

The Study of Challenges and Issues of Blended Learning in High School Education during the Covid 19 Period: A Focus Group Discussion

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Abstract

The Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic interrupted our lives, particularly education in Thailand. As a response to interruption of education due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The schools have been closed to prevent the spread of the virus, and they have converted their system into distance education. The purposes of this paper are to understand the perceptions of the teachers and students regarding the use of blended learning modes in teaching learning transactions and to determine the weaknesses and the strengths of the pandemic distance education, educators may specify convenient methods and techniques for the following terms. A qualitative research approach for this study was chosen through focus groups via internet software application. Two focus groups were convened in December 2021, to solicit current students and teachers' opinions on the blended learning education at Kasetsart University Laboratory School Center for Educational Research and Development. The findings revealed that a blended learning is relatively new to Thai Education system, therefore, it is important to review how a blended learning environment impacts an experience by teachers and students in the learning environment. During the COVID-19 pandemic, e-learning has turned into an important alternative for reforming the entire traditional education system. Effective teaching style of online interactions is very important for enhancing online interactions and motivating students to participate in online discussions. In addition to this, the use of technology in education is only to facilitate the teacher in transfer of knowledge, not on building the students' character.

Keywords: Blended Learning environment, Covid 19, Student-Teacher Interaction, Teaching Motivation

1. Introduction

The COVID-19 has disrupted most of the industries in the world. After, World Health Organization (2020) officially declared the COVID-19 epidemic as a public health emergency of international concern. The global decision to close the educational institutes was rational to keep social distancing to stop its spread. Some countries switched to online learning immediately because online learning was the best solution for continuing education during the pandemic, especially in high school education. Pujari (2020) pointed out that COVID-19 affects all over the education system, examinations, and evaluation, starting of new semester or term and it may extend the school year. On March 18, 2020, the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2020) estimated that more than 100 countries had implemented national school closures related to COVID-19, affecting more than 800 million children. Following the Covid-19 outbreak, there began a renewed interest on the role of digital learning.

Thai government has announced to switch an education system from tradition learning system to online learning immediately because they were already prepared for online learning. When the first wave of COVID-19 turned serious in Thailand last March-May, 2020. However, the situation has worsened lately. Just a few weeks after the second semester began in early December, 2020, the new wave of COVID-19 emerged. The Education Ministry has now ordered all schools (except small schools) in 28 red-zone provinces, including Bangkok, to close and adopt online learning. Some schools created blended learning – a mix of both online and onsite classes for their students. It was observed in the first stage of adapting from traditional education to online teaching and learning. The many worldwide studies had conducted in blended learning during the COVID-19 crisis but few studies related to blended learning challenges and educational in Thailand. The use of blended learning in various classes has been researched by previous writers, such as Ayan (2015) and Chansamrong, Tubsree, and Kiratibodee, (2014). There were many difficulties in blended learning. One of the research observing blended learning is to figure out the infrastructure for online teaching was either missing or insufficient. Teachers had no experience of working this way, and this lack of experience had an impact on the quality of education. Therefore, there is an urgent need to explore the perception of the teachers and students on the use of blended learning particularly in the high schools, the challenges in the implementation of the blended learning and how to mitigate the existing digital division in a country like Thailand.

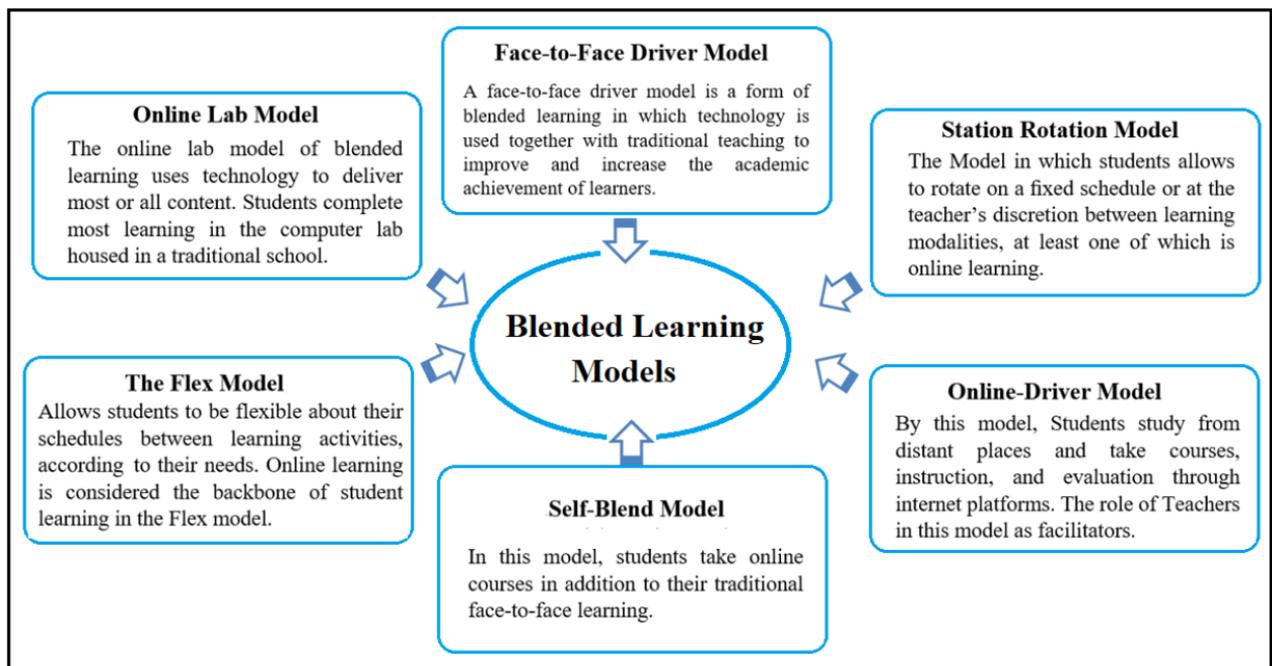
1.1 Research Objectives

This paper focused in the blended learning by Kasetsart University Laboratory School Center for Educational Research and Development as a case study. The purpose of this paper is therefore to understand the perceptions of the teachers and students regarding the use of blended learning modes in teaching learning transactions. Determining the weaknesses and the strengths of the pandemic distance education, educators may specify convenient methods and techniques for the following terms. Consequently, the present study has also aimed to explore the opinions of Thai students about the pandemic education period, and it is hoped to contribute to the field with valuable results. In this way the current study will display blended education issues with its synchronic and asynchronous versions to highlight the strengths and weaknesses. The findings of this study are expected to be one of references to design blended learning with various implements in the new normal education in Thailand.

2. Literature Review

In the spreading of the COVID-19 pandemic, it needs to develop new educational models based on distance technologies require special attention today. One of the ways in which teachers are being guided to achieve such educational outcomes is through the combination of traditional education with e-learning with its multiple styles, and with technological and electronic innovations inside the classroom and outside it (United Nations, 2019). Blended learning (BL) has been widely adopted across higher education with some scholars referring to it as the “new traditional model” (Ross and Gage 2006 and Bryan & Volchenkova, 2016 and Eduviews, 2009 and Tucker, 2012) pointed out that blended learning can be implemented in the education sector using a diverse range of models as summarized in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Blended learning models



Source: Eduviews, 2009 and Tucker, 2012

According to Mantyla (2001), blended learning is the use of two or more presentation and distribution procedures for improving both the content and the learners’ experience. Similarly, Rovai & Jordan (2004) found that students in the blended course measured highest in a sense of community, similar to those students in the face-to-face section, but higher than those in fully online section. It requires the physical presence of both teacher and student, with some elements of student control over time, place, path or pace and also educational materials and technology for online interaction (Friesen, 2012). Although students must still attend physical schools with a teacher present, face-to-face classroom practices are combined with computer-mediated activities regarding content and delivery (Strauss, 2012) to enhance the teaching–learning experience and to encourage the students to explore more to the given content.

However, it is important to understand the impact of blended learning on the effects of education and the social consequences of maintaining this type of education. The impact of digitalization on education was already a reality before the COVID-19 pandemic with the rise of online education. After the first wave, the teaching world faced the challenge of the new school year and this is where blended learning emerged as a firm commitment in the present and looking to the future. Many researchers have extensively studied the impact of blended for example Hebebcı et al. (2020) found that teachers and students have difficulty doing group projects due to a lack of on-campus socialization during the covid 19. As the student becomes a self-directed learner and learns simultaneously and asynchronously at any time, there are many drawbacks of e-learning, the most important of which is getting knowledge only on a theoretical basis and when it comes to using everything that learners have learned without applied practical skills. The face-to-face learning experience is missing, which may interest many learners and educators. Other problems are related to the online assessments, which may be limited to objective questions. Issues related to the security of online learning programs and user reliability are among the challenges of e-learning in addition to other difficulties that are always related to the misuse of technology (Gautam, 2020 and Mukhtar et al. 2020).

2.1 Modified Blended Learning Approach at High School in Thailand

As already mentioned earlier, the COVID-19 lockdown introduced in the beginning of 2020, with all its limitations in the field of Traditional face-to face (f2f) education system, resulted in the need of transition to fully remote work with students in the learning process. Blended learning is one of the most appropriate education system to develop learning skills among Thai students such as self-directed learning and communication skills (Sriarunrasmee, Techataweewan, and Mebusaya, 2015). Blended learning has also been found to support students in comprehension of content as well (Banyen et al., 2016). Khaopa (2012) reported that several universities have used it as blended learning along with traditional teaching in classroom to promote students' learning rather than online education only. The common use of blended learning perhaps is because it has proved to be a teaching tool rather than an educating tool (Pagram and Pagram, 2006) which requires a teacher to deliver knowledge to learners.

One of the most serious risks facing the school-aged population is not only due to the economic downturn and the prolonged school closures, but also fear on the part of parents or children and adolescents themselves around returning to school. Kasetsart University Laboratory School Center for Educational Research and Development have implemented a blended learning system during covid 19. In the beginning of academic year 2021, all teaching classes were implemented by 100% online method, after the declining COVID pandemic situation, onsite study at school and online learning at home were delivered in the second semester. These systems require a pedagogical design that combines face-to-face and distance teaching and learning processes, and which makes full use of the technology available in the short term to reach all students. However, the number of teaching hour was decreased from 50 minutes per class to 40 minutes per class to reduce causing of students' fatigued from learning from computer. Students were allowed to make a choice to study at school or home. In facilitating this teaching model, a face to face teaching was conducted at school together with a live streaming for students who study at home. A balance of synchronous and asynchronous activities were also used based on developmental levels and learning objectives. To be effective, the blended education model must contain mechanisms that allow for teacher-student interaction. This interaction is crucial to keeping students motivated. Therefore, regardless of which distance education modalities are implemented, it is essential to ensure that all students have access to some means of communication with their teachers, whether through digital platforms or mobile phones. It also allows students' learning and well-being to be monitored, as well as offering the possibility of providing the feedback necessary to continue with the learning processes according to students' needs. This will be especially important where schools are expected to remain closed for longer periods, as there will be no face-to-face time to conduct this interaction.

3. Research Method

Qualitative social research is conducted to give suggestions to the audience on how to do better and how to have better services concerning the similar experiences, problems, and thoughts of others (Silverman, 2013). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) stated that qualitative methodology consists of a descriptive and discovery emphasis; its goal is interpreting the meaning of the experience. This study was carried out at Kasetsart University Laboratory School Center for Educational Research and Development, Thailand, as a case study, where all of the teachers have already integrated technologies to run blended teaching and learning under the COVID pandemic. Data were collected using focus group discussion technique. Focus group discussions are used to understand the factors related to students' thoughts and behavior (Krueger and Casey, 2000). Two focus groups were convened to solicit current

students and teachers' opinions on the blended learning education at Kasetsart University Laboratory School Center for Educational Research and Development. Moreover, in focusgroup discussions, participants can think aloud and feel free to say what they think, discuss with the others about counter-arguments, and change their opinions (Lauri, 2019). The aim of the paper is to identify the student's and teacher's perspective on the Blended learning experience during the Coronavirus pandemic in order to improve and strengthen the education system. Furthermore, we were also interested in identifying the main difficulties that students and teachers encountered while learning blended program, and in which context they would like these platforms to be further used by school.

3.1 Data Collection Procedure

A qualitative case study approach was adopted in order to answer the research question and test the hypothesis (Morgan, 2007). A qualitative approach was preferred since the research question requires in-depth information on the various dimensions of the issue, rather than quantitative information. Therefore, to achieve the research aims, the design selected a focus group method, the participants were a group of teachers and students from Kasetsart University Laboratory School Center for Educational Research and Development. The main reason to use focus group as a data collection method because it allows the researcher to listen, observe conversations between knowledgeable informants with different views. In this study, the researcher was the moderator and had previous experience in facilitating focus groups. Evidence indicates that participants' perspectives are the result of their exchange of opinions, experiences, and various attitudes expressed through their views, and those perspectives develop through interaction with others (Krueger and Casey, 2014; Stewart and Shamdasani, 2015). Two focus groups were convened in December 2021, for the first focus group was conducted with four students, three males and female between the ages of 15-17, one English teacher as the author. Whereas, the second session was conducted with four students, three males and female between the ages of 15-17 and teacher from Mathematics department and the researcher. The author conducted focus groups via internet software application, 'Microsoft team' based on research objectives.

3.2 Reliability in Quantitative Research

Reliability is an area for which qualitative research is sometimes criticized. In general terms, reliability refers to the extent in which research findings can be replicated. Denscombe (2002) emphasized that in social research two main questions need to be addressed when determining reliability: (a) Are the data valid? and (b) Are the methods reliable? To increase the reliability in quantitative research, the researcher provided an audit trail by describing in detail how data was collected, how categories were derived, and how decisions were made throughout the study. The researcher also attempted to control for bias by constantly comparing data and also searching the literature to obtain multiple viewpoints.

3.3 Data Analysis

The data collected were analyzed through classical content analysis, which is based on content analysis. More precisely, content analysis refers to "any technique used which results in conclusions by objectively and systematically identifying the specified characteristics of the messages/texts" (Stemler, 2015). In addition, classical content analysis is considered effective in examining trends and models in certain documents, which makes it appropriate here as this study deals with a large number of case studies and a heterogeneous sample. An unique code to each participant were also assigned to protect of their identity and to maintain confidentiality. This code consisted of a number and a capital letter, for example, 1A. In this example, the number represents the focus group, which is Group 1. The letter represents one of the participants corresponding to Group 1. This code identifies each citation, and it consists of a number and a letter, the area of specialization of the participant, and gender, either male or female.

4. Findings and Discussion

Analysis of data revealed the opinions of the participants about the COVID-19 pandemic, blended learning education during the pandemic process, and suggestions for the future of education implementations. The results of each research question were displayed below.

Part 1: Blended learning environment

A blended learning is relatively new to Thai Education system since a concept integrating co-teaching and blended learning is a new teaching models to implement in the pandemic crisis, therefore, it is important to review how a blended learning environment impacts an experience by teachers and students in the learning environment. In such a critical time, there has been a drastic change in how teaching and learning happen while learners are physically out of schools and separated from their teachers and their classmates. However, in blended learning environment, students can access to learning materials by using web technologies outside the class while attending face to face education.

A. Comparing face to face and Blended Learning System

In the group discussion, all students have expressed their experiences in learning by both traditional approach and online learning as *“Within an online classroom environment, students come and listen to the lesson and when they go home, they do the homework and studies related to the lesson. In contrast, during b-learning, students have already got the information concerning the lesson before they come to the class.”*

Many students explained in a several ways: *“face to face features of the session provides social interaction between students and teachers. Besides, face to face sessions may be more similar to students’ study preferences”*.

In the group discussion, all teachers have expressed their experiences in teaching by both traditional approach and online learning as *“the integration of e-learning environment and traditional learning environment may combine ideally the useful aspects of both methods. E-learning environments ensure the flexibility and efficacy which cannot be found in a classroom environment whereas face-to-face learning environment provides the social interaction which is required for learning”*.

Teachers have agreed that the transition from conventional learning systems to blended systems occurred suddenly because the Covid-19 pandemic was not preceded by mature preparation. Because of the reduced face-to-face class time and increased use of online systems, teacher has expressed that it is common to expect that students need to take more effort to get familiar with and make effective use of the blended learning environment. Therefore, to help keep them interested in learning, teachers should put more effort in checking and making sure that students enjoy the learning environment.

B. Effect of technology in Blended Learning System

Another challenge of blended learning is the use of technology during the COVID pandemic. When asked about students’ learning behavior and technology, it appears that the teacher participants believed that learning online would help increase students’ learning autonomy, which is part of the required skillset for the 21st century. The teacher participants felt that *“technology seemed to fit well with students’ learning behaviors and styles. Online learning and technology are appropriate for students’ learning because mobile phones are part of their lives. They are addicted to using mobile phones. When using online learning, students are more motivated to learn because they are required to use mobile phones to do class activities, and class materials appear on their mobile phone screens, so they have to pay attention to them”*. In addition to this, teacher agreed that teacher’s role cannot be replaced by technology. The use of technology in education is only to facilitate the teacher in transfer of knowledge, not on building the students’ character.

Students mentioned that *“learning, downloading materials, and submitting assignments online were convenient because they could access the materials and submit assignments from anywhere at any time. However, all students reported that they still wanted to meet face-to-face with teachers in class”*. Technology provides students with easy access to the course materials and submission of assignments.

Students discussed that they would rather study at school than at home because there they can meet up with friends. They can ask teachers whenever they don’t understand a topic or need more clarification on any lessons. Learning through online platforms at home poses some challenges, making them feel like they are falling behind in their education. *“I was learning on a mobile phone when staying at home. I didn’t follow the lessons as scheduled all the time. Sometimes there were some troubles with the internet connection while learning on my phone,”* Therefore, I still prefer meeting with the teacher in class because I feel I understand the materials more. When in class, the teacher can explain things and clarify difficult points for me.

Interestingly, one student mentioned that *“students today are different from students in the past. We have short concentration spans. It is easy for us to get distracted and go on other websites or applications, like social media. So, the lesson should be well designed, guidance should be provided at the beginning of the lesson, and a summary of major points (e.g., mind map or handouts) should also be provided.”*

C. Transformational practices of the teacher leader

The COVID-19 lockdown introduced in the spring of 2020, with all its limitations in the field of f2f contacts, resulted in the need of transition to fully remote work with students in the learning process. While it is possible to change the BL approach into the framework with distance learning and works, this process requires additional mental and technical preparation, both from teachers and students. As blended learning becomes more established, it offers the opportunity for teachers to develop new methods of communication with and among students, develop learning activities that are engaging to the digital native learner, and differentiate instruction to meet the needs of the diverse learners' styles presented in any classroom. It indicates that it is the careful consideration of many elements in the design of instruction that creates a setting for greater student understanding and learning in blended learning transformation period.

Some students mentioned that *"the main issue they encountered was the lack of adaptation of the teaching style to the online environment, this having a negative impact on their ability to assimilate and understand the subjects taught during the courses"*.

Students mentioned that *"the most appropriate way to carry out the teaching-learning process is the traditional way, face to face, with them whereas the E-learning platform should be used as a complementary instrument to facilitate the educational process"*.

Moreover, some students expressed that *"online learning may affect students' performance when attending more difficult courses in which teacher could not have well adapted methods of teaching"*.

Part 2: The benefits of blended learning

During the COVID-19 pandemic, e-learning has turned into an important alternative for reforming the entire traditional education system. Both teachers and students have had to change their behaviors, their teaching/learning style, assessment methods, and so forth. Teachers and Students have agreed that there are several benefits of online learning. This reform has brought about several benefits as the following:

A. Teacher-student interaction in class

BL aims at using modern technology in teaching without abandoning the usual educational situation and classroom attendance. It focuses on direct interaction in the classroom through the use of modern communication mechanisms, such as computers, networks, and internet portals. Teachers shared that the individualized atmosphere of online courses and the ability to capitalize on one-to-one correspondences were the primary benefits of online learning. On the topic of communication and providing feedback, one teacher shared that: *"I conducted my courses as Microsoft team platform conversations between me and each student, and we found that differentiating instruction in a traditional classroom can be very difficult due to the simultaneous interaction with the students, by contrast addressing individual needs of each student is easier to do with online students, since the nature of the system is more geared to individuals."*

Furthermore, responding to students promptly is yet another important aspect of communication. Teachers and students alike expressed the importance of prompt and supportive feedback. Students feel that *"The more personal one-to-one correspondences were found to be useful when used in conjunction with the class as a whole to target reoccurring questions, interact with the quieter students, and to build "a sense of the course as a dynamic shared enterprise"*.

B. Student opportunities in learning

Students can 'attend' a course at anytime from anywhere. This means that students can attend classes no matter what their working schedule might be attend class from anywhere in the world that has internet access. Another advantage of online learning is that it gives students the ability to gain more control over their learning experiences. It could be said that *"Today's students are increasingly taking their educational destiny into their own hands by seeking out learning opportunities outside of school and leveraging technological tools and applications to customize the learning process to meet their specific needs. Students tell us that online learning provides an environment where they can get extra help in a subject that is hard for them, review classroom material as many times as needed, or feel more comfortable asking their teachers questions"*.

Teacher's value professional development opportunities for online classes and the ability to customize their own teaching methods. *"As teachers are becoming more comfortable with online classes and the use of online tools through their own professional development and learning communities, we are seeing growth in the number of*

teachers interested in teaching online classes themselves". Teachers indicated their belief that students are ready to seize and shape their futures, and to do so by effectively leveraging a wide range of technological tools to implement their personalized vision for 21st century education.

Part 3: The challenges of blended online learning

Under COVID 19 pandemic, teachers and students were not prepared for the sudden shift to exclusively online learning and teaching, but they tried to find strategies to adapt and meet the new challenges. From teacher observed during teaching online class, there are a number of drawbacks and potential issues that students may face while participating in an online course.

A. Technical skill and teaching style

Effective teaching style of online interactions is very important for enhancing online interactions and motivating students to participate in online discussions. Teachers did not have the necessary technical skills and they did not manage in such a short time to adapt their teaching style, or to properly interact with students in the online environment to assure high standards of the teaching process. The technical skills of teachers can be represented by their ability to use different functions offered by the E-learning platform in order to adapt their teaching style to the online environment, for example, using the video conference function where students can actively participate because teachers have the possibility to make them moderators.

Teacher mentioned that *"Online learning, primarily, enables students to gain knowledge from the Internet and to have the autonomy to adjust their learning progress without temporal or spatial constraints, however, the effectiveness of distance learning depends on self-regulation. Therefore, distance learning is only needed to be supplemented courses to students"*.

B. Academic rigor

The use of e-assessment or examination, generally, has been replaced in education during the COVID 19. Typically, online tests involve the use of multiple-choice questions (MCQs), true/false questions, matching questions as well as predetermined short answer questions. Therefore, the academic rigor is a topic that resides at the very core of the traditional conception of the academy. The distance between the teachers and students as well as the lack of traditional face-to-face examination is also felt to increase the likelihood of cheating in an online course.

Teachers has expressed that *"to ease the load on students, many educational institutions have reduced curriculums and offered pass or fail options to learners, or completely deactivated pass/fail options"*. There has also been a switch to focus on formative assessments over summative assessments. A formative assessment during Covid-19 is crucial as *"teachers and parents-turned-teachers need to understand whether students are absorbing the content that is delivered to them in formats that differ from traditional face to face classroom."* Such experiences have led to the rise of inclusive education policies which attempt to provide accessible digital materials for all learners (with captioning, accessible to screen-readers etc.) and design flexible assessments which do not require so many individual adjustments.

C. Classroom dynamics and interaction

When looking at how the use of a blended learning environment affected what went on in the classroom, the issue of classroom dynamics stands out. In this context, classroom dynamics covers student and teacher interaction and student and teacher attitude to the course activities and each other. Teacher mentioned that *"One of the most difficult aspects of teaching online is integrating student because the multisensory, multimodal, multi-tasking interactions that are common place in a face-to-face course are difficult to capture or emulate in an online course"*. Therefore, teachers need to design these interactions effectively so that students are motivated to participate and learn the course materials, and the teachers have ample opportunities to interact with students, stimulate their critical thinking, facilitate their learning, and meet course objectives".

"I feel students are not as engaged in online sessions as they should be. At times, I am not sure if they are all even on the same page. We need to enhance classroom engagement and interactions. Maybe some online tools to monitor and reward or teaching method that improves learning". 'Students are not motivated. I know it's a normal response to the pandemic but the teachers don't know how to motivate them... sometimes, the teachers have their blues, this is a strange situation. The quality of an online session depends on the participant's spirit'. Therefore,

teacher suggested that “student – teacher interactions in an online course include (1) asynchronous or synchronous discussions between students and the teachers, (2) collaborative activities among students for completing course assignments, (3) students interacting one-on-one with the teacher on course materials such as course notes, homework assignments, announcements, etc.

D. Cultural restrictions

Cultural restrictions are another area that one should be mindful of when designing an online course. Educational technology continues to represent the dominate culture, therefore limiting individuals who are not included in the dominate culture. These cultural restrictions should be noted considering that social and emotional aspects of learning are as important as the technical information.

A majority of students stated that “there was a real difference in their learning when comparing a class session online with an in-class session. The impact of peer interaction in class is an important in discussing online learning environments”. Some students stated, “We believe there is a difference because when in class we get the benefit of learning a lot more from our peers.” Students also suggest that a strong and active social life on campus can be used to explain both high persistence and learning satisfaction amongst learners.

Therefore, leading one to believe that the lower persistence rates of online courses are caused by a lack of community and social connectedness in an online learning environment. Clearly there is a difference in peer interaction and community building, so how can an online course structure bridge the gap and capitalize on social interaction using the tools available?

E. Student motivation

To maintain motivation in an online course is another challenge. Students who lacked independence and self-motivation overall had lower success rates than their counterparts. Students with a lack of self-regulation tended to not assign enough time to complete assignments, therefore turning in poor quality work or late assignments all together. Overall, “successful students tend to have stronger beliefs they will succeed, higher self-responsibility, higher self-organization skills, and better technology skills and access”. Students must also be capable of evaluating the motivating factors that will contribute to the continuance of momentum for the duration of the course. Students lacking motivation, whether intrinsic or extrinsic, can easily lose sight of their original goal and quickly become lost within the course.

Understanding learning styles and self-behavior is pertinent to determining one success in the undertaking of an online course. Online course work tends to be reading and writing intensive, deterring some learners. Students with low reading abilities may find the heavy text and writing curriculum to be cumbersome. Another hurdle that some students struggle to overcome is the absence of a teacher in a given place and given time throughout the duration of the semester. Some online learners experience a learning curve when first becoming acclimated with asking questions in various forums, instead of in a traditional face-to-face, classroom setting.

5. Discussions

As a conclusion, it is clear that the COVID-19 pandemic process has affected to the students and teachers both positively and negatively. Most of the opinions disclosed the disadvantages of pandemic education on students’ inthis paper,students mostly complained about not having enough opportunities instudent and teacher interaction in the class as they usually study in the traditional face to face system. This finding supported by the study of O’Lawrence (2005) and Young (1997), they specified the lack of interaction issue from the perspective of teachers. They pointed out that teachers do not see their students’ faces they cannot observe the signs of attention or inattention so they cannot react immediately. It is similar to the finding by Santana de Oliveira et al., (2018), it was found thatstudents could not ask their questions at the time they arise so they had to wait for another contact with theteachers. Unless interaction through collaborative activities is provided, distance education leads students tofeel isolated (Cohen, 2003). O’Lawrence (2005) and Jacob and Radhai (2016) stated that distance education requires more self-discipline and time management than the traditional education. Similar to the study by Santana et at (2018) stated that without physical guidance of teachers it is difficult for students to be disciplined in distance education process. However, some of the opinions disclosed the advantages of pandemic education on students’ learning and teaching such as the studied by Wheatley and Greer (1995), Smedley (2010), Santana et al (2018) and Smedley (2010). According to Wheatley and Greer (1995) one of the primary benefits of web-based distance education is students’ arbitrariness of studying according to their schedule. In parallel with the findings of the

current study Santana et al (2018) noted that flexibility provided by distance education takes away the rigidity in traditional classroom schedules, which makes students advantageous. Smedley (2010) remarked that not only the students but also the institutions and instructors utilize the flexibility of time and place provided by the distance education. Having more responsibilities is the other advantage of it. O'Lawrence (2005) noted that the learners who are able to study on their own can utilize distance education.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

During COVID pandemic, all schools in Thailand have intensified their efforts to enhance online interactions and motivate students to participate in online learning. Transitioning from classroom teaching to blended instruction is a challenge even under the best possible circumstances to adjust to the "new normal." To implement blended learning, the transformation of learning that can be pursued includes the transformation of technology and learning media, transformation of learning designs, transformation of learning models and transformation of assessment processes and learning outcomes. In Blended based learning, it is necessary to build opportunities for interactions and communication between students and their teachers. Teachers are possibly the most important element in the whole process, and especially so in relationship with disadvantaged students, for whom the family can often offer only limited support (in fact, in many cases teachers have a mediating role between students and their family). Finally, it is clear that the blended learning has the potential to overcome several of the disadvantages of both traditional methods and online learning. Synchronous and asynchronous forms are possible tools to reach the needed interactivity levels to enhance retention rate of students, support students in need, and replace individual face-to-face support and mentoring provided in conventional learning on-campus. Integration of the virtual and physical landscapes enables both teachers and students to become learners, but this is most effective when there is institutional support through the provision of professional learning and the opportunity for redesigning courses to the most appropriate blend (Bliuc, 2007). However, according to Kintu, C. Zhu, and E. Kagambe (2017) and Kudryashova, Gorbatoeva, and Rozhkova (2016) if the blended learning model was applied to the learning process it would be more effective with the transition of students to higher levels in gaining knowledge and developing skills.

5.5 Limitations and Future Research

Although this study provided a substantial contribution through research results but some limitations could open up several possibilities for further research. First, this study was performed in a limited population, which was taken from a few participants in one school and in Bangkok. In a wider range of populations, further research may investigate the phenomenon using different techniques, institutions, and other provinces. Second, up-to-date research on the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on the learning lives of students was enriched in terms of causes and some negative consequences, but further motivating frameworks also need to be developed as a response to these causes and negative consequences in the field of blended learning approach. Finally, Motivation has been identified giving influence in students' blended learning at Kasetsart University Laboratory School Center for Educational Research and Development, Kasetsart University. It was affected either intrinsically or/and extrinsically. It is recommended for the teachers and institution to put more attention on external factors as they also integrated to students' self-determination in online learning.

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