e-Bangi Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia
Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities

*Vol. 16, No.1 (1-8), ISSN: 1823-884x*

# THE READINESS OF MMU LECTURERS TOWARDS THE IMPLEMENTATION OF BLENDED LEARNING

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## ABSTRACT

Many higher institutions have started to adopt and implement information and communication technology (ICT) as a source of flexible teaching and learning either in the classroom or outside the classroom. Multimedia University is among the eight universties in Malaysia that are awarded as Premier Digital Tech University by the Ministry of High er Education (MOHE) and the Malaysia Digital Economy Corporation (MDEC). In line with its statuses, MMU has implemented Blended Learning in teaching and learning. Therefore, the study is meant to examine the readiness of MMU lecturers towards the implementation of Blended Learning and to explore the current practice of Blended Learning among lecturers.The findings confirmed on the lecturer's readiness on Blended Learning implementation. The findings also revealed a good practice of the lecturers in implementing the Blended learning approach in their classes. The findings provide input on the integration of Blended learning in the process of teaching and learning. In conclusion, MMU lecturers are ready and equipped with adequate knowledge in implementing Blended Learning in the classes. It is hoped that the findings act as a valuable resource to recognise the various problems and issues in MMU from using technology to enhance the quality of teaching and learning. The analysis shows that adequate levels of technological, pedagogical, and content knowledge are essential for the take-up of e-learning at MMU.

**Keywords:** Blended learning, readiness, lecturer, teaching and learning, implementation

## INTRODUCTION

Blended Learning has become a new trend in teaching and learning process. The implementation of technology in teaching and learning activity has attracted great interest from educational practitioners in higher education institution (HEI) in Malaysia (Farahiza, 2010). Many higher institutions have started to adopt and implement information and communication technology (ICT) as a source of flexible teaching and learning either in the classroom or outside the classroom. Teaching and learning can now be more effective and interesting as students can equip themselves with new technologies that they will be dealing with in the job market. Harasim et. al (1995) and Bates (2001) added that the e-learning provides a good start for instructors to explore and apply the new technology in their teaching approaches. Traditional classroom requires instructors to present, interact, communicate and demonstrate with students face to face in the classroom.

Gaida et.al (2016) identified that there is improved readiness for and receptiveness to feedback and increased control over students' learning. The previous study by Papadopoulos and Ali (2016) involving nursing students showed that e-learning contributes to students' academic achievement. In another study by Abidoye (2015), it is revealed that a blended learning instructional approach was more effective in enhancing students achievement than a conventional teaching method. However, the study further highlighted that learning

institutions should be equipped with adequate computer systems and internet facilities. These indirectly indicate that the implementation and effectiveness of blended learning are not only lain on the readiness of stakeholders, teachers, and learners, but also the support from the institutions in providing the required facilities. Multimedia University is among the eight universties in Malaysia that are awarded as Premier Digital Tech University by the Ministry of High er Education (MOHE) and the Malaysia Digital Economy Corporation (MDEC). In line with its statuses, MMU has implemented Blended Learning in teaching and learning.Therefore, this study explores the readiness and current practice of the lecturers towards the implementation of blended learning.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Teaching and learning is an evolutionary process. Now, it has evolved from a total teacher or classroom dependent stage to an online environment (Farahiza, 2010). From the early development of blended learning, the definitions are varied, but overlapping (Allen and Seaman, 2007; Graham, 2013; and Picciano, 2009). Blended Learning is a form of education that is increasingly being used in the developed world. More universities are gradually employing blended learning into their educational programmes. Blended learning also can be known as e-learning or electronic- learning. According to Mohd Fuad (2008), e-learning or electronic-learning is a concept associates learning with the application of new technologies such as the internet, intranet, email, satellite broadcasts, audio/ video tape or Compact Disc Read Only (CD-ROM). In the blended learning development, students can learn anything without boundaries as blended learning gives students the opportunity for self-directed study. Moreover, within the last several years, scholars have predicted that Blended Learning will become the "new normal" in higher education course delivery (Norberg, Dziuban, & Moskal, 2011).

According to Won Kim (2007), blended learning is the learning outside the traditional classroom using information technology for the delivery of the learning materials. Smith (2001) defines blended learning as a method of educating at a distance that uses technology (high-tech, such as television and the Internet or low-tech, such as voice mail or conference calls) combined with traditional (or, stand-up) education or training. Orey (2002) defines blended learning from both the designer outlook and the learner perspective, which is the organisation and distribution of all available facilities, technology, media and materials to achieve an instructional goal even when many of these things may overlap considerably; and a kind of learning method that being able to choose among the provided learning experiences to achieve any individual learning goals while matching the preferred learning style. In short, blended learning can be precisely defined as the combination of face-to-face and online instruction.

In a study among senior secondary school students at Lagos State in Southwest, Nigeria by Ojaleye and Awofala (2017), examined the effects of blended learning (BL) and problem-based learning (PBL) instructional strategies, found that students' achievement in algebra was enhanced when PBL and BL strategies were used than the traditional lecture method (TLM). PBL is a learner-centred strategy such as a problem solving heuristic that learners are presented with ill structured problems and engaged the problems in a small collaboratory peer teaching to solve the problems. BL is a learning strategy which supplements traditional face to face instruction congruent to the TLM with a computer-based algebrator in which students were subscribed to a class e-mail list. In a quasi-experimental pretest, post-test, non-equivalent control group design (with a sample of 388 students that

consist of 204 boys and 184 girls) with one research instrument, Algebra Achievement Test (AAT) was used for pretest and posttest. Results showed that there was a statistically significant main effect of treatment on students' achievement in algebra. This impliedly marked an evidence that BL incorporated in teaching and learning enhance students achievement.

Additionally, Northey, Govind, Bucic, Chylinski, Dolan, and Esch (2018) studied the effect of "here and now" learning on student engagement and academic achievement. The study involves a quasi-experimental, between subjects design, tests a low investment blended learning approach using Facebook as the asynchronous engagement platform to facilitate collaboration outside the classroom. The outcome revealed that the "here and now" learning through Facebook not only has a positive influence on student learning behaviours and student engagement, but also affect the academic outcomes. It creates another evidence on the importannce of collaborative learning in instructional design, especially in our modern technologically advanced world, where time and place are no longer a barrier in teaching and learning.

Another study focus on the importance of learning style showed that learning style enhanced both students' academic achievement and teacher's professional satisfaction (Vizeshfar and Torabizadeh, 2018). Hence, Blended Learning could be on one of the teaching styles to add in the existing learning style. This is especially relevant to the millennia generation of youngsters nowadays. The teaching method for this generation should take into consideration students' learning preference. In a teaching-learning process, it is important to pay more attention to students' learning preferences than to their other characteristics (Vizeshfar and Torabizadeh, 2018). Students may take more responsibility in the learning process when teachers adopting innovative approaches to teaching since at the present time the education is moving toward student-centered education (Vizeshfar and Torabizadeh, 2018).

Therefore, the study would address the two Research Questions: 1) Do lecturers ready to implement Blended Learning in their teaching? 2) What is the current practice of blended learning in the classroom? Based on the Research Questions, two objectives were derived: 1) To examine the readiness of MMU lecturers towards the implementation of Blended Learning. 2) To explore the current practice of Blended Learning among students and lecturers.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A mixed method was used for the study with survey with questionnaire. However, this article is mainly focus on the descriptive explanation on the readiness and trends of implementation of Blended Learning among lectures in MMU. Random sampling with 111 staff participated was used for the study. Data were gathered through online Google form to all lecturers in MMU. They reponded through google form survey that was emailed through the faculty's managers. Then, the managers sent the invitation to their staff through the faculty's mass mail. 111 staff consists of male (40.5%) and female (59.5%) from two campuses (Melaka and Cyberjaya) participated in the study. Most of the staff particpated in the study were aged between 31-40 years old (42.3%) followed by 41-50 years old (32.4%). And about 51.8 % were Lecturers, followed by 20.5% Senior Lecturers. About 75% have been servising MMU for more than five years.

The questions for objective 1 in the survey were developed and adapted from Malaysian IHL e-Learning Questionnaire (Instructor). (Mohamed Amin Embi, 2011). The

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question asked such as "what are tools that you used in your teaching and learning" and "the degree of readiness" with the response ranged from "strongly agree" and "strongly disagree".

1. Question no.1: I attended many blended learning training or workshop.
2. Question no. 2: My students like the way I incorporate technology
3. Question no. 3: Blended learning assists my teaching and students's learning
4. Question no. 4: Professional development training and worlshop have assisted me to incorporate technology into my teaching
5. I find that BLT has improved my performance in class
6. My teaching evaluation has improved after my BLT in terms of course/subject

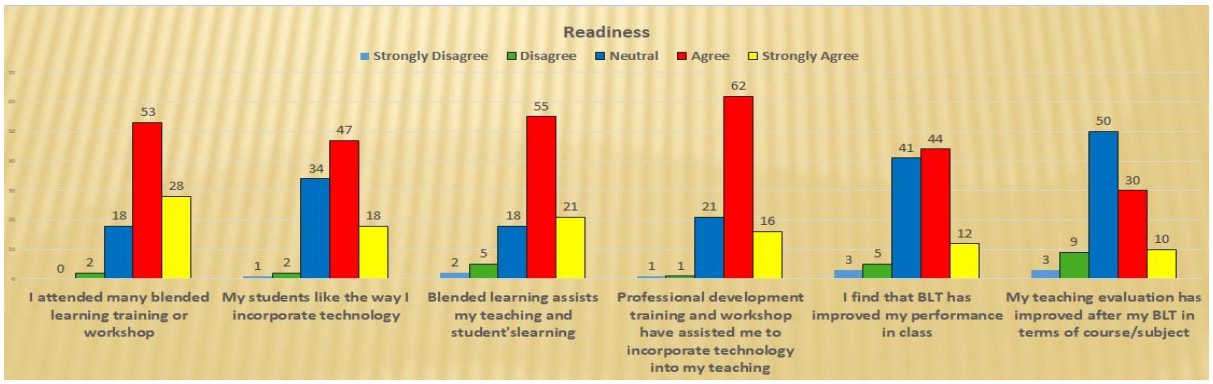
The question for objective 2 asked about the variation of applications or tools used for the Blended Learning activity in the class, such as "what are the application mostly used in your class?" and "list down the tools that you used in the class". The findings were discussed based on two objectives, which are the readiness of the lecturers i.e., the current practice of Blended Learning among the lecturers and trends of implementation of Blended Learning.

## RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### The readiness of MMU lecturers towards the implementation of Blended Learning

Six questions were asked to the participants to evaluate the readiness of MMU lecturers towards the implementation of Blended Learning. As shown in Figure 1, for about 47% agreed that they attended many blended learning training or workshop. About 42% claimed that their students like the way they incorporate technology in their classes. About 49% agreed that blended learning assists their teaching and students's learning. Abou 56% showed that professional development training and worlshop have assisted them to incorporate technology into their teaching. About 40% discovered that BLT has improved their performance in class. Finally, about 45% agreed that their teaching evaluation has improved after they conducted class using blended learning strategy in terms of course/subject.

**Figure 1: The readiness of MMU lecturers towards the implementation of Blended Learning**




The findings showed that MMU lecturers are ready with Blended Learning implementation. They have equipped themselves with all matters related to Blended Learning to enhance their teaching and learning and keep pace with the vast changing technology. The lecturers were very positive on the professional development training and workshop provided by the university.

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**Trends of implementation of Blended Learning**

The current practice of Blended Learning among the lecturers were shown in Figure 2 and 3. Figure 2 showed that the variation of tools often used in teaching and learning. For Email, 45 people said "very often", for content sharing 31 people said "very often", for Assessment 40 people said "often", for contecnt sharing 45 people said "often", for student grouping 32 said "often". However, for forum 48 people claimed "never". Maybe this area need furher investigation to understand the reason it is less utilised by the lecturers. Figure 3 showed that MMLS (provided by the university) was mainly the main application used by the lecturers followed by Kahoot, Youtube, and Quiziz

**Figure 2: The variation of tools often used in teaching and learning**

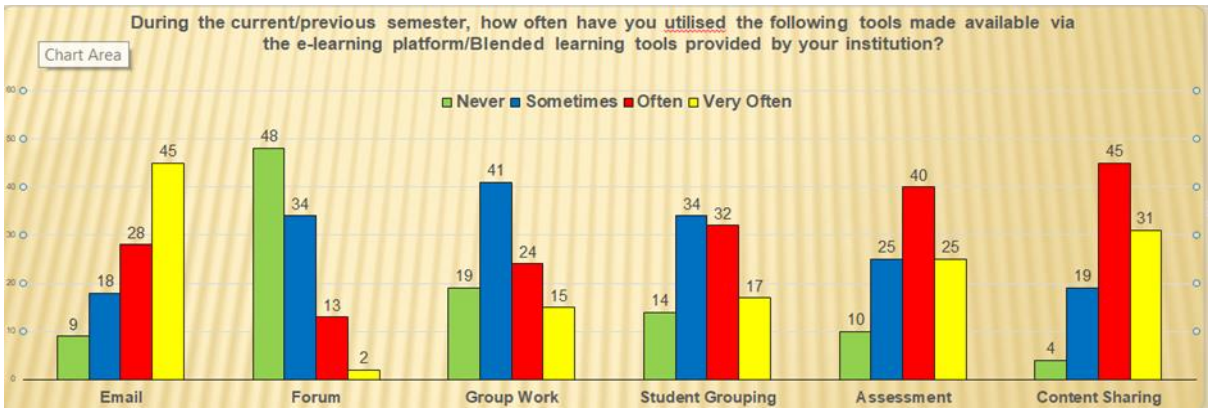
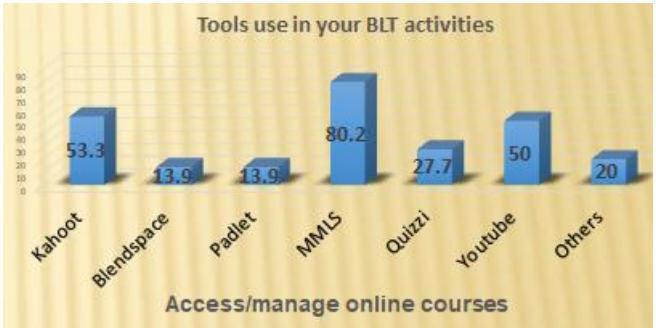



**Figure 3: Specific application used in teaching and learning**




From the abovementioned, the findings confirmed on the lecturer's readiness on Blended Learning implementation. They have equipped themselves with all matters related to Blended Learning to enhance their teaching and learning and keep pace with the vast changing technology. The lecturers were very positive on the professional development training and workshop provided by the university. What can be surmised from the findings is that the lecturers understand the element of Blended Learning. In other words, the lecturers understand the philosophy behind the Blended learning approach. If they understand the philosophy, they can easily catch up with all the factors or materials needed or to be learnt to improve themselves.

Furthermore, there are four meaningful criteria to differentiate between the four basic course delivery methods (Allen and Seaman, 2013) with Blended Learning. Firstly, the

*Traditional F2F* classroom. Secondly, the *Web Facilitated* modality that combined a face-to-face component and between 1% and 29% of online delivery. Thirdly, the *Blended/Hybrid* modality that combined face-to face component and between 30% and 79% of online delivery. Finally, the *Online modality* in which 80% or more of instruction is via online (Allen and Seaman, 2013). MMU lecturers fall under the Blended/Hybrid modality that combined face-to face component and between 30% and 79% of online delivery. The findings showed that the lecturers are on the right track and expected to improve better in the next year to come.

Secondly, along with the recognition as one of the Premier Digital Tech University in Malaysia, the findings revealed a good practice of the lecturers in implementing the Blended learning approach in their classes. From the findings, the lecturers were able to catch up with various tools available to blend the teaching and learning with face-to-face (F2F) class. The tools often used by the lecturers in teaching and learning among the lectures are email, content sharing, and students' assessment. Additionally, MMLS is mainly utilised by the lecturers. MMLS is provided by the University for content sharing and disseminates information to students and all related information about the subject thought by the lecturers. Other than MMLS, the lecturers are also utilising the various free tools for Blended learning available on the internet such as Kahoot, Youtube, and Quiziz. As suggested by Garner and Oke (2015), Blended Learning has emerged as a modality for teaching and learning to foster engaging and interactive learning experiences. They commended that blended learning as an instructional environment has intentionally united the best features of F2F and online learning settings for the purpose of achieving identified student-learning outcomes. Without thoughtful unification of the tools, impactful design and unique strategies of assessment, the learning would not be attractive and functional to the users (Garner and Oke, 2015).

Moreover, with a Blended Learning approach, the element of humanness (Graham, 2006) could be instilled in teaching and learning. The students experience both human (lecturer) touch and enjoy the variety of application or web tools (technology). Education is not only for getting a certificate but also for socialisation. Thus students can still have F2F contact and the same time exploring and enjoying the technology.

## CONCLUSION

The Blended Learning initiative has involved all parties ranging from top management, representatives of the faculties, centres, departments and students in the formulation of a Blended Learning approach. The findings provide input on the integration of Blended learning in the process of teaching and learning. It is hoped that the findings act as a valuable resource to recognise the various problems and issues in MMU from using technology to enhance the quality of teaching and learning. However, the study only focuses on MMU lecturers, thus could not be generalised to other universities. Besides, the study only focus on the readiness of lecturers, but not the students. By assuming that the students are the millenial generation that would love the Blended Learning is not a wise assumption to be made. In short, the analysis shows that adequate levels of technological, pedagogical, and content knowledge are essential for the take-up of e-learning at MMU. However, in future, further research is suggested to look into consideration on both lecturers and students' awareness and readiness as well as the type of courses or programme enrolled by the students to examine inferences between variables and make prediction.

*Vol. 16, No.1 (1-8), ISSN: 1823-884x*

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

This research was funded by Mini Fund Grant 2016/2017, RMC, MMU.

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