IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BLENDED LEARNING MODEL DURING THE NEW NORMAL ERA IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

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Abstract: The new normal era opens up opportunities for implementing limited learning activities combined with online learning. The combination of the learning process is known as blended learning. The writing of this article aims to identify and describe the ability of blended learning to replace conventional learning, the integration of technology in the implementation of blended learning, and students' perceptions of the blended learning model, especially in elementary schools. The writing of this article uses a qualitative descriptive method with a literature review or literature review approach. The technique used is a clear subjective Systematic Literature Review (SLR). The findings from this literature study show that: (1) Blended learning is able to replace conventional face-toface learning in terms of students' cognitive aspects; (2) The combination of synchronous and asynchronous digital technology can be optimized through the renewal of a blended learning model called the Blended Online Instructional Sequence model; and (3) Students' perceptions of conventional (direct) and online learning as part of the blended learning model are quite different, students who undergo the conventional learning process have a meaningful self-assessment. Blended learning has shown its ability as conventional learning' (face to face) alternative with a combination of synchronous and asynchronous digital technology in the new normal era. This shows that blended learning is compatible for all subjects in elementary school. However, the ability of blended learning to replace conventional learning should not only be viewed from the students' cognitive aspect.
Keywords: blended learning, conventional learning, technology.

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INTRODUCTION

The global pandemic Corona Virus Disease (Covid-19) which began to colonize the world in 2020 has had a great impact on all sectors of life, including the education sector (Reista et al., 2021; Saputra et al., 2024). As an effort to prevent and stop the spread of Covid-19, all schools are implementing extreme strategies such as school closures (Suryani et al., 2021; Yanti & Utami, 2021). The strategy impacts more than 90% of children worldwide (Vaillancourt et al., 2021), including Indonesia. Covid-19 indirectly forced the government to issue a policy through the Ministry of Education and Culture Circular Letter No. 4 of 2020 to conduct learning from home (BDR) with a distance learning system (PJJ) online or online (Fajrin & Wulandari, 2021; Intansari, Wulandari, et al., 2023; Wulandari et al., 2022). Until now, the Covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia has not been 100% over, but a significant decrease in cases supports the Indonesian people to enter the new normal era and opens up opportunities for the implementation of limited offline learning activities combined with online learning. The combination of learning processes is known as blended learning.

Blended learning is a traditional learning strategy that is supported by the use of technology or various internet-based tools. In short, blended learning is a strategic combination of face-to-face and online learning. The online learning process is generally carried out with the help of several applications or platforms such as WhatsApp, Google Classroom, Google Meet, Zoom Meeting, Youtube, etc (Intansari, Sugara, et al., 2023; Setiani et al., 2023; Utami et al., 2021). Currently, the blended learning model has been widely applied in elementary schools. The blended learning model is one of the learning strategies that is highly considered, because it is considered more suitable for the current conditions of the world of education and is considered compatible for all existing subjects (Dahry & Avana, 2021). Even so, the role and competence of teachers are highly tested for the implementation of an effective learning process in the midst of various adjustments in the new normal era. One of them is the adjustment to reduce learning time at school (Utami et al., 2023). Considering that learning time in schools is getting shorter and education must continue, the use of technological advantages in the application of appropriate learning methods must be carried out by teachers (Harahap et al., 2021). This urgency further shows the importance of blended learning in today's world of education.

Blended learning indirectly has a positive impact, both for educators and students. The combination of traditional learning and the use of technology that continues to experience rapid development forces educators to always learn until finally mastering various technologies that can support the sustainability of blended learning (Intansari & Sugara, 2023; Wulandari et al., 2023). In addition, from the perspective of students, blended learning can improve learning outcomes (Tasman et al., 2021), learning independence (Karma et al., 2021), learning interest (Pelikan et al., 2021), as well as creating the prospect of efficient learning in the future (Buran & Evseeva, 2015; Rasheed et al., 2020). These various positive impacts implicitly prove that blended learning has many advantages, one of which is a variety of choices of learning resources available online so that students can learn according to their learning style. However, to be able to experience the benefits and advantages of blended learning, the availability of stable internet access, appropriate devices, and appropriate and adequate educational resources must be fully fulfilled (Van Nuland et al., 2020)

Based on the description above, it is clear that the implementation of blended learning is not spared from several prerequisites that can cause problems when one of them has not been able to be met. The most obvious problem lies in one of the components of blended learning, namely online learning (Wulandari & Fajrin, 2022). This study aims to find out and describe the ability of blended learning to replace conventional learning, the combination of technology in the implementation of blended learning, and students' perception of the blended learning model, especially in the scope of elementary school. Therefore, researchers are interested in knowing and studying more deeply about the implementation of blended learning during the Covid-19 pandemic until the transition of education in the new normal era in elementary schools.

METHODS

A qualitative descriptive method with a literature review approach is used in this study. Literature review is known as a type of study to analyze various selected literature until it becomes a conclusion and even a new idea (Kemal & Maharannita, 2023). The technique used is a clear subjective Systematic Literature Review (SLR). SLR is believed to be a method that can recognize, assess, and elaborate all the results of exploration related to the problem to be researched (Sugara & Sugito, 2022). The stages of

implementing this literature review begin with the search for various references relevant to the topic of the problem to be studied and reviewed more deeply. These relevant references are articles indexed by SINTA, Scopus, DOI. All articles that have been collected are evaluated and selected according to the criteria and topics needed. The data collection technique is carried out by analyzing various references that have been selected. Furthermore, an outline structure is made to compile the results of the literature review until conclusions are drawn and new suggestions or ideas are provided Especially in relation to elementary school development efforts.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Efforts to suppress the spread of Covid-19 are still being carried out, one of which is the restriction of learning activities in educational institutions. The restriction of learning activities that until now is still carried out by several elementary schools is the reduction of student capacity and learning hours in face-to-face meetings at school (Lestari & Utami, 2023; Nurkhasanah & Utami, 2022). This means that only a few students can learn at school and others are forced to learn from home with the help of technology to stay connected with teachers (Utami et al., 2024). These conditions and situations force schools to continue to be able to carry out the optimal learning process, until finally many schools adopt a blended learning model. Through the application of blended learning, teachers can still guide students to follow the learning process wherever students are, both in the classroom and at home. The application of blended learning makes teachers and guardians of students work together to guide children to follow the entire series of existing learning, both offline and online (Hewi & Asnawati, 2020).

Various studies on the application of blended learning as a learning innovation and distance learning facilities in the new normal era are available and can be studied. Some of them discussed the ability of blended learning to replace face-to-face learning in terms of mastery of learning and students' cognitive achievement (Fatkhulloh & Haryanto, 2020), A combination of synchronous and asynchronous digital technologies to support online student learning (Moorhouse & Wong, 2022), and students' perception of blended learning (Vaillancourt et al., 2022). In this article, the application of blended learning as one of the educational innovations will be described, starting from the ability of blended

learning to replace conventional learning, the combination of synchronous and asynchronous mode learning, to students' perceptions of face-to-face learning and online learning in relation to several important things during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Blended Learning Capabilities Replace Conventional Learning

Schools are educational institutions that are built in such a way to be able to create the right learning environment for the face-to-face learning process directly in the classroom (conventional learning) in order to achieve learning goals (Intansari, Saptono, et al., 2023; Zulpiyanti & Wulandari, 2023). However, the student learning environment during the pandemic and the new normal era has changed and must undergo adjustments. Blended learning is believed to be the next conventional learning that is much better with various advantages and technology integration in it. According to Fatkhulloh & Haryanto, the advantages of the blended learning model include: (1) The choice of types of learning resources is diverse, so that students can learn according to their learning style; (2) Students can still discuss with friends or teachers related to learning, even outside the classroom; (3) Students can learn outside of face-to-face hours, while remaining under the guidance and management of teachers; (4) Educators are easy to improve/add teaching materials, materials, or enrichment with the help of existing technology; and (5) Fellow students or teachers can easily share learning materials, teaching materials, or other files through the use of technology (Fatkhulloh & Haryanto, 2020).

Based on these various advantages, blended learning is highly considered to be applied in schools in Indonesia. Because the education system in Indonesia refers to "complete learning", the application of blended learning in relation to the completeness of student learning needs to be studied. The results of the analysis showed that blended learning had an effect on cognitive level attainment (CLA) and student learning mastery (SLM) (Fatkhulloh & Haryanto, 2020). Starting from the use of learning strategies, the process of identifying learning content to the selection of learning content delivery technology based on learning objectives are very much considered in the implementation of blended learning, so that it is able to significantly affect the needs and learning styles of students in achieving cognitive levels and student learning completeness. In addition, blended learning has two main components, namely synchronous and asynchronous learning components, which are also able to affect the achievement of students' cognitive level and

learning completeness (Fatkhulloh & Haryanto, 2020). Synchronous learning is a learning concept that is well synchronized without going through intermediaries (there is direct interaction between teachers and students), while asynchronous or asynchronous learning is a learning process mediated by learning media, such as learning videos, textbooks, slides, and so on (Herlina & Utami, 2022). The right integration between these two components determines the success of blended learning which then affects the achievement of the cognitive level and completeness of student learning (Hew & Cheung, 2014).

The results of the student cognitive level achievement test showed that there was a difference in student cognitive level achievement between the blended learning model and conventional face-to-face learning. This can happen because in the application of blended learning, students are very free to explore information and elaborate various information or concepts that have been prepared by teachers with information circulating on the internet, so that they are able to fill the gaps in students' initial knowledge. Thus, the information or concepts received when students carry out face-to-face learning can become complete information or concepts. So, the application of blended learning has the potential to train students to be able to achieve a higher cognitive level. In contrast to the results of the test of the achievement of students' cognitive level which experienced a difference, there was no difference in the completeness of student learning in the blended learning process with conventional face-to-face learning. Ketuntasan belajar adalah kriteria atau predikat yang diberikan kepada siswa yang dianggap telah memenuhi kriteria minimal (Arofah & Wulandari, 2023; Ningrum et al., 2022). The criteria obtained by students are generally used as school evaluation materials for students, for example evaluation materials for grade promotion or graduation. In this study, the learning completeness variable is actually used to determine the feasibility of blended learning in its implementation in schools. In order to be said to be feasible, at least the completeness of student learning in the blended learning process is the same as the completeness of learning in the conventional face-to-face learning process, because so far the standard of learning implementation used in Indonesia is face-to-face learning. So, the completeness of learning obtained from face-to-face learning is a benchmark for the feasibility of implementing blended learning in schools.

Based on the results of the hypothesis test about the achievement of different students' cognitive levels that are significantly different and the completeness of student learning in the blended learning process which is not significantly different from face-to-face learning, it can be concluded that blended learning can replace face-to-face learning in schools in terms of cognitive achievement and learning mastery. Briefly, it can be explained that blended learning does have the ability to replace conventional face-to-face learning, but in this case this ability is only seen from the cognitive aspect of students, not covering all aspects of student growth and development. Therefore, the sustainability of the implementation of blended learning needs to be continuously evaluated and improved to be able to cover all aspects of student growth and development, so that the learning process received and undertaken by students is more optimal and more meaningful for student development.

Convergence of Synchronous and Asynchronous Digital Technologies

The combination of synchronous and asynchronous digital technology as part of the blended learning system accompanied by an instructional approach has become a system adopted by teachers to continue to carry out the educational process during the Covid-19 emergency until now (Sugara et al., 2023). Although the interaction during synchronous online learning still feels different from conventional face-to-face lessons in the classroom and sometimes experiences obstacles, the availability of various existing communication tools must still be sought to involve students in real time.

The above findings are presented according to the three characteristics of the blended learning model, learning resources, assessment, and communication. They showed how teachers have used synchronous and asynchronous approaches based on the abilities of each mode. Asynchronous learning resources provide a way for teachers to manage and create learning materials for students, where later students can learn the material flexibly or when parental support is available. However, asynchronous technology provides more limited opportunities for real-time interaction and regular communication between students and teachers. Therefore, teachers also schedule synchronous learning to provide real-time interaction. Synchronous learning can be carried out offline or online. Technological developments are able to facilitate the implementation of synchronous online learning, as evidenced by the use of a video-conferencing system (VCS) by a teacher for the synchronous delivery of online learning to elementary school students in

Hong Kong. During the learning, teachers use various multimodal features of VCS to facilitate their teaching (Rehn et al., 2016, 2018). In order to support the assessment process, provide feedback on learning, and create a real-time and asynchronous mode of communication, teachers use synchronous technology combined with asynchronous technology.

According to Moorhouse & Wong, it seems that asynchronous or synchronous modes of teaching alone are not effective enough to instruct, assess, and communicate things with elementary school students, so a new model of blended learning needs to be implemented (Moorhouse & Wong, 2022). The new learning model is referred to as the Blended Online Instructional Sequence, which integrates synchronous and asynchronous online practices as a better way for teachers to instruct, assess, and communicate with distance learning students. Meanwhile, the Blended Online Instructional Sequence model suggests a blended learning sequence in five stages (Cong, 2020; Moorhouse & Beaumont, 2020; C. X. Wang, 2021).

Table 1 Stages of the Blended Online Instructional Sequence model

Learning Mode	Instructional Approach	Pedagogical Basis of Thought	Utilization of Digital Technology	Communication
Asynchronous	Initial learning tasks can include: a. Watch the video b. Answer questions available on the LMS	Helps students prepare for hands-on learning and can provide feedback for teachers on students' understanding and ideas.	LMS	Use LMS features and instant messaging platforms to stay in touch at every stage of learning mode
Synchronous	Hands-on learning through VCS: a. Preparing students' conditions b. Teaching and learning activities c. Assignment d. Answer student questions	Providing regularity, interaction between students and students with teachers, and providing answers to existing questions	VCS (Zoom) combined with LMS, game-based platforms, and devices for presentations	
Asynchronous	Self-paced assignments after live learning ends	Examining students' understanding through the	LMS	

Learning Mode	Instructional Approach	Pedagogical Basis of Thought	Utilization of Digital Technology	Communication
		provision of practices relevant to the field of study, consolidation, and continuous learning.		
Asynchronous	Analysis of student responses during the learning process	Analyze student understanding, evaluation, and improvement	Analytics across multiple platforms, e.g. LMS	
Synchronous and/or asynchronous	Providing feedback for students	Provide feedback to students on understanding, evaluation, and areas for improvement.	Annotation software / videos with answers / synchronous tutorials / upload feedback in LMS	

The stages in blended learning can provide opportunities for students to work independently and collaboratively in an asynchronous learning environment, in addition to providing opportunities for teachers to submit direct input, answer questions, and communicate directly during the synchronous learning mode (Jannah & Utami, 2022). The blended learning model, especially the Blended Online Instructional Sequence, is able to provide a learning sequence that allows teachers to give instructions, assess, and communicate with their students more smoothly, so that it can help carry out the learning process and overcome shortcomings in online learning within elementary and secondary schools in the new normal era (Toppin & Toppin, 2016). It is important to be a concern for all teachers, teachers are still in dire need and must continue to hone relevant skills and competencies to create effective online learning (Kemal et al., 2023). Adequate experience and competence will help teachers in making appropriate decisions, planning, delivery, and assessment, as well as meaningful learning experiences for teachers and students.

Students' Perceptions of In-Person and Online Learning as Part of the Blended Learning Model

Since Covid-19 was declared a pandemic, there have been extraordinary disruptions in the scope of education and the lives of students, even students around the world. The

choice of learning model is offered by the Ministry of Education to ease the fears of parents or guardians of students while suppressing the transmission of this extraordinary Covid-19 infection. In particular, parents or guardians of students are given the freedom to choose and allow their children to study in person at school or virtually at home. Increased attention is indeed given to monitor and evaluate the progress of the learning model offered as one of the strategies to prevent virus transmission (Staguhn et al., 2021), however, the potential for "learning loss" (Engzell et al., 2021) and its effects on mental health (Vaillancourt et al., 2021) still not enough attention, there is still quite a bit of consideration made for the socio-emotional implications of this approach for elementary school students. The tendency to see oneself as meaningful to others plays a role in the creation of better mental health and psychological well-being. The feeling of "meaning" during individual development comes from the process of social interaction (Schieman & Taylor, 2001). Thus, it can be estimated that students' perception of "feeling meaningful" will be affected by the absence of face-to-face learning during the pandemic, due to the lack of direct social interaction processes during the pandemic. Vaillancourt's findings show that students who learn face-to-face in person say they mean more than students who learn part of the time in person or completely remotely (Vaillancourt et al., 2022). These results are consistent with recent studies in adult learners that compared online learning conditions with face-to-face learning. Elementary school students who learn in full-time, face-to-face learning are more likely to have feelings of "importance" and "meaning" than middle school students who learn with blended learning.

These findings indicate that face-to-face interaction can support students' sense of care and have a sense of "meaning" for others, so it's important to acknowledge that virtual face-to-face learning can't be a panacea for all learners yet. Collins-Nelsen et al interviewed students who experienced distance learning during the 2020-2021 school year from the same school where the Vaillancourt et al. (2022) research was conducted. Students in the study reported that "lack of bullying, peer pressure, and social anxiety were welcome changes and made it possible to focus more on learning". Students also mentioned that they appreciate the comfort of being at home, not being stressed in the morning, having extra sleep, and having more time with their families. The comments underscore that schools are not always friendly to all students. It is something that

deserves to be acknowledged and cared for by teachers, given the strong evidence that shows that a poor school climate is associated with lower academic achievement (Bryan et al., 2012; Daily et al., 2019; Konold et al., 2018; W. Wang et al., 2014), worse mental health (Aldridge & McChesney, 2018), and worse interactions and relationships with peers (Konishi et al., 2017). The feeling of "meaning" is one of the important components of the school climate, so it is positively correlated with the school climate (Watson, 2017). Teachers should pay attention to the socio-emotional aspect, so that the learning process carried out is more optimal and able to build a sense of "meaning" for all students who participate in blended or blended learning, both face-to-face and remotely. The socio-emotional aspect is important to increase students' interest in learning and increase students' full involvement in the entire learning process.

CONCLUSION

Blended learning has shown its ability as an alternative to conventional learning (face-to-face) in the new normal era from the perspective of students' cognitive aspects. Through a combination of synchronous and asynchronous digital technology, blended learning is able to instruct, assess, and communicate something during the learning process. In order to increase the effectiveness of these three activities, the implementation of blended learning can be optimized by applying a new model of blended learning, namely the Blended Online Instructional Sequence. This shows that blended learning is compatible for all subjects in elementary school. However, in fact, the ability of blended learning in replacing conventional learning not only affects the cognitive aspects of students, but also affects the socio-emotional aspects of students in the form of views or assessments of students who participate in direct (conventional) and online learning. The implementation and assessment related to blended learning skills in replacing conventional learning should also be reviewed from aspects other than student cognition.

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