Students' Perception on Interactive Learning in Enhancing Blended Learning Experiences

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Abstract
Purpose: This study aims to explore students' perception on interactive learning in enhancing blended learning experience.
Design/methodology/approach: This study employed a semi-structured interview from open-ended questions among four respondents through Microsoft Teams application. During the interview, the interviewer was guided by an interview guide that contains questions regarding the students' perception towards the interactive learning in enhancing their blended learning experience.
Findings: This study found that both students' motivation and lecturers' support indeed have helped in encouraging more positive students' perception on using interactive learning platforms. However, student's flexibility shows varied student's perception as some respondents adapt differently in accepting interactive learning to help in enhancing blended learning experience.
Research limitations/implications: This study had a difficulty due to the number of respondents. However, the limitation mentioned will not invalidate the findings of the study. For future research, adding more variables and respondents from both private and public universities might provide better comparison.
Practical implications: This paper aims to contribute new literature on interactive learning in Malaysia. This study is anticipated to contribute to the betterment of implementation of blended learning in higher institutions.
Originality/value: This study will contribute to the current literature for interactive learning and blended learning experiences in Malaysia after the strike of COVID-19.
Paper type: Viewpoint

Keywords: Students' perceptions, Students' motivation, Students' flexibility, Lecturers' support, Interactive learning, Blended learning experience

Introduction
Earlier in 2020, blended learning was rarely used to almost all of lecturers, however it has become a part of our everyday life in this COVID-19 era. The COVID-19 pandemic has passed its one-year milestone and the way of teaching has changed to the better (Ross, 2021). Blended

Learning is now an essential form of learning for higher institution and it is widely used in academic fields. Blended learning is a hybrid between conventional learning and online learning. The implementation of blended learning is to build a richer learning experience for the students (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004).

However, blended learning has been considered as ineffective as it eliminates classroom real interaction time (Laine, 2003). There is also a limitation in the students and lecturer's interaction which leads to students' frustration and confusion during the teaching and learning experience (Hara & Kling, 2000; Piccoli, Ahmad, & Ives, 2001; Smart & Chapel, 2006). Students also need to exercise more discipline and commitment during blended learning (Golladay, Prybutok, & Huff, 2000; Serwatka, 2003; Smart & Chapel, 2006).

Interactive learning is an element in blended learning that could ease students' acceptance in blended learning. It uses two or more approaches in teaching the same topic, based on web-based modules, activities, classroom lectures and discussions. The strategy that lecturers use in interactive learning offers a new methodology as it minimises the amount of direct instruction and maximises one-to-one interaction in the teaching process (AlKhaibary, Ramadan, Aboshaiqah, Baker, AlZaatari & AlZaatari, 2020).

Interactive learning is expected to help students to increase their interest and understanding in learning and it offers lecturers to deliver the lecture and assess students learning using creative and innovative methods (Apandi & Raman, 2020). In addition, it can help students to become independent learners. The students can learn everything without any limitation by clicking on many features or platforms on the internet related to the subjects they are learning.

This paper aims to contribute new literature on interactive learning in Malaysia. This study is anticipated to contribute to the betterment of implementation of blended learning in higher institution. Therefore, this study aims to explore students' perception on interactive learning in enhancing blended learning experience.

This paper is structured as follows; literature review is demonstrated in the next section. It is then followed by a discussion on Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and hypotheses development. Methodology is explained in the fourth section, while discussions and conclusion are elaborated in the last section.

Literature Review
Blended Learning Experience
Blended learning is a combination of more than one methods of delivery (Ughade & Badre, 2020) combining two modes of teaching which are distance learning and face-to-face instruction (Kanuka et. al., 2009). The learning outcome is believed to be optimised when lecturers combine different methods of delivering lesson to the students (Ughade & Badre, 2020). On the other hand, blended learning provides students with opportunity for personalised learning and allow them to learn at their own pace, in their chosen place and at their chosen time. In studies conducted by Jeffrey et al. (2006) and Zepke et al. (2006) it was stated that blended learning leads toward better, positive learning experiences and higher learning outcomes.

Furthermore, blended learning environment is also associated with better test performance (Buttner & Black, 2014), higher learning satisfaction (Alavi, 1994) and it has been shown to increase learning effectiveness (Sahni, 2019). A lot of factors contribute to the successfulness of blended learning implementation. As in previous study conducted by Kintu, Zhu, and Kagambe (2017), the characteristics and background, blended learning design and features, technology quality, students' interactions, tools and resources are the main factors in blended learning. Meanwhile, Nurasma and Jasber (2020) discussed in detail about the students' learning style towards blended learning.

However, previous research also found that blended learning can contribute to higher dropout rates (Deschacht & Goeman, 2015). Besides, students in blended learning environments also complain about the lack of familiarity with technology and they also prefer the classroom environment rather than the blended learning (Concannon et al., 2005). In the blended learning environment, students also tend to wait until the next class to ask questions instead of asking the questions immediately during the online class (Bruff et al., 2013). In addition, students also complained about the lack of face-to-face interaction with their lecturers, the response time by the lecturer is extended and they cannot socialise as in the traditional classroom (Adnan & Anwar, 2020).

Students' Motivation

The students play an important role in the effectiveness of blended learning (Müller & Wulf, 2021). Kintu et al. (2017) indicated that students' attitude towards blended learning is a significant factor to their satisfaction and motivation. Motivation is everything that drives a person to achieve their goals. In learning, motivation is one of the driving forces that exists in students so that the desire to learn arises. This includes internal and external encouragement for students to make changes in behaviour (Rafiola, Setyosari, Radjah & Ramli, 2020). Rafiola, Setyosari, Radjah and Ramli (2020) also found that there is positive relationship between students' motivation and learning achievement among students in Padang, Indonesia.

Students' Flexibility

According to Evan, Yip, Chan, Armatas and Tse (2019), blended learning is seen as coming of age because of its flexibility and benefits that are increasingly well understood. The combination approach in blended learning allows students to learn in their own ways and at their own pace which suits their learning preferences. It is believed that students are enjoying flexibility environment such as accessing the materials, preparing for classes, sending assessments and real time communication with friends and lecturers in the borderless environment.

Previous research on students' flexibility in blended learning indicates that it has a positive impact on cognitive processing among the students (Chen, 2006) and therefore it increases effectiveness in the learning experience. This flexibility allows the students to balance their studies with their personal commitments and provides them with control over their learning materials. Therefore, it is also found that this flexibility can increase the interest of the students and motivation (Scheiter & Gerjets, 2007).

Lecturers' Support

Even though the implementation of blended learning gives positive effects towards students, without the support and cooperation of academics as the setter of the blended learning, it is seemingly impossible to achieve the objective of the implementation of blended learning in an institution. Previous research found that the classroom instructors continue to play an important role to the success of blended learning (Müller & Wulf, 2021). Lecturers' guidance and feedback has a positive impact on students' cognitive processing (Kim, Jeong-eun, Park, Jang, & Nam, 2017; Sun, Yu, & Chao, 2019). Therefore, to ensure the success of blended learning, it is suggested that the lecturers should have enthusiastic online communication with the students (Müller & Wulf, 2021).

The most difficult challenge related to blended learning faced by lecturer is to remain critical to learning because of the vast changing approach and it is related to the usage of technology and applications. Evan et. al. (2019) justified that technology alone is not able to bring the educational transformation, as the more inclusive education models are the vital solutions.

Additional time and ongoing support for lecturers with technology introduced with appropriate support and hands-on modelling are essential (Crompton, Olszewski, & Bielefeldt, 2016).

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

Davis (1986) described Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) as "the motivational processes that mediate between system characteristics and user behaviour". According to Chen and Tseng (2012) and Venkatesh and Davis (2000), TAM was employed to explain and predict user's acceptance of information systems. This model was able to explore the perceptions, beliefs, attitudes, and intentions of the participants' effect on certain technology (Olivier, 2016). Previous studies have used this model to determine the nature of the acceptance or adoption on technologies (Chen & Tseng, 2012). Olivier (2016) used TAM to study on the acceptance of the interactive learning environment and blended learning. For this study, TAM is used to test whether students' perceptions which are students' motivation, students' flexibility, and lecturers' support are able to encourage the students to experience blended learning by using interactive learning.

Methods

In this study, four second year students from Bachelor of Accounting (Hons) in one of the Government Linked University (GLU) have been selected based on their experience on full online learning session. According to Dworkin (2012), the number of respondents for qualitative research is often smaller due to the focus on the meaning of live experience of the research participants. It is imperative for the experience to be understood by the reader (Charmaz, 1990). This study employed a semi-structured interview from the open-ended questions among the four respondents through the Microsoft Teams. During the interview, the interviewer was guided by an interview guide that contains questions regarding the students' perceptions towards the interactive learning in enhancing their blended learning experience. The guided questions are as follow:

1. How interactive learning helps students' motivation in blended learnings experience?
2. How interactive learning helps students' flexibility in blended learnings experience?
3. How is your lecturers' support during blended learnings experience?
4. How interactive learning affects the blended learnings experience?

All the information and data obtained during the interview session and the open-ended survey have been refined into meaningful information to be reported in this study. In addition, all the four respondents had experienced a conventional way of classes previously, therefore they had gone through both methods of learning, hence, the results are expected to be more reliable, comparable, and impactful for this study.

Findings

The selected students are attending online learning session since the COVID-19 outbreak on March 2020 until the time the interview has been conducted. Table 1 shows the demographic profile of the respondents.

Table 1: Demographic of the Respondents

Initial	Gender	CGPA	Located
R1	Male	3.96	Subang Jaya
R2	Female	3.81	Kajang

| R3 | Female | 3.93 | Putrajaya |
| R4 | Male | 3.90 | Kuantan |

Table 2 shows a summary of students' perception indicators based on the students' interview. In this study, the students' perception on blended learning experience were evaluated based on students' motivation, students' flexibility, and lecturers' support.

Table 2: Summary of Students' Perception Indicators

Variables	Indicator	
Blended learning experience	i.	Informative
	ii.	Attractive visual
	iii.	Interesting
	iv.	Additional knowledge
Student's motivation	i.	Better understanding
	ii.	Additional knowledge
Student's flexibility	i.	Ease learning experience
	ii.	Flexibility to learn
Lecturer's support	i.	Encourage student
	ii.	Faster respond

Students' Motivation
Students are motivated to study as interactive learning helps them to grasp the idea on the learning topic. Respondent 1 mentioned that *"...helps us on learning as I could get the basic picture of the topic without reading the slides..."* Respondent 4 also expressed agreement by saying that *"...able to get additional notes in the answer hence I can learn better and able to add some knowledge about the topic learned."* This is consistent with Respondent 2 & 3 as they said *"...better understanding about the topic..."*

Hence, this shows that interactive learning has the ability to motivate and encourage students for better learning experience in blended learning.

Students' Flexibility
In addition, some of the students enjoy the flexibility of learning as they can access materials in their own time and at their own location. Respondent 1 stated that *"...enhance flexibility, couple that with record video, it really helps ease the learning process."* Despite having an agreement that interactive learning indeed provides flexibility in learning, Respondent 4 stated that *"...prefer the video to be watched together during class time so I could ask question,"* which indicated that Respondent 4 preferred a real time interaction between lecturer and students in online class.
Respondent 2 also expressed regarding students' flexibility in quite a statement, *"...it gives me the flexibility as I dare say I was able to slack of a bit but still was able to catch up on the study."* On the contrary, Respondent 3 disagreed and stated *"...I feel like it is too difficult and there's so many factors that hinder the learning process, for example internet connection, laptop hang, etc."*

In conclusion, students have diverse perception toward students' flexibility in using interactive learning to experience blended learning. This is probably due to the different ability for the students to adapt with this hybrid methods of teaching and learning.

Lecturers' Support
Müller and Wulf (2021) stated that ensuring the lecturers to have enthusiastic online communication with the students is one way to ensure the success of blended learning. This is affirmed by Respondent 3, *"...respond to our question really fast. I was able to ask question and get the answer even during the night-time."* Respondent 2 also said that "*...support us during this blended learning and make it easy for us to learn..."* Respondent 1 also mentioned that *"...lecturer really make it easy to understand..."*
The student also seeks for lecturers' support in terms of empathy to guide them throughout the teaching and learning process. This is as expressed by Respondent 4, *"...incredibly understanding and I like how the lecturer make a small conversation during class to get to know us better. Those conversation soothes me, as I know that the lecturer cares about us."*
Thus, this shows that lecturers' support is needed to ensure the smooth transition between face-to-face classes towards blended learning. Furthermore, interactive learning will encourage students to experience better learning process in blended learning.

Blended Learning Experience
Respondent 1 stated that *"...The interactive learning provides a simple yet informative way of learning..."* This is supported by respondent 2 "*...I like how interactive learning make it easy for me to understand every single topic..."* Respondent 2 also mentioned that *"...due to the flexibility in learning which is very convenient for me to learn with my own phase"* Respondent 4 also gave an agreeable respond by saying *"...helps refresh my memory on the topic learned and sometimes it gives additional point that was not even in the lecture slides."*
While Respondent 3 provided acceptable respond that "*...I can even repeatedly do the same topic again and again if I want to study. There is no time limit."* However, Respondent 3 also mentioned that *"...have a hard time to stay disciplined, hence I prefer face to face class. Blended learning makes me delay my work."*
Therefore, this shows that interactive learning plays an important role in enhancing blended learning experience. However, students need to be more diligent and attentive as blended learning provides flexibility in learning experience. Blended learning is preparing the students to be more independent, and this will benefit the students in the future.

Discussion and Conclusion
The objective of this research is to explore students' perception on interactive learning in enhancing blended learning experience. For this study, the students' perception on blended learning experience were evaluated based on students' motivation, students' flexibility, and lecturers' support. Generally, the respondents agreed that interactive learning is able to help them in blended learning experience as this method is able to provide them with more flexible learning experience. Moreover, both students' motivation and lecturers' support are indeed encouraging for more positive students' perception on using interactive learning. This is supported by Rafiola, Setyosari, Radjah and Ramli (2020) as they also found that there is positive relationship between students' motivation and learning achievement among students in Padang, Indonesia. For lecturers' support, previous researcher also found that lecturers' guidance and feedback has a positive impact on students' cognitive processing which means that the students are able to embrace blended learning at ease (Kim, Jeong-eun, Park, Jang, & Nam, 2017; Sun, Yu, & Chao, 2019). However, student's flexibility shows various students'

perception as some respondents adapt differently in accepting interactive learning to help enhance blended learning experience. This result is quite different from the previous study as they found that students' flexibility increases students' interest and motivation (Scheiter & Gerjets, 2007). In conclusion, blended learning cannot be adapted overnight, and the process of improvement needs to be done along the way as lecturers provide their lesson for each semester. By utilising interactive learning, the process of blended learning can be enhanced, and education can be reachable across barriers of time and location.

Practical and Social Implications
This study is anticipated to contribute to the blended learning environment in the universities. The university can advise the lecturers to use interactive learning as this method is able to increase students' motivation to study. In addition, the management needs to encourage the lecturers to provide the necessary support and guidance to the students for them to adapt better with the new hybrid learning process.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research
Although this study has reached its objectives, there are limitations as well. This study has a difficulty due to the number of respondents. However, the limitation mentioned will not invalidate the findings of the study. For future research, adding more variables and respondents from both private and public universities might provide better comparison. Quantitative study can be used to enhance the finding of this study.

Acknowledgment

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