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Optimizing Islamic Religious Education Learning with the Blended Learning Method

Hasan Albashri¹, Juliani², Nur Azizah³, Devi Wahyu Ramadhani⁴, Siti Zahara⁵

^{1,2,3,4,5} Institut Syekh Abdul Halim Hasan Binjai, Indonesia

Email: hasanalbashri548@gmail.com¹, juliani@insan.ac.id², azizah25304@gmail.com³,
deviwahyuramadhani3@gmail.com⁴, sitizahara273@gmail.com⁵

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ABSTRACT

Blended Learning is a learning facility that is carried out by combining various media in delivery methods, teaching models, and learning styles, with the help of information and communication technology appropriately to achieve the desired learning objectives. The pandemic period has seen the popularity of the blended learning approach. However, very few studies summarize the effectiveness of blended in different countries. Therefore, it is meaningful and necessary to examine the effectiveness of blended learning across the world. However, optimizing blended learning needs to be accompanied by adequate facilities and infrastructure as well as human resources. Both teachers and students must have technology-based knowledge to be able to use the facilities used in this blended learning method.

ABSTRAK

Blended Learning adalah sebuah kemudahan pembelajaran yang dilakukan dengan menggabungkan berbagai media dalam cara penyampaian, model pengajaran, dan gaya pembelajaran, dengan bantuan teknologi informasi dan komunikasi secara tepat guna mencapai tujuan pembelajaran yang diinginkan. Masa pandemi telah banyak menyaksikan popularitas pendekatan blended learning. Namun, sangat sedikit penelitian yang merangkum efektivitas blended di berbagai negara. Oleh karena itu, sangat berarti dan perlu untuk memeriksa efektivitas pembelajaran campuran di seluruh dunia. Namun, optimalisasi blended learning perlu di barengi dengan sarana dan prasarana serta sumberdaya manusia yang memadai, baik guru maupun siswa harus memiliki perbekalan ilmu berbasis teknologi agar mampu menggunakan sarana yang digunakan dalam metode blended learning ini.

INTRODUCTION

Islamic Religious Education is taught in madrasahs from elementary to high school. Education is very important for building a nation's civilization. The development of digital systems, connectivity, interaction, artificial intelligence, and visuals marks the beginning of the current industrial era. Where life depends on the network Digital media organizes almost all human activities, including the application of the latest learning models (Bruggeman et al. 2021).

In the current era of information and communication technology (ICT), teachers cannot avoid online learning. Information and Communication Technology can change conventional learning systems to be more modern. Switching from face-to-face communication to online communication certainly requires a lot of effort and cost. However, these efforts can be started by using a blended learning model. The term "blended" comes from the word "blend", which means combination or mixture, and "learning", which means learning. This is in accordance with the idea of Heinze & Procter, who define blended learning as a learning model that effectively combines direct face-to-face and online learning. One of the learning approaches available in the digital era is blended learning.

By implementing Blended Learning as an alternative in Islamic Religious Education learning, educators can combine models with various interesting features in the Islamic Religious Education learning process, so that students are able to carry out Islamic Religious Education learning actively and create comfort in learning. The selection of the Blended Learning learning model is very important as an alternative learning. The learning model was initially only a plan that was designed manually from start to finish, through face-to-face meetings in class, and until now it has been contaminated along with the development of science and technology with digital systems. Currently, there are so many new education models that combine old learning models with media or internet-based learning models or what is now popularly known as the Blended Learning learning model (Muhyidin et al., 2022) (Pai 2024).

Blended Learning can provide many opportunities to deepen the subject matter using learning resources in online learning independently (Nurhayati & Apriani, 2020). Nurhayati and Apriani also stated that online learning can be said to be additional study time for students because information is available before learning activities begin, so it can be more efficient for students to understand the material independently, discuss, and do assignments/practice questions. This can indirectly improve students' understanding of the subject matter, so that the learning outcomes obtained can also increase (Widyasari & Rafsanjani, 2021).

Various thoughts and research results that are concerned with the conditions of Islamic Religious Education learning seem to bring about significant changes, because the research that has been carried out began with the concerns of researchers. Therefore, one of the important learning strategies to study is the implementation of blended learning in Islamic Religious Education learning. Even though the pandemic is over, it does not mean that blended learning can no longer be used. In fact, with the advancement of technology, blended learning will be even more useful in the current era. Because in fact the presence of blended learning is to facilitate the teaching and learning process.

Teachers must be able to utilize it in various activities to support the student learning process. For example; first, teachers give students assignments to find various journal and research references to enrich learning materials; second, teachers can use learning media/applications in assessing student learning outcomes, thereby reducing the use of paper in the exam process and so on; third, teachers in providing enrichment materials can be through learning media/applications so that students can access and make it easier for them to understand the lessons; and fourth, teachers and students must start to get used to using technology-based learning, so that it has a significant impact on the development of the world of education in the future.

METHOD

The research conducted by the author is descriptive qualitative with a library research method, namely by analyzing several studies related to Blended Learning and drawing a conclusion. The research was conducted in the library, relating to several existing literatures, especially on research that is related to the research to be studied, journals, and other sources available in the library. An example is research on the contents of related journals. In accordance with the opinion of Qotrun (2022) research with literature studies is a study whose preparation is no different from other research, but the sources and methods of data collection by taking data in the Library. Such as reading, taking notes, and processing research materials.

Research with library methods is also research and can be categorized as a scientific work because the collection of scientific data is carried out with a strategy in the form of Melfianora's (2019) research methodology as in this study, namely the optimization of blended learning education in the new normal era. Researchers analyze research related to blended learning and how to optimize it in achieving the desired learning objectives.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The use of online learning will be very effective if it fulfills the essential components in learning, namely discursive, adaptive, interactive and reflective with elements that will be very good if integrated with the learning environment so that it can become online learning that is integrated with the environment or fulfills the components of the digital learning ecosystem because it can accommodate learning styles (Oktavian & Aldya 2020).

Flexibility and learning experience of students so that it can bring up positive feelings. The application of the internet for education and teaching can be applied in three forms, the first is a web course, namely the use of the internet as a whole with the internet, starting from teaching materials, discussions, assignments, exercises and exams are done with the internet, some of the facilities used can be Chat rooms, bulletin boards, e-mail, google classroom, google meet, e-learning, video conferences and so on. Second, Web Centric Course, combines two learning methods, so some learning is done online and some offline, and the third, web enhancement course, here, the internet is only used as a learning support, some activities are done face-to-face / offline.

Here, the author would like to explain the Web Centric Course section, which combines two learning methods, namely online and offline in optimizing Islamic religious education. Blended learning in Islamic Religious Education learning can be implemented optimally if teachers and students have a good understanding of the use of technology, especially the use of gadgets and computers, so that teachers are able to create interesting teaching materials such as making simple animations, using projectors, google classroom, google meet, and others. If teachers and students cannot operate the existing facilities and infrastructure, it will not be possible to optimize it. In addition to the ability to use facilities and infrastructure, teachers and students must also have these facilities and infrastructure, such as gadgets, computers, and adequate quotas with a good internet network.

Discussion

Blended learning is a hybrid or mixed learning that emerged in the late 1990s as a new teaching method for distance learning through the application of technology and the internet. Blended Learning is considered suitable because learning is carried out by combining offline and online learning (Salsabila, et.al., 2022). Blended learning aims to optimize student learning and encourage teachers to change their educational methods, and because of that, to shift learning to a more student-centered model than a teacher-centered learning model.

This method not only combines offline and online learning, but can also be in the form of methods, sources, media, learning strategies and learning environments. So that blended learning provides an opportunity for teachers and students to explore learning experiences by utilizing the convenience of time and place of learning, so that students have broad learning opportunities (Mustafa, et.al., 2021).

Aspects of Blended Learning

Mustafa, et.al. (2021) revealed that there are five keys to implementing learning using blended learning, namely: first, Live Event. Synchronous face-to-face learning at the same time and place in class or the same time but different places in virtual classes. Second, Self-Paced Learning. Collaborative learning with independent learning that helps students learn anytime, anywhere using various learning materials that are specially made for independent learning, both theoretical and multimedia. Learning materials are delivered online and offline.

Third, Collaboration. Learning that integrates educators and students, both of which can be across classes. Thus, blended learning designers must understand the forms of collaboration, both collaboration between friends or collaboration between students and educators through long-distance communication tools such as chatrooms, discussion forums, email, websites/webblogs, and mobile phones. Fourth, assessment. Assessment in Blended Learning,

designers must be able to master the types of assessments that are test and non-test. Fifth, Performance Support Materials. If we want to combine face-to-face learning in class and virtual face-to-face. Learning resources and media must be ready to assist learning activities (Mustafa, et.al, 2021). With these aspects, blended learning is expected to run effectively.

The components in blended learning that must be considered are that learning must combine two or more learning patterns, namely conventional or face-to-face learning with online learning that utilizes internet facilities or learning by utilizing computer facilities (offline). Learning using Online learning, there must be intranet and web-based technology so that it is easy to access learning materials and allows interaction.

E-learning is a technology developed to carry out the learning process starting from delivering learning objectives, teaching materials, learning processes, and evaluations in learning using technology. The electronic technology can be in the form of computer devices, mobile phones, internet, or other electronic technologies, for example, it can be in the form of video, or audio learning, which is used to create and improve the optimal learning process.

In addition to the above, with e-learning, the learning process can be directly interactive in real time such as in video conferences, zoom, Google meet, real audio or real video, online meetings. And, in non-real time forms such as Google classroom, E-learning, mailing list, discussion groups, news groups and bulletin boards. While teaching materials, evaluations, quizzes, and all activities in the learning process can also be implemented on the web. Therefore, in the current new normal conditions, so that the learning process runs effectively, we can carry out learning through electronic media with an internet network by combining synchronous and asynchronous learning (Chen, *et al.*, 2019).

The steps of blended learning design are as follows: First, Formulate Learning Outcomes. The first step we take in designing a blended learning system is to formulate learning outcomes first. Learning outcomes are competencies that are expected to be achieved by students or students after participating in learning. Achievements in learning must be formulated well because they will be the basis for developing subsequent learning components. Such as in determining, selecting and compiling materials, namely; determining learning strategies or planning, selecting learning materials and determining evaluations of learning outcomes.

Second, Mapping and organizing learning materials. The second step is to describe and organize study materials and learning materials into discussion topics, sub-discussion topics and main materials according to previously determined learning outcomes. Third, Determining and determining synchronous and asynchronous learning activities. The third step is to determine whether the material from the discussion topic or sub-discussion topic can be understood through synchronous or asynchronous strategies.

Fourth, Designing Synchronous Learning Activities. After identifying which topics can be understood through learning with synchronous strategies, then design synchronous learning. Synchronous learning itself is a learning process where teachers and students are at the same time but in different places, so usually the learning process takes place using communication technology media in the form of video-conference or audio-conference (Nur, 2020).

The steps in synchronous learning are actually not much different from face-to-face learning, where in synchronous learning the learning process also consists of Opening activities, core activities and Closing activities (Nur, 2020). (a) Opening activities; educators provide or show videos about problems according to the theme, then students are asked to respond, and then the educator explains the theme that will be studied and discussed, along with the learning objectives to be achieved at the meeting. (b) Core activities; educators provide a form of problem, then students are divided into several groups to discuss and then present, and then educators and students collect various information from the themes that have been presented. (c) Closing activities; educators ask students to conclude from the themes that have been discussed, then educators provide feedback and reinforcement for the learning outcomes that have been discussed and finally give individual or independent assignments to all students. (d) Designing Asynchronous Learning activities. After identifying which discussions can be

understood through asynchronous learning, the next step is to design an asynchronous learning plan, namely planning a variety of relevant digital materials, relevant online discussion forums, relevant online assignments, and relevant evaluations. Furthermore, arranging the asynchronous learning flow is in PEDATI.

Blended Learning Design Model online learning with asynchronous strategy has four cycles, namely: Learn; deepening; Apply; and Evaluation measuring) (Nur, 2020). First, LEARN; namely the process of studying learning materials or materials asynchronously by providing various types and forms of digital media called learning objects, namely by reading through text, viewing material with visuals in the form of images, listening to audio, the process of viewing through video or animation, experimenting and practicing with simulations and games and so on. Examples of digital media are as follows;

Table 1. Digital Media

Activity	Tools/media	Form of tool/media
See	visual	JPEG, PNG, PPT, GIF
Listen	Audio	Mp3,MP4, Midi
Listen and watch	Animated video	FLV, wmv, swf
Express	Simulations and games	SWF, MP3, MPS, WMV
Read	Script or text	Doc, PDF, HTML, Edup

Second, DEEPEN; meaning, deepening learning by actively participating in online discussion forums. Participation in online discussions is also used by teachers to assess participation or the quality of responses or comments during the discussion so that the responses or comments given during the discussion are also included in the evaluation results assessment in the learning process. Third, APPLY; meaning, that the material that has been discussed online is then implemented into online assignments with types of bills such as tests, quizzes or others, so that this assignment is also included in one form of assessment in the asynchronous strategy.

Fourth, EVALUATION; in asynchronous there is also an evaluation given to the media used by working on an evaluation in the form of an objective test in the form of multiple choice, matching, true false, short answers, and also with a subjective test in the form of essays, quizzes and so on. How to implement blended learning: (1) Conduct an analysis of the target to be achieved, and what needs are needed by teachers and students in the learning process, (2) Build a grand system that you want to use during the teaching and learning process, such as the implementation, management and payment mechanisms, (3) Prepare facilities, in the form of adequate human resources, computer devices, cameras, internet networks, and others, (4) Prepare human resources as implementers of the learning program, (5) Hold training for teachers, during training teachers must have the ability to use hardware and software well, be able to manage content well, be able to manage the implementation of learning well, be able to manage students, and be able to choose appropriate teaching materials.

Technology selection and implementation, schools must be able to choose a Learning Management System (LMS) product that suits the school's needs. In addition, schools must also pay attention to the financing of the system. After the school has finished choosing the LMS, the LMS can be applied immediately. Usually the LMS provider will help with the system installation process.

CONCLUSION

Based on the description above, it is concluded that education can be improved by using a blended learning style that combines bold and engaging instructions. The approach ensures high flexibility and effectiveness in achieving learning objectives. The key factors for the success of implementing this method are mastering technology, accessibility of technology, teacher creativity, and quality learning materials. Furthermore, the benefits of Blended Learning in

Islamic Religious Learning are that it is flexible, interactive, personalized, and effective. However, there are also challenges in the form of technical difficulties (weak internet connection or devices not functioning properly), digital divide, and lack of teacher competence.

To address these challenges, collaboration between various stakeholders, including governments, schools, teachers, and individuals, is needed to increase access to technology, provide training to teachers, and create learning environments that support blended learning. between various stakeholders, including governments, schools, teachers, and individuals, is needed to increase access to technology, provide training to teachers, and create learning environments that support blended learning.

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