



## Blended Learning as a Developmental Model Strategy of Teaching and Learning in Islamic Universities in Indonesia

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### Abstract

Blended learning is a demanding topic nowadays where its existence is possibly enhance lecturers' competencies as well as giving students new experiences from the combination of different platforms of learning i.e. face to face interaction and online class. Since blended learning seems to be relevant topic at the present time, therefore the aim of the study is to explore the implementation of blended learning in Islamic universities in six different cities in Indonesia. Direct observation was conducted in order to map the strategy used by each Islamic university in implementing blended learning method. Other than that, Focus Group Discussion was also held to all Islamic universities in order to dig deeper regarding the policy from the management of the study program of Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) as well as confirming to what researchers found on the direct observation to the lecturers related to blended learning employment. Additionally, to support the result, semi-structured interview was conducted to representative of students from each Islamic university in order to highlight their perspectives in the realization of blended learning. As a result, the researchers found that the proportion of having between offline and online learning methods are varied, whether 70:30, 60:40, or 50:50. Additionally, there is no slight difference in terms of conducted activities during the offline session, whereas the use

of online platforms with varied e-learning media are found very interestingly. Lastly, interview conducted to PAI students indicate positive attitude towards the implementation of blended learning where it is obviously provide future insight for further researchers. The novelty and pedagogical implications are also highlighted in this article.

**Keywords:** blended learning, developmental model strategy, Islamic universities, implementation, students' perspectives

## **A. Introduction**

Education is one of sectors which has been changed over the time especially during pandemic of Covid-19 outbreak where education is no longer just sitting, silent, and taking notes. Education nowadays tend to be more active in system of conducting the teaching and learning e.g. via virtual class such as Google Classroom, Zoom, Google Meet, Webex, and other media of online meeting. Therefore, the process of conducting teaching and learning is no longer teacher-centered but student-centered which combined with various modern activities (Manan & Hanafi, 2020).

Furthermore, one of methods which can activate student-centered function is blended learning where its existence can facilitate both offline and online teaching and learning platforms (Alfi et al., 2016). In this case, in blended learning, the mixture of face to face and online teaching and learning are conveyed by using a variety of learning resources media and strategies to ease teachers and students communication (Kaczynski et al., 2008). Obviously, although students might have lack of motivation in experiencing blended learning (Sari et al., 2021; Zavyalova, 2020), teachers and students can have fruitful benefits of the use of high-tech learning without losing the essence of direct interaction to students (Kaczynski et al., 2008). Additionally, blended learning is not only used to introduce students to technology but also support to less competitive or considered as weaker students in the case of cognitive ability (Raj & Abdallah, 2005; Yusoff et al., 2017).

Studies related to blended learning have been conducted by some researchers in different levels of education whether in general (Acosta-Gonzaga & Ramirez-Arellano, 2021; Aji et al., 2020; Baker et al., 2021; Batac et al., 2021; Dakduk et al., 2018; Fadillah et al., 2020; Islam et al., 2021) or in Islamic context (Shamad & Wekke, 2019; As'ad, 2021; Fahyuni et al., 2020; Setiawan, 2020; Setiawan, 2019a; Setiawan, 2019b). To sum up, there were quite many of previous studies which focused on blended learning in general context in education, but limited to the context to Islamic education.

It is assumed that blended learning is one of the right methods in Islamic educational reorientation (Kastolani, 2019). It is based on the reason that, obviously, learning instructors or lecturers in the context of higher Islamic education should take part on the changes of learning styles and methods. Additionally, lecturers must upgrade their capability in the use of modern technology and not limited to offline mode. Lecturers' creativity is demanded so that students can experience high-tech learning introduced by lecturers without leaving

aside the importance of face to face interaction between lecturers and students (Baharun, 2016). Hence, the researchers strongly believe that blended learning is a solution in nowadays era especially in post covid period. Therefore, this study is aimed to report the implementation of blended learning in Islamic context particularly to several Islamic universities existed in six different cities in Indonesia i.e. Yogyakarta, Surabaya, Malang, Samarinda, Tulungagung, and Jember.

## **B. Literature Review**

### **Blended Learning as a Development Model Strategy in Islamic Education**

Islamic education plays strategic role especially in Indonesian context which aim is to reveal an ideal and religious personality or what so called by insan kamil. In order to gain this objective, the theory existed in Islamic education is constructed based on Alqur'an and Hadits (Muhaimin, 2006) in order to build solid Islamic assembly to the youth in this modern age. In this case, Islamic youth nowadays live in the middle of high-tech period where people already built their path by starting to combine the traditional and modern methods including educational sector. The development of classical education system to the use of information and communication technology is an embodiment of 4.0 industrial revolution which is not limited to Islamic education around the world. Many applications have been created such as Google Classroom, Edmodo, Sevima, Moodle, Cisco Webex, Zoom, and other e-learning applications in order to ease the teaching and learning process in the classroom. Global demans instruct that the educational sector should immediately follow the trend of digital developments as a form of improving the quality of education.

Above issues bring educational system, not limited to Islamic context to the new format of conducting teaching and process namely blended learning. Blended learning carries out various changes and development in educational system where with its existence, the offline and online learning can be combined one to another. It is a system which functioned can meet the demands of updated educational needs which is relevant to the use of modern patterns by using information and communication technology media. Blended learning is considered to be important because its presence becomes a model in the development of education in order to explain and notice an object, system, or a concept (Setiawan, 2019a). It is also a pattern, variety, or relying prototype which functioned is to build and result educational components (As'ad, 2021).

The term of "blended learning" originally means the combination of face to face interaction in the calssrooms and computer-based teaching and learning which is facilitated with internet connection or also called by mobile learning (Batac et al., 2021) or hybrid learning (Sjukur, 2012). In this case, fast development of internet devices is very difficult to control, therefore, in order to counter negative effect of modern technology, direct education platform or face to face interaction is still considered vital to maintain students' attitude in learning (Prawiladilaga, 2016). Not limited to above concept which only focus on the combination of platform whether offline or online, blended learning can also be defined as the combination of various media or aids, learning activities, teaching methods, platform of conducting teaching and learning whether conventional face to face interaction or online

learning (Singh, 2003). Interestingly, slightly alike the previous theory, blended learning also can be categorized as the combination of mobile learning elements (Rihatul, 2017).

Moreover, blended learning is useful in facilitating and accelerating the process of communication between lecturers and students (Sandi, 2018). Additionally, blended learning is also beneficial in developing students' discipline towards the learning established in the institution (Bibi & Jati, 2015). Blended learning can be followed by students with various cultures and the ability to choose the format offered in the learning material. There are two types of blended learning. First, learning that combines traditional classes and e-learning. This type is best known because it appears to combine theory and practice in combining teacher-student and student-centered learning. Second, synchronous and asynchronous mixing in e-learning technology. This second type is very useful to be used as a solution to many international students with different cultures and geographical locations (Al-Hunaiyyan, 2008). Particularly, synchronous learning refers to a learning event in which learners are engaged in learning at the same time. Different with synchronous learning, in asynchronous learning, teacher and learners are not engaged in the learning process at the same time.

Moreover, in conducting a blended learning, there are three components which should be revealed in teaching and learning process i.e. online learning, face to face interaction, and independent learning (Istianingsih & Hasbullah, 2014). Meaning that educational stakeholders cannot just conduct online learning, but there should be face to face direct interaction between teachers and students in order to deliver "meaning" of having a learning materials which cannot be conveyed in online learning as well as functioning it to deepen learning materials. Additionally, independent learning is also vital to train students' behaviour, shape their point of views, and their independent ways of learning.

### **C. Research Methodology**

This research is a case study where the researchers investigate phenomenon happened in natural setting of a person or a group of people (Creswell, 2012; Biklen & Casella, 2007). Subject of the study was both lecturers and students from six different Islamic universities in Indonesia i.e. located in Yogyakarta, Surabaya, Malang, Samarinda, Tulungagung, and Jember. Particularly, the researchers only focus on investigating the Islamic Religion or what so called by Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) Study Program existed in those Islamic universities.

In this qualitative study, the implementation of blended learning was observed by applying direct observation (Miles et al., 2014), where in this case, the researchers acted as a passive observer (Harrison, 2014) in order to capture all phenomenon happened during the implementation of blended learning in PAI classrooms in above Islamic universities.

Furthermore, in order to support the findings, six lecturers and management staff of PAI Study Program in the Islamic universities were invited to Focus Group Discussion in order to discuss deeper related to the employment of blended learning on PAI classrooms. Not only the lecturers, thirty students in PAI classrooms in all Islamic universities mentioned above were also interviewed by using semi-structured interview (Brinkmann, 2013) so that

the researcher can explore the application of blended learning from the students' point of view.

After collecting the data by using above instruments, Spiral Data Analysis was used to analyse the data found from the research. Specifically, the steps of analyzing the data include data managing, data reading and memoing, data describing, data interpreting, and data presenting (Creswell, 2005). Finally, data analysed were triangulated by source and investigator triangulation in order to ensure the trustworthiness of data analysis (Gay et al., 2006).

## D. Findings & Discussion

### 1. Data obtained from observation

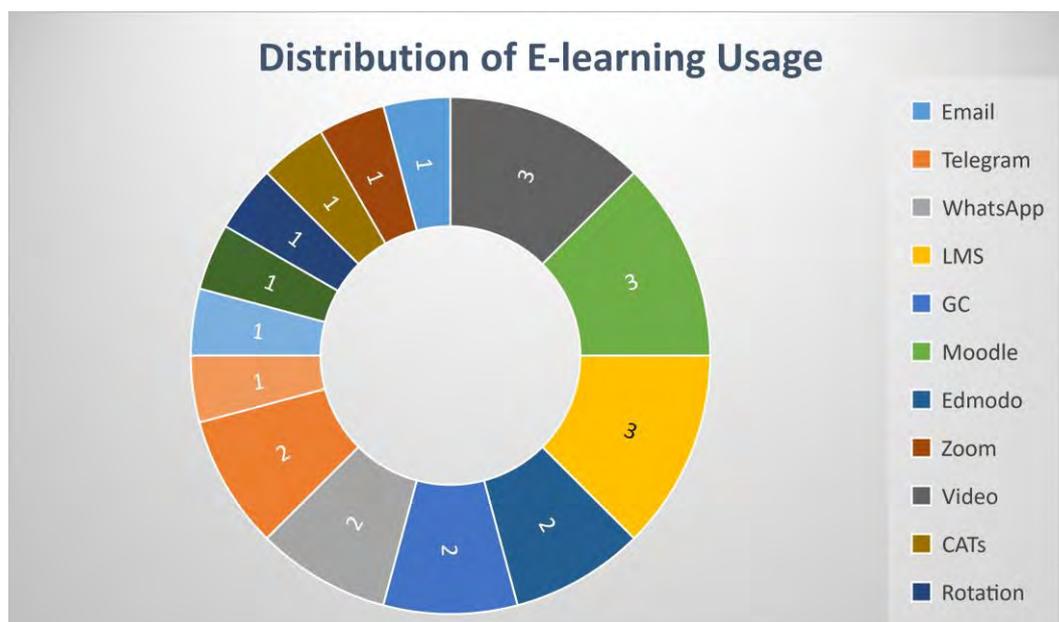
From observation conducted by the researchers, all of Islamic universities in Yogyakarta, Surabaya, Malang, Samarinda, Tulungagung, and Jember managed offline or face to face interaction between lecturers and students where the activities are particularly similar including lecturing, individual and group assignments, and group discussion. To the more particular findings gained in this research were summarized to below table, where in this case, the table includes the ratio or formation in conduction the blended learning regulated by each Islamic university in terms of percentage and meetings, activities during offline learning, and high-tech media the universities occupied during online meetings.

Table 1. Implementation of Blended Learning in PAI Classrooms

Islamic Universities	Formation of Blended Learning	Proportion of Meeting	Techniques Applied on Offline Mode	Techniques Applied on Online Mode
Yogyakarta	70:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 11 offline meetings</li> <li>• 5 online meetings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lecturing</li> <li>• Individual &amp; group assignments</li> <li>• Classroom presentation</li> <li>• Feedback from students</li> <li>• Discussion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Email</li> <li>• Telegram</li> <li>• WhatsApp</li> <li>• LMS by campus</li> </ul>
Surabaya	60:40	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10 offline meetings</li> <li>• 6 online meetings</li> </ul>	Appeared to be similar to Yogyakarta	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Google Classroom (GC)</li> <li>• Moodle</li> <li>• Edmodo</li> </ul>

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Zoom</li> <li>• Video recording</li> <li>• LMS by campus</li> </ul>
Malang	60:40	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10 offline meetings</li> <li>• 6 online meetings</li> </ul>	Appeared to be similar to Yogyakarta	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CATs</li> <li>• Moodle</li> </ul>
Samarinda	70:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 11 offline meetings</li> <li>• 5 online meetings</li> </ul>	Appeared to be similar to Yogyakarta	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LMS by campus</li> </ul>
Tulungagung	50:50	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 8 offline meetings</li> <li>• 8 online meetings</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rotation</li> <li>• Video recording</li> </ul>
Jember	50:50	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 8 offline meetings</li> <li>• 8 online meetings</li> </ul>	Appeared to be similar to Yogyakarta	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Video recording</li> <li>• Google Classroom (GC)</li> <li>• Edmodo</li> <li>• Moodle</li> <li>• YouTube</li> <li>• Facebook</li> <li>• Instagram</li> <li>• WhatsApp</li> <li>• Telegram</li> </ul>

Figure 1. Distribution of E-Learning Usage



## 2. Data obtained from FGD

The forum of FGD held by the researchers was attended by six lecturers and management staff from all of six Islamic universities researched in this study. This meeting was intended to explore deeper regarding the implementation of blended learning such as how they divide the materials being taught offline or online as well as what sort of activities the lecturers applied during the usage of e-learning as well as offline classes.

The findings gained from FGD confirmed the findings obtained from direct observation where the activities during offline session include lecturing, individual and group assignments, classroom presentation, discussion, and feedback session from the students. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is no difference activities done in the application of offline session in all of Islamic universities. It also confirms the findings gained from direct observation regarding the applications used by the lecturers in conducting the online session are varied starting from having virtual meetings with the students by using Zoom, Moodle and LMS provided by universities, posting assignments by the use of Google Classroom, Edmodo, and some social media such as YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, sharing materials through Whatsapp and Telegram, evaluating the students' works by using CATs. To conclude, the results showed in observation confirmed to the information provided by the lecturers.

Above findings were also investigated by previous studies especially to the use of varied teaching media in conducting the online session. In this case, the researchers found the previous study done by Tajuddin & Syafi'i (2021) who investigated the use of WhatsApp application to support the implementation of blended learning. Similar case but using different platform, Yeou (2016) researched about the use of Moodle in the employment of blended learning especially regarding the students' acceptance. The use of Edmodo also has been investigated by previous study, specifically from Yunita (2020) where the findings

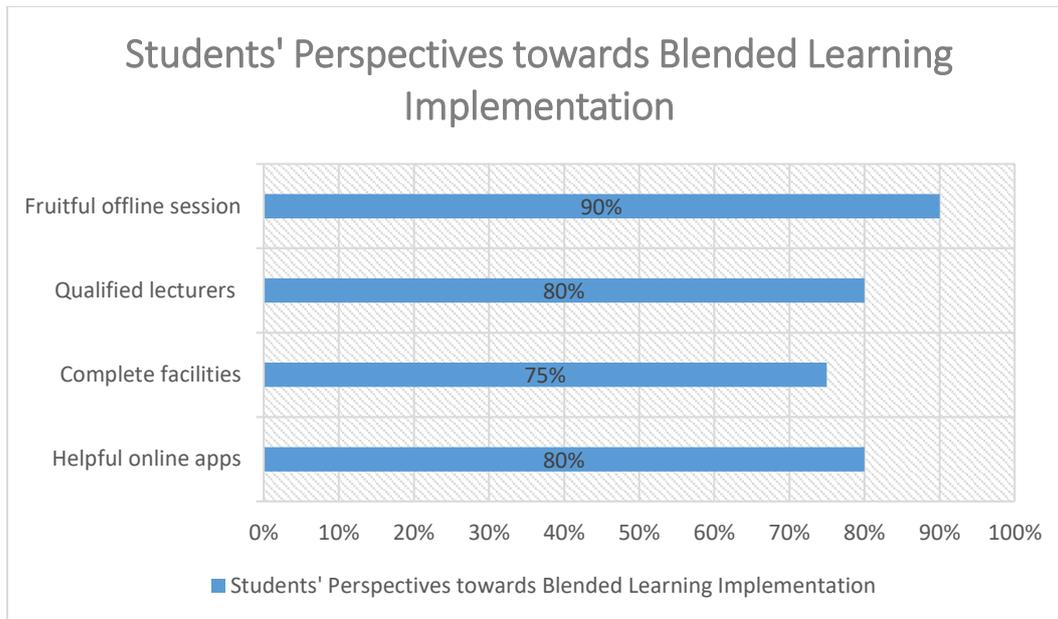
indicated that students were facilitated in learning anytime and anywhere. In this case, the findings of the study reveal to the various usage of e-learning application so that the researchers believe that students are already have enough facilities in joining the blended learning. However, the evaluation for better teaching and learning in the future is certainly needed.

What have been found from the information provided by the management staff of PAI Study Program regarding to the formation of blended learning is kind of specific. Once again, as the data on the observation showed that there are some differences occur in terms of formation of blended learning in those Islamic universities where Islamic universities in Yogyakarta and Samarinda use 70:30, Surabaya and Malang use 60:40, and Tulungagung and Jember use 50:50, the management staff said that it comes with several considerations when applying the formation. Those Islamic Universities which have formation of 50.50 would like to have balanced proportion between offline and online class to the process of teaching and learning, whereas those which have 60;40 formation eager to start to introduce the online platforms to the students but not jump to the importance of having the offline session, and those universities which have formation of 70:30 would like to give their students a slight overview on the use of high-tech applications in learning without leaving aside an extreme essence of having the offline face to face interaction between teachers and students.

### **3. Data obtained from interview**

The interview section was conducted to five represented PAI students from each Islamic university which is aimed to investigate the perspective from the students regarding the implementation of blended learning in their university. In this case, all thirty PAI students indicate positive attitude towards the application of blended learning. Particularly, they respond happily to have high-tech learning during the employment of e-learning whether using Learning Management System (LMS) provided by the university, or other applications such as Email, Edmodo, Moodle, Google Classroom, Zoom, Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and Telegram.

Furthermore, in order to support the findings, the researchers also explored regarding the students' point of view towards the implementation of blended learning from some aspects including facilities provided by campus management, lecturers' capability in operating the blended learning, whether offline meetings and online applications help them in learning in terms of percentage. It is summarized to the following chart:



From the result of the students' perception above, it is showed that the students are happy to have offline session since they can have more understanding towards materials given by the lecturers especially for the low achiever students. It confirms and seems alike to the findings from Yusoff et al. (2017) and Raj & Abdallah (2005) that blended learning is beneficial for students with less proficiency. Moreover, this part of the study is limited to just investigating students' perception, but not focusing on how they perform the subjects learned. Just like the findings from Means et al. (2013) which indicated that students perform better achievement during online learning rather than offline learning. This might be a reference for further research that investigating what the students like and dislike is as important as analysing students' learning performance. Therefore, further researchers can also correlate between students' perception towards the implementation of blended learning and their achievement in learning.

Moreover, even though the percentage of fruitful offline session comes to be the highest one, positive attitudes are also conveyed towards all of the aspects interviewed to the students. Positive attitudes towards the implication of blended learning also reveal in other studies done by Mielikäinen (2021) where project-based information combined in the application of blended learning in Finland context reveal to positive attitudes from students. Positive students' attitudes also obtained from the research conducted by Perera et al. (2020) where students have extremely positive attitudes towards the use of collaborative blended learning and co-lecturing. However, in the case of the study, even though students have positive attitude towards overall blended learning implementation, a barrier such as limited internet connection during the online session when they are at their home appears to be the challenge for the students. This part of finding confirms the result from previous study conducted by Aji et al. (2020) that students can feel the benefits of experiencing blended learning especially to their motivation, ICT skills, and flexible learning, but unfortunately slow internet connection is the most challenging for them.

Findings explained broadly above drive to a novelty of the research where the application to evaluate students' written performance is newly found and used namely CATs or Classroom Assessment Techniques in supporting the application of e-learning by one of Islamic universities. Pedagogical implication of this study comes to the needs of evaluation towards the implementation of blended learning which include whole aspects i.e. components of program planning, readiness of teachers in operating the blended learning system, readiness of management of study program in terms of funding and providing facilities especially for teachers in order to ease them in organizing the high-tech tools in conducting the online session (Divayana, 2017). In this case, students' perception above can be used as a logical and strong reasons in improving the quality of the implementation of blended learning in Islamic universities as researched in this study as well as in Indonesia in general. Lastly, the exploration of brand new online applications to support the teaching and learning process are still needed until the present time as well as to encounter future unpredictable challenges.

### **E. Conclusion**

From the result above, it can be concluded that there are three points to be reported i.e. (1) formation of conducting blended learning are varied based on each Islamic university's policy and considerations, (2) result from FGD to the lecturers confirmed what the researchers have found on the direct observation related to the activities done during offline and online learning as well as what sort of e-learning application they use to conduct the online class, and (3) students promote positive attitude towards the implementation of blended learning in PAI class. From these findings, the researchers come up with a suggestion for further researchers to investigate deeper and wider related to the correlational or experimental study whether blended learning can improve students' learning performance. Other than that, in terms of conducting the online session, an exploration of new application is still needed in order to ease lecturers in teaching by using high-tech tools as well as giving new experiences for students which hopefully can increase their learning motivation by using blended learning. Finally, evaluation to the implementation of blended learning in Islamic universities researched in this study is highly suggested in order to increase the performance of the management system as well as lecturers' capability in operating the blended learning strategy in classrooms.

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