ISSN: 2654-2528
DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.4719816

Abstract

This study aims to perceive the students understanding, point of view, action and expectation toward implementation of blended learning in ELT teaching learning process in English Education Study Program of Language and Art Department , Teachers Training and Educational Sciences Faculty, Pattimura University in Ambon. Students data on perception were collected using closed-ended questionnaire and guided-interview. The data gathered from in depth interview were analyzed qualitatively , while the data obtained from questionnaire were analyzed and interpreted using interval analysis. The results showed that the students had positive perception about the implementation of blended learning. They understand the way blended learning was implemented, they had positive point of view, actions toward blended learning, and they expect the improvement on several aspects of blended learning implementation. Inspite of the challenges that exist in the implementation of blended learning such as the requirement to master the devices/tools of online learning, the unstable internet connection, online activities were meaningful for the students. It has favourable influence on their independence and confidence in learning. Feedback from the lecturer on the students' tasks and performance are crucial to be paid attention in the implementation of blended learning. Lectures engaged in the development of blended learning need to pay more attention to the ways in which they develop and integrate online and face-to-face materials.

Keywords: perception, blended, learning, student

INTRODUCTION

Students' perception is one of essensial factor in education because the students' perceptions of events, the nature of instructor expectations, and the patterns of interaction between students and instructor have an impact on their academic attitudes and behaviors. Some previous studies shows advantages of knowing the students' perception. Perez: (2010) stated that knowing the students' perception allowed learners to consider why they are participating in certain activities, then they would use those activities to learn so they can utilize

them both for academic purposes and outside of the classroom. Furthermore Sekuler, R and Blake, R. (1990) explains that students' perception plays very important role to support the learning process in classrooms activities. Thus, conducted study in the students' perception plays significant roles in the effort of elevating the quality of teaching learning process especially the teaching learning process in this Covid-19 pandemic era.

In the end of 2019 the world was attacked by Corona Virus Disease (Covid-19) and it has changed entire parts of human life and so as the system of teaching and learning process. Face to face meeting turns into both synchronous or asynchronous mode of online teaching. Indonesian Minister of Education and Culture issued decree Number 4 2020 about education policies during the emergency spread of the Covid-19 to regulate and adapt teaching learning process with the current condition. Blended learning also called as hybrid learning or mixed-mode learning, is one of the solutions that is implemented in higher education teaching learning process.

The term blended learning is generally applied to the practice of using both online and in-person learning experiences when teaching students. instructor have been blending or integrating different types of learning activities and resources in classroom, laboratory, practicum, studio contexts for a very long time. Today, the term 'blended learning' has evolved to mean the integration of classroom learning with online or e-learning. In a blended-learning course, for example, students might attend a class taught by a teacher in a traditional classroom setting, while also independently completing online components of the course outside of the classroom. In this case, in-class time may be either replaced or supplemented by online learning experiences, and students would learn about the same topics online as they do in class—i.e., the online and in-person learning experiences would parallel and complement one another. Graham (2006) states that blended learning is the combination of instruction from two historically separate models of teaching and learning: traditional face-to-face learning systems and distributed learning systems.

Blended-learning environments may vary widely in design and implementation to university level. For example, blended learning may be provided in an existing university by only a few instructors or it may be the dominant learning-delivery model around which a university academic program is designed. Online learning may be a minor component part of a classroom-based course, or video-recorded lectures, live video and text chats, and other digitally enabled learning activities may be a student's primary instructional interactions with an instructor. In some cases, students may work independently on online lessons, projects, and assignments at home or elsewhere, only periodically meeting with to review their learning progress, discuss their work, ask questions, or receive assistance with difficult concepts. In other cases, students may spend their entire day in a traditional ?? building, but they will spend more time working online and independently than they do receiving instruction from an instructor . Osguthorpe and Graham (2003) stated that those who use blended approaches base their pedagogy on the assumption that there are inherent benefits in face-to-face interaction (both among learners and instructor) as well as the understanding that there are some inherent advantages to using online methods in their teaching. Thus the aim of those using blended learning approaches is to find a harmonious balance between online access to knowledge and face-to-face human interaction.

Blended learning offers many potential advantages and disadvantages that will largely depend on the quality of the design and execution of a given blended-learning model. It is argued that blended learning gives students the benefits of both online learning and in-person instruction. For example, students can work independently and at their own pace online, but still have access to the personal attention of an instructor and all the assistance, knowledge, and resources such an educator provides. At the same time, instructor can structure courses and deliver instruction more flexibly or creatively than in a traditional classroom setting. Some

studies found benefits of blended learning such as first it has positive effects on student performance (Boyle, Bradley, Chalk; Lim & Morris, 2009; O'Toole & Absalom, 2003); it enables the promotion of a flexible learning environment that reinforces the student's autonomy, reflection and powers of research (Chambers,1999; Lebow,1993; Radford,1997; Tam, 2000); and it facilitates the review and control of learning (Osguthorpe & Graham, 2003)

Blended learning may also allow teachers to spend less time giving whole-class lessons, and more time meeting with students individually or in small groups to help them with specific concepts, skills, questions, or learning problems. Blended learning may also allow university level to teach more students more efficiently at a lower cost to the school and—in the case of higher education—the student. And because students are required to use digital and online technologies in blended-learning situations, they naturally acquire more technological literacy and greater confidence using new technologies.

However, there is widespread skepticism regarding digital and online learning, at least in part because many technology-enabled educational activities are still largely untested, and their educational usefulness and importance remain debatable. One common criticism leveled at online learning is that it encourages rote, formulaic tasks that do not foster the kind of higher-order thinking skills that contribute to deeper and more meaningful learning for students. Critics of blended-learning experiences may also question whether the approach can provide students with sufficient personal attention, guidance, and assistance from instructors, especially for students who are not self-directed, self-disciplined, or coordinated enough to learn effectively without regular supervision from teachers and adults. Without in-person monitoring, students could potentially spend more of their study time on social media and talking with friends than on schoolwork. Critics often question whether instructors have undergone or would receive sufficient training on how to effectively educate students in a blended-learning setting, considering that the practice necessitates the use of emerging technology and, potentially, more sophisticated instructional methods. Some educators are also concerned that blended learning is simply a way for states or schools to cut labor costs by substituting technology for people, which may lead to teacher layoffs, higher student-teacher ratios, unanticipated educational gaps, and other negative outcomes.

Previous studies about the students' perception toward implementation of blended learning reported that students had positive perception about blended learning. Perez (2010) found that a high degree of utility, motivation and satisfaction is perceived from blended learning, which could lead students to have a positive attitude towards learning. Moreover, Lei (2010) indicates that blended learning reinforces students' understanding of the subject, enhancing and supporting the learning process. In addition, it is shown that the online activities included were useful for the students, which could have a favourable influence on the work they carried out independently. However, this article has a different standpoint from those previous studies, because it believes that students' own experience in the teaching learning process is another central aspect of teaching and learning. Therefore, this study focuses on studying the students' perception - viewed from students' understanding, point of view, action and expectation- toward the implementation of blended learning in ELT in order to get more comprehensive aspects of students' preceptions.

RESEARCH METHODS

The purpose of this study is to find the students' perception, viewed from four dimensions, namely students' understanding, point of view, action and expectation toward the implementation of blended learning. Considering this objective, it is decided to use qualitative approach in this research. Ary et. al (2010) explains that qualitative research is a research that tries to understand a phenomenon by focusing on the total picture rather than breaking it down into variables, the goal is getting a holistic picture and depth of understanding the phenomena.

The subjects of this study are fourty seven students in English Study Program, Department of Language and Art, Teacher Training and Educational Science Faculty, Patimura University especially at the first semester 15 Students, the third semester 15, and the fifth semester 17. This course was chosen as blended learning was implemented in the teaching learning process.

The data were collected through google form-based questionnaire and in depth-interview to find the students' perception towards blended learning employed in English study program, Department of language and art, Faculty of Teachers Training and Educational Science, Patimura university in Ambon. The questionnaire was developed using four aspects of human perceptions proposed by Vernon (1987) and Kalish (1966) who divided students' perception into four aspects namely; what students knows, how students view, what the students reaction were and what the students expectation were about the course.

There are thirty six questions in total for four aspects of blended learning. Ten questions for asking about the students understanding about blemded learning, eight questions to reveal the students point of view toward blended learning, ten questions to know the students' reaction and eight questions about the students' expectation about blended learning. There are five options in each questions ranging from "strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree were to reveal the students' perception. After completing the survey questionnaire, students were asked to answer questions in the depth-interview to confirm and to validate information individually of the respondent's experience.

The writer analyzed and interpreted the data gathered from in depth interview using three steps of qualitative data analysis proposed by Creswell (2008) that consists of; 1) organizing the data, 2) reading the data, 3) analysing the data obtained from the survey questionnaire using the following steps; first, the data obtained from the questionnaire were turned into scores based on the Linkert-scale in which the score for strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree were respectively 5,4,3,2, and 1 score. The computed scores then were calculated in the percentage score. Then, the computed scores were interpreted using interval analysis.

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

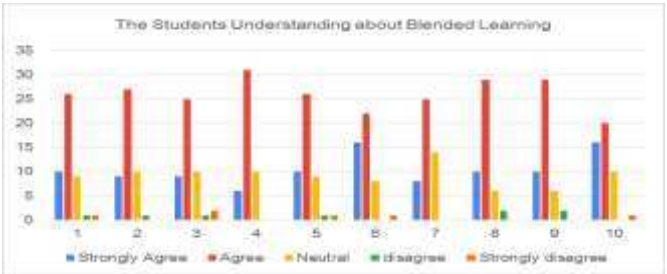
The aims of this research are to know the students perception toward the implementation of Blended Learning that consist of four aspects, namely; students' understanding, point of view, actions and expectation.

Students Understanding about the Implementation of Blended Learning

The first indicator of the students' perception in this study is the students knowledge or understanding about the implementation of blended learning. The results of the questionnaire and interview showed that the students in general have good knowledge about the aspects and the implementation of blended learning. The following description explains the results of the questionnaire and interview related to the students understanding about blended learning.

Graph 1 below shows the results of questionnaire computation from ten questions related to the students understanding about blended learning.

Graphic 1. Students Knowledge about Blended Learning



From graph 1 above, we can observe that the students know almost all of the aspects of blended learning. For example in the first question about initial preparation done by the lecturer to implement blended learning, thirty six or eighty three percent of the students agreed with the statement. There were nine or fourteen percent of the students who were not sure and there were only two or one percent students who didn't understand this aspect. We can find this same results for the other questions, such as question number two, four, five, six and ten. It means they have good understanding about the class activities components, before they started the lesson, they know that the class activity consider their independence on learning, they also identified that they were provided with clear guidelines/expectations about what they are to do by the lecturer, they were provided with clear rationale, and feedback on their performance as part of doing the activity or following completion of the activity in the blended learning.

Those results are supported with the results of the interview. They said that the lessons presented in blended learning have been planned before as they found that the lecturer had posted the learning materials in Google Classroom and WhatsApp. They could be ready before the lesson started as the lecturer had asked them to study the lesson before they followed the class. However, they were still uncertain whether the activities promote their independence in learning because they often couldn't handle the difficulties doing the activities when they were in online learning class. They continued explaining that the lecturer provided clear guideline/ expectation about what they had to do together with explanation about the time duration to do the tasks. They also stated that not all of the lectures gave them feedback on their performance when they tried to complete the tasks given. So, they tend to wait to have the offline session because in this occassion the lecturers directly gave them the feedback, so they can improve their learning activities.

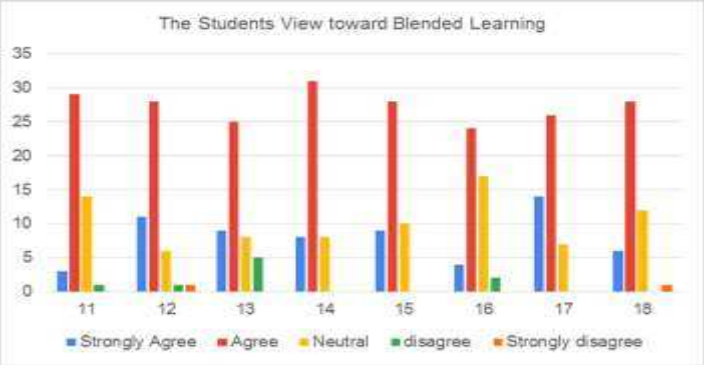
On the contrary, for question number three, eight and nine there were ten or sixteen percent of the students who were still confused whether the provided activities lead to achievement of the learning goals, whether there were support resources for their class activities, and whether they were provided with sites links prior to the lesson or not. However, these doubts were confirmed by their answers during the interview, they said that the activities had lead them towards achieving the learning outcome and/or completing assessment because the lecturers gave them the tests to recheck their understanding during the learning process or at the end of semester to know their learning outcome. They explained that resources were also available, the material and the class activities were well- prepared by the lecturers thus they can learn in completing the tasks given by the lectures.

Furthermore, for question number seven, fourteen or twenty three percent students were not sure whether they understood about the availability of lesson resources and supports in the blended learning. During the interview they stated that supports for online tools, web links and media files helped them in gaining the learning outcome in blended leaning.

Students Point of View about Blended Learning

The second indicator of the students' perception is the students point of view or opinion about the implementation of blended learning. The results of the questionnaire and interview analysis showed that generaly the students had positive view about the implementation of blended learning. The data about the students opinion are obtained from both questionnaire and interview. Graph 2 below shows the results of questionnaire computation from 8 questions related to the students view about blended learning followed by the describtion of the interview results.

Graph 2. The Students View about Blendend Learning



From graph 2. above we can see that generally the students have postive opinion about blended learning. In question number eleven about whether they could achieve learning objective when they learn in the blended learning, thirthy two or seventy five percent of the students were sure that the learning goals were achievable. Fourteen students or twenty for percent were not sure while only one student had negative view. These results are almost the same to the students answers for question number fourteen (about whether they could learn from assessment activities and feedback process during their learning in blended situation), number fifteen (about the facilities of communication in blended class) and question number seventeen (about whether the challenge in blended learning). (related to challenge in blended learning)

Those resuts are validated with the data from the interview. They explained that they could fail on achieving some learning goals both in offline or online class, so the blended learning didn't give any effect on the achievement of the learning objective. Furthermore, they said that they should learn from the result of assessment activities and feedback process in blended learning because from those aspects they knew their progress to gain their learning outcome. However, related to questions number fifteen about whether their interactions and engagement were facilitated by online communication and networking or not, they felt that the facililties did not run well. It made them insecure. However, if the networking channel ran well those aspects above can be gained to help them learn. Furthermore, they said that blended learning is challenging, because they should master the devices/tools of online learning to complete the tasks given. They also sometimes faced problems if the internet connection was unstable, they couldn't finish the tasks.

Thirty nine or eighty eight percent of the students were agreed. six or nine percent of the students were in doubt while two students disagreed for question number twelve about whether learning in blended could make them could be more independent in learning or not. In the interview they said that they could be more independent and sometimes they could monitor their own progress but they needed the lectures to give them some notes/comments to show that they have progressed in that subject.

Thirty four or eighty one percent of the students said they were independent learners and confident, however there were six or nine percent of the students were unsure while two or one percent of the students were not confident for question number thirteen about whether they could be confident or not in blended learning. From the interview we can know the reason why they sometimes felt unconfident during the blended learning, they explained that sometimes they felt insecure when they looked into the screen, they see so many people over there, but when they looked back at themselves, they were alone.

Twenty eight of the students or sixty seven percent students agreed, while seventeen or thirty percent were unsure while two students disagreed for question number sixteen about whether they could have access to wide range of quality resources and supports or not. The

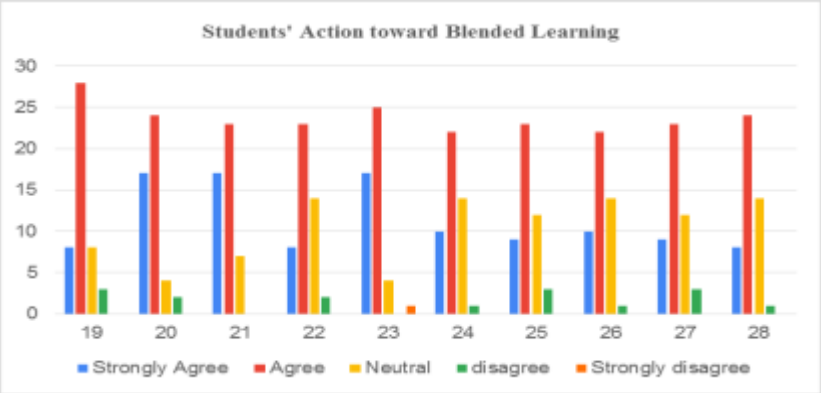
results of the interview confirmed that they could access to range on quality resources and supports in the blended learning, because sometimes some of the lecturers gave them link to access some books to help them in learning. However, when their internet connection was unstable they met the problem to access the sources.

Thirty four or eighty percent of the students agreed, twelve or twenty percent were unsure while one student disagreed for answering question number eighteen about whether they found sufficient support in blended learning. During the interview they explained that they found sufficient support in the blended learning if the internet connection was stable, but if it was not stable all of the activities, the tasks, assessment could not accessed.

Students Actions toward Blended Learning

The third indicator of the students' perception is the students action or activities about the implementation of blended learning. The results of the questionnaire and interview analysis showed that in general the students could follow the activities in the blended class. The obtained data about those activities from both questionnaire and interview are described below. Graph 3 below shows the results of questionnaire calculation from ten questions related to the students actions in the blended learning then it is followed by the description of the interview results.

Graph 3. Students Action toward Blended Learning



From graph 3 above we can see that generally the students had done the activities in the blended learning positively. In question number nineteen about whether they have achieved the learning outcomes that have been planned, there were thirty six or eighty three percent of the students who stated that they achieved the planned lesson objectives, while eight students or thirteen percent of the students were not sure while three other students stated that they hadn't achieved the lesson goals. These results are similar to the students answers for question number twenty (completing the provided assessment), number twenty one (monitoring progress) and question number twenty three (submitting the tasks on the provided time) as we can see in graph 3 above. Those results are confirmed with the data from the interview, especially for the students who were not sure whether they had achieved learning objective or not. They said that sometimes they got the good score as what they have planned, but sometimes the results were different from their expectation. In completing the assigments they said that they completed the provided assessment to get their scores, so they could know their progress. Regarding to monitoring their own progress, they explained that sometimes they could not assess their own progress. They hope that lecturers could give comment related to their performance during the learning process. In submitting the task on time they explained that they completely depend on the internet connection, if it was stable they could submit the tasks without any problems.

The next questions about activities that the students did in blended learning was about whether they followed the guidelines about the tasks given by the lecturers (question number

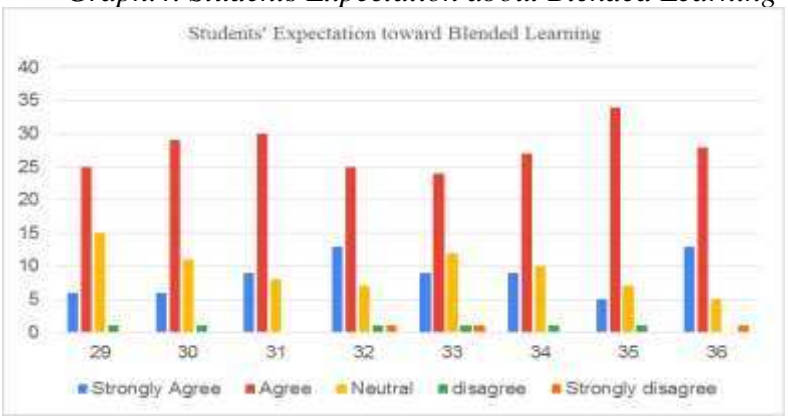
twenty two), there were thirty one students or seventy four percent of the students who were able to follow the lecturers tasks guidance, fourteen or twenty three percent of the students were uncertain while two students were not able to follow the lectures tasks guidelines. These results are similar to the students responses to the questions about whether they accessed the resourses and support such as task instructions, learning guide, web links, and media files easily (question number twenty four), whether they followed instruction and content material written/created by the lecturer well (question number twenty five), whether they found the links to the materials (question number twenty six), whether they received and followed feedback (question number twenty seven), and whether they extend their learning opportunities outside the class (question number twenty eight) as we can see the data in graph 1.3 above.

They explained that they followed the guideline about the tasks given by the lecturers to finish all of the activities, then they continued saying that they could access the resources easily, follow instruction and content material, web, and media files but it depended much on internet connection. They also said that they could find the appropriate link to get materials before the class started, eventhough sometimes they faced problems to get the materials if the internet connection was unstable. For question number twenty seven about whether they received and followed feedback from the lecturers they stated that not all of the lecturers gave them feedback directly. Finally, related to question number twenty eight about whether they extended their learning opportunities outside the class, they explained that they could extent their learning opportunity as they wanted to enlarge their knowledge.

Students Expectation toward Blended Learning

The last indicator of the students' perception is the students expectation about the implementation of blended learning. The results of the questionnaire and interview analysis showed that mostly the students have clear expectation about the implementation of blended learning. The data about the students opinion are obtained from both questionnaire and interview. Graph 4 below shows the results of questionnaire computation from eight questions related to the students expectation about blended learning then it is followed by the description of the interview results.

Graph.4. Students Expectation about Blended Learning



From graph 4 above we can see that students expect the improvement of the implementation of blended learning. In question number twenty nine about whether they expect activities in the blended learning were carried out based on the plan or not, there were thirthy one or seventy three percent of the students agreed that the activities in the blended learning are based on the plan. Fifteen students or twenty five percent were not sure while only one student didn't agree. On the contrary, for question number thirty six about whether they expect that there is written/created resources that students can use in doing the activity such as

instructions, content materials, online tools, etc, almost all students agreed with this statement, there were ninety one percent of the students who agreed to have these in the implementation of blended learning. The results of the interview showed that they expect this in the blended learning to help them to learn particular materials in order to achieve their learning outcome.

For question number thirty about the clear and achieveable learning outcome in each unit, thirty five or eighty percent of the students were agree, while eleven students or eighteen percent students were unsure, while only one student was disagreed. These results were similar to the students' responses for questions number thirty three (there is clear guidelines/expectations about what they are to do, where, and within what time frame) and question number 34 (there is written or oral feedback on the students' performance). In the interview the students stated that it was important to see clear enough the learning objective of each unit, so they knew what they should do. Then they explained that it was helpful when the lecturers to have already prepared materials and activities with the guideline so, they could do the activities based on the guideline. Furthermore, they needed the lecturers give them written/oral feedback since they need to improve their learning outcome.

Thirty nine or eighty seven percent of the students were agree while the seven students were unsure for question number thirty one about the activities that projected to achieve the learning outcomes. These results are identical to the students' answers for questions number thirty two (the activity promote the students to be independent) and question number thirty five (various accessible resources and supports include: task instructions, learning guide, online tools). In the interview the students said that all provided activities were expected to be projected to achieve learning outcome, so that was why they had tried to do all of the tasks given by the lectures as good as possible. Furthermore, they explained that both in online or offline classes the lectures gave them link to access the course materials, however, they prefer to choose offline learning class, because they could meet each other to discuss/ share the information in order to complete the tasks given.

DISCUSSIONS

The present study shows that students have positive perception about the implementation of blended learning. They have good understanding or knowledge, positive point of view, actions and expectation about the implementation of blended learning in their ELT class. This positive attitude is consistent to Lei's (2010) study which found that a high degree of utility, motivation and satisfaction perceived from blended learning could lead students to have a positive attitude towards learning. Moreover, this conclusion indicates that blended learning enhances and supports the learning process.

The well-prepared written/ created resources, instructions, content materials, online tools that students can use in doing the activity supported the students to complete the tasks. It was helpful when the lecturers have already prepared materials and activities with the guideline so, they could do the activities based on the guideline. As Welker and Berardino (2005) point out, planning for blended learning requires each module or course of study be looked at individually.

However, the students think that blended learning is challenging , because they should master the devices/tools of online learning to complete the tasks given. The unstable internet connection becomes the main challenges in the implementation of blended learning. They explained that they followed the guideline about the tasks given by the lectures to finish all of the activities, then they continued saying that they could access the resources easily, follow instruction and content material, web, and media files but it depended much on internet connection.

In some cases they were still uncertain whether the activities promote their independence in learning because they often couldn't handle the difficulties doing the

activities when they were in online learning class. In addition, it is shown that the online activities included were useful for the students, which could have a favourable influence on the work they carried out independently. They also stated that not all of the lectures gave them feedback on their performance when they tried to complete the tasks given, therefore, they tend to wait to have the offline session because in this occassion the lecturers directly gave them the feedback, so they can improve their learning activities. Accordingly, we may consider that e-learning activities complement, rather than replace, traditional forms of learning (Crawford et al., 1998). The other previous researches found that complementing traditional classes with online materials: a) has positive effects on student performance (Boyle, Bradley, Chalk, Jones, & Pickard, 2003; Lim & Morris, 2009; O'Toole); b) enables the promotion of a flexible learning environment that reinforces the student's autonomy, reflection and powers of research (Chambers,1999; Lebow,1993; Radford,1997; c) facilitates the review and control of learning (Osguthorpe &Graham, 2003).

Students expect the improvement of the implementation of blended learning. they expect this in the blended learning to help them to learn particular materials in order to achieve their learning outcome. Furthermore, they needed the lecturers to give them written/oral feedback since they need to improve their learning outcome. Lectures engaged in the development of blended learning courses need to pay particular attention to the ways in which they develop and integrate online and face-to-face materials. An essensial issue in the blending of learning materials and opportunities was that of balance between online and face-to-face activities. This is echoed in the literature where some learners' preference remains with traditional classroom-type delivery (Kamin et al., 2001). Enthusiasm was expressed about the flexibility and convenience provided by the online component, the chance to take responsibility for their own learning as adults, as well as the quality and variety of the online learning materials. This is consistent with the conclusions of Madoc-Jones and Parrott (2005) who investigated the experience of providing social work education online and recommend a balancing of face-to-face and online activities centred on students learning as a shared building of meaning and understanding.

CONCLUSIONS

The results of this study imply that he students positive perception toward the implementation of blended learning shows that blended learning is more than just a hybrid model of teaching, it improves and supports the teaching learning process. The offline and online class complements each other. A catious- planning for written/ created resources, instructions, content materials, online tools that students can use in doing the activities supported the students to achieve the learning objectives.

Inspite of the challenges that exists in the implementation of blended learning such as the requirement to master the devices/tools of online learning, the unstable internet connection, online activities were meaningful for the students. It has favourable influence on their independence and confidence in learning. However, feedback from the lecturer on the students' tasks and performance are crucial to be paid attention in the implementation of blended learning, therefore the quality of learning activities can be elevated.

Lectures engaged in the development of blended learning courses need to pay particular attention to the ways in which they develop and integrate online and face-to-face materials. A significant issue in the blending of learning materials and opportunities was that of balance between online and face-to-face activities. Since this present study hasn't taken the teachers point of view and used limited area of study, it is suggested to the other researcher to conduct further research in the area of blended learning viewed from the practitioners point of view. Therefore more comprehensive understanding about the implementation of blended learning can be revealed.

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