



## Opportunities and challenges of bachelor of elementary education students in blended learning

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### Abstract

The challenges and struggles in transitioning the teaching and learning methods were evident to learners, leading to different factors that affected students' performances. Thus, this study aims to determine the opportunities and challenges for Bachelor of Elementary Education learners in blended learning at a university in Visayas, Philippines. This study utilizes a qualitative descriptive research design that produces information from an individual's viewpoint of events or experiences. Ten learners of Bachelor of elementary education were purposely selected as respondents. This study employed thematic analysis to analyze the learners' experiences in their learning process. With the data gathered, five themes were formulated. The result shows the significant impact of blended learning on BEED learners. Whether face-to-face setup or online setup, the learning is still there, and they were able to adjust and adapt to the new learning strategy. It is recommended that future researchers explore and deepen the understanding of blended learning to enhance students' performance in both settings.

**Keywords:** Blended learning, Challenges, Face-to-face, Online, and Opportunities

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### 1. Introduction

Blended learning is an innovative concept that incorporates the benefits of both traditional classroom instruction and ICT-supported learning, including offline and online learning. It provides opportunities for collaborative, constructive, and computer-assisted learning (CAL) (Dangwal, 2017) <sup>[6]</sup>. It establishes flexibility and collaboration in students' ability to study independently at their own pace and enables them to be progressive in tailoring their learning experiences to meet their needs. However, in a high-quality blended learning environment, in-person and online learning activities and content are integrated and geared toward the same learning objectives, so the learning experiences should be integrated and organized to be aligned side by side.

This challenge transcends the international context and is rampant in Asian educational settings. Several studies have been conducted to justify the efficacy of blended learning in students' new learning settings in various international contexts. This challenge was viewed by experts as enabling more chances for teacher-student connection, greater student involvement in the learning process, more flexibility in the teaching and learning environment, and chances for continuous improvement. Universities were able to offer more combinations of blended online and in-person learning programs as a result of the convergence of information and communication technologies, which promised to improve learning outcomes (Tham *et al.*, 2011) <sup>[18]</sup>. However, research on the latent positive effects of blended learning, particularly in some educational settings, is limited. Recent studies proved that the adaptation and implementation of blended learning is a cultural shift in instruction and learning (Powell *et al.*, 2015, p. 6) <sup>[14]</sup>, and whole-school implementation has its effects and challenges. In achieving effective implementation of blended learning, there were a myriad of crucial features required, such as a shared vision, a feasible instructional design, the capacity to combine offline teacher-led instruction with online digital technology, professional development for teachers, and a supportive Information Technology (IT) department (A. Kim, 2015) <sup>[9]</sup>.

In the local context of Cebu, the challenges of the educational setting adapted by transitioning from a traditional educational setup to a blended learning format as a new teaching and learning process are evident, and many students have adapted to blended educational learning since the pandemic and have begun taking classes from the comfort of their homes. The challenges and struggles in transitioning the teaching and learning methods were evident to students, leading to different factors that affected students' performances. These difficulties, struggles, and challenges interfered with their academic progress. It was significant to establish a method appropriate for meeting the students' needs about their challenges and difficulties. However, several colleges provided some programs in a hybrid style in which a certain university in Cebu City converted all of its face-to-face sessions to blended learning delivery, leveraging a method of instruction designed specifically to meet the learner's needs (Napier, N. P. *et al.*, 2011) <sup>[12]</sup>. Nonetheless, there was a need for processes for planning, training, and implementing the transition to a blended format for the adjustment of students to a new learning environment.

When students had to make a trip to get to their classroom, traditional educational learning or classroom instruction could turn out to be costly. In addition, learners were expected to attend classes at particular hours, which took up much of their time. Discussion and engagement would decrease if the program were lecture-based. The student may become inactive in a classroom setting and lose focus (Woodall, 2010) <sup>[20]</sup>. It was essential to talk about the challenges the students experienced in making adjustments and improvements to meet their needs with the process of blended learning and its opportunities and challenges for students' academic success.

This study's findings provided crucial information and knowledge regarding the chosen topic from the respondents, recent studies, and related sites. This research study was an instrument that guided the researchers in discovering credible, reliable, and insightful data to contribute substantially to tertiary learners, instructors, and an array of local settings in Cebu City, Philippines.

Other published studies focused on the effectiveness of blended learning on students' achievement and not on the challenges faced by the students. Hence, this study aimed to determine the opportunities and challenges for bachelor of elementary education students in blended learning at a certain university in Visayas, Philippines.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1. Research Design

Kim *et al.* (2017) <sup>[9]</sup> state that qualitative descriptive research is a research design that produces information that, from an individual's viewpoint, describes the "who," "what," and "where" of events or experiences. In educational research, this research design is commonly used when the researchers become interested in finding out information on a specific event, such as who is involved, what is involved, and where things happened.

### 2.2. Sampling Design, Respondents, and Environment

Purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique, was employed in this research conducted at a certain University in the Visayas, Philippines, and selected ten students as respondents. According to Nikolopoulou (2023), "purposive sampling" describes a class of non-probability

sampling methods in which respondents are chosen because they possess qualities your sample needs. In other words, units are chosen "on purpose" in purposive sampling. In this case, researchers carefully selected bachelor of elementary education students who had experience in blended learning.

### 2.3. Research Instrument

To provide and gather as much informative and reliable information as possible. The researcher interviewed the respondents using a questionnaire. The type of questionnaire that is used in this study is a semi-constructed questionnaire. According to Cleave (2023), semi-constructed questionnaires are a particular kind of interview when the interviewer just asks a select few predetermined questions, and the rest of the questions are not preplanned. This questionnaire consisted of three open-ended questions that answered the challenges and effectiveness of blended learning. Furthermore, an audio recorder was used to record further responses.

### 2.4. Data Gathering Procedure

The initial step in this study is obtaining clearance from the research ethics committee. After the clearance was released, the research team was authorized to conduct the research process. The researchers selected ten students enrolled in the 3rd year college Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEED) program. The researcher informed the respondents that the interview is entirely voluntary, and the researchers actively seek informed consent from the participants. The research instrument employed in this is a meticulously crafted questionnaire comprising three open-ended questions that delve into the challenges and effectiveness of blended learning. A thematic analysis was employed to comprehensively assess the challenges and effectiveness of blended learning.

### 2.5. Data Analysis

Thematic analysis, a qualitative research method that describes the processes used to understand data, was employed in this study to explore the students' experiences in their learning process. These analysis come from interviews where individuals share their experience. By analyzing researchers can identify themes and patterns to look for commonalities and differences among the narratives. Villegas, (2023) stated that a technique for assessing qualitative data called thematic analysis is reading through a collection of data and searching for patterns in the meaning of the data to identify themes. Making sense of the data was an active reflexive process where the researcher's personal experience is crucial. Therefore, thematic analysis was utilized in this study, enabling a comprehensive exploration of the challenges and effectiveness of blended learning through the lens of respondents' responses.

### 2.7. Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are essential in any research study because this is a set of guidelines that guides your research designs and methods. Ethical considerations ensured the confidentiality and well-being of respondents. In this research study, several ethical considerations were taken into account. First, the respondents' consent was obtained once they had been entirely told about the study's goals, the need for their participation, and the protection of their privacy and rights. Anonymity and confidentiality were ensured and maintained by creating a new ID for each participant instead

of using their personal information. The information gathered would be kept confidential, and only the research team would have access to the information. Respondents would have the right to withdraw or decline to participate in the study at any time without consequences. The respondents were given a token of appreciation. The respondents to the survey would receive a keychain. Further, those who allowed the researchers to voice record their answers were given a keychain and 15 pesos worth of GCash. Furthermore, the study adhered to the ethical guidelines and regulations set by the institution, ensuring that the research procedures and

interventions were conducted ethically and responsibly. An ethics committee reviewed and approved the research protocol after it had been filed to ensure that it complied with all regulations and protected the rights and welfare of participants.

### 3. Results and Discussions

#### Results

The tables present the clustering of codes, and themes that were identified to support the findings of the study.

**Table 1:** Clustered Themes

▪ Sentiments at the start of blended learning	1. Sentiments and adoption of the emergence of blended learning
▪ Challenges experienced during blended learning	2. Challenges experienced during blended learning
▪ Disadvantages and negative aspects of blended learning	
▪ Unable to afford gadgets and access to wifi	
▪ Advantages in blended learning	3. Advantages in blended learning
▪ Time management	4. Time management
▪ Personal growth and self-directed education	5. Personal growth and self-directed education and motivations
▪ Positive Reactions/Motivation	

#### Final Themes

1. Sentiments and adoption of the emergence of blended learning
2. Challenges experienced during blended learning
3. Advantages in blended learning
4. Time management
5. Personal growth and self-directed education and motivations

Thirty-five (35) significant statements were extracted from the interview transcripts of the ten informants. There were 8 codes, which also generated 8 formulated meanings. The eight codes were grouped into five categories, which emerged as five themes. Allicamen, D. (2020) stated that Blended Learning provides opportunities for both instructors and students. It allows students to prioritize what they want to work on first, how long they want to work on it for, and where they want to complete their assignments. According to the participants' responses, despite the abrupt and swift shifts from face-to-face to blended learning, they were able to adjust and adapt to the new learning strategy since they had no choice but to be adaptable given the circumstances.

#### Discussions

##### Theme 1. Sentiments and the adoption of the emergence of blended learning

Results reveal blended learning significantly influenced and impacted the selected 3rd-year BEED students. It states that some respondents are more likely to choose complete face-to-face than the current teaching mode. These were notable in the statements from the selected 3rd year BEED respondents.

*“Small influence, tungod man gud dili kaayo ko fan of the online classes more on face to face classes jud ko. A little influence, because I am not fond with online class, I am more into f2f class -Informant 2*

*“kakapoy, dayon nabag-ohan pako sa set up gyud kay first time sad baya nako naka kuan ana na set up jud sukad ato pagka covid. Since covid 19 happened, a new set up of learning was employed. This new set up is very new to me that it felt so hard to learn.” - Informant 3*

*“I guess mas kuan jud ang mag face-to-face pure kay mas makat on ang mga students compared sa blended. Based from experience, i prefer a full face to face set up since in face-to-face we have a lot of knowledge compare in online.” - Informant 9*

Due to its benefits over traditional and online teaching methods, blended learning is used more frequently in higher education. Graham (2006) confirms learners needed more time to prepare for the change. The abrupt shift from face-to-face to blended learning compelled individuals to adjust and adapt to new learning methods, highlighting the necessity to be flexible in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This flexibility implies their readiness and capacity to accept change and take advantage of the circumstances. However, this also reflects that circumstances have forced the learners to be open to a new learning environment. This implies that with unforeseen changes, the learners are able to face and accept the challenge.

##### Theme 2. Challenges experienced during blended learning

Results reveal that the blended learning challenges the selected 3rd year BEED students. It states that some respondents are most likely to experience blended learning as a distinct pain and difficulty due to a lack of gadgets and an internet connection. These were notable in the statements from the selected 3rd year BEED respondents.

*“Coming from the province of cebu, at first I don't know yet about the transportation going to school and in online the challenge is only the internet connection”. -Informant 1*

*“Lack of resources jud na ang challenge, wala mi wifi pag start palang, akoa gadget kay cellphone ra pajud so lisod kaayo mag multi task if cellphone ra imo gadget.” The lack of resources is currently the main challenge that I am facing. It's challenging to do all the tasks and projects without a laptop or PC, and the internet is also limited, so it's really tough. -Informant 2*

*“dili ko mag salig sa discussion sa maestra kay sa panahon karon dapat makat-on naka sa imoha ra paagi nga maka catch up kas discussion. I don't rely on the*



**teacher's discussion because in these times, you should be able to learn through your own means to catch up with the discussions.**" -Informant 3

**"sa bukid mawala wala ang internet nya pag face to face sad ato kay dili pa kaayo ko familiar sa place mag lisod pako direction." It was challenging at first because in the rural area, the internet is not stable. And when it comes to face-to-face interactions, I wasn't very familiar with the place, so I had difficulty finding my way.** - Informant 5

**"Sa internet, lisod kaayo nya gadget, wla pay mga laptop, comfortable nga ka stayhan sa kanang nay kusog na internet, lisod man gd sa amo kay bukid amoa ba niya wa gyuy signal" With the internet, it's very difficult since connection is not stable, and we don't have laptops or a comfortable place with strong internet. It's tough for us because our location is in a rural area where there is no signal.** - Informant 6

**"big adjustment gihapon siya hangtod karon kay for example mag online class then inig ka Wednesday and Thursday nasad magbalik nasad ug face to face, mura bitaw ng dli ang na use before na online, online rasad gyud pero naa pud siyay advantage." It's still a big adjustment until now because, for example, we have online classes, and then on Wednesdays and Thursdays, we switch back to face-to-face classes. It's like what we used before for online classes; it's mostly online, but it also has its advantages.**-Informant 7

**"Ang first jud na challenge no kay ang pag use gyud sa kanang devices, karon rata naka discover ba nga pwede diay siya mahitabo na nga nay in ani like dili ragyud siya fully face to face." The very first challenge was the actual use of those devices because it was quite unfamiliar at the time. Now, we've discovered that something like this is possible, where it doesn't have to be entirely face-to-face.** -Informant 7

**"dili gd kaayo ko kaayo kuan sa mga digital, sa mga devices dili gd kaayo ko kay traditional raman jud amoa, wala kaayo ko naka encounter ug mga computer kay limited ra ang amoang resources sa amoang previous school, so nakalitan ko" I wasn't very familiar with digital devices and technology, as we were very traditional in our learning before. I didn't have much experience with computers because our resources were limited at my previous school, so it was a bit challenging for me.** - Informant 8

**"I only use cellphone during the online classes and also the internet connection kay sa province kay dili jud kanang high ang internet connection kay usahay mawala." I only use a cellphone during the online classes, and the internet connection in the province is not very stable. Sometimes it disconnects, and you can't attend the class.**

-Informant 9

**"sa amoa kay dali ma brown out niya wifi among gamit, walay signal . In the province the internet connection is very poor. There are also times that the electricity is out."** - Informant 10

The advent of technology has resulted in significant changes in the economic, social, and educational sectors. This has significantly altered the way individuals conduct their daily lives (Ursua, 2008) <sup>[19]</sup>. (Redillas, 2022) <sup>[16]</sup> confirms that the lack of devices used to attend their online classes presents a

problem for the respondents. Additionally, the internet connection quality is crucial for running and taking part in lessons. Blended learning has been a significant adjustment for 3rd year BEED students. Many of the students are struggling because not everyone has access to the necessary gadgets and a reliable internet connection. This has made attending online classes and completing assignments quite challenging. This implies that it is essential to recognize and work collectively to find solutions that ensure that all students, regardless of their digital access, have the opportunity to succeed in their education.

### Theme 3. Advantages in blended learning

Results showed that blended Learning provides much opportunity to the 3rd-year BEED Students. It states that the respondents prefer this mode of Learning as this method is student-friendly and budget-friendly. Another respondent stated that this method helps improve their skills, such as in technology. These were notable in the statements from the selected 3rd year BEED respondents.

**"Ang influence sa face to face is to better yourself sa any aspect sa imoha strategies nya in online pwede ma influence ang imo self-appreciation and to enhance your weaknesses." The influence of face-to-face interactions is to improve yourself in any aspect of your strategies, and online, your self-appreciation and enhance your weaknesses.**" -Informant 1

**" sa face to face kay mas nakaila jud ko sa ako mga classmate, mas na familiarize jud nako ila mga nawng kay sa online kay profile picture raman ang makita nya panagsa rasad kaayo maka storya or maka video call using open cam." In face-to-face interactions, I get to know my classmates better and I become more familiar with their faces. In contrast, in an online setting, I can only communicate with them by only seeing their profile pictures.** - Informant 3

**"mas dali ang way of information basta online." It's easier to exchange information online, while in face-to-face.**" -Informant 4

**"adjustable ra sya kay sa online if ever naay mag klase na maestra if ever manguitana ang maestra maka search ra. Sa face to face anha jud makita kung naminaw ba ang mga estudyante sa maestra." In an online setting, if a teacher asks a question, you can simply search an idea and expound it. In a face-to-face class, it's evident whether or not the students are listening to the teacher. Blended learning is very student-friendly because it strikes a balance between in-person classes, which offers more flexibility."** -Informant 5

**"Sa online classes maka search bitaw if ever manguitana ang teacher nya dili rasad sya kapoy sa lawas kay adto raman sa balay. Unya if ever mangari mi sa skwelahan for face to face kay maka update sa mga news and information nya maka kat-on jud mi pag ayo kay sa face to face learning anha man makit-an kinsa to naminaw kinsa to wala naminaw." In online classes, you can easily search for ideas to support your answers if the teacher asks a question, and it's not physically tiring because you're at home. When we have face-to-face classes at school, we can catch up on news and information. In face-to-face learning, it's clear who's paying attention and who's not."** -Informant 5

**"nakat on kog mga new skills and then mas nahanas gali**

*ang akong kapasidad sa pagiging media literate, sa pag handle unsaon ang mga apps na magamit para pag eskwela "I've learned new skills and improved my ability to be media literate, as well as how to handle and use various apps for studying." - Informant 6*

*"dako siyag opportunity as a working student kay pwede maka work sa gabie like atong face to face kay it's only wednesday and thursday, so with that wednesday and thursday pwede himoon. Naa siyag opportunity nga dili siya maawit for how many days na walay klase" **It's a significant opportunity, especially for me as a working student because I have time to work in the evening. Our face-to-face classes are only on Wednesdays and Thursdays, so I can have those days off for other commitments. Despite not attending classes, I still have time to catch up with the lessons.**" - Informant 7*

*"It helps me to widen my knowledge about the integration of technology especially in doing my activities because daghan ra man kag resources and accessible ra for all, like sa internet accessible ra ang mga answers or like maka kuan rakag mga sources gani nga ma kanang kahibaw ka" **It helps me expand my knowledge about the integration of technology, especially in completing my assignments. There are plenty of resources available, and everything is easily accessible. On the internet, ideas and answers are accessible, and you can quickly find sources that you know..** - Informant 9*

*"Mas maka less ta, and mas flexible and mas maka daghan tag time na rest siguro at home kay in ana ang situation" **We have fewer constraints, more flexibility, and more time for rest at home given the situation.** - Informant 9*

*"Tungod sa blended, were able to manipulate things, using technology or computer most especially in using google classrooms. Tungod sad sa blended learning, accessible sad ta sa kanang like various information maka adto ug laing websites kay maka search or kanang para mapadaghan ang atong knowledge.." **In blended learning, we've been able to become more proficient in using tools like technology and computers, particularly in Google Classroom. We've become literate enough to navigate and use technology and we have access to various sources of information. We can visit different websites to search for information and expand our knowledge.** -Informant 10*

The approach of blended learning provides better accessibility to the learners, more accessibility towards content and knowledge, and better and more accessible communication with their fellows (Banerjee, 2011; Uzun & Senturk, 2010). Melgar, C., (2019) <sup>[10]</sup> confirms that the students consider blended learning to be very effective in terms of technicality because it is well-facilitated and has clear instructions. With blended learning, students take each class whenever it is most convenient for them. Additionally, it addresses the issue of the school's transportation costs, which are on the rise. This implies that with the advent of this approach, the students obtain knowledge or assistance online anytime, and it requires that students take an active role in and acknowledge responsibility for the school work completed outside of the classroom.

#### **Theme 4. Time management**

Blended learning proliferates students' interest in their

learning progression and facilitates students to study at their speed (Chang-Tik, 2018). Results reveal that blended learning provides more quality time for self-reflection and gives ample time for family. These were notable in the statements from the selected 3rd year BEED respondents.

*"nindot siya karon nga 2 days ang atong online then 2 days ang atong face-to-face kay naa tay time, naa jud times na maka rest then if online kay pwede ragd naa ta sa balay, niya maka bonding sa atong family, makatabang sa atong household chores" **Especially now that we have two days of online classes and two days face-to-face. We have the time to rest and on online class, we can be at home, spending time with our family, and helping out with household chores.** - Informant 8*

*"ang opportunity ana kay if ever gani naa kay boarding house diri, naa pakay time mo buhat sa mag buhaton." **The opportunity of blended learning provides more time in making activities or performance tasks especially when you have a boarding house.** -Informant 10*

*"time management lang jud most especially dealing with kuan pressure in acads and in personal life" **It's all about time management, especially when dealing with the pressure of academics and personal life.** -Informant 10*

The respondents were also delighted about learning with the gadgets, saying that they could study, take the exam online without going to a classroom, and work (for those who are working) would not be affected (Melgar V., 2019) <sup>[11]</sup>. Time management has an impact on more than just students' performance or results; it also has an impact on their mental skills and has the potential to enhance their stress level (Ahmad S. et al., 2009). Additionally, it asserts that blended learning supports effective time management among respondents, particularly for those who are currently boarders in the city. Blended learning, according to the findings, helps BEED respondents in managing their schedules and controlling their time spent on educational responsibilities. They have adequate time to travel, take care of housework, and spend time with their own families, which encourages them to become well-versed time managers. This simply implies that having good time management affects a learner's capacity to function better in an educational setting.

#### **Theme 5. Personal growth, self-directed education and motivations**

Results reveal that blended learning helps the respondents in the learning process, self-assessments, and self-development. The result also states that the respondents can conquer their fears and improve their weaknesses. These were notable in the statements from the selected 3rd year BEED respondents.

*"I was able to learn more and improve myself with application in the classroom through demonstration and/or creative presentations as a future educator." - Informant 1*

*"I was able to learn how to become a more digital literate person especially during online class where dapat jud ka knowledgeable how to kulikot your gadgets, how to access different sites, how to verify if an information is right/wrong, and so on. I was able to become an independent commuter. My school is far from our house, that's why I need to strive harder and help myself push*

*through lots of commuters." I have learned to become a more digitally literate individual, especially during online classes, where it's crucial to be knowledgeable about handling your devices, accessing various websites, verifying the accuracy of information. I became an independent commuter out of necessity. I have manage my way through various commutes, whether in the morning or at night -Informant 2*

*"it improves my information and media literacy skills and kahibaw nako mo edit ug ppt ug infographics."It has improved my information and media literacy skills. I already knew how to manipulate, add, or create edits online. - Informant 4*

*"Dili palabi ka pressure sa academic performance. Dapat di ta mo focus sa usa ka aspect ra sa ato kinabuhi dapat ato i balance nato atoa mindset and atoa actions."We shouldn't put too much pressure on our academic performance because we have many other aspects of life to consider. We shouldn't focus solely on one aspect of our life; instead, we should balance our mindset and actions across various areas of our life. - Informant 5*

*"Mold me nga mas na broad akong skills and knowledge about sa media and technology world "Mold me to broaden my skills and knowledge in the world of media and technology.-Informant 6*

*"wala ra, laban ra gyud "Its nothing, just keep on going and keep fighting."- Informant 6*

In blended learning, the focus is switched from teaching to learning, encouraging students to be more involved and excited about their studies, consequently improving their perseverance and commitment (Ismail *et al.*, 2018). Allan (2004) confirms that offering a wide range of learning opportunities will increase learners' engagement while adopting blended learning. This means that this learning method motivates the respondents to learn despite the challenges and struggles encountered. And this point of view admits that diverse teaching and learning strategies may pique the interest and motivation of particular students. This implies that blended learning can have a major impact on personal growth, self-directed education, and motivation by offering flexibility, and diverse learning experiences.

#### 4. Conclusion and Recommendations

Blended learning has a significant impact on third-year BEED students. Even though there are a lot of challenges they encounter in both setups, just like in online setup, they need more resources and more internet connection. Moreover, in face-to-face setup, they faced challenges in daily transportation, difficulty interacting with peers, and struggle with time management. Despite the struggles of blended learning, they have also experienced opportunities in both online and face-to-face setups. In an online setup, they can still help their parents do household chores, and they become media literate. Furthermore, whether face-to-face setup or online setup, the learning is still there. The respondents are left with no choice but to adopt and be flexible. Future researchers could further analyze effective models of teacher support for learners and professional

development, readiness, and effectiveness of blended learning from student, professor, and administrator perspectives as well as a comparative analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of blended learning as a way to discover what makes a blend for learning ideal.

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