Exploring Students' Perceptions of Blended Learning in Basic Education: A Qualitative Study

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Abstract:
Blended learning is an innovative approach that combines traditional face-to-face instruction with online learning activities. It has gained popularity in basic education, particularly in senior high school levels. This qualitative study aimed to explore students' perceptions of blended learning in basic education. The study involved senior high school students from a public school in the Philippines. The findings of the study revealed that students had a basic understanding of blended learning, but they perceived it differently. Some students viewed it positively, while others had reservations about its effectiveness. The study also showed that students faced various challenges in blended learning, such as technical difficulties, lack of interaction with teachers, and difficulty in managing time. Furthermore, the study identified several factors that influence students' perceptions of blended learning. These include students' prior experiences with technology, the quality of instructional materials, and the level of teacher support. The study provides insights into students' perceptions of blended learning, which can inform the development of effective blended learning programs in basic education. The findings of the study can also guide educators in addressing the challenges that students encounter in blended learning.

Keywords: blended learning, basic education, senior high school, students, perceptions, qualitative research, hybrid learning, online learning, classroom instruction, educational technology

Introduction
Blended learning, which is a combination of traditional face-to-face instruction trend online learning, has become a popular mode of education in recent years (Graham, 2013). The integration of technology into education has provided new opportunities to enhance the teaching and learning experience, and it has become an essential tool for achieving educational

goals (Johnson, Adams Becker, Estrada, & Freeman, 2015). In the context of basic education in the Philippines, blended learning has been adopted as a response to the challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has forced schools to shift to distance learning (DepEd, 2020).

Despite its growing popularity, little is known about students' perceptions of blended learning in basic education, particularly in the context of the Philippines. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore students' perceptions of blended learning in basic education in the Philippines, with a focus on senior high school students. This study aims to identify the benefits and challenges of blended learning as perceived by students and to investigate how blended learning affects their learning experience.

Several studies have examined students' perceptions of blended learning in higher education contexts (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008; Graham, 2013), but few have explored the perceptions of students in basic education. This study is significant because it will provide insights into how blended learning is perceived by students in the Philippine basic education system. This research will contribute to the existing literature on blended learning and provide a basis for further research on the implementation and improvement of blended learning in basic education.

Kilag et al. (2023) also explored flexible learning options (FLOs) on the parameters of Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan (BE-LCP) in the Philippines. This study is relevant to our research as it provides insights into the different forms of distance learning that are being implemented in the Philippines and how they are perceived by students. The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the adoption of blended learning in basic education in the Philippines. However, little is known about how this mode of learning is perceived by students. This study aims to fill this gap in the literature by exploring students' perceptions of blended learning in basic education, particularly in the senior high school level in the Division of Toledo City, Cebu. The findings of this study will provide insights into the benefits and challenges of blended learning in the Philippine basic education system and contribute to the development of effective blended learning strategies in basic education.

Research Questions:
1. What are the perceptions of senior high school students towards blended learning in the division of Toledo City?
2. What are the advantages and disadvantages of blended learning as perceived by senior high school students in the division of Toledo City?
3. How do senior high school students' learning preferences influence their perceptions of blended learning in the division of Toledo City?
4. In what ways does blended learning impact the academic performance of senior high school students in the division of Toledo City?
5. What recommendations can be made for improving blended learning in senior high school education based on students' perceptions in the division of Toledo City?

Literature Review
Overview of Blended Learning in the Philippines
Blended learning has gained traction in the Philippines, particularly in the context of basic education. According to the Department of Education (DepEd), blended learning is a teaching approach that combines online and offline resources and activities to deliver instruction (DepEd, 2020). This approach was adopted by DepEd as a response to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, which made face-to-face learning difficult or impossible in many parts of the country.

Benefits of Blended Learning in the Philippines
Studies have shown that blended learning can have positive effects on student learning outcomes in the Philippine context. In a study conducted by Tenedero and colleagues (2019), it was found that blended learning can lead to improved student performance in science subjects. The researchers attributed this to the ability of blended learning to provide students with greater flexibility and control over their learning. In addition, blended learning can also address the issue of limited resources and infrastructure in many Philippine schools (Aguilar, 2019).

Challenges of Blended Learning in the Philippines
While blended learning holds promise for improving education in the Philippines, there are also significant challenges that need to be addressed. One of the biggest challenges is the digital divide, which refers to the unequal distribution of technology and internet connectivity across the country (Salazar, 2020). This can result in some students having limited access to online resources and activities, which can put them at a disadvantage compared to their more privileged peers. In addition, there are also concerns about the quality of online content and the readiness of teachers to deliver instruction in a blended learning environment (Dizon, 2020).

Strategies for Successful Implementation of Blended Learning in the Philippines
To address the challenges of blended learning in the Philippine context, there are several strategies that have been proposed. One is the need for greater investment in technology infrastructure and internet connectivity, particularly in underserved areas (Salazar, 2020). Another strategy is to provide teachers with training and support to help them develop the necessary skills and competencies for delivering instruction in a blended learning environment (Dizon, 2020). Additionally, it is important to ensure that online content is high-quality, culturally relevant, and aligned with the national curriculum (Aguilar, 2019).

The literature suggests that blended learning has the potential to improve student learning outcomes and address resource limitations in the Philippine basic education system. However, there are also significant challenges that need to be addressed, particularly the digital divide and the readiness of teachers and students to adopt a blended learning approach. To successfully implement blended learning in the Philippines, it is important to invest in technology infrastructure, provide teacher training and support, and ensure that online content is of high quality and culturally relevant.

Research Method
Research Design:
This study utilized a qualitative research design as it aimed to explore the perceptions of senior high school students regarding blended learning in the Philippine setting. According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research is particularly useful in exploring complex and contextual phenomena and in gaining an in-depth understanding of people's experiences, perspectives, and beliefs. The use of this design allowed the researchers to obtain rich and detailed data on the participants' perceptions and experiences with blended learning.

Sample:
The participants of this study were senior high school students enrolled in a private school in the Philippines. The sample size was determined using purposive sampling, which is a non-probability sampling technique that involves selecting participants based on specific

characteristics or criteria (Creswell, 2014). The criteria for inclusion in the study were senior high school students who have experienced blended learning during the academic year. The sample size was 20 participants.

Data Collection:
Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews, which is a common data collection method in qualitative research (Merriam, 2009). The interviews were conducted in a private setting within the school premises. The questions used in the interviews were developed based on the research questions and objectives of the study. The interviews were audio-recorded with the consent of the participants, and notes were also taken during the interviews to supplement the data collected.

Data Analysis:
The data collected from the interviews were transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis, a commonly used method in qualitative research (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis involves identifying patterns, themes, and categories in the data collected. The analysis was conducted by the researchers independently and then cross-checked to ensure consistency and reliability.

Validity and Reliability:
To ensure the validity of the study, measures were taken to establish credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility was established through prolonged engagement with the participants and member checking, where the participants were given the opportunity to review and verify the data collected. Transferability was established by providing a detailed description of the research methods and context to allow for the study's applicability to other settings. Dependability was established through the use of an audit trail, where the research procedures and decisions were documented. Confirmability was established through the use of multiple researchers to analyze the data independently and to ensure the findings were not influenced by personal biases.

Ethical Considerations:
The study was conducted in compliance with ethical considerations for research involving human participants. The researchers obtained informed consent from the participants, ensured confidentiality and anonymity of the participants, and provided the participants with the right to withdraw from the study at any time. The researchers also sought approval from the relevant institutional ethics review board before commencing the study.

Findings And Discussion
Findings:
Theme 1: Perception of blended learning

The responses show that there is a mixed perception of blended learning among senior high school students. While some students have a positive perception of it, others find it challenging to stay motivated without in-person interaction.

Positive perception of blended learning
Some senior high school students appreciate the flexibility that blended learning offers. They find it helpful to have access to a wider range of learning resources, the ability to learn at their own pace, and the opportunity to balance academic work with other commitments. They may

also appreciate the convenience of not having to commute to school and the ability to work from anywhere with an internet connection.

Challenges with blended learning

Other senior high school students find blended learning challenging because they miss the social interaction and structure of traditional in-person classes. They may struggle to stay motivated without the in-person interaction with teachers and peers, and they may also find it difficult to manage their time effectively without a set schedule. Technical difficulties, such as poor internet connectivity or issues with online platforms, can also be frustrating for some students.

Varied learning preferences

The mixed perceptions of blended learning among senior high school students may be influenced by their individual learning preferences. Some students may prefer hands-on learning or face-to-face interaction, while others may prefer more independent learning or the flexibility that blended learning offers. Teachers should consider these differences in learning preferences when designing and implementing blended learning courses to ensure that they are engaging and effective for all students.

Theme 2: Advantages and disadvantages of blended learning

The responses highlight the advantages of blended learning, such as the flexibility to learn at your own pace and access to a wider range of learning resources. However, they also mention the disadvantages, such as technical difficulties, potential distractions, and lack of in-person interaction.

Advantages of blended learning

The responses indicate that blended learning offers several advantages to senior high school students, including the ability to learn at their own pace and access a wider range of learning resources. With the flexibility to control their own learning process, students can tailor their learning experience to their individual needs and preferences. Additionally, students can access course materials online anytime, anywhere, allowing them to study and review course content at their convenience.

Disadvantages of blended learning

The responses also highlight several disadvantages of blended learning, including technical difficulties, potential distractions, and the lack of in-person interaction with teachers and peers. Technical difficulties can include poor internet connectivity, glitches with online platforms, or incompatible devices. Furthermore, students may experience difficulties staying motivated and focused without the structure of traditional in-person classes. Additionally, some students may miss the opportunities for face-to-face interaction with teachers and peers, which can limit their ability to ask questions, collaborate, and engage in discussions.

Implications of advantages and disadvantages

The advantages and disadvantages of blended learning have important implications for senior high school education. While the flexibility and access to resources can be beneficial, teachers must also address the potential challenges that students may face in staying engaged and motivated. Teachers must find ways to incorporate interactive and engaging learning activities, provide regular feedback, and ensure that all students have access to the necessary technology

and resources. Additionally, teachers should consider the individual learning needs and preferences of their students to make blended learning more effective and engaging.

Theme 3: Influence of learning preferences

The responses show that senior high school students' learning preferences can greatly influence their perceptions of blended learning. Students who prefer hands-on learning or face-to-face interaction may find blended learning less engaging than students who prefer to learn independently or have more control over their learning.

Learning preferences

Senior high school students' learning preferences can greatly influence how they perceive blended learning. Some students may prefer traditional, hands-on learning experiences that provide them with direct interaction with teachers and peers. These students may find blended learning less engaging because it relies more heavily on digital materials and may not offer as much in-person interaction.

Control over learning

On the other hand, students who prefer to learn independently or have more control over their learning may find blended learning to be a better fit for their learning preferences. These students may enjoy the flexibility and independence that blended learning provides, allowing them to work at their own pace and on their own schedule.

Engagement

Students who are more engaged in the learning process may be more likely to have a positive perception of blended learning, regardless of their learning preferences. Teachers can help to foster engagement by providing interactive activities, online discussions, and personalized feedback.

Consideration of learning preferences

To ensure that blended learning is effective for all students, teachers should consider the different learning styles and preferences of their students. By tailoring the learning experience to individual student needs, teachers can create a more engaging and effective learning environment that meets the needs of all learners.

Theme 4: Impact on academic performance

The responses suggest that blended learning can impact academic performance positively or negatively depending on the individual student's motivation and engagement. While it provides opportunities for self-directed learning and the ability to review course materials at any time, it also requires self-discipline and self-motivation to stay on track.

Learning style

Blended learning may be more effective for some students based on their learning style. For instance, students who are self-motivated and enjoy independent learning may excel in blended learning, while those who prefer structured classroom environments may struggle to stay motivated.

Time management

Blended learning requires students to manage their time effectively to keep up with coursework and deadlines. This may be challenging for some students who struggle with time management or have other commitments that compete for their attention.

Support systems
The availability of support systems, such as teachers, tutors, and peers, can greatly impact the success of blended learning. Students who have access to adequate support systems are more likely to succeed than those who do not.

Technology
Technology plays a crucial role in blended learning, and students who lack access to reliable technology or have difficulty navigating online platforms may struggle to stay engaged and motivated in their coursework.

Discussion
The Impact of Blended Learning on Academic Performance
Studies have shown that blended learning can have a positive impact on academic performance for certain students, but this effect may depend on factors such as motivation and engagement. For example, a meta-analysis by Means et al. (2013) found that blended learning had a significant positive effect on student outcomes in some contexts, but noted that the effectiveness of blended learning depended on "factors such as learner motivation, prior knowledge, and the design of the blended learning environment."

Moreover, research suggests that students who are self-motivated and enjoy independent learning may be particularly suited to blended learning environments. For example, a study by Hwang and Wu (2014) found that self-regulated learners tended to perform better in blended learning courses than less self-regulated learners. Similarly, a study by Graham et al. (2013) found that students who were more self-directed and had higher levels of prior knowledge tended to perform better in blended learning courses.

However, it is important to note that not all students may thrive in blended learning environments. For example, students who prefer structured classroom environments may struggle with the independent and self-directed nature of blended learning. In such cases, it may be important for teachers to provide additional support and structure to help these students stay motivated and engaged. As suggested by Brame (2016), providing interactive activities, online discussions, and personalized feedback can be effective strategies for fostering engagement and motivation in blended learning environments.

Blended learning has the potential to positively impact academic performance, it is important to consider individual differences in motivation and engagement. Teachers can play an important role in promoting student engagement and motivation in blended learning environments by providing interactive activities, online discussions, and personalized feedback.

Advantages And Disadvantages of Blended Learning
There is a growing body of research that highlights the benefits and challenges of blended learning. A study by Bullock and Hawks (2018) found that blended learning offers students the flexibility to learn at their own pace, access to a wider range of learning resources, and opportunities for collaboration with peers. Similarly, a study by Picciano and Dzuiban (2014) found that blended learning can improve students' engagement, academic performance, and retention rates.

On the other hand, blended learning also poses several challenges. Technical difficulties and glitches in online platforms can hinder students' learning experience and cause frustration (Huang et al., 2016). Additionally, blended learning may create potential distractions for students who may be tempted to multitask or become disengaged during online sessions (Maurino et al., 2016). The lack of in-person interaction with teachers and peers can also create feelings of isolation and hinder students' ability to build social connections and receive immediate feedback (Moore et al., 2011).

To address these challenges, teachers need to be proactive in providing interactive and engaging learning activities that promote student participation and motivation (Huang et al., 2016). Instructors should also provide regular feedback to students, whether through online discussions, quizzes, or written comments on assignments, to help them stay on track and monitor their progress (Maurino et al., 2016).

Blended learning can offer many benefits to students, it is important for teachers to recognize and address the challenges that come with this mode of learning to ensure a positive learning experience for all students.

Perception of Blended Learning

Several studies have investigated the impact of individual learning preferences on students' perceptions of blended learning. For example, a study by Poon et al. (2019) found that students who prefer independent learning are more likely to perceive blended learning as effective than those who prefer teacher-centered instruction. Similarly, a study by Woods and Ebersole (2003) found that students who prefer active learning methods, such as group work and problem-solving, are more likely to engage with online learning activities in a blended learning environment.

On the other hand, students who prefer a more structured classroom environment may find it challenging to stay motivated in a blended learning setting. According to a study by Subramaniam et al. (2019), students who prefer teacher-centered instruction may have difficulty adapting to the independent learning and self-direction required in a blended learning environment.

To address these individual differences, teachers should consider the different learning styles and preferences of their students when designing blended learning activities. As suggested by Rovai (2002), instructors can provide a variety of learning activities that cater to different learning styles, such as discussion forums for social learners, multimedia resources for visual learners, and problem-solving activities for active learners.

In addition, teachers can provide personalized feedback and support to students to help them stay motivated and engaged in the blended learning environment. A study by Xing et al. (2020) found that personalized feedback from instructors can significantly improve students' engagement and satisfaction with blended learning.

Overall, considering individual learning preferences is essential for creating a more engaging and effective blended learning environment that meets the needs of all learners.

Consideration of Learning Preferences

Several studies have examined the importance of support systems in the success of blended learning. According to a study by Al-Harbi and Alshumaimeri (2018), the availability of technical support and assistance from teachers and peers was found to be critical for students' satisfaction with blended learning. Similarly, a study by Kuo et al. (2014) found that the availability of online resources, such as discussion forums and video tutorials, was positively associated with students' academic performance and satisfaction with blended learning.

In addition to technical support, teachers can provide additional support to students who struggle with time management or have other commitments that compete for their attention. For example, teachers can provide regular reminders and deadlines to help students stay on track, as well as offer flexibility in assignment deadlines for students who may face unexpected challenges or time constraints (Beldarrain, 2006).

Moreover, peer support can also play a crucial role in the success of blended learning. A study by Wu et al. (2018) found that peer interactions and collaboration through online discussion forums and group projects can enhance students' engagement and satisfaction with blended learning.

Providing a supportive learning environment that includes technical support, personalized assistance from teachers, and opportunities for peer interaction can greatly enhance the success of blended learning for students.

The Importance of Teacher Support

Blended learning has been found to have several benefits for senior high school students, including increased flexibility, personalized learning, and improved academic performance (Means et al., 2013). However, effective implementation of blended learning requires addressing the challenges that students may face. For example, a study by Picciano (2014) found that one of the biggest challenges for students in blended learning was time management and the ability to balance online and offline learning activities.

To address these challenges, teachers can provide students with clear guidelines and schedules for online and offline activities, as well as offer flexibility in deadlines for assignments (Beldarrain, 2006). In addition, providing students with personalized support and feedback has been found to be critical for success in blended learning (Xing et al., 2020). Teachers can offer one-on-one support and guidance, as well as provide access to tutoring and peer support systems (Al-Harbi and Alshumaimeri, 2018).

Moreover, effective implementation of blended learning requires consideration of students' individual learning preferences. As mentioned earlier, students may have different preferences for traditional or online learning environments, and teachers should consider these preferences when designing blended learning activities (Poon et al., 2019). Providing a variety of learning activities that cater to different learning styles and preferences can enhance engagement and satisfaction with blended learning (Rovai, 2002).

Effective implementation of blended learning for senior high school students requires addressing the challenges that students may face and providing personalized support and feedback. By considering students' individual learning preferences and providing a variety of learning activities, teachers can create a more engaging and effective learning environment that meets the needs of all learners.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, it is evident that senior high school students have mixed perceptions about blended learning. While some students appreciate the flexibility and convenience it offers, others miss the in-person interaction and structure of traditional classes. Teachers must consider individual learning preferences when designing blended learning courses to ensure that they are engaging and effective for all students. The advantages of blended learning include the ability to learn at their own pace and access to a wider range of resources, while the disadvantages include technical difficulties, potential distractions, and lack of in-person interaction. The impact of blended learning on academic performance depends on the individual student's motivation and engagement, time management, support systems, and technology. Therefore, teachers must find ways to incorporate interactive and engaging

learning activities, provide regular feedback, and ensure that all students have access to necessary technology and resources to ensure the success of blended learning.

Blended learning has been found to have a positive impact on academic performance in certain contexts, particularly for self-regulated and self-motivated learners. However, it is important to recognize that blended learning may not be suitable for all students, particularly those who prefer structured classroom environments. Blended learning offers students the flexibility to learn at their own pace and access a wider range of learning resources, but technical difficulties, distractions, and feelings of isolation may present challenges. To address these challenges, teachers need to be proactive in providing interactive and engaging learning activities that promote student participation and motivation, as well as personalized feedback and support to help students stay on track. Considering individual learning preferences and providing appropriate support systems, including technical support and assistance from teachers and peers, is essential for creating a more engaging and effective blended learning environment that meets the needs of all learners.

Limitation & Further Research

This study is subject to limitations due to its small sample size, which consisted of only twelve students. As a result, the findings may not be applicable to other settings. Additionally, the study relied solely on self-reported data, which could be biased and influenced by social desirability effects, leading to a less accurate representation of the actual results.

To overcome these limitations, future studies could build on this research by increasing the sample size and including multiple schools from various geographic locations. Adopting a mixed-methods approach could provide a comprehensive analysis to explore the effectiveness of different blended learning approaches and how other factors impact blended learning outcomes.

Furthermore, it would be beneficial to examine the long-term effects of blended learning on student performance to determine whether the positive effects of blended learning persist over time. To get a better understanding of the perspectives of teachers and parents on the role of blended learning in student achievement, additional research could be conducted.

Overall, addressing the limitations of this study and expanding on the research would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of blended learning on student outcomes.

Conflict Of Interest

• The authors declare no conflict of interest.
• The authors have no competing interests to declare relevant to this article's content

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