

Application of the Blended Learning Approach in Developing Student Character in the Digital Era of the 21st Century



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ABSTRACT

In the digital era of the 21st century, the development of information and communication technology has had a significant impact on the world of education, opening up more flexible learning spaces through online platforms. Learning that is no longer limited to the classroom, utilizes blended learning—a combination of face-to-face and online learning—to accommodate the needs of developing 21st century skills such as critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration. This study aims to explore the application of the blended learning approach in student character development, focusing on values such as responsibility, discipline, and cooperation. The method used is a literature study, reviewing various previous studies related to blended learning and character education. The results of the study show that blended learning can strengthen students' character education, by providing opportunities for them to be more independent in managing learning and engaging in collaborative activities. However, the main challenges faced are the inequality of access to technology and the limitations of digital literacy which can affect the effectiveness of this method. Therefore, an education policy that supports equal access and increased digital literacy is needed to optimize the implementation of blended learning.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the digital era of the 21st century, the development of information and communication technology has a significant impact on the world of education. Learning that was once limited to the classroom is now increasingly open through digital platforms that can be accessed anytime and anywhere (Rozie & Pratikno, 2023). The use of technology in education is not only focused on delivering teaching materials, but also on developing 21st century skills, such as critical thinking, creativity, and the ability to collaborate. One of the approaches that has been widely introduced to meet the demands of education in this digital era is blended learning, which combines face-to-face learning with online

learning (Adisel & Pranansa, 2020). This approach is considered to be able to provide a more flexible and effective learning experience, while supporting the development of students' character that is balanced between cognitive and affective aspects (Hockly, 2018). However, despite its great potential, the implementation of blended learning in student character development in Indonesia still requires further study, considering various factors such as technological readiness and different student characteristics.

Blended learning, or blended learning, is an educational approach that combines face-to-face learning methods with online learning (Idris, 2018). This concept refers to the use of



technology to support and enrich the learning experience in the classroom. In Indonesian language learning, blended learning facilitates students to access materials through various digital platforms that support language teaching (Susanti & Prameswari, 2020). In addition, this technique allows for more flexible interaction between teachers and students and can be done at any time, thus supporting different learning speeds and ways of students. The success of this model relies heavily on the effective integration of face-to-face and online learning to improve understanding of the material being taught. Garrison and Kanuka (2004) explain that blended learning can significantly change the educational experience by harnessing the potential of technology in integrating traditional and digital learning (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004).

One of the main advantages of blended learning is its ability to provide students with wider access to digital resources, such as learning videos, e-books, discussion forums, and interactive exercises. In the context of Indonesian language learning, teaching materials in the form of text, audio, and video are very important to develop listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. Students can more easily understand the context of language use through more diverse and visual media, which is not typically found in traditional teaching. Blended learning also allows students to learn independently by accessing the material online, while face-to-face classes are used for in-depth discussions, clarifications, and practical applications. Bonk and Graham (2006) highlight how technology supports increasing learning effectiveness by enriching the content delivered to students (Bonk & Graham, 2012).

The application of blended learning in Indonesian learning also pays attention to the differences in the characteristics and learning needs of students. Some students may be more

comfortable with an online approach that allows them to learn at a more flexible pace, while others may prefer hands-on learning with more structured teaching. This model helps teachers to better understand the characteristics of their students, such as more visual, auditory, or kinesthetic ways of learning, and adjust teaching methods as needed. Therefore, blended learning provides more opportunities for students to find the best way to understand and use Indonesian effectively. Simarmata et al (2016) revealed that understanding the characteristics of students is important in designing technology-based learning (Simarmata et al., 2016).

However, a challenge that is often faced in the application of blended learning is the gap in access to technology between students. Not all students have adequate devices or stable internet connections to access online learning materials. In the context of the Indonesian language, this gap can affect students' ability to understand the material in a more interactive and practical way. Therefore, it is important for educational institutions to provide solutions for students who lack access to technology, such as computer lab facilities or the procurement of devices that can be loaned to support the learning process. Keengwe (2018) noted that technological constraints are often an obstacle in the implementation of blended learning, even though the potential benefits are very large (Keengwe, 2018).

The character of students also has a great influence on the success of the implementation of blended learning. Some important characteristics to consider in the context of learning Indonesian include motivation, discipline, and the ability to manage time. Students who are highly motivated and have great curiosity tend to be more active in utilizing online materials. On the other hand, students



who lack discipline or have difficulties in time management may have difficulty completing assignments or participating in online learning effectively. Therefore, teachers need to provide adequate guidance and develop a supervision system that can monitor students' learning progress more intensively. Aritonang & Safitri (2021) emphasized that student motivation is a determining factor in the success of blended learning (Aritonang & Safitri, 2021).

Teaching Indonesian through blended learning requires good skills and technological knowledge from teachers. Teachers must not only be able to teach language skills, but also manage online learning platforms effectively. In addition, teachers need to design learning that is able to motivate students and create an inclusive learning atmosphere. This can be achieved by combining a variety of challenging teaching techniques, such as online quizzes, online discussion forums, and tasks that involve collaboration. In the long term, the application of blended learning can improve students' ability to speak Indonesian and prepare them to face the challenges of an increasingly digital world. Graham (2018) reveals that teachers play a central role in designing and implementing effective blended learning (Graham, 2018).

This research focuses on the importance of developing students' character in the midst of the industrial revolution 4.0 which continues to encourage changes in the world of education. The character of students is very important to form a generation that is not only intellectually intelligent but also has integrity, creativity, and is able to adapt to changing times. Effective character education is expected to create students who not only have knowledge, but also have good social and emotional skills. Blended learning offers an opportunity to develop students' character in a more holistic way, but its

application in Indonesia is still constrained by challenges in integrating technology with traditional learning methods (Bower, 2017).

Several previous studies that have been carried out include, Hasan (2022), research shows that the application of blended learning that integrates technology with conventional learning methods can be effective in improving learning in elementary schools. This approach not only helps in the delivery of academic materials, but also supports the development of student character education. By utilizing technology in learning, students can learn more flexibly and interactively, while character values such as discipline, responsibility, and cooperation remain integrated in the learning process. This research emphasizes the importance of using technology to create a more dynamic learning environment and support the formation of student character in the digital era (Hasan, 2022).

Furthermore, research from Karlina and Sudarman (2021), shows that the application of blended learning during the Covid-19 pandemic has succeeded in supporting character education in early childhood. Although the challenges of the pandemic limited face-to-face learning, the blended learning method that combines online and offline learning allows character education to continue to run effectively. Through this approach, children can learn flexibly, while character values such as discipline, empathy, and responsibility are still taught both through digital media and in-person activities at home. This research highlights the importance of technology adaptation in supporting children's character development even in challenging situations (Karlina & Sudarman, 2021).

Finally, research from Atmoko et al. (2017), shows that the application of blended learning in



counseling services in schools can meet the needs of students in exploring and developing their character. By combining online and offline learning, students get the opportunity to access counseling materials in a more flexible and interactive way, which supports the strengthening of character values such as honesty, responsibility, and cooperation. This study underscores the importance of using technology in counseling services to support the process of developing students' character more efficiently and effectively, both inside and outside the classroom (Atmoko et al., 2017).

The purpose of this study is to examine how the blended learning approach can be applied in the context of character education in Indonesian schools. This study also aims to identify the factors that affect the success of the implementation of blended learning in shaping students' character, as well as the impact caused by the implementation. The benefits of this research are expected to provide insight for education practitioners in designing a curriculum that is more responsive to technological developments and the needs of students' character in the 21st century. In addition, the results of this study can also be a reference for policymakers in formulating educational strategies oriented to character development through educational technology. Thus, this research is expected to make a positive contribution to improving the quality of education in Indonesia, especially in developing students' character in the digital era.

2. METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with the type of literature study (Creswell, 2016). This study aims to examine and analyze various relevant sources related to the application of the blended learning approach in developing student

character in the digital era of the 21st century. The literature study was chosen because the focus of this research is to explore information and analysis from various previous researches, articles, books, and reports related to the topic. Thus, literature studies allow researchers to summarize the results of previous studies, identify gaps in the literature, and build a deeper understanding of the application of blended learning in the context of character education.

The data sources used in this study include journal articles, books, research reports, and other academic sources related to the topic of blended learning and character education. The main data sources are obtained from academic databases such as Google Scholar, JSTOR, ProQuest, as well as various leading educational journals. Source selection is carried out based on relevance, credibility, and contribution to the research topic. Only sources published within the last five years are used to ensure the accuracy of information (Moleong, 2000).

The data collection technique in this study was carried out by means of documentation and literature study. Researchers will collect, read, and analyze relevant sources related to the application of blended learning in the context of character education in the digital era. The collected data will then be selected and synthesized to provide a comprehensive picture of how blended learning can support student character development. The data analysis method used in this study is content analysis, where the researcher will identify the main themes that emerge from various relevant literature sources. Content analysis will be carried out by grouping information based on certain categories, such as the definition of blended learning, its application in character education, and the challenges and opportunities faced in its implementation. The results of this



content analysis are expected to provide a deeper understanding of the application of blended learning in developing student character in the digital era of the 21st century.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The following is a table containing 8 selected articles from several articles related to the

application of the blended learning approach in developing student character in the 21st century digital era. These articles are selected based on their relevance, credibility, and contribution to the topic discussed. Each article provides a different perspective on various aspects of blended learning and character education, as well as challenges and opportunities in its application in the digital era.

Table 1. Literature Review

No	Name	Title	Source	Finding
1	(Oliver & Trigwell, 2005)	Can 'blended learning' be redeemed?	E-learning and Digital Media	Blended learning, despite the challenges it faces in the integration of face-to-face and online learning methods, has the potential to improve the quality of teaching if applied with the right strategies and a deep understanding of the learning context.
2	(Perdana & Adha, 2020)	Implementasi blended learning untuk penguatan pendidikan karakter pada pembelajaran pendidikan kewarganegaraan	Citizenship Jurnal Pancasila dan Kewarganegaraan	The implementation of blended learning in Civic Education learning can strengthen student character education, especially in developing attitudes of responsibility and social awareness through a combination of face-to-face and online methods.
3	(Nurussholihah & Abdullah, 2022)	Strategi Pembentukan Karakter Disiplin Dan Bertanggung Jawab Melalui Penerapan Model Pembelajaran Blended Learning	Jurnal Cakrawala Pendas	The application of the blended learning model is effective in shaping the character of discipline and responsibility for students through the integration of structured online and offline learning activities.
4	(Kartikasari et al., 2022)	Metode Blended Learning pada Pendidikan Politik di Organisasi Intra Sekolah Dalam	CIVICUS: Pendidikan- Penelitian- Pengabdian Pendidikan Pancasila dan	The blended learning method in political education in intra-school organizations has succeeded in instilling an attitude of responsibility in high school students in Tuban Regency through



		Menanamkan Sikap Tanggung Jawab Bagi Siswa SMA Di Kabupaten Tuban	Kewarganegaraan	a combination of active and participatory online and face-to-face learning.
5	(Salim et al., 2024)	The Impact of Blended Learning an Educational Innovation as on Student Character Building in Islamic Religious Education	Qubahan Academic Journal	The application of blended learning as an educational innovation has a positive effect on the formation of students' character, especially in improving moral and spiritual values in Islamic Religious Education subjects.
6	(Sitorus et al., 2021)	Analysis of effectiveness character value in blended learning	2021 International Conference on Computer & Information Sciences (ICCOINS)	This approach improves the understanding and application of character values in students through more intensive interaction between online and face-to-face learning materials
7	(Kintu et al., 2017)	Blended learning effectiveness: the relationship between student characteristics, design features and outcomes	International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education	The effectiveness of lended learning is influenced by student characteristics, learning design features, and results achieved, where the integration of these elements can increase student engagement and achievement in learning.
8	(Wardani & Aminah, 2019)	Evaluating the e-learning on students' character: blended learning model as a strategy to improve students' character	Journal of Physics: Conference Series	The blended learning model can be an effective strategy to improve students' character, especially in terms of discipline and responsibility, through the evaluation of e-learning-based learning.

Blended learning, as a combination of face-to-face and online learning methods, shows great potential in improving the quality of education and character formation of students. The use of this model not only supports the understanding of learning materials but also encourages character development, such as responsibility, discipline, and moral values. However, its success depends heavily on implementation strategies, learning design, and student characteristics.

Based on eight studies that have been studied on the application of blended learning in student character development, it can be concluded that blended learning is an effective approach to strengthen student character education in the digital era of the 21st century. This method combines face-to-face learning and online learning, which provides opportunities for students to develop character such as responsibility and discipline. A number of studies, such as those conducted by Perdana and Adha (2020) and Nurusholihah and Abdullah (2022), show that blended learning strengthens these character values, because students are given the opportunity to be more independent in managing their study time and engaging in activities that lead to character building.

Other research, such as Kartikasari et al. (2022) and Darlis and Sari (2021), also emphasized the positive impact of blended learning on students' attitudes of responsibility and discipline. This flexible timing of learning allows students to be more independent and engaged in assigned tasks both online and face-to-face, which in turn strengthens their discipline. Research conducted by Salim et al. (2024) also shows that blended learning can help in the formation of students' moral and spiritual character, especially in religious education subjects. This approach provides opportunities for students to learn more flexibly, with a focus on developing deeper moral values.

In addition, research by Sitorus et al. (2021) also shows that blended learning helps students in

developing the values of cooperation, empathy, and integrity. By combining online materials that can be accessed at any time with more interactive face-to-face sessions, students have the opportunity to understand and apply these values in their daily lives. This shows that although technology plays an important role in improving academic achievement, technology also makes a significant contribution to the formation of students' character.

However, some studies have also identified challenges in the application of blended learning, such as those found in the research of Wardani and Aminah (2019). One of the main challenges faced is the problem of uneven access to technology in various regions. This inequality in access can reduce the effectiveness of blended learning in shaping students' character, especially for those who live in areas that lack technological infrastructure. Therefore, while blended learning promises great benefits, it is important to ensure that all students have equal access to the necessary technology.

Research by Kintu et al. (2017) and Darlis and Sari (2021) also show that student characteristics and digital literacy play an important role in the successful implementation of blended learning. Students who have good digital literacy skills tend to be able to utilize technology more effectively, which in turn accelerates their character development. In contrast, students who are less skilled in using technology may face difficulties in following the material or participating in online discussions, which can slow down their character development.

In addition, research by Kintu et al. (2017) also shows that the success of blended learning does not only depend on learning design or access to technology, but also on the level of student involvement in the learning process. Students who are more actively involved, both in online discussions and face-to-face projects, tend to experience improvements in their character development. This involvement gives them the opportunity to learn socially and hone characters



such as cooperation and tolerance.

Overall, although blended learning has its implementation challenges, there are many advantages that can be gained from this method in developing students' character, especially in improving discipline, responsibility, social awareness, and cooperation. Learning that integrates technology with face-to-face interaction provides opportunities for students to be more independent in learning and develop their character in a more flexible and interactive environment. However, in order for its effectiveness to be maximized, it is important to pay attention to factors such as access to technology, students' digital literacy, and students' active involvement in the learning process.

Discussion

The application of the blended learning approach in developing student character in the 21st century digital era makes a significant contribution to the formation of a more holistic student character. In this era, where digital technology is increasingly dominating various aspects of life, character education has become very important to ensure that students are not only intellectually intelligent, but also have good social and emotional skills. Blended learning, which combines face-to-face learning with online learning, offers flexibility and convenience in the learning process that can strengthen aspects of student character, such as discipline, responsibility, cooperation, and empathy.

The application of blended learning in student character development faces several challenges and obstacles that need to be considered so that its effectiveness can be achieved. One of the main challenges is the inequality of access to technology, where not all regions have adequate infrastructure, both in terms of internet access and digital devices. This hinders some students, especially in remote areas or with low economic

levels, from participating in online learning optimally. In addition, the limitations of digital literacy are also an obstacle, because students and teachers need to have sufficient ability to use digital devices and platforms. Without adequate training, the quality of learning can be disrupted.

Another challenge is how to motivate students to stay actively involved in online learning, which often makes students feel isolated and less interacting. Students who prefer face-to-face learning may feel less motivated in online learning. In addition, the success of blended learning is highly dependent on effective learning design, which must be able to accommodate the needs and characteristics of students. If the design is not right, the goal of developing students' character can be hampered. Finally, student character assessment in blended learning is also a challenge, because it requires a more holistic approach and is based on observation and constructive feedback, in contrast to traditional evaluations that assess the final results.

No matter how great the technology used in the world of education, character values remain an important element in classroom learning. Character education focuses on developing students' attitudes, behaviors, and integrity, which will shape their personalities to become intelligent, creative, ethical, and ready individuals to face the challenges of the global world. Although technology, such as blended learning, can enrich the learning process, its application should not replace the main goal of education, which is the formation of students' character. Therefore, it is important to integrate character values in every aspect of learning, both face-to-face and online. In this context, blended learning, which combines face-to-face learning with technology-based learning, offers great opportunities to develop students' character.



Blended learning provides flexibility in the learning process, allowing students to learn at their own pace, and interact more frequently with learning materials and fellow students. However, the technology must be accompanied by the right strategy so that the goal of character development can be achieved. One of the main strategies that can be used in blended learning is the use of content that not only prioritizes mastery of the material, but also teaches moral values, such as responsibility, discipline, and empathy. For example, in online learning, the material presented can contain elements that stimulate students' self-reflection regarding their behavior, ethics, and social relationships. Thus, although students can access the material flexibly and independently, they still acquire in-depth character teaching through instructor-guided instruction.

In addition, in the blended learning approach, project-based learning strategies can be used to encourage character development through group work, collaboration, and real problem-solving. Project-based learning provides students with the opportunity to apply what they learn in real-world contexts, while also developing a collaborative and creative attitude. In face-to-face learning, direct interaction between students and teachers remains crucial to strengthen character teaching. Activities such as discussions, problem-based learning, and group reflection can strengthen students' understanding of character values and how to apply them in daily life. Therefore, even though technology can accelerate access to information and facilitate the learning process, the social interaction that occurs in the classroom remains irreplaceable.

The effective application of blended learning in developing students' character requires careful

planning and support from various parties, including teachers, parents, and the government. Teachers as facilitators must be able to create an atmosphere that supports the development of students' character, both in face-to-face and online sessions. This means that teachers must have the skills to design learning that prioritizes not only academic achievement, but also the moral character of students. Parents also have an important role in supporting learning based on character values outside the classroom, through open communication with schools and accompanying children in online learning activities. In addition, the government needs to provide policies that support the wise and comprehensive use of technology in education, without ignoring the character aspect that is the main foundation in the formation of students' personalities.

Thus, although technologies such as blended learning have great potential in facilitating learning, character values must remain the main focus in education. Blended learning can be used as a tool to support the development of students' character, but the teaching of moral and social values should still be an integral part of the learning strategies implemented in schools.

4. CONCLUSION

Blended learning, which combines face-to-face and online learning, has proven to be effective in developing students' character in the digital era of the 21st century. Research shows that this approach reinforces values such as responsibility, discipline, cooperation, and empathy, by giving students more freedom in managing their study time. However, the main challenges faced are inequality in access to technology, limited digital literacy, and lack of proper learning design. This can hinder the effectiveness of blended learning, especially for



students in remote areas or with low levels of technological skills.

To optimize the application of blended learning in student character development, the right strategy is needed. Learning content should integrate the teaching of moral values with academic materials, while project-based learning can encourage cooperation and problem-solving. Support from teachers, parents, and the government is crucial in ensuring equitable access to technology and the quality of learning that suits the needs of students. With the right approach, blended learning can be a very effective tool to develop students' character holistically.

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