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Editorial

The May/June 2024 JIRSEA Issue has consistently resulted in 67% of papers being declined or withdrawn due to relevance to JIRSEA's focus on Higher Education issues or Institutional Research and those that do not meet the "sound scientifically grounded" research requirements of JIRSEA. Of the 23 papers that went through the Preliminary Reviews with revisions and re-submitted, and after the Double-Blind Review of 10 papers, only 8 papers were accepted for this issue publication after the rigorous and stringent vetting process, with 2 non-follow-ups. The first two papers from Malaysia and Indonesia used internationally indexed databases to look at internationalization activities in universities and to identify, evaluate, and summarize the findings of all studies about inequality in VET, respectively. The third paper from China conducted a comparative analysis of art education curricula in China and Kyrgyzstan, followed by the identification of commonalities and major differences in the approaches to shaping the arts education system in both countries. Two papers from Indonesia used a case study examining the risk management of the implementation of Learning from Home and explored the phenomenon of international cultural exchange programs done by students and faculties from different countries: Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines. A key paper discussed the challenges and frustrations of editorial work and provided basic guidelines and improvements to guide better development and ensure paper acceptance. The last two submissions from Vietnam covered blended learning in a Vietnamese university and the readiness of EFL students for online learning in Vietnam and identified difficulties in online learning.

The key synopses of these nine papers are as follows:

- **Article 1 – Mohammad Nurhafiz Hassim** of *Universiti Teknologi MARA, Malaysia,* explored the implementation of scorecards and dashboards in assessing internationalization activities in universities using academic databases from Scopus, Web of Science (WOS), and Google Scholar, focusing on aspects related to the benefits, monitoring, and effectiveness of scorecards and dashboards in evaluating an internationalization process or activity carried out by a university. Several key factors, such as academic reputation, employer reputation, faculty/student ratio, citations per faculty, international faculty ratio, and international student ratio, were used as the criteria. This study found that implementing scorecards and dashboards in evaluating a university to improve its reputation and ranking is indeed effective due to various factors, including the benefits, effectiveness, and accurate measurement offered by the scorecards and dashboards and their widespread use in universities.
- **Article 2 – Yolandaru Septiana, Edi Istiyono, Sukirno,** and **Siti Irene Astuti Dwiningrum**, all from *Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, Yogyakarta, Indonesia* conducted a systematic literature review to identify, evaluate, and summarize the findings of all studies about inequality in VET, thereby making the available evidence more accessible to decision-makers. A total of 8.892 studies were found, and 46 studies were selected based on the specified criteria, showing that inequality in VET includes inequalities experienced by marginalized international students, immigrants, refugees, people with disabilities, gender, labor markets, opportunities, and wages. They proposed that efforts need to be made to reduce inequality by reviewing

policies, improving curricula and learning processes, evaluating learning in VET, and improving VET.

- **Article 3 – Chunhuan Liu and Nurbubu Asanalievna** Asipova of [1]*Kyrgyz National University named after Jusup Balasagyn, Kyrgyz Republic,* and **Bin Lu and Wei Wu** from *Luoyang Normal University, China,* conducted a comparative analysis of art education curricula in China and Kyrgyzstan, followed by the identification of commonalities and major differences in the approaches to shaping the arts education system in both countries. The study employed a qualitative document analysis approach to comprehensively compare art education curricula in China and Kyrgyzstan, focusing on curriculum structure, content emphasis, teaching methodologies, and cultural integration. The result identified significant differences in the strategies of curriculum development in art education. In China, preference is given to a centralized system with a rigidly structured curriculum, while in Kyrgyzstan, students and teachers are given more freedom and a more individualized approach to the choice of topics and teaching methods, promoting flexibility in art education. In Kyrgyzstan, special attention is paid to national artistic traditions, whereas in China, contemporary art movements are also actively supported in parallel with traditional art, all illustrating how cultural and historical aspects significantly influence the organization of art education in different countries.
- **Article 4 – Imeldha Putrianti** of *Sekolah Dharma Suci Jakarta* and **Ktut Silvanita Mangani** of *Universitas Kristen Indonesia* used a case study examining the risk management of implementation Learning from Home during the COVID-19 Pandemic at SMA 'X' in North Jakarta. Risk values were calculated by multiplying the probability and impact factors and then presented in the heatmap matrix. Bow Tie Diagrams were used to illustrate each event comprehensively, including the mitigation procedure applied to each likelihood and impact. The study's findings identify contributing factors to the decline in education quality, including teachers' readiness and skills, unaltered learning methods, and difficulty measuring student competency, providing a basis for developing more effective learning methods to mitigate risk in this school and other schools with similar contexts, thereby improving the quality of education.
- **Article 5 – Teay Shawyun** of the *South East Asian Association for Institutional Research* and **Krisda Tanchaisak and Narat Wattanapanit,** both from *Ramkhamhaeng University,* discussed the challenges and frustrations of editorial work and provided basic guidelines and improvements to guide better development and ensure papers acceptance. This paper aims to support good paper development and submission and dispel beliefs of easy and potentially frustrating efforts. This paper attempts to provide retrospect and reflections on the "frustrations" of an Editor that papers should avoid in a Scopus Indexed Journal. It attempts to identify researchers' innocent or non-intentional practices by providing a set of dos and don'ts that are personalized based on retrospect and reflections of the paper submitted, rejected, and accepted in this Journal. It attempts to share "overlooked" practices that the researchers can use to ensure their papers stand a higher chance of acceptance.
- **Article 6 – Nailul Authar, Tyas Saputri, Djuwari, and Ali Mas'ud,** all from *Universitas Nahdlatul Ulama Surabaya,* explored the phenomenon of international cultural exchange programs done by students and faculties from different countries:

Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines. It provides evidence about the handicap of having the cultural exchange program to visit *Kampong Lali Gajet* and other problems during the visit in this region. These are intended to (1) improve the relationship with other nations, (2) get strategies for networking (3) get skill of interpersonal communication skills. The study believes that the program serves the purpose of sharing common traditional games, recognizing cultural differences, and fostering connections through shared interests.

- **Article 7 – Tram Huyen KIEU, Tho Doan VO, and Dinh Ha Quang VO,** all from the *University of Economics Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam,* and Kean Wah LEE and Gurcharan Singh BISHEN SINGH, both from the *University of Nottingham, Malaysia Campus, Malaysia* used a mixed-methods study that utilized the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (Hall & Hord, 2006) to assess the stages of concerns among lecturers and their specific concerns regarding the top-down decision to adopt blended learning in a Vietnamese university. The findings showed that the lecturers were early adopters of blended learning, exhibiting strong concerns about the adoption, particularly those unrelated and self-focused. The research also indicated that lecturers experienced instructional ambiguity in understanding the essence of blended learning, technological apprehension, workload stress, and skepticism about student learning autonomy, lecturers' readiness to learn about blended learning, their enthusiasm for intradisciplinary cooperation, and their flexibility in applying the teaching strategy.
- **Article 8 – Vo Thi Kim Anh, Nguyen Van Long, and Ho Thi Thuc Nhi** from the *University of Foreign Language Studies, The University of Danang,* presents findings of a quantitative study examining the readiness of EFL students for online learning in Vietnam and identifies difficulties in online learning in late 2021. The findings revealed that EFL students in Vietnam have a high level of readiness for online learning with no significant statistical difference in the level of readiness of male and female groups of students for online learning. Students' class levels are found to have an impact on students' readiness. Students are found to experience challenges such as difficulties in a distracting environment, and technical issues. The paper recommended that universities provide students with consistent technical support and necessary training for their online learning, suitable online learning activities, specific guidelines for online learning, course requirements, and suitable teaching pedagogies with varied activities that need to be designed carefully to increase students' online learning readiness.

JIRSEA Editor: Assoc. Prof. Teay Shawyun, Ph.D.

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IMPLEMENTING SCORECARDS AND DASHBOARDS FOR MONITORING AND EVALUATING INTERNATIONALIZATION IN HEIs: A CONCEPTUAL PAPER

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the implementation of scorecards and dashboards in assessing internationalization activities in universities. The methodology of this concept paper is referencing secondary data comprising established academic databases from Scopus, Web of Science (WOS), and Google Scholar, focusing on aspects related to the benefits, monitoring, and effectiveness of scorecards and dashboards in evaluating an internationalization process or activity carried out by a university. The improvement of a university's reputation and ranking should be based on several key factors such as academic reputation, employer reputation, faculty/student ratio, citations per faculty, international faculty ratio, and international student ratio. These are the same criteria considered by institutions such as Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) and Times Higher Education (THE), which rank and rate universities and institutions of higher education around the world. This study found that implementing scorecards and dashboards in evaluating a university to improve its reputation and ranking is indeed effective. This is due to various factors, including the benefits, effectiveness, and accurate measurement offered by the scorecards and dashboards and their widespread use in universities.

Keywords: Evaluation**,** Effectiveness, Internationalization, Scorecard, Dashboard

Introduction

The higher education sector today is no longer focusing solely on classroom education. This sector has changed its focus towards a different dimension, specifically the process of internationalization and globalization. Globalization has had positive effects in this era, such as the growth of franchise activities, articulation programs, branch campuses, and online delivery of higher education (de Wit, 2020). The global village concept applies in this scenario as knowledge, cultures, and people are shared across borders, and geographical location becomes less important than the quality of ideas and ability to contribute to the global intellectual dialogue. Moreover, it facilitates a global university network where students, faculty, and ideas flow freely between institutions, regardless of physical location. Each research university is part of a single global network. As a result, internationalization has become a major strategic priority for academic leaders of higher education institutions who want to internationalize their institutions and connect their organizations, students, and faculty to an accelerating world (Mohsin & Zaman, 2014).

The internationalization of universities has several benefits, including increased awareness of the global context. Engaging students in an international context enhances their understanding of global affairs and difficulties from multiple viewpoints (Buckner, 2019). It facilitates academic standards by exchanging different practices from various countries and cultures. There is an opportunity for universities to improve the quality of academics by learning from other universities around the world and sharing their best practices (Jibeen & Khan, 2015). Last but not least, cultural exchange and understanding are promoted because an internationalized university environment fosters cultural awareness, an international perspective, and tolerance among the students. This fosters such values as tolerance, respect, and an ethical obligation to the world (Singh, 2021).

The Internet has dramatically facilitated this, as digital communication technologies and trends drive the focus toward international cooperation in research and education (Umpleby et al., 2009). However, it should be noted that globalization is a dynamic phenomenon that is influenced by region, language of use, and academic culture. Different types of institutions within an interconnected global system play it out differently, where each university is visible to the other. In this light, as the impact of the worldwide dimension grows, it becomes impossible for nations or even individual institutions of higher education to be completely isolated from the global influence.

The internationalization of higher education institutions has become increasingly important in a globalized world. However, measuring the effectiveness of internationalization activities in universities remains a complex and challenging task. Despite the numerous efforts and projects that have been implemented to assess internationalization, such as the "CeQuInt Project" of the European Consortium for Accreditation, which created a framework for assessing internationalization at the program and institutional levels (Gao, 2019) and the IMPI Project, which was supported by the European Union and offers a set of indicators that institutions can use to evaluate their performance in internationalization (Green, 2012). Hence, scorecards and dashboards are found to be very useful for evaluating the success and outcome of internationalization in universities as they have several advantages over other tools. They allow users to sort, drill down, search, analyze, and visualize the most critical metrics for

internationalization KPIs, which converts data into an easily understandable and engaging format (Team, 2024). They also assist in detecting changes or problems since users can compare the most important internationalization KPIs side by side and see which ones are on track, which ones are not, and which ones need further investigation. Therefore, there is a clear need to see how effective and appropriate the dashboard and Scorecard are in assessing internationalization activities based on indicators from (QS) and (THE) in improving the university's achievement, ranking, and reputation.

Literature Review

Internationalization of the Universities

The terminology "internationalization" is not novel; nonetheless, its incorporation within the realm of education is a recent development. Delving into the epoch before the 1980s, it becomes palpable that the terminology of "international education" held a more prevalent sway. This predilection maintains its grip even in contemporary times, with the United States of America as a prominent bastion of this nomenclatural inclination (De Wit, 2002: 104; Knight, 2004: 2 in Chan & Dimmock, 2008). According to Knight (2003), internationalization incorporates a global, intercultural, or international component into higher educational institutions' goals, duties, or delivery modes. While Liu (2004) states in Hou (2022) that the concept of education should advocate a decisive rejuvenation of the educational paradigm, this recalibration encompasses multiple facets: a call for a contemporary overhaul of educational constructs, a determined effort to improve academic skills, an unabashed embrace of an open-ended pedagogical approach, and a visionary quest for the collective dissemination of educational reserves.

According to Kirkwood and Price (2013), internationalization in higher education systematically integrates an international perspective into the institution's teaching, research, and public service activities. The internationalization of higher education entails giving university instruction, research, and services an international and intercultural perspective (Mia et al., 2022). However, by the year 2014, the meaning of internationalization was quite different from what it used to be. Pukall and Calabro (2014) defined internationalization as a process that is characterized by the existence of state and change variables that are in a constant process of interacting with each other. This perspective recognized the dynamic nature of internationalization and the fact that institutions had to be ready to respond to changes in the global environment. The idea was then taken a step further in the mid-2010s when de Wit et al. (2015) and Hudzik (2015) called for the internationalization of higher education to be all-encompassing. This concept went further than mere integration; it included the improvement of education standards and the positive impact on society. Liu and Ko (2017) extended the argument by concentrating on the organizational use of global economic resources, which can be seen as a shift to the economic perspective of internationalization in addition to the educational perspective.

Since 2018, the concept of internationalization has been considered as a complex and a multilateral process. Crăciun (2018) pointed out that internationalization is a multidimensional process, while Hiroshi (2018) stressed the need for participation in decision-making processes at different levels. Knight and de Wit (2018) defined internationalization as a complex concept that includes various purposes, methods, and

activities that can be applied to various and constantly evolving environments. In this period, internationalization is not only a process of improvement of education but also a process of creating international awareness and international goodwill. Concepts like study abroad, cultural fairs, and international students' associations have become essential in fostering intercultural relations and eradicating prejudice (Sobkowiak 2019; Maharaja 2018; Soria & Troisi 2013). These efforts were meant to foster understanding and respect for the cultures of both the home and host countries, as well as promote cooperation between the two (Nyangau 2018).

In the most recent phase (2021-2022), the concept of internationalization has evolved into a more complex and challenging phenomenon. Chyrva et al. (2021) highlighted the engagement, devotion, and commitment required from Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to sustain internationalization efforts. Hunter et al. (2022) and Rumbley et al. (2022) noted that internationalization is continually refined and revised, with theories and definitions adapting to new insights and evolving global circumstances.

This period suggests recognizing that internationalization is becoming a more complex and diverse process, which is viewed as a never-ending process. The emphasis is on the challenges of global interaction and the factors that affect the implementation of internationalization plans. Based on the analysis of the development of internationalization over the last decade, the following trends can be identified. The international dimension of university activities has been a priority since 2013, as universities began to promote the global and intercultural approach actively. This is supported by the view of internationalization as a process that is constantly evolving and, therefore, requires constant changes as a result of events in the global arena. There is also a more extensive concept of internationalization that has been developed and covers various aspects, from the quality of education to the contribution to society and economic capital. This view of the concept of internationalization shows that the process is complex and has numerous effects.

Therefore, culture has continued to be at the center of internationalization, with the main objective of encouraging international exchanges and cooperation between students and institutions in different countries (Sobkowiak, 2019; Maharaja, 2018; Soria & Troisi, 2013). These similarities, regardless of the changes in the concept of internationalization, show the sustained focus on the development of a diverse and interculturally sensitive academic population.

The dynamics and nature of internationalization processes have also become more complex and multifaceted, which makes the need for assessing these activities more important to determine their effectiveness and future sustainability. Since the process of internationalization is complex and comprises numerous aspects, universities must have an effective system that will help analyze their activities in the international environment. Such a need creates the prospect of talking about tools such as Scorecards and Dashboards, which are vital in this context. Due to the development of internationalization into a multifaceted and constantly changing process, it is necessary to employ a comprehensive approach to evaluate the effects of the process and its advancement. Such concern with monitoring and evaluation is important as it helps institutions assess the success of their internationalization plans. This includes

determining the strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities and considering key facts that would assist in improving engagement at the international level (Knight, 2001).

The further development of Scorecard and Dashboard tools can also be considered as a continuation of this idea. These tools offer an institutional framework for monitoring and assessing the internationalization processes to measure the progress of improvements made. In all, by implementing Scorecards and Dashboards, universities can design a sequential and reasonable structure for their internationalization processes and show that they are willing to be accountable (Gao, 2019).

Table 1: The Evolution of Internationalization Definition

Studies	Terms of Internationalization
Kirkwood and Price (2013)	Methodological integration of the international perspective into an institution's teaching, research, and service activities.
Pukall and Calabro (2014)	Dynamic process, explained by state and change variables that affect each other continuously.
de Wit et al. (2015)	Integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions, and delivery of post-secondary education to enhance the quality of education and research for all students and staff and to contribute meaningfully to society.
Hudzik (2015)	Comprehensive internationalization
Liu and Ko (2017)	The process of organizing and using global economic resources such as capital, raw materials, labor, information, market, and management.
Crăciun (2018)	Multifaceted and multidimensional process
Hiroshi (2018)	Active engagement at various levels of decision-making
Knight and de Wit (2018)	Internationalization has become a very broad and diverse concept, encompassing new rationales, approaches, and strategies in different and ever-changing contexts.
Chyrva et al. (2021)	Engagement, devotion, and commitment to HEI
Hunter et al. (2022)	The concept of internationalization is constantly refined and revised, and theories and definitions are adapted to new and evolving insights.
Rumbley et. al. (2022)	A multifaceted and evolving phenomenon

Table 1 presents the various perspectives/studies on the definition of 'internationalization' in studies published between 2013 and 2022. It reflects the evolution of the 'internationalization' over the years.

Scorecard and Dashboard Tools

The process of internationalization in universities is complex. Hence, it has to be measured accurately in order to be successful. In this regard, scorecards and dashboards, management tools that offer a summary of the performance of an organization (Edward et al., 2011; Gao, 2019), including universities, are considered the most noteworthy internationalization tools. They include Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), faculty performance, student academic performance, and details of the activities of the university (Khawaja, 2020; Ibrahim & Tho, 2012). These tools can support better collaboration by

providing an overview of the progress on the defined internationalization KPIs, by providing each stakeholder with access to the same dashboards, and by engaging people in the discussion about the performance and identification of further improvement (Tang et al., 2019). They also allow real-time ROI analysis through tracking and evaluating the biggest internationalization KPIs in real-time and help users understand the efficiency and scale of their decisions and investments within a shorter timeframe, which results in better long-term performance (Team, 2024). In addition, the use of these tools enables universities to compare the level of internationalization with other universities across countries (Gao, 2017). In this regard, although there are other tools available, like the IMPI project discussed by Green (2012), scorecards and dashboards are a more engaging, fast-acting, and group-centered way of measuring, evaluating, and responding to the key areas of the university's internationalization activities.

According to Arputharaj et al. (2024), this coherent framework focuses on defining key objectives, setting benchmarks, and offering charts to illustrate advancements in such areas. It offers an effective overview of organizational performance, as illustrated by a case study. Moreover, this methodology can be used to assess the effectiveness of a university's internationalization process, and authors have used scorecards and dashboards as a way of monitoring and evaluating the effects of internationalization on universities (Shuangmiao & Zhou, 2015).

By utilizing scorecards and dashboards, universities can track key performance indicators related to their internationalization activities and make data-driven decisions to enhance their global presence and achieve their internationalization goals. According to Few (2006), the dashboard can be defined as a visual representation of the key information needed to achieve one or more goals, consolidated and arranged on a single screen so that data can be monitored at a glance. Doerfel & Ruben (2002) explained that a dashboard is "a set of financial indicators and other operational measures that reflect key elements of an organization's strategic direction and are used to "steer" the organization, much as a pilot uses the set of indicators in the cockpit to monitor and steer an aircraft. It enables managers to more effectively measure, monitor, and manage organizational performance (Muntean et al., 2010). At the same time, Kaplan & Norton (1992) describe scorecards as a tool for measuring business performance. Top managers use it to help emulate an organization's strategy and measure performance (Kopecká, 2015).

Notably, scorecards and dashboards have some critical differences in terms of their purpose and functionality. Scorecards track progress toward strategic objectives and target attainment, while dashboards are operational, monitoring, and measuring processes (Banelienė, 2021). Thus, scorecards and dashboards are often used interchangeably, so it is essential to recognize the nuances between them. Scorecards provide a high-level view of an organization's performance, focusing on key performance indicators and target attainment. In the meantime, both allow a strategic approach, helping organizations align their efforts with long-term goals (Marilyn, 2020; Rahimi et al., 2018).

Nevertheless, designing an effective scorecard for the university's internationalization activity requires careful consideration of the key performance indicators used to measure progress and success. Furthermore, KPIs should align with the university's overall strategic objectives and reflect its commitment to environmental and social perspectives.

One approach to developing a KPIs model for internationalization activities is to incorporate the principles of balanced scorecard methodology proposed by Kaplan & Norton, (1996). This methodology is divided into four perspectives: financial, customer, internal processes, and learning and growth. According to Yüksel & Coskun (2013), educational institutions have the flexibility that results in adopting four specific perspectives for the Balanced Scorecard in educational services: stakeholders, internal processes, learning and growth, and financial sustainability. The dashboard should provide a clear and concise overview of key performance indicators related to internalization activities. It should display real-time data and be user-friendly, allowing stakeholders to interpret and analyze the information quickly (Basavaraju, 2023). Moreover, integrating scenario analysis capabilities in performance dashboards enables universities to explore potential outcomes and make informed decisions regarding their internationalization strategies.

Thus, the scorecards and dashboards can play an essential role in the process of internationalization of universities as they provide an instrument for evaluation of the progress in the internationalization agendas. These tools help universities define where to focus and set achievable goals to improve from time to time.

Methodology

In the context of the global higher education environment, the assessment of international activities at colleges and universities is growingly important. Thus, scorecards and dashboards become useful means to evaluate and manage the efficiency of internationalization initiatives. To this end, a secondary data analysis approach was adopted, with a focus on peer-reviewed articles that were published between 2010 and 2022. This paper adopts a narrative review approach to examine the monitoring and evaluation of internationalization activities in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). A narrative review is a type of literature review that aims to give an understanding of the literature available on a particular topic, including a quantitative analysis of the findings as opposed to a qualitative analysis of the themes and patterns present (Shah, 2018). The study design is based on secondary research, and the data is obtained from various academic databases. This approach is useful for the evaluation of the prior works as it provides a comprehensive view of the topic.

The data will be collected from academic databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar. These databases were chosen because they provide access to numerous full-text, peer-reviewed articles. The time frame selected for the analysis of the literature is from January 2010 to December 2022, thus providing a modern perspective. The data collected were analyzed thematically, a method used often in qualitative research. This included going through the compiled literature and categorizing it according to themes and keywords like "Scorecard," "Dashboard," "Internationalization," and "University". A structured data extraction form was used to extract information from the selected studies, with preference given to studies published between 2010 and 2022. From the title and abstracts, 50 articles were considered relevant and passed through the inclusion criteria.

Finally, the articles that were relevant to the implementation of scorecards and dashboards in internationalization activities of universities and the research method used, whether quantitative, qualitative, or mixed, were reviewed in full text, and 30 of them

were included in the study. This increases the reliability and consistency of the data extraction process and makes it easier to analyze the collected data.

Discussion

The Use of Scorecards and Dashboards for University Performance

Internationalization of universities is seen as necessary for universities because of the variety of benefits it is said to bring. According to Simmons (2014), there are four types of benefits of internationalizing universities. By internationalizing universities, students can deepen their understanding of global issues and their local implications and acquire skills that enable them to navigate heterogeneous environments with a variety of people. They can respect differences/different values, recognize different cultures as legitimate, and develop and manage intercultural communication skills. Certainly, such an internationalized university can attract both students and academics from all over the world (Sagara, 2014).

According to Muntean et al. (2010), universities can use dashboards to manage student, staff, department, and researcher performance by establishing metrics and managing these indicators over time through data visualization. There are several studies conducted on the implementation of dashboards in universities; Kuzilek et al. (2015) used demographic and VLE interaction data to predict at-risk students. The study developed a dashboard for displaying the course outline and summary of each student's predicted performance level, which are then emailed to the teaching team. Furthermore, no evaluation of the effectiveness of the dashboard was conducted.

Moreover, Charleer et al. (2018) implemented LISSA (Learning dashboard for Insights and Support during Study Advice) to help student advisors help their first-year students plan a more accessible course of study. Historical data and student grades were analyzed to create visualizations. The use of dashboards in the field of education in universities is quite common. Many universities around the world employ dashboards as a means to track progress based on their missions, objectives, and goals.

Furthermore, by gathering data from sources, a dashboard can provide an overview of crucial information that enables faculty members to easily and quickly access the data they need (Hora et al., 2017). Performance dashboards have proven to be tools for organizations aiming to enhance their business performance through measurement, monitoring, and management of their operations (Eckerson, 2010). These dashboards are widely used for monitoring, analysis and managerial purposes by leveraging business intelligence and data integration infrastructure (Eckerson, 2010; Muntean et al., 2010).

However, what sets this Scorecard apart from others is its combination of non-financial metrics across four perspectives (Kiriri, 2022). This approach distinguishes instruments that play a role in achieving organizational goals. Based on Išoraitės (2008), there are four perspectives to consider: customer, internal, and learning perspectives. Kaplan and Norton (1996) developed these perspectives to provide an overview of an organization's performance. By utilizing the scorecard framework, organizations can effectively balance long-term financial goals with long-term success factors while considering both internal and external influences on performance. This interconnected approach allows for an

evaluation of performance and emphasizes the importance of continuous improvement through the active participation of all employees (Camilleri, 2021).

Moreover, a scorecard can serve as a tool for measuring and tracking performance in a manner (Basuony & El Guindy, 2019). According to De Geuser et al. (2009), implementing a scorecard can enhance performance by complementing the organization's strategy implementation efforts. Additionally, using a scorecard helps align activities with goals (Madsen & Stenheim 2014).

The utilization of scorecards ensures that organizational activities are closely aligned with overarching objectives. They establish a connection between the activities and the overarching vision, ensuring that everyone is aligned toward common objectives. By adopting scorecard techniques, organizations can holistically assess their performance across dimensions, including customer satisfaction, internal processes, and growth opportunities.

The Use of Scorecards and Dashboards Helps to Measure Universities' Internationalization

Scorecards and dashboards can aid in measuring and sustaining university internationalization in several ways, including measuring and presenting internationalization KPIs. Scorecards and dashboards help universities sort, search, evaluate, and display KPIs of internationalization interactively and convert data into graphics (Tang et al. 2019). In addition, scorecards and dashboards cover all aspects of university internationalization, such as student and staff mobility, international projects and partnerships, international research, delivery of education to other countries by new forms of collaboration (transnational education), and international, intercultural, and global dimension in curriculum and learning. Internationalization as one of the third missions of universities has become more significant in the last three decades. A lot of attempts have been made to measure the effectiveness of universities in this regard. For instance, in the CeQuInt project, the European Consortium for Accreditation in Higher Education has created an assessment framework that can be applied to assessing the internationalization of a program or an institution (Gao, 2019).

This is because scorecards and dashboards can also facilitate data-driven decision-making and sustainable improvement of global engagement efforts through the definition of key performance indicators and the use of a clear framework to monitor progress (Martin & Sauvageot, 2011).). Hence, through the application of these tools, the university can assess its progress toward the achievement of its internationalization objectives, adapt the strategy when necessary, and ensure that its internationalization efforts are beneficial, meaningful, and consistent with the overarching vision of the university. This comprehensive strategy assists institutions in navigating the challenges of internationalization, improving effectiveness, and realizing the intended outcomes of internationalization strategies.

The Effectiveness of Evaluation Using Scorecard and Dashboard

Universities have increasingly recognized the importance of evaluating the impact and effectiveness of their internationalization efforts. This assessment serves purposes.

Firstly, it allows universities to gauge their progress and pinpoint areas for improvement in their activities. By understanding the impact of these endeavors, universities can determine if they are successfully achieving their goals in terms of engagement and cultural diversity (Yesufu, 2018; Iuspa, 2010). Secondly, measuring the effectiveness of internationalization activities is crucial for universities to be evaluated within the rankings. These rankings often take into account a university's commitment to internationalization and its performance in this area (Green & Ferguson, 2021; Bedenlier & Zawacki Richter, 2015).

Moreover, assessing the effectiveness of these activities can assist universities in planning for programs by evaluating outcomes and benefits generated by their international initiatives (Zartoshty, 2022). Lastly, it plays a role in shaping policies that promote and support scientific research on an international scale (Bedenlier & Zawacki Richter, 2015). Monitoring and evaluating activities undertaken by university policymakers can effectively identify the strengths and weaknesses of their support systems. This allows the allocation of resources in a way that ensures results. Furthermore, universities must measure and assess the impact of their exchange programs on a scale. Such programs have become a part of university activities. Understanding their effectiveness enables institutions to evaluate the value they bring to students. This evaluation also helps in fostering a presence and achieving academic excellence (Zartoshty, 2022; Yesufu, 2018; Iuspa, 2010).

Evaluating internationalization activities is a task that requires consideration and attention to detail. The subjective nature of internationalization poses one of the challenges in this process, as it makes determining the success of activities quite arduous. Moreover, measuring the impact of internationalization activities can be challenging as their effects may not be immediately apparent and could take time to manifest (Hudzik & Stohl 2012a). Hence, establishing concise criteria for evaluating internationalization further adds to this challenge, necessitating input from stakeholders (Yesufu, 2018).

To summarise, evaluating and measuring the performance of educational institutions is a process that involves various factors and methods. When assessing the effectiveness of universities' efforts in internationalization, we consider metrics such as teaching quality, research output, and community engagement. These metrics help us understand how well universities are achieving their internationalization goals and enhancing students' educational experiences. Additionally, factors like article citations and collaborative research partnerships highlight universities' involvement in research networks and their contributions to knowledge exchange. While renowned ranking organizations like Times Higher Education (THE) and QS use indicators to assess university performance, it is important to acknowledge that performance measurement can go beyond these metrics. The balanced scorecard approach offers a perspective by considering finance, student satisfaction, community impact, internal processes and continuous growth as metrics for evaluating higher education performance.

Aligning the performance management system (PMS) with objectives and individual goals is crucial. It emphasizes the management of resources and talent, which plays a significant role in the success of higher education institutions. As these institutions continue to adapt and evolve to meet changing landscapes and global demands, their

comprehensive evaluation and performance management systems remain vital. Whether using indicators or adopting a perspective, these systems have the potential to enhance the quality, impact, and international reputation of higher education institutions in an increasingly competitive world.

Despite these challenges, it is crucial to evaluate the effectiveness and impact of internationalization efforts on the success of an organization. By acknowledging and tackling the limitations and obstacles associated with a process, companies can devise assessment strategies that promote internationalization and contribute to long-term prosperity (Zartoshty, 2022).

Implications

Evaluating the effectiveness of scorecards and dashboards in the implementation of internationalization activities implementation at universities is of great importance and has numerous implications. Firstly, the implementation of scorecards and dashboards in the implementation of internationalization activities helps to improve accountability and transparency in universities. With accurate and comprehensive metrics and easily accessible data, along with the implementation of scorecards and dashboards, universities can foster a culture of accountability. This also helps in the appropriate allocation of resources to support global engagement initiatives and provides stakeholders with comprehensive data on the effectiveness of internationalization.

The implementation of scorecards and dashboards for internationalization activities contributes to improved decision-making processes at all levels of the university. Regular analyses and data evaluation provide decision-makers with valuable insights into the impact and results of internationalization activities. This helps them to make strategic decisions based on facts and priorities when allocating resources and making programmatic improvements.

Evaluating the effectiveness of scorecards and dashboards for internationalization activities helps with the processes of strategic planning and resource allocation at universities when it comes to assessing universities' access to quality processes. Universities can use the information and data from scorecards and dashboards to identify strengths and weaknesses in their internationalization activities, allocate resources, and set feasible targets for their global engagement.

Besides, regular assessment of internationalization activities using scorecards and dashboards can play an effective role for universities to maintain and improve quality and continuously look for ways to benefit international students in order to develop best practices. And lastly, internationalization activities can help universities to increase diversity, equity, and inclusion at universities. Research that focuses on how scorecards and dashboards are used to improve internationalization activities at universities can help universities identify ways to promote support for diversity, create an inclusive environment, and eliminate biases that are barriers for a few people to choose to go global.

Due to this, examining the applicability of scorecards and dashboards for evaluating the initiatives for internationalization at universities can have extensive consequences for its

proficiency, tactical scheduling, maintenance of quality and global competition. At the same time, the use of data and appraising tools can help universities improve their attempt at global engagement, fostering diversity and preparing students for a global and diverse world.

Recommendations

This research focuses on the conceptual method for the next research studies related to the power of applying scorecards and dashboards at university-level internationalization. Firstly, for the next studies on research, they can apply qualitative ones because these methods can explore the experiences, perceptions, and attitudes towards the use of scorecards and dashboards in internationalization activities of the universities. Methods like interviews, focus groups, case studies, etc., can provide in-depth ideas about applying scorecards and dashboards in assessing international activities. Secondly, they also can apply this research by using longitudinal studies. In this regard, they can check the effectiveness of applying scorecards and dashboards by assessing internationalization activities over time. For example, they can develop a particular timeline to evaluate internationalization activities in universities every semester. Thirdly, two representations. In order to show the effectiveness of the Scorecard, dashboards, and metrics, the researchers have to prove that these tools can assess the internationalization activities of the universities by different representations.

Conclusion

The concept of internationalization has gained significance in the field of education, prompting universities to allocate resources towards enhancing their influence. However, evaluating the effectiveness of these efforts can be challenging without measurement and evaluation tools. This is where dashboards and scorecards come into play, providing universities with insights into the impact of their internationalization initiatives. These scorecards and dashboards empower universities to make decisions when successfully implemented as they help identify areas for growth and consistently enhance the impact of their internationalization endeavors.

The insights derived from the tool's universities can help universities adapt their strategies based on changing education trends and ensure resource allocation while delivering significant value to their stakeholders. One notable advantage of employing scorecards and dashboards is that they enable universities to adjust their strategies according to the evolving landscape of education. By monitoring performance metrics and key indicators, universities can swiftly identify emerging trends. Take proactive measures to stay ahead. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that effective implementation of measurement tools requires an understanding of the university's goals, policies, and procedures. Hence, universities need to develop a system of scorecards and dashboards that aligns with their goals of internationalization and promotes a culture of making data-driven decisions. In summary, continuous enhancements in internationalization efforts are vital for universities to stay competitive in the education sector. By utilizing scorecards and dashboards, universities can monitor their progress, identify areas for improvement, and make decisions that strengthen their presence.

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INEQUALITY IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING – A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Vocational Education and Training (VET) has a wide range of issues related to its implementation. VET processes and outcomes still have elements of inequality. However, existing research on inequality in VET is very heterogeneous. To identify, evaluate, and summarize the findings of all studies about inequality in VET, thereby making the available evidence more accessible to decision-makers, we conducted a systematic literature review. Using the systematic literature review method, a total of 8.892 studies were found, and 46 studies were selected based on the specified criteria. The relevant studies analyzed showed that inequality in VET includes inequalities experienced by marginalized international students, immigrants, refugees, people with disabilities, gender, labor markets and opportunities, and wages. Efforts need to be made to reduce inequality by reviewing policies, improving curricula and learning processes, and evaluating learning in VET. The knowledge generated about inequality in VET can provide a valuable basis for improving VET. This article presents a substantial starting point and research agenda for further studies on VET.

Keywords: vocational education and training, VET, inequality, systematic literature review

Introduction

Vocational education and training are important in the field of vocational education. Vocational education is a form of education that focuses on preparing students' competencies for work (Suharno et al., 2020). With the globalization of the economy, the labor market has also become global (Huang & Jung, 2020). It is necessary to prepare skilled vocational school graduates. VET aims to enable students to participate in debates and controversies in society and their field of occupational practice as a basis for their participation in a democratic society. This is not an argument for induction into the discipline (or applied discipline) as an eternal truth (Wheelahan, 2015).

Considering the importance of this topic in terms of research, practice, and policy, the main objective of this article is to identify, evaluate, and summarize the findings of all studies about inequality in VET, thereby making the available evidence more accessible to decision-makers, we conducted a systematic literature review. The authors systematically analyze the current state of international research on VET inequality from a multidisciplinary and multilevel perspective using the "systematic literature review" method. The identification of thematic and methodological foci, as well as semantic and/or structural relationships between different approaches, theories, and best practice models, is the focus of this article.

Conceptualizing VET Inequality

To provide a comprehensive and structured overview of the current state of VET inequality and to analyze multidisciplinary perspectives on VET inequality. As a first step, it is necessary to define the meaning of the core concept in this article, "Inequality in VET". Inequality can be defined as inequalities by social background, inequalities by race, inequalities by ethnicity, inequalities by immigrant status, and inequalities by gender (Blanden, 2020). The way to reduce inequalities can be through education and skill development (Tyagi et al., 2020). In the field of education, especially VET, inequality also occurs. Inequality occurs because there are factors that do not work properly. Based on this explanation, it is necessary to have a systematic literature review on inequality in VET to provide a comprehensive and structured overview. This systematic literature review on inequality in VET is useful for identifying, evaluating, and summarizing the findings of all studies about inequality in VET, thereby making the available evidence more accessible to decision-makers.

Methodology

Systematic literature review activity is a literature review method. In this context, Linnenluecke et al. (2020) highlighted the benefit of a systematic literature review is to collect sufficient evidence systematically and evaluate it based on criteria. This article presents a systematic analysis of the current state of international research on VET inequality from a multidisciplinary and multilevel perspective, following Gessler & Siemer (2020). According to its category definition, a systematic literature review includes the following four steps: (1) scope definition, (2) data selection, (3) data processing, and (4) data reporting (Gessler & Siemer, 2020).

Data Collection

The data collection process and procedure of systematic literature review by Gessler & Siemer

(2020):

Scope Definition

The scope definition defines the research problem and derives the main research questions. In this literature review, the authors systematically analyzed theoretical-conceptual and empirically oriented research on VET inequality from a multidisciplinary and multilevel perspective. The identification of thematic and methodological foci, as well as semantic and/or structural relationships between different approaches, theories, and best practice models, is the focus of this article. In addition, indications of international networks and potential synergies in the field of research are considered. The main objective of this literature review is to analyze the state of VET inequality and structure future VET opportunities.

Data Selection

The next step was data selection, which required a systematic search and eligibility screening for the articles used. Sources must be determined, and relevant research must be selected, screened, and read, while ineligible research must be excluded. The determination of relevant sources is done through a multi-step approach. The step of finding relevant and reliable sources uses relevant databases such as Scopus, ERIC, ScienceDirect, and Semantic Scholars. The first process is to search for relevant sources through keywords and the right combination of keywords to find relevant publications. In the literature search, the keywords we used were "inequality, VET" in the Scopus search. This procedure also generates many search results, as irrelevant literature is inevitable in the search list.

Data Processing

In the third step of data processing, we focus on assessing the quality of the selected literature to weed out inappropriate literature search results, select relevant data from Scopus, and critically evaluate the selection of relevant literature. The relevant literature search process (Table 1) was obtained from articles that met the keywords inequality and VET in the Scopus search. The result of identifying relevant literature was 8.892 articles. A number of these articles were filtered by qualifying articles in the 2014-2023 timeframe, so 3.958 articles were obtained. From this number, the articles were filtered with articles that had social science subject areas, and the results were 2.129 articles. The determination of the subject area in the field of social science is relevant to the purpose of this research. From these results, 682 articles have document types in the form of articles. Next, we filtered articles that were in English. This left 137 articles. The last filtering step is articles that have PDF files. This left 46 suitable or most relevant articles used in the systematic literature review of this article.

Table 1. Selection of Literature Guided by Criteria

Data basis	Results	Years	Subject area	Document	In English	PDF file
Scopus	98	78	70	52	43	36
ERIC	7	4	1	1	1	1
Science Direct	8.494	3.759	1.909	533	2	2
Semantic Scholars	293	117	149	96	91	7
Total	8.892	3.958	2.129	682	137	46

Data Reporting

The final step in the systematic literature review is data reporting, which conveys the findings and implications as well as the limitations of the review and the discussion of conclusions. In this section, several studies are presented with theoretical studies in mind. Key findings and implications are presented and discussed. Then, the last step of the data reporting section is the presentation of limitations.

Results

The Current State of VET Inequality

The few systematic reviews and evaluations of VET inequality indicate significant research gaps. Therefore, the main objective of this systematic literature review is to analyze and compile a knowledge base to describe VET inequality, as well as to conduct a downstream analysis of the contextual conditions and determinants (challenges, opportunities for improving VET inequality). In the following section, the key findings are summarized, and their implications for our research objectives are discussed.

Key Findings

In this section, we present relevant studies from the 46 articles included in our systematic literature review (see Table 2 in the appendix) addressing this topic at different levels. The majority of the 46 included are related to inequality in VET. All studies, regardless of their specific focus on inequality in VET, were initially included in the mapping procedure. To collate the studies' data and their findings, we summarized them and presented inequality on VET. Afterward, the studies were categorized based on their methodological approach, identifying 14 studies that addressed the topic of inequality in VET at the theoretical literature review level and 32 studies that addressed the topic empirically (see Table 2 in the appendix). In this literature review, inequality in VET is discussed in terms of education in VET and inequality in VET.

Discussion

The Implementation of VET Education

The education process at vocational schools provides practical learning for students. The benefits of vocational education are important for students' future. Education also plays an important role in wage determination. Ebner (2015) conducted a study with the results of wage differences between education groups of various levels in Germany. The highest level of education among respondents was categorized into four categories: no vocational training, dual vocational training, vocational further education, and higher education.

The contribution of vocational education and vocational training (TVET) also affects graduates. Hilal (2017) conducted research and found that the contribution of TVET to empowering young Palestinian graduates who face marginalization and inequality is that it can provide opportunities for graduates to improve their abilities and gain various indicators of empowerment, such as household decisions and participation in public life. This indicates that the role of VET is very important for graduates. It is also possible that wider regional learning

opportunities will increase the probability of students enrolling in general education programs. Conversely, limited learning opportunities will increase the probability of students enrolling in vocational education programs (Glauser & Becker, 2016). The tendency for students to join vocational education programs exists when learning opportunities are limited. This is in line with the finding that individuals who come from families with better access to education have a higher likelihood of attending higher academic education, but higher vocational education provides more inclusive access, although participants and employers privately fund it (Nägele et al., 2018).

In terms of the learning process in vocational schools, it is important to start with the curriculum used. The main purpose of curriculum theory in VET should be 'what is taught and learned in VET', which is the basis for distinguishing between academic and vocational curricula. The curriculum in VET includes knowledge, the distinction between theoretical and everyday knowledge and between different types of theoretical knowledge, the relationship between knowledge and skills, and the implications of this relationship for the VET curriculum and the conditions under which students access and integrate knowledge and skills (Wheelahan, 2015). Different countries have their own decisions regarding VET curriculum policies. Current curriculum policies and trends in Finland, Iceland, and Sweden are dominated by neo-liberal discourses that emphasize principles such as "market relevance" and employability skills. This trend reinforces the separation between academic and vocational education, particularly through the organization of knowledge in vocational programs that separates it from more general and theoretical elements (Nylund et al., 2018). In addition, an important thing in curriculum development is the role of curriculum developers. Curriculum development can involve stakeholders and industry or employers to determine a subject matter that suits industry needs. A common approach in curriculum development or shaping higher vocational education outcomes is where the stakeholders involved are more diverse, or the process is conducted at the national level with employers intended to represent not only their own companies (Köpsén, 2020).

Aspects of Inequality in VET

Various disparities exist regarding VET. An analysis of 46 articles revealed that inequalities in VET exist in a variety of ways. Course-related work experience and access to it are uneven across institutions and inconsistently implemented in the VET sector.

International Students

Vocational education is expected to provide real-world work skills for students, including international students. For international students, they must be capable of spatial movement to be able to produce new conditions and possibilities for them in the industrial world (Tran, 2015). International students are marginalized due to their lack of power, social networks, and cultural capital in negotiating course-related work experience (Tran & Soejatminah, 2017). One of the inequalities in VET is that international students. It is because they lack power. After all, they are international students who come from abroad. Social network factors also have an impact on inequality, international students are students who have just come to a new environment, so there is still inequality that occurs.

Immigrant Status

Another gap is that migrant students have a higher propensity to enter academic education by eight percentage points. Migrants from Spain or Portugal have a 10-percentage point higher propensity to choose academic education compared to native Swiss. Immigrant optimism explains about 18% of this ethnic choice effect. As mentioned earlier, the baseline difference is striking, especially for migrants from the Balkans/Turkey, at 13 percentage points; 23% is explained by immigrant optimism (Tjaden & Scharenberg, 2017). Related to other migrants, the difference between migrant students and German students is smaller at lower ability levels. High-achieving migrant students are much less likely than high-achieving German students to access vocational education (Tjaden, 2017). In European countries, immigrant youth tend to prefer academic education over vocational education and training (VET) compared to natives, who have higher participation rates in academic pathways at the upper secondary level and less often choose VET after completing lower secondary and upper secondary education, and more often switch to higher education after achieving an upper secondary degree (Busse & Scharenberg, 2022).

Refugees

Inequalities also exist for refugees. The educational process of refugees in vocational education in Germany is related to their place of residence, and the proportion of refugees who successfully made the transition to vocational education within the observation period is lower compared to natives or citizens with a migration background but not refugees (Meyer & Winkler, 2023). In Europe, refugees' access to Vocational Education and Training (VET) is linked to race, which serves as a powerful political category (Chadderton & Edmonds, 2015).

The existence of inequalities, according to teacher analysis, reveals how knowledge sharing, stratification of secondary education, school grammar, and learning culture are interconnected and contribute to explaining how the organization of secondary schools impacts the (re)production of social inequalities (Tarabini & Jacovkis, 2022). Regarding inequality among students, VET students in Turkey have socio-economic disadvantages in various aspects, including family income, parental education level, and family employment status. Although the percentage of low-income students increases in all types of schools over time, it is consistently higher in VET students compared to other secondary school students. In addition, students' initial achievement and their socio-economic status have a significant impact on students' achievement in secondary school (Suna & Özer, 2021).

Labor markets and opportunities

Inequalities also exist in Germany, where the vocational training system is highly structured, resulting in social inequalities in employment opportunities. Students from lower social classes more often enter the vocational training system than higher education, even if they have a university entrance diploma. Moreover, in the vocational training system, access to training in general and interesting jobs in particular is highly dependent on school attainment, which is highly correlated with social class and parental educational background, as reported in various PISA studies (Protsch & Solga, 2016). Inequalities in early career labor market outcomes among individuals who have undergone various programs where variations in skills and knowledge acquired through VET affect individuals' long-term labor market allocation (Grønning & Kriesi, 2022).

Gender and geographical

Gender inequalities and geographical limitations exist in VET Africa, where a major challenge is the dominance of economic thinking in development thinking and the need for active engagement in economic transformation in Africa and Africa's relations with other countries (McGrath, Powell, et al., 2020). The persistence of gender stereotypes in the understanding of young women's professional abilities in apprenticeship programs in male-dominated career fields (Makarova et al., 2016).

Wages

Inequality also occurs in wages. VET graduates with an Abitur (high school diploma) generate almost twice as high a return on salary as VET graduates without an Abitur. VET graduates without Abitur experience higher salary inequality. In addition, the level of previous education also affects salaries in Germany (Friedrich & Hirtz, 2021b).

The widening gap in VET in the U.K. reflects the country's growing inequality. A more practice-focused approach to workplace learning may increase the reproductive role of educational practice that vocational education actors generally desire. This reinforces class divisions in VET if the U.K. moves further away from the European social model and is more likely to adopt a more extreme liberal version of the market economy. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic may reinforce the shift from classroom learning to workplace learning, especially if this is seen as helping the country's limited finances. It also raises questions about what jobs and which aspects of work should be rewarded, and, therefore, what educational preparation they need and deserve (Esmond & Atkins, 2020). The gap in education and employment outcomes for Indigenous Australians, despite efforts to provide appropriate academic, social, and cultural support, is often an inadequate and under-resourced model (Cameron et al., 2017).

People with disabilities

VET in a country with a highly compressed wage structure, a strong VET system benefits students who are unlikely to go on to higher education (Birkelund & van de Werfhorst, 2022). In addition, disparities also exist where elites generally dominate prestigious technical and professional courses due to better accessibility and affordability, while the vulnerable miss out on many of these (Bazaz & Akram, 2022). Inequalities also exist in the vocational education (VET) attainment of individuals with disabilities and how this differs compared to self-reported people without disabilities, as well as in relation to other levels of education (Pullman, 2019).

There is also the issue of participants choosing training occupations that do not match their realistic occupational aspirations (Schels et al., 2022). This creates an imbalance where students choose jobs that do not match their competencies. Han's research in Singapore and the U.K. found higher scores on political self-efficacy, collective (school) efficacy, and future choice intentions among vocational students in Singapore compared to students in the U.K. Then the lowest performing students in Singapore had higher scores in intention to vote in the future compared to the U.K. student group (Han et al., 2014).

VET is also related to internships. Internships certainly produce high-quality graduates. However, there is a concern about the impact of internships, namely the dropout rate. This dropout rate is likely the result of employers preferring internship applicants who are like them

or that child welfare clients lack networks (Dæhlen, 2017). This inequality also stems from rational selection factors and educational expectations from social groups (Busse et al., 2023a).

One of the solutions that can be implemented is the need for new approaches in VET research to involve various fields of study (McGrath & Powell, 2016). One approach that can be used is the "critical capabilities approach in vocational education and training" (CCA-VET), a new approach that combines critical ontology, epistemology, and methodology (McGrath, Powell, et al., 2020). In addition, the need for the role of relevant stakeholders is very important. The role of employers is also related to VET. Fleckenstein conducted a study with the result that powerful employers violate government policies related to vocational skill formation. This indicates that Korea's political economy does not facilitate the inter-firm cooperation necessary for collective skill formation (Fleckenstein et al., 2023). The role of parents in VET is that children are more likely to receive dual apprenticeship training when their parents have more native labor market contacts (Roth & Weißmann, 2022).

Another approach is that an expanded approach to the social ecosystem of skills is a potentially good way to help understand VET better and generate better policies and practices for development (Ramsarup et al., 2023). In addition, it is necessary to pay attention to factors that affect VET, including the ability to integrate young people into the labor market changes in global trends or technology (Carstensen & Ibsen, 2021). Another solution is the need to implement policies that increase youth mobility and successful transitions into VET (Hoffmann & Wicht, 2023). After policies are in place, it is also necessary for critical policy analysis to facilitate discussions about work processes, wage labor, and its intensity (Avis, 2018).

Implications

The systematic literature review of inequality in VET shows a description of inequality in VET activities, and the factors related to inequality in VET. The results of the current analysis of inequality in VET clearly show that inequalities exist, including inequalities experienced by marginalized international students, immigrants, refugees, people with disabilities, gender, labor markets and opportunities, and wages.

The SLR implies that many VET articles have discussed inequalities in the last ten years; knowing inequality in VET, especially marginalized international students, immigrants, refugees, people with disabilities, gender, labor markets and opportunities, and wages, find out the impact of inequality in VET on the education sector. Based on this research result, stakeholders should be made to reduce inequalities by reviewing policies, improving curricula and learning processes, and evaluating learning in VET. This article presents a substantial starting point and research agenda for further studies on VET.

Limitations

In general, this literature review has followed the procedure, but there is still a possibility that relevant studies are not included in this research. This is because only studies published in the period 2014-2023 and from Scopus, ERIC, ScienceDirect, and Semantic Scholars indexed journals were used. In addition, only studies in English were used. The topic of inequality in VET is a broad one, so more relevant studies are needed. Therefore, there may be non-English literature that could be used. In addition, the use of broader studies, not only from Scopus,

ERIC, ScienceDirect, and Semantic Scholars indexed journals, will provide a more in-depth study. In addition, based on the results of the analysis, there is a limitation in that the number of studies screened during the literature review did not provide appropriate and sufficient information. Despite these limitations, this research successfully combined and analyzed relevant studies on inequality in VET.

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Appendix

Table 2: Overview of the Included Studies

No	Aim of the Study	Method	Sample	Countries Involved	References
	Theoretical-literature review				
1	Identify problems in curriculum theory, especially in the context of vocational education and training, and demonstrate the importance of theoretical knowledge for VET students in actively participating in society and their field of work.	Theoretical			(Wheelahan, 2015)
2	The problem of vertical stratification in the German vocational education and training (VET) system examines the relationship between educational attainment and social origin in the German VET system.	Theoretical approach		Germany	(Protsch & Solga, 2016)
3	address these issues through literature that contributes to a new understanding of this vision.	Literature review		Africa	(McGrath, Ramsarup, et al., 2020)
4	developing appropriate theories and policies for vocational education in today's world, which is not only an urgent task in academic terms but also an important basis for transforming vocational education to contribute to social transformation that supports human success in economic, environmental, and social spheres. This research does not intend to claim that "skills can save us" but that vocational education can support broader societal efforts to create a just transition.	Literature			(McGrath, Powell, et al., 2020)
5	to find the best ways to develop expertise that can support sustainable development with the well-being of individuals, society,	Description			(McGrath & Powell, 2016)

No	Aim of the Study	Method	Sample	Countries Involved	References
	and the planet in mind. Also, this research aims to promote social justice, reduce poverty, and achieve better transformation in society and the world of work.				
6	analyzed the Swedish VET education policy established in 2009 and identified the definition of knowledge that is considered legitimate for a high-level VET curriculum.	Analysis of policy and instructional documents			(Köpsén, 2020)
7	It seeks to fill an unfilled space in existing research and offers a new approach to solving this problem. The goal is to challenge the dominant position of large corporations in South Korea's political economy and address the uneven division of the labor market so that VET policy reform can be a more successful and meaningful endeavor.	Documentary analysis using official reports, policy papers, and press releases	22 key stakeholders, including representatives from employers' associations and public organizations	South Korea	(Fleckenstein et al., 2023)
8	shows that dual vocational education graduates have better protection against unemployment and a lower probability of working in temporary employment. However, the earnings of dual vocational education graduates are much lower than those of higher education graduates. The research also highlights some of the future challenges and opportunities faced by the dual vocational education system.	Theory description		Germany	(Ebner, 2015)
9	provide a better understanding of institutional change in VET and how political struggles influence the institutional reforms that take place.	Theoretical review		Denmark	(Carstensen & Ibsen, 2021)
10	explores the relationship between social media use and individual social well-being.	Literature review		Australia	(Cameron et al., 2017)
11	investigates the relationship between vocational education and training (VET), the labor market, and social justice in the current context. The approach used in this research is critical policy analysis, which places the discussion within a broader socio-economic	Critical policy analysis		UK, England	(Avis, 2018)

No	Aim of the Study	Method	Sample	Countries Involved	References
	and political context.				
12	analyze and compare the curricular strategies of these two PPDPs to revamp TVET for the inclusion of disadvantaged learners	document analysis, interviews, and focus groups	two local PPDP-based departments at TVET institutions in Ethiopia and Zambia	Ethiopia and Zambia	(Melesse et al., 2022)
13	reveals gaping holes between the dreams of superior vocational education and training that educational tracking ought to deliver and the realities of lost opportunities and facilitated inequalities, especially in students with poor socio-economic backgrounds, weak social capital, and sparse social networks.	synthesis of the existing literature	between industrialized countries, the tracking is applied at ages of 15 or 16 in most Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries	between industrialized countries, the tracking is applied at ages of 15 or 16 in most Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries	(Ozer & Perc, 2020)
14	To ensure more equity among diverse student bodies, inclusive education has become a human right and a global norm	Sociological research	vocational training and higher education in Germany's selective	Germany	(Powell & Blanck, 2023)
	Empirical				
15	to fill the under-researched gap in course-related work experience for international students and provide a better understanding of the factors that influence their access to and experience of integrated learning with work experience.	Fieldwork and interview	155 interviews with international staff and students and field research in the Australian vocational education and training sector.	Australia	(Tran & Soejatminah, 2017)
16	This study investigates the influence of ethnic choice at the end of compulsory schooling in Switzerland, a country with a strong vocational education sector that offers competitive incentives, especially for low- or medium-achieving students.	PISA Survey, Logistic regression analysis	Representatives of ninth graders and 15-year-olds in various grades	Swiss	(Tjaden & Scharenberg, 2017)
17	to provide a better understanding of the factors affecting migrant students' participation in VET, as well as their research and policy implications.	Survey	German ninth-grade students	Germany	(Tjaden, 2017)
18	explain the relationship between the division of education and the distribution of knowledge described and represented by teachers. In addition, this research also aims to identify the mechanisms explaining this relationship that are recognized in the discourse and experiences of	In depth-interview	72 principals, coordination teams, and tutors in eight schools	Barcelona	(Tarabini & Jacovkis, 2022)

No	Aim of the Study	Method	Sample	Countries Involved	References
	the actors within the school.				
19	examines the effect of school tracking on vocational education in Turkey over the past decade.	linier regression model	grade 12 students between 2010 and 2019	Turkey	(Suna & Özer, 2021)
20	understand the compromises made by students entering vocational education and training (VET) to achieve their occupational aspirations. This research also seeks to determine how these compromises differ based on social background.	National Educational Panel Study (NEPS) interview	VET students from lower secondary and upper secondary school tracks from the German National Educational Panel Study (NEPS-SC4)	Germany	(Schels et al., 2022)
21	investigates how parental relationships with native and migrant contacts in the German labor market affect children's likelihood of obtaining enterprise-based vocational education (VET) after secondary education. In addition, this study evaluates to what extent parental social network characteristics explain ethnic inequalities in the transition from school to work.	Using longitudinal data from Starting Cohort 4 (ninth graders) of the National Educational Panel Study	Ninth graders	Germany	(Roth & Weißmann, 2022)
22	envisioning new futures in VET and addressing the challenges of equitable transition in the global south by considering the development of VET systems that involve boundary crossings between formal and informal VET systems and developing the concept of social skills ecosystems ontologically through critical realism.	A mix of approaches, including face-to-face and online interviews and focus groups (with learners and staff in vocational institutions, employers in the formal and informal sectors, civil society actors, and youth); participatory action research with community groups and VET college staff; analysis of social media interactions in learning networks; surveys of vocational lecturers; analysis of policy texts (including industrial strategies, spatial strategies, sectoral policies, and skills policies); and critical reflection	learners and staff in vocational institutions, employers in the formal and informal sectors, civil society actors, and youth, community groups and staff of VET colleges; vocational lecturers	Uganda, South Africa, and England	(Ramsarup et al., 2023)

No	Aim of the Study	Method	Sample	Countries Involved	References
		by key team members on their previous work as policy actors and practitioners (including as ministerial advisors and advisors to international development agencies).			
23	to provide a better understanding of VET accessibility for individuals with disabilities and its implications for educational inequality.	multinomial logistic regression model	aged between 20 and 64 in 2014, a range intended to cover the period where most individuals have completed compulsory education and have not retired. In addition, 226 people with unidentified disabilities were excluded, as well as 24 people with missing disability information on some indicators.	Canada	(Pullman, 2019)
24	identifying the factors that influence individuals' decisions to pursue higher education in both vocational and academic education in Switzerland. This study aims to understand individuals' motivations for continuing their education, as well as to examine the influence of work environment factors on this decision.	Multinomial logistic regressions were run to test the hypothesis.	601 working individuals who were not engaged in higher education in 2014	Switzerland	(Nägele et al., 2018)
25	explains the relationship between spatial characteristics and young refugees' VET opportunities. It is hoped that the results can be used to reform current vocational education and training distribution policies, thereby increasing the chances of social and professional integration for young refugees in Germany.	analyzing the IAB-BAMF-SOEP Refugee Survey (n=5216) using multilevel discrete-time event history analysis	of young refugees aged 18-30 to VET, depending on where they live	Germany	(Meyer & Winkler, 2023)
26	investigating the perceptions of young women during their vocational education and training (VET) in traditionally male-dominated STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) fields	Semi-structured interviews, qualitative methods	Young women (N = 71) who have chosen a career in STEM and are enrolled in a VET program at a secondary school in Switzerland	Switzerland	(Makarova et al., 2016)
27	show how often spatial	Survey	recent longitudinal	Germany	(Hoffmann &

No	Aim of the Study	Method	Sample	Countries Involved	References
	mobility occurs among students entering the VET system, identify factors that influence their spatial mobility, and emphasize the importance of spatial mobility in addressing regional disparities and regional mismatches in the VET market to improve youth access to vocational education and training.		data from NEPS covering a cohort of school leavers from 2011-2017 (N = 5537, 47% female, mean age 18 [SD 1.3]), combined with small-scale geospatial data. A representative sample of 14,540 9th-grade students in German secondary schools.		Wicht, 2023)
28	describe the role and impact of vocational education (VET) in the marginalized Palestinian context on human well-being and development, looking at the contribution of VET to human well-being and development in this difficult context.	Survey	764 TVET graduates	Palestine	(Hilal, 2017)
29	looked at the relationship between citizenship attitudes, such as those relating to political self-efficacy and collective (school) efficacy, and future choices among students from two vocational secondary schools in the U.K. and Singapore.	Questionnaires and interview	100 questionnaires were completed for each school, interviews with 7 students and 2 teachers at a P.T. college in the U.K. and 12 students and 2 teachers at a Technical College4 in Singapore.	Singapore and England	(Han et al., 2014)
30	addresses inequalities in the short- and medium-term career outcomes of workers with different vocational education and training (VET) programs during their early careers. Researchers investigate how the degree of vocational specificity of VET programs affects occupational status mobility throughout an individual's early career, a topic that has previously received little attention.	multinomial logistic regression model	uses the first cohort of the Transitions from Education to Employment (TREE) panel study on a Swiss cohort who had completed compulsory education in 2000, then aged 15-16. The data consists of nine waves of research conducted between 2001 and 2014.	Swiss	(Grønning & Kriesi, 2022)
31	identify the relationship between regional opportunity structures and students' decisions in choosing education programs.	Multinomial logistic regression model, survey, interview	A stratified random sample of classes of 8th graders in the 2011/12 school year in German-speaking regions of Switzerland (for details, see (Glauser 2015), 125-132). The timing of the survey was midway through grade 8 (January/February	Swiss	(Glauser & Becker, 2016)

No	Aim of the Study	Method	Sample	Countries Involved	References
			2012) as well as at the beginning (September/October 2012) and end (May/June 2013) of the final year of compulsory education.		
32	reveals diversity in differential wage returns among graduates of the German vocational education and training (VET) system.	Hierarchical multilevel analysis	The survey covered around 20,000 core German workers who are at least 15 years old and work at least 10 hours per week.	Germany	(Friedrich & Hirtz, 2021a)
33	explore how early work experiences in their education programs influence young British men and women for future employment, and discover key differences in valued learning content, socialization, and credentialization across each type of work-based learning.	Semi-structured qualitative interviews.	students who have experienced work-based learning, and their teachers	England	(Esmond & Atkins, 2020)
34	identify the problem of exit rates in vocational education and training among disadvantaged students and recommend actions that can be taken to improve this situation.	the marginal mean effect of the multinomial logistic regression model	public registry with a sample size of 10,535 people.	Norway	(Dæhlen, 2017)
35	explores how VET policies affect racial equality and how racial structures in Europe affect VET.	Focus group discussion	Methodologists in the field of refugee education were invited to participate in focus groups, Seven participants in these discussions were not refugees themselves, but rather they worked for refugee charities or had conducted research on refugees and education in an academic context.	European (five European countries, namely Germany, Italy, Romania, the U.K., and Denmark).	(Chadderton & Edmonds, 2015)
36	studies the effects of ethnic choice on the German education system, particularly on young people with an immigrant background.	Survey	longitudinal data from the German National Education Panel Study (NEPS) to explore the effects of ethnic choice at different stages of the education system. n = 11,536 young adults born between 1990 and 1997.	Germany	(Busse & Scharenberg, 2022)
37	migration-related inequalities in youth education pathways at the end of junior secondary	NEPS multicohort sequence design, bivariate analysis	longitudinal data obtained from the German National Education Panel	Germany	(Busse et al., 2023b)

No	Aim of the Study	Method	Sample	Countries Involved	References
	education.		Study (NEPS, Starting Cohort 4).		
38	test hypotheses regarding the role of VET as a socio-economic safeguard and diversifier, as well as provide a better understanding of the long-term effects of educational pathway choice on labor market outcome gaps.	Regression model	15 cohorts of students attending grade 9 of lower secondary education in the period 1978-1992, which included cohorts born between 1962-1976. We restricted the sample to individuals who were alive and living in Denmark at age 40 (N=1,028,365). We also excluded individuals with missing educational or family background information and individuals attending school cohorts with fewer than 20 students (approximately 5% of the total). The final analytic sample consisted of 973,829 individuals, of which about two-thirds (664,642) had siblings who were also born within the study window.	Denmark	(Birkelund & van de Werfhorst, 2022)
39	examines the prevalence of Informal Vocational Training (IVT) in India and explores the gap that exists at the accreditation level between IVT and other formal vocational, technical, and professional courses, as well as its impact on people's lives occupationally, economically, socially, and culturally.	The survey method and the case method are methodologically triangulated.	People who are part of the "labor force", and the study includes women who primarily take care of the family but are willing to join paid work if the opportunity arises.	India	(Bazaz & Akram, 2022)
40	seeks to further develop that account through an even stronger emphasis on VET in the context of extreme poverty, inequality, and marginalization as faced in Palestine	Survey	a representative sample of 2,011 graduates from 31 VET institutes constituting the main governmental and nongovernmental VET providers	Palestine	(Hilal et al., 2016)
41	investigated regional and gender differences in academic achievement in Ethiopia and examined whether these differences can be explained in terms of unequal educational opportunities (E.O.)	Multilevel analysis	the 2014 and 2015 national standardized exams for grade 12 students (n = 194503 and n = 205719).	Ethiopia	(Tesema & Braeken, 2018)

No	Aim of the Study	Method	Sample	Countries Involved	References
42	trends in the gender gap of educational achievement and late-life cognition across countries	Survey	use data from the Health and Retirement Study (HRS) in the United States and its sister studies around the world	United States	(Angrisani et al., 2020)
43	investigate online training and educational inequality in TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training) delivery in Kenya during the COVID-19	Qualitative case study	15 Technical Training Institutes	Kenya	(Achuodho & Pikó, 2024)
44	asks what form these compromises take by examining multiple extrinsic occupational dimensions and investigating differences by social background	Cluster analysis	lower and intermediate school tracks from the German National Educational Panel Study (NEPS-SC4) are combined with occupation-specific data	Germany	(Schels et al., 2022)
45	investigate the effects of the number of apprenticeships and the presence of school-based VET and a transition system in Germany's federal states on the amount of ethnic inequality in VET for 1. generation migrants	Fuzzy Set Qualitative Comparative Analysis	Data from the official representative survey of the population and the labor market in which one percent of all households in Germany are surveyed annually.	Germany	(Schuller, 2018)
46	generating knowledge about Vocational Educational Training (VET) levels 1 and 2, focusing on their students and the conditions that facilitate or hinder their educational itineraries, and providing proposals aimed at reducing dropout at these levels.	longitudinal methodological	VET in the region of Valencia (41 centres and 71 classrooms.)	Valencia	(López* et al., 2018)

CULTURALLY-INFORMED STRATEGIES IN ART EDUCATION: INSIGHTS FROM CHINA AND KYRGYZSTAN

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ABSTRACT

The differences in educational systems and teaching methods in China and Kyrgyzstan can provide valuable lessons and insights for improving each country's educational programs. The aim is to conduct a comparative analysis of art education curricula in China and Kyrgyzstan, followed by the identification of commonalities and major differences in the approaches to shaping the arts education system in both countries. The study employed a qualitative document analysis approach to comprehensively compare art education curricula in China and Kyrgyzstan, focusing on curriculum structure, content emphasis, teaching methodologies, and cultural integration. Through comparative analysis, inductive reasoning, and deductive reasoning, the research identified common trends and distinctive characteristics, providing insights for enhancing arts education in both countries within their unique cultural contexts. As a result of the study, there are significant differences in the strategies of curriculum development in art education. In China, preference is given to a centralized system with a rigidly structured curriculum. This means that educational programs in China are more supported by regulations and cover certain educational standards. In Kyrgyzstan, students and teachers are given more freedom. There is the possibility of a more individualized approach to the choice of topics and teaching methods, promoting flexibility in art education. The cultural and historical aspects of each country have a significant impact on curriculum development. In Kyrgyzstan, special attention is paid to national artistic traditions, which contribute to the preservation and transmission of cultural heritage through art education. Whereas in China, contemporary art movements are also actively supported, in parallel with traditional art. These differences in curriculum development strategies illustrate how cultural and historical aspects significantly influence the organization of art education in different countries. The results of this study provide a valuable basis for exchanging experiences in art education between China and Kyrgyzstan, as well as for improving the quality of educational programs.

Keywords: Cultural Heritage, Educational Systems, International Cooperation, Teaching Methods, Traditional Arts

Introduction

Art education plays a pivotal role in shaping the cultural and educational landscape of a nation, its significance reverberating through generations. The approaches to arts education in China and Kyrgyzstan diverge significantly, shaped by their unique cultural and educational backgrounds. These differences manifest in the very fabric of curriculum design, teaching methodologies, student assessment strategies, and, ultimately, the learning outcomes achieved.

In Kyrgyzstan, art education is deeply intertwined with the nation's rich nomadic heritage, a tapestry woven from vibrant traditions. Preserving and promoting these national artistic practices is a core tenet, with the teaching of felt making, wood carving, pottery, and jewelry making introduced from a tender age. The curriculum seamlessly integrates Kyrgyz epic storytelling, music, and dance forms, instilling a profound sense of identity and cultural pride in the younger generation. Moreover, the study of works by renowned Kyrgyz artists across different eras, from the Soviet period to post-independence, is a cornerstone of the educational experience. Flexibility is a hallmark of Kyrgyzstan's approach, empowering teachers to adapt lessons to local artistic practices and community needs, fostering an environment conducive to individual creativity and self-expression alongside technical mastery.

In contrast, China's art education is rooted in an ancient, immensely rich artistic legacy that has withstood the test of time. The study of traditional Chinese art forms, such as calligraphy, painting, pottery, and sculpture, is a mandatory component from the earliest stages of education. Formal, systematic training in the techniques and stylistic elements of these ancient arts is rigorously emphasized, with the curriculum centralized and standardized across the country by the Ministry of Education. However, China's art education landscape is not static; in recent decades, it has embraced the influence of contemporary Chinese art and global modern art movements, seamlessly integrating these into higher education curricula. The focus extends beyond traditional training, nurturing skills for various art-related industries and careers. China's economic growth has catalyzed substantial investment in art education infrastructure, technology integration, and faculty development programs, propelling the sector's rapid evolution.

Contemporary art and culture are in constant development and change. It is influenced by various factors such as technological progress, socio-cultural changes, and global challenges (Volkov, 2023). The arts are becoming increasingly diverse and multi-layered, encompassing both traditional and contemporary forms. In this context, it is important to explore how arts education programs respond to these changes and promote diversity and creativity in students.

Other researchers try to examine how cultural and educational factors influence curriculum design and teaching methods in arts education programs in China and Kyrgyzstan, aiming to understand their implications for promoting diversity and creativity in students. They also seek to identify potential strategies for cross-fertilization of educational practices between the two countries in the field of arts education. According to M. Ysmayilov et al. (2022), there is considerable diversity in the approach to arts education in different countries. The European system emphasizes broad art education, while in North America, the focus is on professional specialization. As A. Ibiraiym Kyzy et al. (2020) said, the influence of the Chinese model of art education on Kyrgyzstan and possible negative consequences for the unique Kyrgyz artistic traditions. K. Muratbek (2022) points to China's role as a world leader in contemporary arts and its influence on neighboring countries, including Kyrgyzstan. This opens up the potential for Kyrgyzstan in the development of modern arts and technologies.

A. Alimbekov (2022) notes the importance of taking into account cultural differences in the formation of curricula and emphasizes that maintaining a focus on national artistic traditions is important for the preservation of Kyrgyzstan's unique cultural identity. According to G. A. Omurzakova (2023), the significance of modern arts and technologies in China points to the potential of training using modern methods in Kyrgyzstan.

Referring to the definition of M. Musakanova (2019), art education in both countries attaches great importance, but applies different approaches. China is characterized by a more centralized system with a focus on traditional and contemporary arts. In comparison, Kyrgyzstan provides more educational freedom and pays attention to national artistic traditions.

There is limited comparative research analyzing arts education curricula in China and Kyrgyzstan. Therefore, there is a need for in-depth analysis to understand the differences in approaches and their impact.

Thus, this research aims to conduct a comparative analysis of art education curricula in China and Kyrgyzstan, examining how cultural and educational factors shape curriculum design in each country. The study examines the structure and content of curricula, including disciplines, goals, and requirements, as well as the teaching methods and student assessment approaches used. By comparing these aspects, the research seeks to understand the impact of different approaches on the learning processes and outcomes of students in both countries. This understanding helps to identify potential areas where experiences can be shared and the quality of arts education can be improved, reflecting the unique educational landscapes and cultural contexts of China and Kyrgyzstan.

Literature review

Culturally-informed strategies in art education are crucial for fostering creativity and understanding in diverse educational settings. In China, art education is deeply rooted in the country's rich cultural heritage. The emphasis on cultural preservation and transmission is reflected in the education system, where traditional arts such as calligraphy, painting, and music are taught alongside modern art forms. In Kyrgyzstan, the focus on cultural diversity and tolerance in education is critical for promoting interethnic and inter-confessional understanding. The country's cultural policy and education system are designed to embed ideas of cultural diversity and tolerance in the education process.

M. Samaniego et al. (2024) identify and analyze relevant characteristics associated with creative thinking, particularly in arts and design education. The results highlight the importance of experiential learning, STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics), and interdisciplinary approaches as prevalent educational methodologies for fostering creative thinking. The identified techniques include interdisciplinary projects, artistic practices, nature-based activities, and the use of digital tools. The core skills identified include originality, fluency, flexibility, and elaboration. Additionally, the study underscores the urgency of promoting research in specific regions, such as Latin America, to contribute to advancing and enriching the educational landscape in these areas.

The study by D. Semião et al. (2023) focused on the perspectives of teachers regarding cultural diversity in schools. The study aims to expand knowledge and awareness of cultural diversity issues to promote the inclusion of learners from primary to secondary education in Europe. The

findings suggest that while teachers generally have a favorable view of students' cultural diversity, they also consider it a challenge. The study highlights the importance of teachers' sensitivity to students' diversity issues, which can improve learning outcomes. The article identifies several strategies that can contribute to the development of teachers' professional learning, including the development of intercultural projects, collaborative strategies such as coaching or classroom observations, and the creation of professional learning communities. The study also underscores the importance of teacher self-reflection in creating culturally relevant teaching practices.

M.-D. González-Zamar and E. Abad-Segura (2021) focused on the analysis of research trends in emotional creativity in art education. The results show an exponential growth in research productivity, particularly in the last decade, with five prominent lines of research emerging: emotion, higher education, education, art, and leadership. Additionally, the study identified five future research directions: visual art education, affective paradigm, metacompetency, expressive arts therapy group, and cognitive empathy. The issue of curriculum development was examined by K.N. Mpuangnan and S. Ntombela (2023). The study aimed at incorporating community voices in curriculum development to achieve broader educational goals. The results highlighted the relevance of community-based knowledge in facilitating curriculum development through community engagement and community needs assessment. The community needs assessment process was shown to enhance curriculum quality, learner engagement, and educational outcomes. Additionally, embracing cultural diversity was identified as a valuable approach to developing a culturally responsive curriculum.

The synthesis of various studies underscores the pivotal role of fostering creative thinking in education, particularly in arts and design. Experiential learning, interdisciplinary approaches, and the integration of STEAM methodologies emerge as effective strategies for nurturing creativity. Additionally, the acknowledgment of cultural diversity within educational settings is highlighted as crucial for promoting inclusive learning environments and enhancing learning outcomes.

Materials and methods

The methodology employed in this study was designed to conduct a comprehensive comparative analysis of art education curricula in China and Kyrgyzstan. A qualitative document analysis approach was adopted, drawing upon official curriculum documents, study programs, and normative acts regulating the art education process in both countries.

The rationale behind selecting China and Kyrgyzstan for a comparative study of art education curricula stems from the distinct cultural and educational backgrounds of these two countries. Situated in different regions with rich artistic legacies, an analysis of their respective approaches can yield valuable insights into how national identities and traditions shape curriculum design and pedagogical practices. Furthermore, examining the contrasting centralized system of China and the more flexible approach of Kyrgyzstan offers an opportunity to understand the impact of educational philosophies on fostering creativity and preserving cultural heritage through arts education.

The sampling frame comprised undergraduate fine arts curricula offered at public universities, recognizing the potential impact of national culture and identity on curriculum design at this foundational level. To ensure a diverse and representative sample, a stratified random sampling method was employed. Specifically, the sample included curricula from the prestigious Kyrgyz

National University named after Jusup Balasagyn in the Kyrgyz Republic (550600 Art Education) and Luoyang Normal University in China (Research of Fine Arts).

The researchers meticulously reviewed and analyzed the selected curriculum documents, extracting relevant information pertaining to the core variables of interest, including curriculum structure, content emphasis, teaching methodologies, resource allocation, and assessment approaches. This process facilitated the identification of common principles, patterns, and significant differences in the approaches to art education in both countries. To synthesize the findings, the authors employed data synthesis techniques, combining disparate fragments of information on curriculum structure and educational standards to construct a unified view of the arts education systems in China and Kyrgyzstan. This synthesis process involved abstraction, highlighting basic characteristics and key features, enabling deeper and more meaningful comparative analysis.

The study applied the methods of comparative analysis, induction, and deduction to examine the curricula in art education comprehensively. The comparative analysis allowed for the identification of similarities and differences in terms of curriculum development strategies, content emphasis, and the integration of cultural and historical aspects. Inductive reasoning was employed to derive general principles and patterns from specific observations, while deductive reasoning facilitated the formulation of conclusions and recommendations based on the synthesized findings.

The analysis of the results of the comparative study and data synthesis enabled the identification of common trends and distinctive characteristics within the educational programs of both countries. These insights serve as a valuable foundation for developing informed strategies to enhance the teaching process and improve the quality of arts education in China and Kyrgyzstan, taking into account their unique cultural contexts and educational traditions.

Results

Both countries attach high importance to arts education and invest significant resources in its development. China and Kyrgyzstan are striving to develop their educational systems and keep up with modern trends in art and culture (Table 1). China has a centralized system with a rigid curriculum that includes both traditional and modern arts. In contrast, Kyrgyzstan provides more educational freedom and flexibility, with an emphasis on national artistic traditions. Thus, the fundamental curriculum structure in China follows a centralized system with a rigidly structured curriculum that includes both traditional and contemporary arts. In Kyrgyzstan, the curriculum allows for more flexibility, with an emphasis on national artistic traditions and the possibility of an individualized approach to topics and teaching methods. The cultural and historical aspects of each country significantly influence the overall organization of the art education curriculum.

The comparative analysis also revealed the influence of cultural and educational factors on curriculum design. Kyrgyzstan emphasizes national artistic traditions and strives to preserve its cultural characteristics, while China actively invests in modern arts and technology while preserving its traditional arts. Before independence, Kyrgyzstan was part of the Soviet Union. Art education in Kyrgyzstan was then oriented towards Soviet standards, and teaching methods were heavily influenced by Soviet pedagogy. During this period, special attention was paid to the development of technical skills in the arts, such as painting and sculpture, taking into account the principles of socialist realism. With independence in 1991, Kyrgyzstan began to develop its own

education system and art education in particular. The country currently has a number of institutions providing education in the fine arts, including fine arts academies and vocational schools. Art education courses in Kyrgyzstan cover a wide range of disciplines, including painting, sculpture, graphics, design, as well as art theory (Hu & Ødegaard, 2019).

Table 1: Results of comparative analysis of educational programs

Comparison criterion	China	Kyrgyzstan
Curriculum structure	Basic disciplines at the beginning. Specialization after 2 years	Basic disciplines at the beginning. Specialization after 2 years
Basic disciplines	Drawing, painting, sculpture, and composition. Modern technology and design	Drawing, painting, sculpture, craftsmanship. Less emphasis on modern technologies
Modern technologies	Emphasis on the use of computer graphics and design	There are corresponding courses, but a less pronounced emphasis
Duration of the program	Bachelor's programs are usually 4 years	Bachelor's programs are usually 4 years
Availability of specialized courses	Wide range of specialized courses	Available, but the selection is limited
Methods for assessing knowledge and skills	Mixed methods, including exams and hands-on projects	Assessment includes exams and practical work
Level of international accreditation	High level of international accreditation	It may be lower at some accreditation levels
Student support system	Tutoring, career support, extensive libraries.	Basic support is available but with limitations.
Alumni Success	Graduates are employed in the fields of design, art, and creative industries.	Graduates successfully integrate into local artistic environments. They open their art studios and actively participate in exhibitions and projects.
Educational goals/objectives	Emphasizes mastery of traditional artistic techniques and cultural heritage preservation	Focuses on fostering creativity, critical thinking, and cultural appreciation
Content	Primarily traditional Chinese art forms such as calligraphy, ink painting, and classical music	Incorporates a broader range of artistic styles and influences, including traditional Kyrgyz art and contemporary trends
Instructional methods/strategies	Traditional teacher-centered approaches with an emphasis on rote learning and mastery of techniques	Utilizes more student-centered and participatory methods, encouraging experimentation and self-expression
Learning resources/materials	Relies heavily on traditional art materials such as brushes, ink, and paper, with limited integration of modern technology	Utilizes a mix of traditional and modern resources, including digital tools and multimedia resources
Learning environment	Often characterized by structured and disciplined classroom settings with an emphasis on respect for authority and tradition.	Encourages a more relaxed and open learning atmosphere, promoting collaboration and peer interaction
Stakeholder involvement	Government agencies, cultural institutions, and academic experts play a significant role in curriculum development and implementation.	N/A

In both countries, the educational programs start with basic disciplines, followed by specialization after two years. However, the emphasis on core disciplines differs significantly: China focuses on modern technology and design, while Kyrgyzstan prioritizes drawing, painting, sculpture, and craftsmanship. Despite this distinction, undergraduate programs in both countries typically span four years. China offers a broader array of specialized courses, particularly in computer graphics and design, whereas Kyrgyzstan provides a more limited selection. Assessment methods also diverge, with China employing a mix of exams and practical projects, while Kyrgyzstan relies on exams and practical work. Furthermore, China's educational programs boast a high level of international accreditation, contrasting with potentially lower accreditation levels in Kyrgyzstan. The student support systems vary as well, with China offering tutoring, career assistance, and extensive libraries, while Kyrgyzstan provides basic support with some

constraints. Notably, the success of graduates differs in each country: Chinese graduates excel in design, art, and creative industries, whereas Kyrgyzstan's graduates integrate into local art scenes, establish their studios, and actively engage in exhibitions and projects. Moreover, the educational goals and content reflect cultural nuances: China emphasizes mastery of traditional artistic techniques and cultural heritage preservation, featuring primarily traditional Chinese art forms like calligraphy and ink painting.

Conversely, Kyrgyzstan focuses on fostering creativity, critical thinking, and cultural appreciation, incorporating a broader range of artistic styles, including traditional Kyrgyz art and contemporary trends. Instructional methods and learning environments also diverge, with China employing traditional teacher-centered approaches and structured classroom settings, while Kyrgyzstan promotes more student-centered, participatory methods, encouraging experimentation and collaboration. Additionally, stakeholder involvement varies, with Chinese programs seeing significant input from government agencies, cultural institutions, and academic experts, whereas Kyrgyzstan's stakeholder involvement is not specified.

In Kyrgyzstan, strengthen the introduction of modern technologies in the educational process to increase the competitiveness of graduates in the global lab market. In China, it emphasizes the development of practical skills and mastery of handicrafts to preserve art traditions. Encourage the exchange of experience between educational institutions in both countries to enrich art education and cultural diversity. These recommendations will help to improve the quality of art education in both countries and prepare graduates for successful careers in art and design. Contemporary art education in Kyrgyzstan places great emphasis on the development of creative thinking, student self-expression and research in art. Study programs include practical classes and master classes, as well as theoretical courses that help students deepen their understanding of art and culture.

Nevertheless, there are certain problems in art education in Kyrgyzstan. Insufficient funding and limited access to resources can complicate students' opportunities. In addition, the education quality assessment system needs to be improved, and more modern and innovative teaching methods need to be developed.

The educational system in China comprises a multitude of educational institutions covering general, higher and specialized arts education. It includes universities, technical colleges, and specialized arts education institutions such as academies and art institutes. Programs in China can cover a variety of art fields, including painting, sculpture, music, dance, theatre, architecture, and other artistic disciplines. Students can choose areas of study depending on their interests and needs. Arts education programs are offered at various levels: undergraduate, graduate, and postgraduate. The length of programs can vary depending on the level of education and specialization, but on average, Bachelor's degrees last 4-5 years, Master's degrees last 2-3 years, and postgraduate degrees last 3-5 years (Awgichew & Ademe, 2022).

The educational system in Kyrgyzstan has a narrower specialization in the arts. The number of specialized art schools in the country is limited compared to China. Programs in Kyrgyzstan probably have a more limited range of areas of study compared to China but can still cover various art forms such as painting, sculpture, music, dance, etc. Arts education programs are also offered at different levels: undergraduate, graduate, and possibly postgraduate. The duration of programs in Kyrgyzstan may be similar to Chinese programs, but the exact duration may vary depending on the specific specialization and institution. Both of these countries provide arts

education programs at different levels, but differences may include the number of specialized institutions and the variety of majors available.

There are a huge number of institutions offering arts education in China. This includes universities, academies and art institutes, as well as technical colleges and other educational organizations. At prestigious institutions, such as the Central Academy of Fine Arts, teachers are usually highly qualified and have a wealth of experience in their field. They may have doctorates, Master's degrees, and many publications or exhibitions that showcase their professional achievements. Teachers in China also have opportunities for ongoing professional development, including participation in masterclasses, seminars, conferences, and other educational activities. Many teachers at prestigious Chinese educational institutions may also conduct research activities in their areas of expertise.

In Kyrgyzstan, due to the limited number of specialized educational institutions in the arts field, teachers may have less access to a variety of professional development programs. The qualifications of teachers can vary depending on their experience and education. Some teachers may have advanced degrees, while others may have more practical experience. Research activity among teachers in Kyrgyzstan may be less prevalent, especially when compared to teachers in prominent Chinese institutions. Teachers in Kyrgyzstan can obtain additional qualifications through professional development courses, seminars, and other educational programs, but these may be less diverse and accessible compared to China (Qing, 2021).

There is access to outstanding material resources in China, especially at large and prestigious arts institutions. Large educational institutions usually have state-of-the-art art studios, modern facilities, and libraries, which provide students with the opportunity to develop their creative potential to the fullest.

Both of these countries provide arts education programs at different levels, but differences may include the number of specialist schools and the variety of streams available. Modern art studios and professional equipment provide students with hands-on learning and art-making opportunities. In China, especially at large institutions, such resources are usually available in extensive quantities, fostering students' creativity. In addition, libraries with a variety of fiction, monographs, and electronic resources enrich the educational process.

In Kyrgyzstan, especially in smaller educational institutions, resources may be limited, which may affect the availability of modern art studios and professional equipment for students. However, even with limited resources, students can have basic opportunities for hands-on learning and creativity.

Analyses of graduate success rates in China indicate outstanding achievements in professional careers. Graduates from major institutions such as the Central Academy of Fine Arts achieve outstanding success in their respective fields of art. Participation in national and world exhibitions and competitions allows them to showcase their talents and make important connections in the arts industry. In addition, the publication of work in trade publications complements the career achievements of graduates (Zhang, 2021).

Successful careers of graduates in the arts can also be observed in Kyrgyzstan. They can work as artists, designers, and musicians, fulfilling their creative potential. Participation in local exhibitions and competitions provides them with a platform to present their work to a wider

audience. Publishing work in local publications helps to disseminate and recognize their creative heritage.

Self-employment and entrepreneurship in the arts represent a significant opportunity for successful graduates of educational institutions in both China and Kyrgyzstan. They have the chance to develop as independent artists, designers, architects, or art teachers. Moreover, their impact on the cultural environment of both countries is undeniable. The works of art created by these artists and female artists are able to inspire and influence public opinion (Gupta & Zhao, 2023).

Building a professional network is an important element of success in the arts. Successful graduates can build strong professional connections and networks in the arts industry, which significantly contributes to their further growth and development.

In the context of China and Kyrgyzstan, employer feedback has a significant impact on the career path of artists. In China, where the arts industry is extensive and dynamic, employers pay attention to the quality of graduates. They assess the availability of necessary skills and knowledge, as well as specialized skills and creativity. In Kyrgyzstan, where the industry may be less developed, employers also carefully assess the relevance of graduates to the labor market requirements in the arts.

Professional internships and apprenticeships play a key role in the training of future artists. In both countries, as an important part of the educational program, they provide students with the opportunity to apply their knowledge in real-world settings. These practical experiences not only contribute to the development of skills but also help students establish professional contacts and gain insight into the characteristics of the arts industry (Du et al., 2022).

Overall, the arts education system and training in China and Kyrgyzstan provide students with many opportunities for professional growth and development in the arts industry, with each country having its characteristics and advantages. In both countries, the present time reflects the desire to balance modern art requirements with the preservation of cultural heritage. Art education programs remain accessible to students and take into account both contemporary artistic trends and national artistic traditions.

In China and Kyrgyzstan, contributing to better-preparing students for successful careers in art and design. In China, emphasis should be placed on integrating modern technology into the learning process, helping graduates to be more competitive in today's art industry. In Kyrgyzstan, in turn, it is important to emphasize the development of creative thinking and self-expression, which will help students maintain and develop their unique artistic voices (Jodoi, 2023).

Allowing students to choose specialized courses and participate in practices based on their interests will allow them to develop their unique skills and talents. Active collaboration with international arts institutions and organizations will enrich students' educational experience and broaden their cultural horizons.

The development of critical thinking, analytical skills, and the ability to analyze and interpret art is essential to the development of quality artists. The inclusion of theoretical courses and practices in art education programs, as well as the support of research activities, contributes to the development of creativity (Jiang et al., 2022).

A comparison of the arts curricula of China and Kyrgyzstan revealed significant differences. The Chinese curriculum places a greater emphasis on art history, with more required courses dedicated to the subject compared to Kyrgyzstan. In contrast, the Kyrgyz curriculum focuses on studio art courses that aim to develop techniques and skills. Regarding assessment methods, Chinese programs rely heavily on formal written examinations, while Kyrgyz programs use more informal assessments such as portfolio reviews. As for teaching methods, Chinese educators prefer passive lecturing approaches that focus on transmitting theoretical knowledge, while Kyrgyz educators are more likely to employ active, hands-on teaching techniques. Moreover, the analysis shows that Chinese curricula dedicate twice as many required courses to traditional East Asian art forms compared to Kyrgyz curricula, reflecting a difference in cultural content. These findings highlight the distinct approaches and areas of focus within the arts curricula of China and Kyrgyzstan.

Increasing the availability of resources is also an important aspect. Providing students with access to modern art studios, technical equipment, and library resources contributes to the fuller development of their creative potential. Developing an educational quality assessment system that takes into account multiple aspects, from theoretical knowledge to practical skills and creativity, is also crucial. Stimulating and supporting the creative initiative of graduates is essential for a successful start in the arts industry. Developing programs and initiatives to support graduates at the start of their careers, including organizing exhibitions, competitions, and other events, contribute to a successful start in the arts industry. These recommendations aim to improve the quality of art education in China and Kyrgyzstan and to better prepare students for careers in art and design.

Discussion

This study is a significant contribution to the comparative analysis of art education curricula in China and Kyrgyzstan. The results of the analysis of official documents reveal important aspects of approaches to the formation of art education in both countries.

In China, there is a preference for a centralized system with a rigid curriculum. It means that curricula are subject to national standards and norms. This approach promotes standardization of education, which in turn can ensure a high level of training of students in the field of art. Here, the educational process is oriented towards the systematic mastering of the theoretical foundations of art, which creates a solid foundation for subsequent creative development.

In Kyrgyzstan, the country favors a more flexible education system. Here, the study programs provide students with more academic freedom. This means that students can have the opportunity to choose disciplines and areas of study that match their interests and needs. This approach creates the conditions for deeper individualization of the learning process, allowing each student to develop his or her unique creative abilities.

Such differences in approaches to curriculum design point to the diverse strategies of educational systems. In China, stricter centralization and standardization may promote high-quality training, while in Kyrgyzstan, greater flexibility may allow for more in-depth consideration of individual student needs and interests.

In this context, China is taking a different approach. The country endeavors to support and develop both traditional and contemporary arts. This represents a remarkable balance between

preserving cultural heritage and stimulating contemporary creative flows. With this approach, students are able to get a more well-rounded education, covering different aspects of the arts.

According to K. A. Long and C. O'Connell (2022), the funding and accessibility of education in China and Kyrgyzstan differ significantly. In China, public funding provides greater access to education, which increases the number of students receiving arts education. In Kyrgyzstan, limited state resources can create barriers for certain segments of the population, especially for those who cannot afford expensive art education. K. A. Long and C. O'Connell (2022) highlight significant differences in the financing and accessibility of education in China and Kyrgyzstan. In China, public funding is more extensive, which ultimately leads to greater access to education, including art education. This, in turn, can contribute to an increase in the number of students receiving art education and a diversity of talented young artists. In Kyrgyzstan, with limited public resources, there is a risk of creating barriers for certain segments of the population, especially those who cannot afford expensive art education. This could lead to a potential loss of talent and limited access to arts education for certain groups of the population. This is an important observation, as access to quality arts education plays an important role in developing and unlocking the creative potential of young artists in both countries. The level of funding and support has an impact on shaping the future artistic community and cultural heritage.

Academician Y. Lee (2021) points out the importance of cultural characteristics and traditions in shaping students' artistic skills. In China, where traditional arts are highly valued, students have the opportunity to immerse themselves in the depths of Chinese artistic traditions. In Kyrgyzstan, where the artistic heritage of Central Asia is important, students can find inspiration in the traditional arts of this region.

However, it should not be forgotten that in addition to cultural specificities, other important aspects can influence the formation of students' artistic skills. For example, modern technologies and innovative teaching methods can complement and enrich the traditional approach to art education. It is important to find a balance between respect for cultural heritage and innovative approaches to ensure that students develop their artistic abilities completely and harmoniously.

K. Longhurst et al. (2019) identified that professional orientation and support for research activities are different in China and Kyrgyzstan. In China, students can participate in internships and professional projects that contribute to their professional growth and skills development. In Kyrgyzstan, where creative freedom is more emphasized, students may have more opportunities for self-realization and experimentation in the arts.

Despite these differences, it is important to note that a balanced approach that includes both professional orientation and support for research and creative freedom may be most effective. A variety of approaches to building artistic skills can contribute to the fuller and deeper development of students. However, it is also important to consider students' individual needs and preferences. Some may be more comfortable working in a strictly vocational environment, while for others, the freedom to create and experiment is more important. In an ideal situation, an educational program should offer a variety of opportunities to develop both professional skills and creativity. This allows students to realize their potential to the fullest.

A. Benavot et al. (2022) emphasize that both education systems have their challenges and advantages. In China, students face high competition and pressure but develop rigor and

excellence. Students in Kyrgyzstan may have more creative freedom but may face limited resources and opportunities for professional growth.

In China, students face high competition and pressure, but they develop rigor and mastery in the process, which can play an important role in their professional careers. On the other hand, students in Kyrgyzstan can enjoy more creative freedom, which favors the development of individual creativity. However, they may also face limited resources and opportunities for professional growth, which requires extra effort to achieve a high level of excellence. Both China and Kyrgyzstan have their unique contexts that can impact student development. Understanding these characteristics allows educational programs to be tailored to the needs and potential of each country, creating a more effective environment for professional growth and creative development.

According to A. P. Manoharan et al. (2020), the importance of international cooperation in education. Student exchanges, joint programs, and the integration of world art movements can enrich the experience of students in both countries. This can foster a more global understanding of art and open new perspectives for students on the world stage.

Additionally, it is important to note that international cooperation in education also facilitates the exchange of cultural values and understanding of the world views of different nationalities. This allows students not only to deepen their knowledge of the arts but also to develop intercultural competence, which is an important skill in today's globalized world. Moreover, the integration of different artistic movements from different countries can stimulate the creative process and foster innovative ideas in art. This exchange of ideas and approaches can lead to more effective interaction and cooperation between artists from different cultures. International cooperation in art education has many positive aspects that affect both the development of students' artistic abilities and the enrichment of the world's artistic heritage.

S. Assanova et al. (2019) note that assessment and monitoring of student's progress have different approaches in China and Kyrgyzstan. In China, the assessment system is more formal and focused on exam results, which creates high pressure on students to achieve high scores. In Kyrgyzstan, the learning process is more emphasized, and assessment can be based on participation in projects, creative processes, and discussions.

It is worth considering that a variety of assessment methods may suit different types of learning and individual student characteristics. For example, some students may show their potential better in formal examinations, while for others, it is more important to assess their participation in creative projects. It is also worth considering that the approach to assessment can affect student motivation. High standards and a rigorous assessment system can incentivize diligence and drive to achieve high results. At the same time, a more flexible, learning-centered approach can encourage creative thinking and self-promotion. It is important to consider the diversity of students' needs and abilities when designing an assessment system to ensure they are optimized to develop and unlock their creative potential in the arts.

Firstly, the study revealed significant differences in teaching methods between China and Kyrgyzstan. China emphasized formal assessment methods and examinations that promote the development of theoretical knowledge. Whereas in Kyrgyzstan, more emphasis is placed on flexible and creative teaching methods that allow students to experiment and develop their artistic style.

Conclusions

The findings suggest that the cultural histories and educational philosophies of each country heavily influence art education curricula. China's education system, which values theoretical knowledge and cultural preservation, emphasizes art history and traditional cultural forms. In contrast, Kyrgyzstan's more flexible approach, which focuses on individual development and expression, prioritizes studio skills and informal assessment. Chinese art programs should consider incorporating more required studio art courses to provide hands-on skills development in areas like painting, sculpting, and drawing. Kyrgyzstan programs should include more required art history coursework to strengthen students' understanding of cultural and aesthetic traditions. Both countries could benefit from adopting a more balanced approach in blending art history, cultural knowledge, and studio-based skills development in their curricula.

In addition, it is important to examine how cultural influences shape curricula. The heavy emphasis on traditional East Asian art forms in China suggests a need to expose students to more diverse artistic styles and influences. To achieve this, Chinese programs should broaden the cultural scope of core courses to include more global perspectives and contemporary artistic movements. Kyrgyzstan might also consider increasing cultural pluralism in the curriculum by reducing the insular focus on local traditions. By incorporating these changes, art programs in both China and Kyrgyzstan can better equip students with a broader understanding of art and its various forms, enhancing their creativity and critical thinking skills.

Support for career guidance and research also differs between China and Kyrgyzstan. In China, students are provided with opportunities for internships and participation in professional projects, facilitating their professional development. In Kyrgyzstan, there is more emphasis on students' creative freedom and self-realization in the arts. The study also emphasizes the importance of international cooperation in art education. Student exchanges, joint programs, and integration of world art movements can enrich the experience of students in both countries. Student assessment and monitoring systems also have different approaches in China and Kyrgyzstan. In China, assessment is more formal and focused on exam results, which puts high pressure on students to achieve high grades. In Kyrgyzstan, the focus is more on the learning process, and assessment can be based on participation in projects, creative processes, and discussions.

One of the key limitations of this study is that it focused solely on undergraduate art programs despite the existence of postgraduate programs, which could provide additional insights. As for future research prospects, conducting cross-cultural comparisons with art education curricula from other countries could further enhance the understanding of how societal values and national identities shape curriculum design.

Implications

The study also has practical implications, suggesting that a balanced approach combining art history, cultural traditions, studio skills, and innovative creation may be beneficial for developing students' aesthetic skills and future career success. This could inform educational reforms in both countries. Additionally, exploring the practical implications of a balanced approach that combines art history, cultural traditions, studio skills, and innovative creation could inform potential educational reforms in both China and Kyrgyzstan.

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RISK ANALYSIS AND MITIGATION LEARNING FROM HOME DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: AN EFFORT TO TRANSFORM THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia necessitated that schools provide learning services from home for all students starting in mid-March 2020, leading to concerns about a decline in the quality of education. However, these limitations have also prompted improvements. This study leverages challenges and difficulties as catalysts for change. Employing qualitative methods, this case study examines the risk management of implementation Learning from Home during the COVID-19 Pandemic at SMA 'X' in North Jakarta. The risk analysis process began with risk identification through interviews with several teachers. The likelihood and impact ratings are derived from internal school documents and focus group discussions with homeroom teachers. Risk values were calculated by multiplying the probability and impact factors and then presented in the heatmap matrix. Bow Tie Diagrams were used to illustrate each event comprehensively, including the mitigation procedure applied to each likelihood and impact. The study's findings identify contributing factors to the decline in education quality, including teachers' readiness and skills, unaltered learning methods, and difficulty measuring student competency. An intriguing phenomenon was identified for further study, providing a basis for developing more effective learning methods to mitigate risk in this school and other schools with similar contexts, thereby improving the quality of education.

Keywords: Learning from Home, Risk and Mitigation, Education, Transforming

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic caused significant disruptions in many human activities, including the education sector. Educational institutions had to modify their operational system rapidly, shift to substitute teaching and learning methods, and implement new work arrangements. These changes led to many adjustments and challenges for the school management and employees (Mostajo et al., 2021). Since mid-March 2020, the pandemic has compelled schools to provide remote learning services to all students. Although limited offline classes have gradually resumed in Indonesia since October 2021, remote learning has continued to be implemented concurrently. From the outset, the home learning procedures have received numerous complaints and encountered difficulties from all parties involved, including parents, students, teachers, and school management. All parties have been forced to adapt and operate within these constraints.

Indonesian Government Policy for the Implementation of Learning from Home

The learning-from-home program is governed by Circular No. 4 of 2020 from the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia, which addresses implementing Education Policies during the Emergency Period of the COVID-19 Pandemic. This policy mandates that online and distance learning be implemented to provide meaningful learning experiences for students without the pressure of completing all curriculum objectives. Instead, it emphasizes life skills education to help students adapt to living with COVID-19, with varied activities and tasks tailored to their interests and conditions. Learning outcomes are to be assessed through qualitative feedback rather than quantitative grading. This regulation was further reinforced by Circular No. 15 of 2020, which provides Guidelines for Organizing Learning from Home, emphasizing that learning materials should be inclusive, culturally relevant, reflective of students' character and uniqueness, and should promote positive interaction and communication between teachers and parents.

The learning-from-home method is executed through two primary approaches: online and offline learning. Schools may opt for an online, offline, or blended approach based on the availability and readiness of their facilities and infrastructure. Online learning utilizes gadgets or laptops, accessing resources through various government and school-provided portals and learning applications. Offline learning can be delivered via television, radio, self-study modules, worksheets, printed materials, and teaching aids derived from the surrounding environment.

The primary principle of the learning-from-home initiative is to ensure that children's rights to quality education are met while protecting all school members and preventing the spread of COVID-19. Accordingly, the government has provided guidelines and steps for implementing this initiative.

The implementation steps for learning from home by schools include (1) establishing a school management model that supports remote working and teaching for educators and staff, including scheduling picket duty if necessary; (2) ensuring the affordability and accessibility of the learning system for all students; (3) creating a learning continuity plan by coordinating teachers to adapt online and offline teaching materials creatively; (4) providing guidance and monitoring to teachers through learning reports; (5) ensuring the availability of necessary

facilities and infrastructure for both online and offline learning, such as gadgets, laptops, internet access, and distribution methods for modules and teaching aids.

Teachers play a crucial role in the execution of the learning-from-home program. They are responsible for preparing both online and offline learning implementation plans by (1) ensuring the achievement of the specified competencies, (2) preparing relevant teaching materials, (3) determining appropriate methods and interaction strategies, (4) selecting suitable teaching media, and (5) enhancing their capabilities by participating in various online training sessions focused on organizing distance learning. (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2020)

The Challenge of Learning from Home

The COVID-19 pandemic is an unforeseen event that has drastically altered the learning patterns of students worldwide, exposing inherent vulnerabilities in educational systems globally (Ballena et al., 2021). Adaptability, shifts in habitual patterns, and changes in mindsets are crucial in addressing the challenges posed by these transformative conditions.

An initial analytical study by SMERU identified several factors contributing to inequality in distance learning. These factors include the quality of teacher-student communication during home-based learning activities, the teaching methods employed during the pandemic, the assessment of the learning process, the dynamics of student learning, and the teacher's perceptions of their workload during the implementation of remote learning (Bima, 2020).

Research by Wunong Zhang et al. highlights potential difficulties faced by online learning policies, such as the inadequacy of online teaching infrastructure, the inexperience of teachers, disparities in learning outcomes due to varying teacher experience, the information gap, and the complex home environment (Zhang et al., 2021).

The decline in learning quality during the home-based study period is a significant concern. Usman (2021) warns that ineffective learning-from-home could jeopardize Indonesia's projected demographic bonus expected in 2035. Additionally, a 2020 study by The SMERU Research Institute outlined the challenges faced by the learning-from-home program in Indonesia, including uneven access to online learning facilities and disparities in teacher competencies (Bima, 2020).

Pokhrel and Chhetri (2021) highlighted challenges such as inadequate online teaching infrastructure, limited exposure of teachers to online teaching methods, information gaps, non-conducive learning environments at home, equity and academic excellence issues in higher education, and difficulties in authentic assessment and grading in remote learning settings. They also identified opportunities such as innovative teaching methods, enhanced parent-teacher collaboration, the use of online platforms for education, and improved support for learners with special needs.

Risk Management

Risk management is the systematic process of identifying, assessing, and mitigating potential risks within an organization or specific context. Risk, as described by Arthur J. Keown (2000),

pertains to the possibility of an undesired outcome, often associated with the likelihood of adverse events and the impact of uncertainties (Kirchsteiger, 2002).

In organizational settings, Aven (2011) characterizes risk as the probability of specific effects resulting from hazards within defined timeframes or situations. This perception of expected value, grounded in analysts' assigned probabilities, leads to quantifiable predictions of negative outcomes.

The Committee of Sponsoring Organizations of the Treadway Commission (COSO) emphasizes the link between strategy and performance in managing risks (Chelsey, 2004). COSO delineates eight interconnected components guiding enterprise risk management that are: (1) Internal Environment, (2) Objective Setting, (3) Event Identification, (4) Risk Assessment, (5) Risk Response, (6) Control Activities, (7) Information and Communication; (8) Monitoring.

This dynamic, iterative process ensures that each component influences the others, fostering a comprehensive approach to risk management. By understanding and implementing risk management concepts, organizations can enhance their ability to identify, evaluate, and manage risks effectively, thereby improving their capacity to achieve objectives.

In this study, the COSO framework serves as the methodological approach for risk management. This framework, outlined by Chelsey (2004), provides a structured method for identifying, assessing, and mitigating risks associated with implementing learning-from-home services during the COVID-19 pandemic. By adhering to this framework, the study aims to systematically address potential risks and enhance the effectiveness of risk management strategies.

Moreover, the COSO framework ensures alignment with organizational objectives, promotes transparency through effective communication, and facilitates ongoing monitoring and evaluation to adapt to changing circumstances. Employing the COSO framework establishes a robust approach to managing risks and enhancing the resilience of educational institutions in response to the challenges posed by the pandemic.

Objectives

This research leverages challenges and difficulties as catalysts for change, with a specific focus on Risk Analysis and Management within the context of institutional research. The risk analysis was conducted to identify challenges arising from the learning-from-home process and to develop mitigation strategies. These findings are further examined to provide actionable insights for advancing educational transformation.

Risk Analysis and Management are crucial components of institutional research, as they help educational institutions identify, assess, and prioritize risks that could hinder their operational effectiveness and educational outcomes. By systematically analyzing risks, institutions can develop strategies to mitigate these risks, ensuring a more resilient and adaptive educational environment.

The learning-from-home methods during the pandemic cannot be uniformly applied across all schools. Learning needs to be tailored to the specific conditions of each school, with different educational levels facing unique challenges. The implementation of distance learning policies varies significantly and is influenced by numerous factors (Bima, 2020). Consequently, this study employs a case study approach in a single school institution, with the aim that the results will apply to other institutions, particularly those with similar backgrounds.

The objective of this research is to analyze the risks associated with the implementation of learning from home during the COVID-19 pandemic faced by Dharma Suci High School. By identifying these risks and developing mitigation strategies, the study aims to contribute to the broader field of institutional research. The insights gained from this case study are intended to offer implications and recommendations that can be generalized for schools across Indonesia, particularly in North Jakarta.

The findings will provide a framework for other institutions to assess and address their unique challenges in implementing remote learning, develop targeted risk mitigation strategies based on identified risk factors, enhance teacher readiness and adaptability to different teaching modalities, improve student engagement and competency measurement in a remote learning environment, and foster better communication and support mechanisms between teachers, students, and parents. These recommendations are designed to ensure that the results obtained are relevant and beneficial for a wide range of educational institutions, promoting an overall improvement in the quality of education during and beyond the pandemic.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this research draws upon several key concepts and theoretical perspectives to guide the analysis of challenges and mitigation strategies in the implementation of learning-from-home during the COVID-19 pandemic.

At the core of the framework lies the principles of risk analysis and management. Drawing from the fields of risk management and organizational theory, this framework emphasizes the systematic identification, assessment, and mitigation of risks associated with remote learning implementation. By applying risk management principles, educational institutions can proactively address potential challenges and enhance their resilience in adapting to remote learning environments.

Drawing from the field of adaptive management, this framework underscores the importance of adaptive capacity in responding to complex and uncertain environments. Adaptive capacity refers to an organization's ability to learn, innovate, and adapt in response to changing circumstances. By enhancing adaptive capacity, educational institutions can effectively navigate the uncertainties of remote learning implementation and continuously improve their practices based on feedback and experience.

Methodology

Research Approach

This study uses a qualitative design that is widely used in the field of education as a tool for collecting research data (Gay et al., 2012). Qualitative research aims to understand social phenomena from the participants' perspective, who are invited for interviews, and observations and asked to provide data, opinions, thoughts, and perceptions (Sukmadinata, 2006). Qualitative data is collected through document studies (Creswell, 2007).

This research design is a case study that presents as much information as possible on the risk management of the implementation of learning-from-home services during the COVID-19 pandemic at Dharma Suci High School, located in North Jakarta. The case study research is intended to intensively study the individual, group, institution, or community (Rasyid, 2019).

Data Collection

The purpose of the preliminary research is to identify the risky events associated with the implementation of learning-from-home during the COVID-19 pandemic. The data collection technique employed for this purpose is an interview with 12 full-time teachers, who constitute 60% of the teaching staff at Dharma Suci High School. This sample group is deemed representative of the overall teacher population, as the remaining 40% are part-time teachers. The full-time teachers include 1 principal, 4 vice principals, 2 guidance counselors, and 6 homeroom teachers.

Primary data for the research was collected through a detailed study of several school documents, such as summaries of evaluation results gathered from the students and parents, which are relevant to the research objectives. Other sources include teacher performance reports and meeting documents. Different categories of respondents and sources are associated with various types of risk events based on specific purposes. The information obtained from document analysis reflects the results of the school's internal analysis and evaluation, summarized from the data of all teachers, 90% of students, and 60% of parents in the school.

To verify and strengthen the data obtained, both data collection methods and the information used, the researchers employed triangulation techniques. Triangulation involves using multiple methods or sources of data to cross-check and validate research findings. In this study, triangulation was performed through repeated checks from different sources of information. For instance, insight from interviews with full-time teachers was cross-verified with data from school documents and evaluation summaries.

Triangulation is a technique for checking the validity of data through the convergence of information from various sources (Bryman, 2008). By integrating diverse perspectives and cross-verifying information, the researchers aimed to ensure the reliability and accuracy of the findings. This process included repeated comparisons and checks of information from interviews, document analysis, and focus group discussions (FGDs), where expert judgments were solicited. This iterative approach of verifying data from multiple angles helped to identify any discrepancies and inconsistencies, thereby enhancing the credibility of the research outcomes.

Data Analysis

Risk analysis is carried out through the following research flow:

Figure 1: Research flow

1. Internal Environment

Understanding the internal conditions of schools that provide learning from home will involve examining several key elements. This includes the school's vision and mission, the National Education Standards document, and the school curriculum. This analysis will involve interviewing various representatives from the school community, including teachers, students, and parents. These interviews will provide deeper insight into the school culture, the policies governing learning-from-home services, and the school's risk appetite.

2. Event Identification

The event identification stage focuses on recognizing potential risk events that may arise from various risk sources. The identification of these risks will be based on a literature review, previous research on the risks associated with learning from home, and field observations. The results of this identification process will be organized using a fishbone diagram (also known as an Ishikawa diagram), which is a method used for analyzing the causes of a problem or condition.

3. Risk Assessment

Risk assessment involves measuring the probability and impact of each identified risk event, with the data from these assessments being converted into a measurable scale. The Likert scale, an ordinal scale, is used to gauge the level of respondents' perceptions of the identified risks and their impacts. This process includes both qualitative and quantitative steps.

Initially, risks were qualitatively assessed through interviews and discussions with experts, including school principals and homeroom teachers, who are knowledgeable about the school environment and the challenges of learning from home. These experts considered various factors such as past experiences, current conditions, and external influences that might affect the likelihood of each risk event (Cooke, 1991; Morgan & Henrion, 1990). After the qualitative assessment, the likelihood and magnitude of each risk event were measured quantitatively using a numerical scale.

Once the risk probabilities and magnitudes were assessed both qualitatively and quantitatively, they were converted into standardized scales for easier analysis and comparison.

Expert judgment played a crucial role in both qualitative and quantitative assessments. Experts, including school principals who also served as researchers, along with homeroom teachers, engaged in focus group discussions to evaluate and reach a consensus on the likelihood and impact of various risk events. Their combined expertise and experience ensured a comprehensive and reliable assessment of risks (Cooke, 1991; Morgan & Henrion, 1990).

This measurement will be guided by the Godfrey scale (1996) and refined through Focus Group Discussions with the School Foundation, considering the specific needs of the school.

Table 1: Risk Probability and Impact

Scale	Probability	Frequency Level	Impact	Consequence Level
5	$80 \leq x \leq 100\%$	Frequent	Threatened financial and reputational conditions	Catastrophic
4	$60 \leq x < 80\%$	Probable	Relatively significant loss in goodwill	Critical
3	$40 \leq x < 60\%$	Occasional	Hampered learning process for students	Serious
2	$20 \leq x < 40\%$	Remote	Disruption in the students' learning process from home in terms of fulfilling administrative and service requirements	Marginal
1	$0 \leq x < 20\%$	Improbable	Disruption in the school's administrative system and normal work patterns	Negligible

4. Risk Response

The determination of risk acceptance at Dharma Suci High School is specifically tailored to the school's conditions and risk appetite. This process involves preparing a heatmap that reflects the school's unique context. The acceptability of risks is evaluated using the Godfrey scale (1996), and researchers develop a narrative to account for the specific needs of the school.

5. Mitigation

Mitigation actions are determined based on their level of risk acceptance. Dominant risks, or major risks, which fall into the categories of unacceptable and undesirable, require special and immediate attention due to their significant impact. Conversely, risks that are deemed acceptable and negligible theoretically do not necessitate mitigation actions.

Risk control actions are carried out in two main directions: mitigation of probabilities and mitigation of impacts. Probability mitigation aims to reduce the likelihood of the occurrence of an unwanted event, while impact mitigation focuses on lessening the severity of the impact should the event occur.

The analysis to determine risk mitigation strategies is conducted using a bow tie diagram. This diagram illustrates the causes of unwanted events, their potential impacts, and the corresponding prevention and mitigation efforts.

Result

Risk Analysis

1. Internal Environment

Dharma Suci School is a private institution based on Buddhist teachings located in North Jakarta, Indonesia. The high school level (SMA) began its operations in 1997. SMA Dharma Suci implements the national standard curriculum, which is the 2013 Curriculum.

The vision of Dharma Suci School is "The Leading Buddhist School in Indonesia." In alignment with this vision, SMA Dharma Suci has articulated a relevant vision: "Leading in achievement and faith, capable of self-leadership, and inspiring others to excel." The mission of Dharma Suci School is "To Build Happy and Open-minded Children." To achieve these vision and

mission objectives, Dharma Suci School has developed core values or character values, which include compassion, respect, creativity, and truthfulness.

At SMA Dharma Suci, the learning-from-home policy is structured around an online and synchronized study schedule, with students attending three subjects per day, equivalent to ten hours of lessons. Subject teachers have simplified this curriculum to suit the abilities and needs of the students. To foster skills, talents, and interests, the school offers various extracurricular activities, workshops, and online student engagements.

The learning-from-home strategy at SMA Dharma Suci involves a blended approach. This combined method includes online, semi-online, and offline components, with online, face-to-face interactions scheduled throughout all learning hours. Online learning is facilitated through Google Classroom as the Learning Management System (LMS), while Google Meet and ZOOM Meeting are used for real-time interactions with students. Semi-online learning is conducted via WhatsApp groups and LINE groups for more effective discussion compared to Google Classroom's discussion boards.

To ensure the effective and efficient delivery of remote learning across all subjects, the use of Google Classroom is meticulously managed. The procedures for implementing distance learning at SMA Dharma Suci are as follows:

- Instruction Methods. Teaching methods are like those used in traditional classrooms but adapted to the constraints of remote learning. Teachers provide explanations in written form via Google Classroom or through WhatsApp/LINE. Students complete assignments on Google Forms or upload their work to Google Classroom. For some assessments and projects, students present their work via Google Meet or ZOOM.
- Continuous Monitoring. The principal and vice-principal continuously monitor the learning process. Monitoring includes checking WhatsApp groups, lesson plans, teaching journals per session, and daily reports.
- Attendance Tracking. Both teacher and student attendance are tracked directly in Google Classroom for each session. The principal and activity coordinators can access all Google Classroom subjects to observe interactions, assignments, and submissions.
- Virtual Classroom Monitoring. Monitoring also extends to virtual face-to-face classes on ZOOM or Google Meet. The principal and vice-principal can join any class to observe real-time interactions.
- Issue Resolution. Technical and learning process issues are addressed immediately as they arise. Coordination among teachers and discussions with class advisors and counselors help monitor the learning process both in and out of virtual classrooms. Regular and as-needed teacher meetings are held either in person at school or via ZOOM meetings.

2. Event Identification

In studying the learning-from-home process implemented at SMA Dharma Suci, researchers identified events characterized by uncertainty that negatively impact the achievement of learning objectives. This identification process began with preliminary interviews. Researchers conducted initial interviews with several teachers and parents. Following these interviews, the researchers, along with class advisors, held focus group discussions. Through these discussions,

researchers categorized the identified adverse events into six risk sources: students, teachers, parents, learning methods, infrastructure, and character and competence.

These risk events were identified by examining the learning-from-home process as outlined in the school curriculum document, along with insights from the interviews and focus group discussions. The identified events are systematically presented using a fishbone diagram, which facilitates a comprehensive analysis of the underlying causes and impacts (See Figure 2 below).

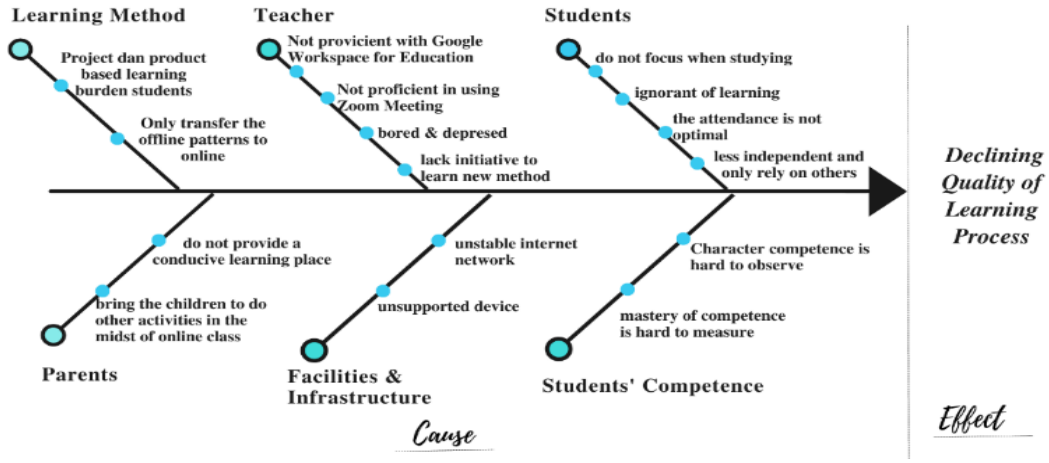


Figure 2: Fishbone Diagram of Risk Identification for Learning from Home

3. Risk Assessment

The measurement of the risk value at Dharma Suci High School involves a thorough analysis of existing data from various documents. The primary documents reviewed include:

- Document Analysis of Learning from Home for the Academic Year 2020/2021. This report contains survey results from 90% of students' parents at the end of the 2020/2021 school year.
- Recapitulation of Teacher Assessments for the 2020/2021 Academic Year. Compiled by the principal, this document is based on class visit supervision, LMS supervision, and survey results completed by 98% of students.
- Final Report for the Academic Year 2020/2021. This report to the Foundation details the home learning process, including data on student grades, incident records, and notes from the homeroom teachers.
- Student Self-Evaluation Analysis Document for the 2020/2021 Academic Year. This analysis includes results from a self-assessment survey filled out by 98% of students.
- Minutes of the 2020/2021 Academic Year-End Evaluation Meeting. These minutes capture teachers' opinions and narrative comments about the learning process, which describe the probabilities and impacts of various risk events.
- Minutes of Homeroom and Parent Meetings. These minutes document homeroom teachers' observations regarding the home learning situation for each student and the outcomes of discussions with parents.

In the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) process, data was converted into measurable units using the Likert scale. This conversion was necessary due to the diversity of the data sources, which included narrative descriptions, percentage data, survey results with other ordinal scales, and various metrics. The assessment of these measures was based on consensus reached during the

FGD. Expert judgment involving the principal and homeroom teachers, who directly engaged with the field, was deemed valid and acceptable.

Based on this document analysis, the researchers conducted a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with six homeroom teachers to determine the probabilities and impacts of each identified risk event. The risk value for each event was then calculated by multiplying the probability by the impact. The results of these calculations are summarized in the table below.

Table 3: Risk Measurement

Risk Code	Unwanted Events	Probability	Impact	Risk Value
Risks from Teachers				
R01	Teachers are not proficient with Google Workspace for Education	4	3.3	13
R02	The teacher is not proficient in using ZOOM Meeting	3.4	3.5	12
R03	The teacher is bored and/or depressed	3.6	3.5	13
R04	Teachers lack the initiative to learn new methods	4.4	2.5	11
Risks from Students				
R05	Students do not focus when studying	2.5	2	5
R06	Students are ignorant of learning	2	3	6
R07	Student attendance is not optimal	2	1	2
R08	Students are less independent and more reliant on others	1	2	2
Risks from Parents				
R09	Parents do not provide a conducive learning environment	2	3	6
R10	Parents engage children in other activities during synchronous online class	1	3	3
Risks from Learning Methods				
R11	Project and product-based learning methods burden students	4	3	12
R12	The learning method only transfers the offline pattern to the online	4	3	12
Risks from Facilities and Infrastructure				
R13	Unstable internet network	3	1.5	5
R14	Unsupported Device	3	2	6
Risks to Students' Competence				
R15	Character building is hard to observe	4	2.5	10
R16	Mastery of competence is hard to measure	4	*3.5*	*14*

4. Risk Response

The level of risk acceptance is presented in a heatmap, as shown in Figure 3 below.

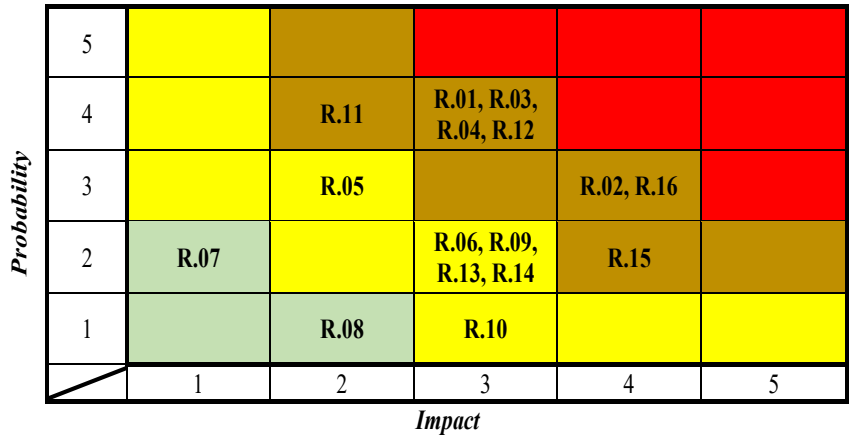


Figure 3: Heatmap of the Risks of Learning-from-Home at SMA 'X'

The level of risk acceptance is marked by the color on the heatmap as follows:

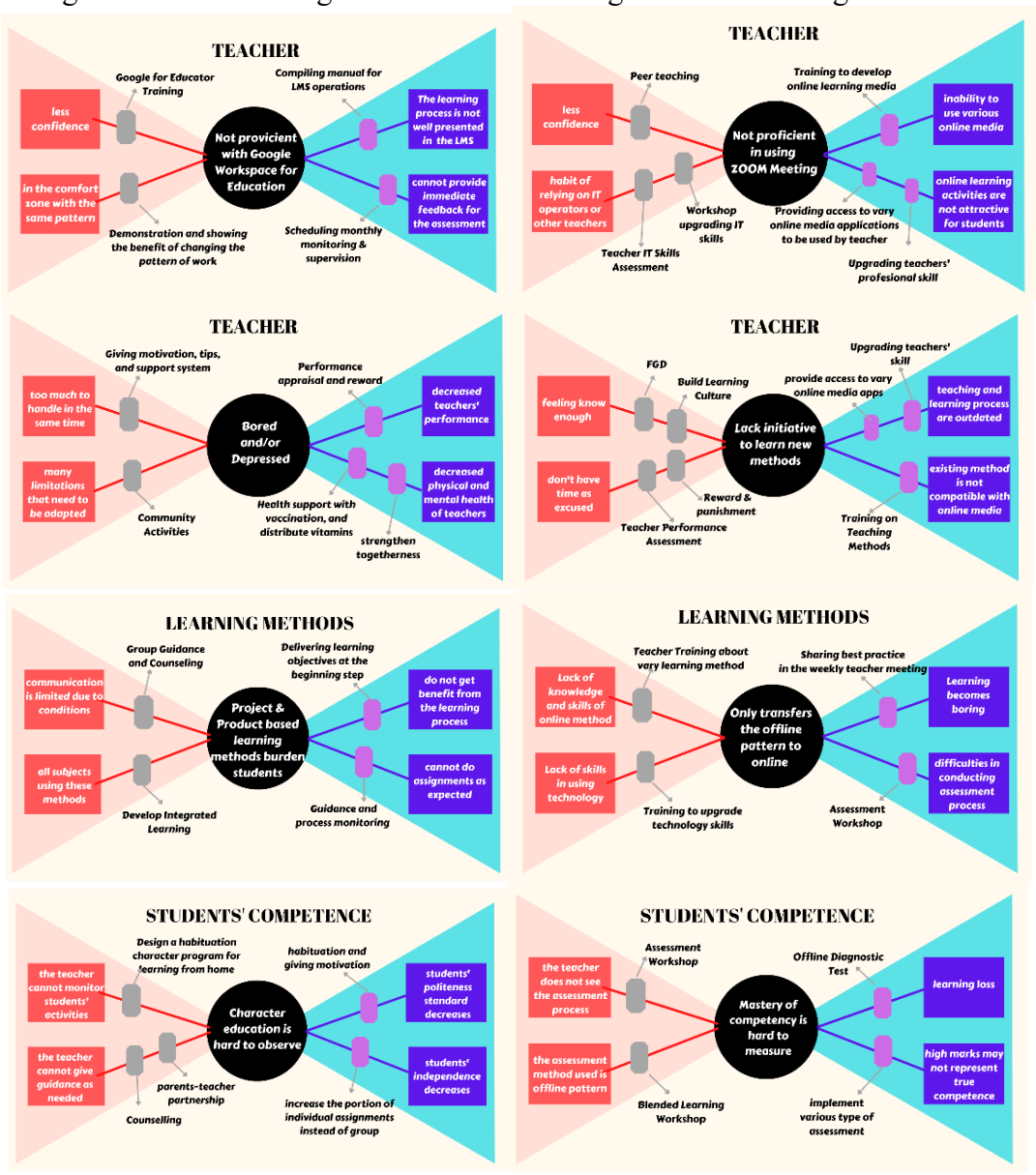
- *Negligible risks:* These risks are very small and do not require special mitigation.
  - R.07: Student's attendance is not optimal.
  - R.08: Students are less independent and more reliant on others.
- *Acceptable risks:* These risks are manageable and do not necessitate special mitigation measures. Standard management control and supervision are sufficient to handle these risks.
  - R.05: Students who do not focus when studying.
  - R.06: Students ignorant of learning.
  - R.09: Parents who do not provide a conducive learning environment.
  - R.10: Parents who engage children in other activities during online classes.
  - R.13: Unstable internet network.
  - R.14: Unsupported device.
- *Undesirable Risks:* These risks are not desirable as they have a critical impact on the quality of the learning process. They require serious attention and appropriate mitigation measures to reduce their impact.
  - R.01: Teacher is not proficient with Google Workspace for Education.
  - R.02: Teacher is not proficient in using ZOOM Meeting.
  - R.03: Teacher is bored and/or depressed.
  - R.04: Teacher lacks initiative to learn new methods.
  - R.11: Project and product-based learning methods burden students.
  - R.12: The learning method only transfers the offline pattern to the online.
  - R.15: Character building is hard to observe.
  - R.16: Mastery of competence is hard to measure.

By categorizing the risks into these three levels—negligible, acceptable, and undesirable—Dharma Suci High School can prioritize its risk management efforts effectively. This categorization ensures that serious risks receive the necessary attention and mitigation to maintain the quality and effectiveness of the learning-from-home process.

5. Mitigation

The analysis to determine risk mitigation is prepared using a bow tie diagram, as illustrated in Figure 4. In the bow tie diagram, the unwanted event is positioned in the middle, with the causes depicted in the left bow and the impacts in the right bow. The mitigation strategies for each cause and impact are articulated on the connection lines between them.

Figure 4: Bow Tie Diagrams of The Risk Mitigation for Learning from Home



Discussion

The results of the risk analysis highlight three significant sources of risk events: teachers, learning methods, and students' competency as the learning outcomes. While concerns about infrastructure and distractions at home were noted, they were deemed manageable through

technical school policies. However, the main components of learning, particularly teachers, methods, and learning outcomes, present more significant challenges.

In terms of teacher risks, challenges in technology adaptation and teacher stress indicate the need to enhance professional competence. Teachers' adaptation to new methods and technologies is crucial, as indicated by the risks associated with proficiency in using online learning platforms and feelings of boredom and stress.

Regarding risks associated with learning methods, burdensome project-based learning events and the mere replication of offline patterns to online were noted. Again, the learning method cannot be separated from the teacher's teaching skills. When students feel burdened, the teacher's role is to accompany, direct, and encourage them, as well as evaluate their learning methods. Learning that only moves the offline pattern to online is caused by the lack of the teachers' skills in packaging online learning, which stems from the teacher's lack of initiative to learn and try new things. These issues underscore the importance of teachers' teaching skills and their ability to adapt learning methods to online environments.

For learning outcomes, difficulties in assessing students' character and competencies underscore the importance of teacher competence in assessment practices. Teacher proficiency directly impacts the measurement of learning outcomes.

The researcher highlights an intriguing observation regarding the convergence of significant risks within the domain of teachers' responsibilities. This phenomenon underscored the pivotal role of educators, both in traditional classroom settings and particularly amidst the challenges of remote learning. Despite the transition to home-based learning during the pandemic, teachers remain the linchpin of education, embodying the frontline of instructional delivery.

The pandemic has underscored the paramount importance of enhancing teacher competence as a fundamental resource in educational transformation. To effectively navigate this shift, teachers need to cultivate a diverse array of competencies, encompassing personal, pedagogic, professional, dan social dimensions. As delineated by the Law on Teachers and Lecturers Government of Indonesia, 2005). These competencies constitute the cornerstone of effective instructional practice.

The findings of this study underscore the imperative of prioritizing the development of teacher competence as the primary driver of educational excellence. Particularly pertinent in the context of Dharma Suci High School is the need for heightened teacher competencies to effectively implement project and product-based learning methodologies. Consequently, Dharma Suci High School must innovate and adopt a more structured approach to school development to meet the evolving demands of education.

In this regard, the Sekolah Penggerak Program, spearheaded by the Ministry of Education and Culture of Indonesia, emerges as a transformative initiative aimed at fostering holistic learning outcomes in students. This program advocates for internal school transformations facilitated through the empowerment of school leaders and educators. By strengthening the capacities of principals and teachers, Sekolah Penggerak catalyzes systemic reform within individual schools, with the potential to drive broader regional and national-level changes (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2020).

In summary, the researcher's findings underscore the critical role of teacher competence as the linchpin of educational transformation. By investing in the development of educators' skills and capacities, schools like Dharma Suci High School can effectively navigate the challenges of contemporary education and emerge as catalysts for positive change within their communities and beyond.

Conclusions

The results of the risk analysis conducted in this case study reveal three significant sources of risk events: teachers, learning methods, and learning outcomes. These risks converge on the realm of the teacher's responsibilities, emphasizing the critical need to enhance educator skills amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Skilled and adaptable teachers are essential for developing teaching methods that align with students' current needs, designing assessments tailored to individual circumstances, and accurately measuring expected competencies.

Like two sides of the same coin, the pandemic has led to different impacts. While the pandemic has presented challenges, sadness, and discomfort, it has also sparked creativity, renewed enthusiasm, and resilience. The constraints imposed by the pandemic are prompting schools to cultivate positive habits and undergo a transformation in the education sector.

The risk analysis conducted at Dharma Suci High School underscores the pivotal role of teachers as the primary drivers of education. Regardless of circumstances, adaptive, proactive, and creative teachers are indispensable for designing, implementing, and evaluating effective learning experiences. The ability of teachers to organize and motivate themselves is crucial for fostering adaptive and innovative learning environments. Collective transformation begins with individual growth and commitment.

Building upon the findings of this study, Dharma Suci High School has applied for the Sekolah Penggerak Program, an educational transformation initiative initiated by the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia. Following a rigorous selection process, Dharma Suci High School was designated as Sekolah Penggerak in the second batch. Subsequently, structured training sessions for principals and teachers in April–June 2022. Moreover, the implementation of a new curriculum, known as Kurikulum Merdeka (Independent Curriculum), commenced in the academic year 2022/2023, starting in July 2022.

Recommendations

For SMA X: Schools should prioritize initiatives aimed at enhancing teacher competence, recognizing the pivotal role educators play in driving educational transformation. Despite the apparent easing of the pandemic, the ongoing development of teacher skills remains essential for delivering quality education services. Establishing a dedicated budgetary program for teacher training and incentives is advisable.

For future researchers: This study has focused solely on a single case study at Dharma Suci High School, which is relatively economically homogeneous and well-equipped for fully online learning. To broaden understanding, future research could investigate schools with a more socio-economically diverse student population for a comparative analysis.

For teachers all around the world: As frontline educators, it is incumbent upon teachers to embrace a commitment to continuous professional development. Drawing from the wisdom of Ki Hadjar Dewantara, the first Minister of Culture and Education of the Republic of Indonesia, an exemplary teacher leads from the front. Setting an example by actively engaging in learning, demonstrating initiative, and embracing a proactive approach to acquiring new knowledge (*ing ngarso sung tuladha)*; stands alongside students, fostering collaborative learning experiences, empathizing with their challenges, providing guidance, sharing enthusiasm, and collectively advancing toward growth and innovation (i*n madya mangun karsa)*; stands behind to provide support, offering encouragement and reinforcement to students who may falter or feel disheartened along the learning journey (*tut wuri handayani)*.

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FAITHFUL AND FAITHLESS RESEARCH PUBLICATIONS: AN EDITOR'S REFLECTIONS

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ABSTRACT

All universities mandate research, one of the institution's pillars and core mission. Over the last decades, ASEAN nations have been in a rapid transition to motivate and entice their faculty to increase and improve on research productions toward Indexed journals and proceedings. While papers submitted to proceedings have a lower bar in acceptance, Scopus or ISI-indexed journals are something that these institutions strive for, as they are critical to their accreditation and ranking. Unfortunately, journals have mushroomed overnight, and these seemingly suspicious journals collect monetary benefits like reviewing and publication fees to outright fly-by-night research predatory scammers. This has resulted in potential researchers using these and inadvertently sending them to reputable journals. Due to these unfortunate circumstances, this paper aims to support good paper development and submission and dispel beliefs of easy and potentially frustrating efforts. This paper attempts to provide retrospect and reflections on the "frustrations" of an Editor that papers should avoid in a Scopus Indexed Journal. It attempts to identify researchers' innocent or non-intentional practices by providing a set of dos and don'ts that are personalized based on retrospect and reflections of the paper submitted, rejected, and accepted in this Journal. It attempts to share "overlooked" practices that the researchers can use to ensure their papers stand a higher chance of acceptance.

Keywords: Research Dos & Don'ts, Publications Dos & Don'ts, Editor's reflections

Introduction

Research Imperatives and Implications

One pillar of academic institutions is "Research," the holy grail of academic recognition and academic requirement for promotion. It leads to the proliferation of publication by all means. One primary method of disseminating research findings is publishing conference proceedings and peer-reviewed journal articles (i.e., publication output) (Lisée et al.,2008). The rapid and voracious appetite for research has created much debate in the academic corridors about the future of academic publishing, particularly its foundation, the blind peer review process. It includes the proliferation of predatory journals, in-house productions, and backlogs for reputable journals that compounded and complicated the peer-review processes, taxing the capacity and capability of well-established peer-review processes & protocols.

These fundamental problems are artifacts of several global higher education developments in the past half-century massification and the rise of global and national rankings of universities. It led to most academic institutions wanting to resemble the universities at the top of the academic pecking order, thus seeking to become research-intensive. Research publications and conference presentations continue to represent the main mechanisms for disseminating research findings. Presentations are represented in the published research literature as conference proceedings. Published literature is an indicator of scientific activity and global research partnerships. Scientific publications are not merely an exercise of ivory tower academics but a key linkage enabling public use of scientific output (Yin et al. 2021). In addition, there is a growing trend in doctoral education for doctoral students to publish several articles based on their research in academic journals, in effect moving responsibility for evaluating doctoral research from university committees to journal editors and reviewers. These have led to a crisis in academic publishing with too much pressure on top journals, too many books of marginal quality, the rise of predatory journals and publishers that publish low or marginal-quality research, and tremendous pressure on academics worldwide to publish (Altbach and de Wit, 2018).

Research Statistics and Monetization

Data on publication output indicate an increase in global research activity, a growth in middle-income countries' involvement and scientific capabilities, and an internationally connected research ecosystem. At least 64 million academic papers have been published since 1996, with the growth rate of newly published articles increasing. As of 2022, over 5.14 million academic articles are published annually, including short surveys, reviews, and conference proceedings. Four geographically large countries led the worldwide growth of publication output, from 1.9 million in 2010 to 2.9 million in 2020, based on data from the Scopus database of S&E publications. China (36%), India (9%), Russia (6%), and the United States (5%) together accounted for about half the increase in publications over this period. At least 64 million academic papers have been published since 1996, with the growth rate of newly published articles increasing (Science-Metrix, 2021). Publication output reached 2.9 million articles in 2020. The countries with the largest volume of S&E publications in 2020 were China, with 23% of global output, and the United States, with 16%. The compound annual growth rate of publication output has increased in recent years. The rate was 5% over the last 4 years (2017 to 2020) but was 4% over the longer 11-year period (2010 to 2020). The journals and articles publications data of the Top 10 or Big 5 in the academic journals:

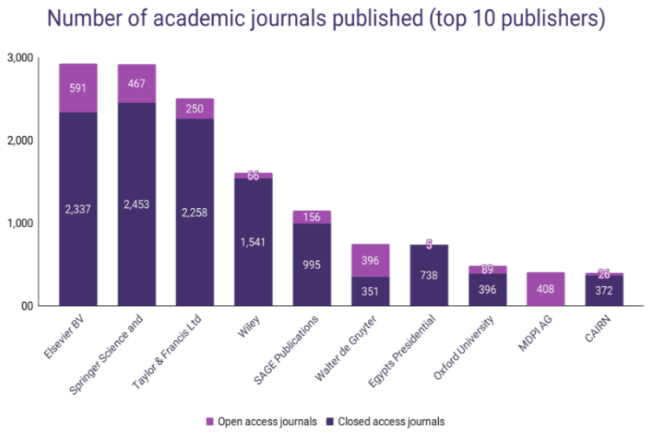

Figure 1: Largest academic publishers in the world

- Regarding the Number of academic journals published, Elsevier published 2,928 journals in 2022, the most among all academic publishers. Springer (2,920) and Taylor and Francis (2,508) are the only remaining publishers with over 2,000 journals.
- Together with Wiley (1,607) and SAGE (1,151), these 5 publishers have over 11,141 journals under their wing as of 2022.
- It means the Big 5 in academic publishing accounts for at least 25% of all journals published worldwide.

As to open-access journals, the biggest publishers are still resisting this growing trend:

- 20.18% of Elsevier's journals are open-access, and this is the biggest share of open journals among the top 5 publishers. Wiley has only 4.11% of journals with open access, and Taylor & Francis has around 9.97%.
- On the other hand, publishers like MDPI and Copernicus are fully engaged in open access, and all their journals are widely available for free.

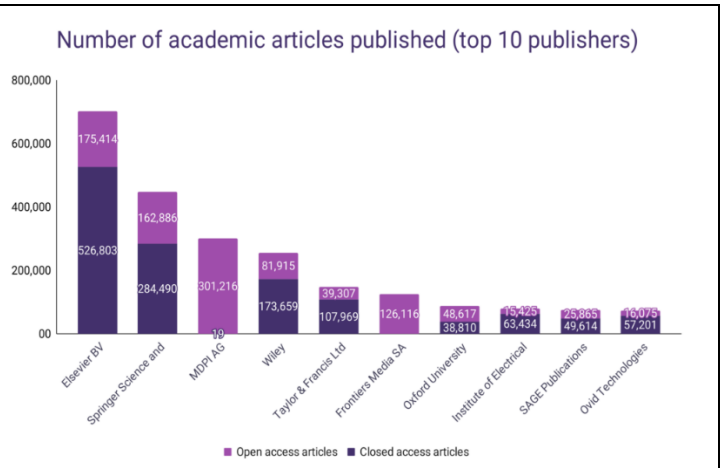

Figure 2: Academic articles published by the Top 10

- In 2022, Elsevier published around 702,217 academic articles through its journals, the most among all academic publishers.
- No other publisher had over 450,000 articles published. Elsevier accounts for over 13% of all published academic articles per year.
- Only 6 publishers produced over 100,000 academic articles in 2022.
- 10 publishers account for almost 50% of all published articles during the year.
- MDPI leads all academic publishers in the open-access category with 301,216, or 99.99% of its articles having open access.
- Elsevier published over 175,414 open-access articles, accounting for only 24.98% of the publisher's total.
- 36.41% of Springer's articles have open access.
- Frontiers Media is the only remaining academic publisher, with over 100,000 open-access articles published over the last year.

There needs to be more official statistics on how many scientific journals there are, but several estimates point to around 30,000, with nearly two million articles published yearly. Some of the top journal publishers came up with the following numbers: Elsevier: 3263; Springer: "more than 2900"; Taylor & Francis: "more than 2100"; Wiley: 1500; SciELO: 1249; Sage: "more than 950" that adds up to 12,000, and under the ASEAN Citation Index, there are 10 Countries with 662 Journals 199996 Articles 306399 Authors (https://asean-cites.org/). These figures do not include those (1) owned and published by independent entities and (2) fly-by-night dubious operators

"predators" for publication and processing fees and dubious hi-impact journal claims, with a very fast and high turnover time of a few weeks. Thus, research has turned out to be a highly quick and easily profitable venture, as STM estimates that the journal market is worth about $10 billion. Assuming that 55% of Elsevier's 2017 revenues came from journals, that translates into £1.363 billion, which - at the average exchange rate for the year – equals $1.756 billion (a 17.5% market share). The academic publishing industry has a large financial turnover. Its worldwide sales amount to more than USD 19 billion, which positions it between the music and film industries (Buranyi, 2017). The market is largely dominated by five large publishing houses: Elsevier, Black & Wiley, Taylor & Francis, Springer Nature, and SAGE, which control more than 50 % of the market. Elsevier is the largest, with approximately 16 % of the market and more than 3000 academic journals. As an industry, these publishing houses are unique in their profitability, generating large net profits. Elsevier has a profit margin approaching 40 %, which is higher than that of companies such as Microsoft, Google, and Coca-Cola, and the curve is pointing upward (Hagve, 2020).

Publications with more citations are more impactful (Garfield 1955; Waltman, van Eck, and Wouters 2013). Potential sources of bias in the publication data counting publications and citations using bibliometric data in Scopus (1) inclusion of non-peer-reviewed articles, and a bias toward English-speaking countries because Scopus requires articles to contain an English-language title and abstract, or full papers in English (Science-Metrix 2021a). The first bias is mitigated by removing articles published in journals lacking substantive peer review, sometimes called *predatory journals* (Grudniewicz et al. 2019). Additional limitations include the lack of measurement for the amount of research in each article and the contributions of associated data sets (Sugimoto and Larivière 2018).

Research Issues and Problem Statement

Within these scenarios, the impending issues facing most academic institutions are key questions that (1) present days research is done for the sake of requirements and promotion rather than delving into the value of creating new knowledge or providing solutions to problems, (2) academics in fulfilling these research requirements are "short-circuiting" the research plethora with the massification of research undermining research practices and protocols integrity. This leads to the key issue facing all academic institutions of a Catch-22 "Quantity Vs. Quality" dilemma (Waltman et al. 2013). As these issues have become phenomenal and potentially implosive, more reputable research journals are "shutting off" research to maintain their status. Based on these potential issues, the paper aims to identify the importance of the research practices and protocols fundamentals, faithful and faithless understanding and applications of research fundamentals, and how potential budding researchers can enhance their research through some basic common-sense approaches in a Scopus Indexed journal.

Faith of Formal Research Practices

A simple googling on some key aspects of "research" produced many hits of: "research" 11,990,000,000 results (0.31 seconds), "research studies" 11,200,000,000 results (0.48 seconds), "research methods" 4,110,000,000 results (0.48 seconds), "research books" 2,760,000,000 results (0.65 seconds), "research frameworks or models," 1,700,000,000 results (0.47 seconds), "research methodology" 1,010,000,000 results (0.44 seconds), "research designs" 979,000,000 results (0.43 seconds), and "scholarly articles on research" 790,000,000 results (0.43 seconds) in descending order. The reference to "Research" on the internet ranges from the high

end of about 12 billion to the low end of 790 million. This demonstrates the vast amount of "Research" being done in one way or another. Regardless of the explosive vast amount of knowledge and practices in research, most of them are highly similar in the basic Research fundamentals, as shown in the 4 main infographics:

Figure 3 shows one of the more basic representations of Research Paper development, emphasizing the typical research methodology a researcher should follow. However, a Statement of Limitations is mainly found in a Thesis or Dissertation; not much is required of a Journal or Proceeding publication. Though the "Conclusion" shows the "Importance" of the Research, it can be enriched through a more extensive discourse of implications and recommendations based on the findings.

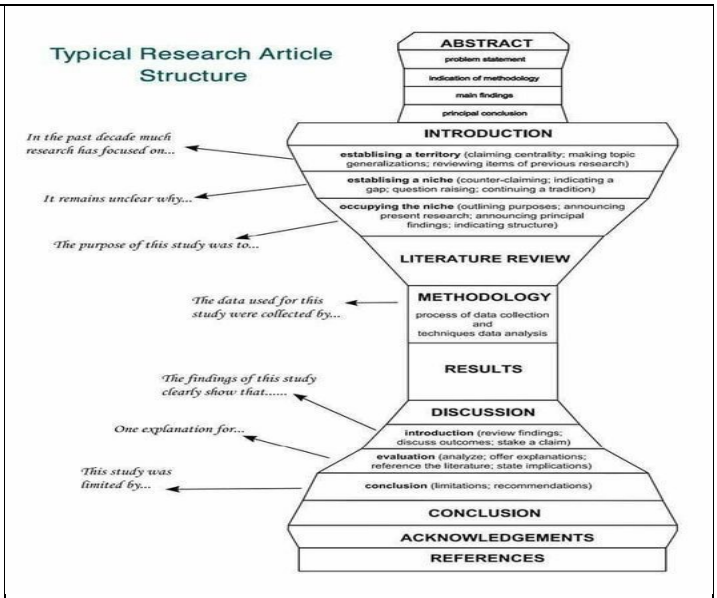

Figure 4 shows a more comprehensive Typical Research structure with a highly structured approach that needs to be incorporated in journal publications. The Abstracts have 4 main points that surmise the whole paper in 300 words, demonstrating the importance of the "Abstract," which most potential researchers failed to adhere to. The introduction also highlights the rationale of WHY the Research is done.

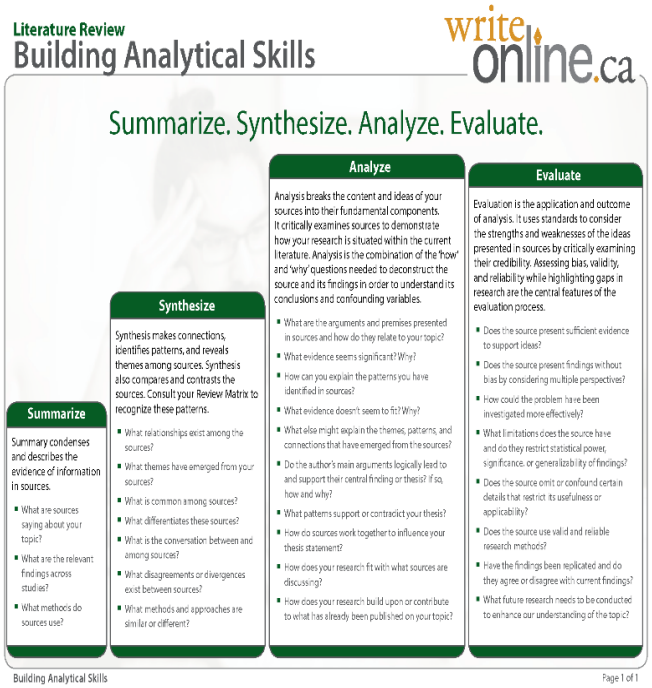

Figure 5 illustrates the value of a well-done and established research literature review. Most failed papers fail to understand and deliver on the value and stop at Step 1 of summarizing the Literature Review. A highly reputable journal requires the "synthesis", "analysis," and "evaluation" Steps to justify the development of the Research Framework/Model by identifying the key construct measures or variables leading to the statistical analysis to provide answers to the research questions fulfilling the research purpose/aims/objectives.

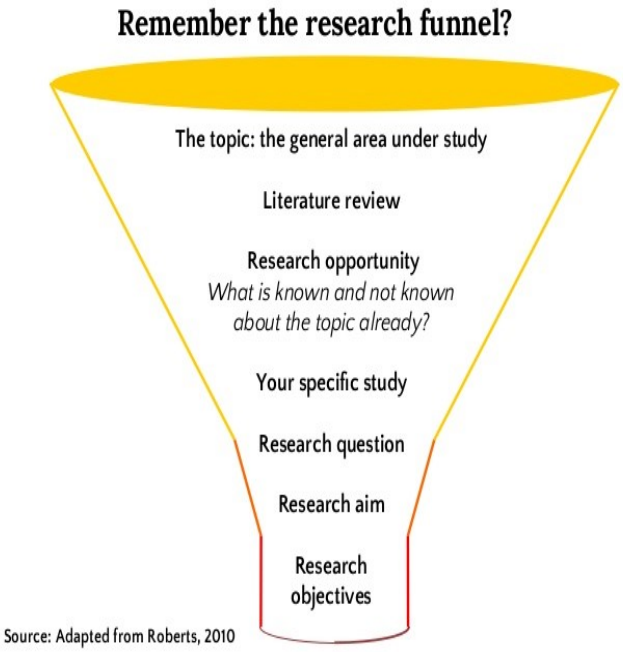

Figure 6 highlights the importance and imperative that all aspects of the research are interlinked through the Title or Topic of Research, Literature Review, Research opportunity, questions, aims, and objectives that should tie and relate consistently and coherently in a holistic way. They should not be treated nor discoursed independently of each other. Highly reputable journals will look at the consistency and coherence across the whole paper through this funneling of all the main items identified here.

Regardless of the Research focus, be it scientific or social science research, there are common principles that all are similar. The main difference is their emphasis on logic and focus on specific principles. Most of the Journal's publications and articles should inherently demonstrate faithful adherence to the basic principles, as shown in Figures 3 to 6. This inherently means that the Research Paper is not simply (a) an informed summary of a topic employing primary and secondary sources, (b) A book report nor an opinion piece or an expository essay consisting of one's interpretation of a text or an overview of a topic subjectively. A Research Paper means investigating and evaluating sources intending to offer interpretations of the text and not just a compilation of sources. As such, any academic paper or research aims to: (a) draw on what others say about a topic and (b) engage the sources to offer a unique perspective thoughtfully.

So, the common-sense approach is to conduct primary research on the Journal to fully & completely understand the Journal:

- Focus of the Journal – Does your paper meet the basic focus of the Journal and not based on your intentions?

- Profile of Editorial Board and Editor by using correct salutations
- Know well the Context and Content:
  - Explore some of the types of papers accepted (Academic papers? Empirical Research?)
  - Form and format of the papers; Statistical analysis needed of quantitative or qualitative analysis; discussions of findings, implications, and recommendations
  - Single or double columns
  - Referencing format (APA? MPA? Harvard? Chicago?)
  - Figures, Tables, Graphs

These basic First Steps tell the Editor you know & understand the Journal and practically lead to "Love at first sight," which forms the first impression of the paper's quality, 50% of the battle won.

Frustrations to "Fs" of Faithless Research

1. **Frustrated Love at First Sight –** If a potential author takes the time to review the journal requirements fully, the Editor will "love" you as you are interested and take the time to review and deliver on everything required of the Journal. "NO" arguments are warranted, and it will make the Editor's and reviewers' jobs so much easier.

2. **Focus –** First and foremost, determine the "FOCUS" of the Journal by searching for the requirements and past papers published. If you do this, you are on firmer grounds to receive your paper with thanks. Editors and reviewers are human beings, and they are "spiteful" in that they are "pacified and happy" in that the researchers take the time to deliver what meets journal requirements and "NOT" based on wishful, careless, or callous paper development and submissions.

3. **Forms and Formats –** All journals have a set of guidelines as to the forms and format of the paper in terms of (a) fonts and spacing, (b) citations, (c) titles, headings & sub-headings, (d) research paper length, and the Number of words and (e) research logical flow from the title, abstract, introduction, literature, research framework and instrumentation, research methodology, sampling, and statistical analysis, (f) discussion of findings, implications, and recommendations in detail based on the findings.

4. **Foci of paper development –** There are widely accepted research frameworks or methodologies. Ensure that all research papers have a minimum of

   a. ***Research title –*** The Research Title defines the scope and scale of the whole research within a maximum of 5 to 7 words,

   b. ***Research introduction, problem statement, and objectives –*** This is the key synopsis of the focus and logic of the whole paper as to the justification of "WHY" or "WHAT" the whole research is about and what problem issues it intends to address, – this supports the needs and justification of the research paper "value". The core introduction should be precise and concise to introduce and justify the research. It should not go into lengthy narratives of background and potentially unrelated data that direct the research's core issues.

c. ***Research literature and Framework or Model*** – In this case, the researcher compiles literature for the sake of "literature requirements" without fully understanding and expounding the nature and value of literature. The main fault is just the presentation or narration of literature without systemizing and synthesizing the "value" and "relevance" to developing the research framework, the research instrumentation, and the research statistical analysis.

d. ***Research Design and methodology*** – This goes into the realm of using the literature based on its synthesis and analysis to develop the research framework (model) with the variables (technically the research constructs) used for the instrumentation of both qualitative and quantitative methodology and statistical analysis,

e. ***Research statistical design analysis and discussion*** – This is the crux of using the research instruments to find "answers" to the research questions through statistical analysis and discussion of the analysis based on the statistical analysis,

f. ***Research implications, recommendations, and conclusions*** – There is a "faulty understanding that the discussion covers all three of these. Due to word counts and insufficient pages, the researcher normally condenses all three in one, which is technically an issue. The difference of statistical analysis is that the statistical findings discussion is on the discourse of the findings based on the statistics. Implications of a study are the impact your research makes in your chosen area; they discuss how the findings may be important to justify further exploration of your research topic. Research recommendations suggest future actions or subsequent steps supported by your research findings. These should be separated to demonstrate that the researcher is academically well-versed in widely accepted research organization and presentation.

5. **Faulty logic of research paper –** while most researchers know the bolts and nuts of 4 (a) to (f), the main issue is that they organize and present them separately and independently, primarily forgetting that there are "key" relationships that "cyclically closes" the whole research loop across all of them. It means that the whole research paper should "create and deliver" whatever is promised holistically, consistently, and coherent across the whole paper as "one" rather than a summation of parts as:

a. ***Research title, introduction, problem statement, and objectives set the pace of the research context and content, meaning that th***e paper evolves around these key scope and scale mandates. Nothing more, and nothing less. If it is less, the paper has not convinced the reader that all the stated objectives are consistently and coherently researched. Since these lay the scope and scale of the research, all the latter parts are created and delivered within these contexts. The research questions and hypothesis are based on statistical analysis and findings to provide answers to fulfill the research objectives.

b. ***Research Literature and Framework or Model*** – Researchers tend to summarize the literature without fully understanding the meaning and value of the literature review. The literature review goes beyond identifying and

summarizing the other studies, theories, or research relevant to one's research. A well-done literature review synthesizes the key measures and potentially the construct measures used in designing and developing the research variables within the research framework or model. The research framework or model is the culmination of the literature regarding the variables or constructs measures to find answers to the research objectives through the research instrumentations. This frequently overlooked or neglected aspect of most research does not make the excellence cut.

c. ***Research Design and Methodology*** – The main aspect of the research design is that the instrumentation of the quantitative research surveys, interviews, or the thematic case study highly depends on the key construct measures or variables operationalized for measure and synthesized and discovered in the literature reviews. Unfortunately, many researchers create the research instrument separately and independently of the construct measures or variables discovered in the literature review and as embellished in the research framework. This is the beginning of the fall of a good research paper as the logic of the instrumentation relevancy to the research framework to accomplish the research objectives is now in tatter, leaving the readers not comprehending the research as a seamless and valuable piece of "new knowledge". In addition, the crux is in the respondents as to how they are selected from the population. Regardless of the sampling methodology, the Journal does not need a rehash of theories but a realistic picture of whether the sampling is selected correctly and is representative of the population to answer the research objectives.

d. ***Research statistical design analysis and discussion*** – Statistical analysis is very diverse for quantitative research as various statistical methods are used. But for qualitative research, there is an often-forgotten issue that there are statistical methods for qualitative research, and it is not just re-producing "what X or what Y mentioned in interviews". This serves as a key reminder that regardless of whether the research is quantitative or qualitative, statistical analysis is the bane of all researchers that needs great attention, and it serves as the key to testing the research hypothesis or justifying the findings statistically rather than subjectively. The statistical results must be discussed technically to show whether the research objectives based on the research questions have been attained.

e. ***Research implications, recommendations, and conclusions*** – The discussion here of the implications, recommendations, and conclusions should not be mixed up with the discussion of the statistical findings. The main difference here is that the implications examine how the research has impacted or created "new knowledge" based on the research findings. Practical implications are potential values of the study with practical or real outcomes**.** Determining the practical implications of several solutions can aid in identifying optimal solution results. Theoretical implications in research constitute additions to existing theories or establish new theories. These types of implications in research characterize the ability of research to influence society in apparent ways. It is, at most, an educated guess (theoretical) about the possible

implication of action and need not be as absolute as practical implications in research. If the study supported the tested theory, the theoretical implication would be that the theory can explain the investigated phenomenon. Otherwise, the study may serve as a basis for modifying the theory. Recommendations allow the researcher to suggest specific interventions or strategies to address the issues and constraints identified through your study. It responds to key findings arrived at through data collection and analysis. Implications discuss the importance of the research findings, while recommendations offer specific actions to solve a problem. The implication section can include a paragraph or two that asserts the practical or managerial implications and links it to the study findings. Research recommendations should be based on your topic, research objectives, literature review, analysis, or evidence collected. Use the SMART approach when developing research recommendations, meaning they should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and timely. Research is meaningless if there are no recommendations, or the recommendations are not relevant or achievable so that they can benefit the readers and stakeholders.

6. **Fanciful research framework, methodology, and analysis –** Some researchers use fanciful terminology like mixed-research methods that combine quantitative and qualitative methods. It is fine if they are faithfully demonstrated for both research methods, with correct statistical methods, and discuss how the findings support or contradict each other to arrive at constructive implications and recommendations based on the two mixed approaches. Unfortunately, most of them failed in this fanciful attempt, as they failed to meet the requirements of 5 (b), (c), and (d) above, thus complicating their research and diluting the research findings' usefulness. Another example is the use of "phenomenological research," which is very rich-sounding. Still, unfortunately, the research design and analysis do not support Phenomenological Research. This qualitative research approach seeks to understand and describe the universal essence of a phenomenon as it investigates the everyday experiences of human beings while suspending the researchers' preconceived assumptions about the phenomenon. Another sampling issue is using respondents from different study levels, schools, universities, or countries to attempt a larger population study. Unfortunately, the researcher forgot and failed to understand that these are diverse and different groups with different characteristics. The fault lies in the combined statistical analysis and discussion as a single group, thus invalidating their research.

7. **Frustrated Failures –** Ultimately, failing to adhere to research principles and misinterpreting or misrepresenting these generic research principles that underpin the quality of the research can potentially lead to a "failed" research and the rejection of the paper.

Faithful understanding and representation of Quality Papers

To avoid the pitfalls of the 7 "F" s of Faithless understanding, interpretation, representation, and adherence to widely accepted generic research practices, protocols, and principles can, for some "common sense" approaches:

(a) Faithful initial preparation and provision – Initial preparation and provision calls for:

- Not agitating the Journal by fully researching the Journal that you want to publish.
- Giving the Journal what they want by following the middle path to the research papers' principles, protocols, and fundamentals:
    1) abstract;
    2) introduction;
    3) Literature Review;
    4) Research methods of:
        a) Research Model or Framework of the Constructs,
        b) Link Constructs to instruments,
        c) Sampling frame & methods
        d) Statistical analysis of findings
    5) Implications & recommendations based on findings
    6) Conclusion
    7) References

(b) ***Faithful Common-Sense Approach to Avoid Common Mistake (s) by copy-editing –*** Ensure the organization and demonstration proper:

- ✓ Writing Style – Miss to apply the required style properly, use the passive voice extensively, use verb tenses inconsistently, and make long sentences
- ✓ Accurate References – Snapshots of state of the state-of-the-art in a certain field and allow readers to exploit them as a starting point to step forward with their studies
- ✓ eliminate first-person pronouns – Use expressions such as "the authors" or "the researchers" with the verb in the active voice
- ✓ Maintain consistency and coherence in content, expression, vocabulary, and grammar – Ask a colleague, a supervisor, or a friend to read/review his/her work in progress could be helpful.

(c) ***Faithful Common-Sense Approach of things to do when Addressing Post Reviews & Comments –*** Address all of the reviewers' comments very carefully:

- ✓ Most importantly, demonstrate that you are a professional.
- ✓ Most importantly, the Journal is not your friend or business associate.
- ✓ When reviewers ask the researcher to do something, do it, and no questions are asked unless it is overlooked or misinterpreted by the reviewers. If you do not agree with the comments, provide justifications & explanations. If not, do not challenge.
- ✓ Do not procrastinate by checking & re-checking deadlines, as many journals are not patient, have backlogs, and are not in the interest of " babysitting" your paper.
- ✓ Do not give apologies for not doing something as it shows your irresponsibility & indifferences.
- ✓ Do not negotiate, as you need them more than they need you, and you are in a highly disadvantageous position to negotiate. Negotiations show that you have no respect for the Journal's intent.

Implications

While this paper has emphasized the importance of following the rigorous and stringent approaches to developing and writing a research paper using the widely accepted research methodologies, these might be viewed as overly repressive and making a paper longer than needed to write a quality research paper. It should be noted that social science and humanities journals are different from scientific or engineering journals in that those in social science and humanities tolerate more lengthy papers elaborating on the faithful adherence to the core research principles of literature synthesis, research framing, design, and methodologies that goes into length to support the findings, discussions, implications, and recommendations. Scientific and engineering papers are much more focused on the scientific methodology and results. In Social Science and Humanities, there are two main categories of empirical and non-empirical research, while the methodologies are mainly classified into two main groups: quantitative and qualitative methodologies and statistical analysis.

Lengthy papers do not mean being overly verbose and just documentation. Shortening a lengthy paper goes into synthesis as opposed to a summarized discussion of each research literature or documenting each literature separately without identifying the core variables, construct measures, and their operationalization. The key to a quality paper is the "synthesis of literature" to determine the key variables used in formulating the research objective, questions underpinning the research framework, and instrumentation.

To ensure coherence, consistency, and conciseness, a very research literature identifies the construct measures and operationalization of these variables. The importance lies in the clear and well-defined research framework with the core variables and sub-variables, which are critical measures that support the instrumentation logic and justification. This supports the "logic & flow" from the research title, objectives, and questions to the instrumentation, analysis, and findings, linking key aspects of the research methodology. It includes the use of appropriate sampling from the targetted population that is representative and delivers on the research objectives and question. What and how the sampling is determined and conducted needs clear definitions and development to ensure the validity and reliability of population representations, especially for different groups with different characteristics based on demographics, educational attainment, or behavioral groups. These groups can affect the statistical analysis based on this diversity and differences in groups' characteristics, norms, and behaviors,

Findings are normally statistical-based demonstrations of the statical analysis addressing the research objectives and questions objectively regardless of the use of quantitative or qualitative methods, as both have statistical or thematic/inferential approaches. In contrast, the discussion is centered on the discussion of the findings and relating to other research that supports the findings. Preferably, these two parts should be separated, but if combined, skill is needed to arrive at a statistically based discussion that is comprehensive and inclusive.

Unfortunately, most papers go directly into a conclusion after the discussion, missing out on two potentially important aspects of the research implications and recommendations. In addition, papers also mistakenly include implications as part of the discussion, which is potentially not correct. Discussion, as noted above, is the "discussion of the findings based on the statistical evidence". On the other hand, research implications suggest how the findings may be important for policy, practice, theory, and subsequent research. Research implications are basically the conclusions that the researcher should draw from statistical analysis and findings or results and

explain how the findings may be important for policy, practice, or theory. Research Implications demonstrate the impact the research makes in the chosen area based on the research aims or objectives as they discuss how the findings of the study may be important to justify further exploration of the research topic that has been conducted. Research recommendations may suggest constructive, pragmatic, and realistic future actions or subsequent steps based on the research findings. These are some of the weakest links in the whole research paper as they are taken as unimportant or unnecessary aspects of research.

On the contrary, they are important as this underpins the very reason why the research is undertaken and what sort of constructive actions can be developed based on the research objectives and its subsequent findings that are proven statistically. These are the defacto inferential analyses from the findings that close the research loop by linking them back to the research title and objectives. This inferential analysis covers inference from the conclusion about the current state of research in the field or the quality of methods employed. As noted in Elsevier (2024), "A research paper that does not explain the study's importance in light of its findings exists in a vacuum. The paper may be relevant to you, the author, and some of your co-workers. But it is unclear how others will benefit from reading it". The main aspects are who and what the readers will benefit from reading your paper and what stakeholders like policymakers, the public, or other researchers. Based on the implications of the research, a set of constructive practical or theoretical suggestions or recommendations should be provided, as the researcher better understands the research and provides a more constructive and usable set of recommendations based on the findings of the research.

Recommendations

In Social Science Research, which is the focus of this paper, there is normally a misunderstanding between academic papers and empirical research. There is a key difference in that an empirical article is a research article that reports the results of a study that uses data derived from actual observation or experimentation, either containing original research such as scientific experiments, quantitative or qualitative methodologies, and research studies. A scholarly literature review article or an academic paper summarizes, synthesizes, and critically evaluates academic articles and other scholarly works on the progress or current state in some particular subject, area, or topic to suggest a new conceptual approach, framework, or methodology that does not contain original research and is technically non-empirical.

Empirical Research vs. Non-Empirical Research

Aspect	Empirical Research	Non-Empirical Research
Definition	Reports new research and findings based on statistical or experimental data.	Summarises and synthesizes existing research studies and proposes a newer framework or approach.
Structure	Contains sections like introduction, methods, statistical results, discussion findings, implications, and recommendations based on data.	Includes a summary, topic introduction, and a discussion synthesizing research, identifying

Aspect	Empirical Research	Non-Empirical Research
		gaps, and suggesting new frameworks or approaches.
Content	Filled with new data and findings based on statistical methods (quantitative & qualitative)	Compiles and analyses existing data; no new research findings, but utilizing knowledge gaps to propose a new framework or approach.
Role	Introduces fresh research and insights to academia based on empirical results.	Offers a comprehensive view of a topic based on existing research, arriving at a new proposed framework.
Impact	Advances knowledge and prompts further research.	Clarifies and summarises research, guiding future studies through a proposed framework.
Sample Title	"Investigating students' HOTS on students' academic performance "	"Students' HOTS: A re-defined approach."

Adapted from: Stapleton, A. (2023). What Is The Difference Between A Scholarly Research Article And A Review Article? https://academiainsider.com/what-is-the-difference-between-a-scholarly-research-article-and-a-review-article/

Some of the suggestions for embarking on research:

- **Walk-through preliminaries before embarking on the Research** – Decide on the very onset, whether it is to be an empirical or non-empirical research, the research aims/purposes. Conduct a rough sketch of the paper's aims, methodology, and outcome. Then, check what Journal you will be targeting, investigate its focus, and review some papers on their requirements. This first small but critical step of "understanding the Journal" will save a lot of headaches in paper acceptance as it demonstrates one's resilience that the Journal is the door to your paper publication and the journal requirements and respect for the Journal and its Editor are the key and lock.

- **Defining and developing the Research logic and alignment –** In most cases, all papers have a research title, aims/purpose, literature, model/framework, instrumentation, sampling design, statistical/non-statistical methods, findings based on statistical/non-statistical methods, discussion of findings, implications, recommendations, and conclusions. It is a "sum of total" rather than the "sum of parts" imperative that is mostly overlooked, as what readers call "the smooth flow" to ensure logical understanding through the whole paper. Some potential issue mitigations are to ensure that the following:

    a) Research title aims/purpose, literature, model/framework, and instrumentation are logically and academically aligned coherently and consistently, as these are based on the systemized variables, sub-variables, and operationalization of the

construct measures. The researcher's main capability of "synthesizing and discussing" the construct measures should be improved on, as the basis is synthesis and not summarization, which is normally a potential weakness of most papers' literature review. Another potential flaw is the rehashing of literature or citing them without interpreting or synthesizing the core and critical essence of why this literature is chosen and how it contributes to a better research paper.

b) Sampling design, statistical/non-statistical methods, and findings based on statistical/non-statistical methods, as these are the solicitation of sampling representative of the population, can be avoided through a thorough and full understanding as to whether these sampling frames can provide a valid and reliable set of responses. In addition, ensure that sampling frames from different groups of demographics and characteristics like educational attainment and social-cultural and environmental backgrounds are statically or thematically separated.

c) Findings are statistically or thematically separately espoused for different groups, and the discussion of findings, implications, recommendations, and conclusions are based on the findings of the Research and other related Research done by others.

- **Faithful or Faithless research conscience –** All academics, regardless of academic standing or attainment, are required to produce research. Two main impetus requiring academics to do research are the institution's academic requirements for quality assurance and accreditation, with the other more personalized strive for advancement and promotion whereby research is a core criterion for promotion. Driven by these two mandates/motivations, an academic must produce research by all means. This inevitably calls for academic conscientious endeavors to produce quality or mediocre research or depend on guns for hire. It is a personal decision that no one can ever know the truth. Institution Presidents have fallen on plagiarism accusations, and the practices of hiring others to do their research or just plain coercion or bosses' acquiescence or patronage are quite rampant and normally blindsided. As discussed previously, academics will need to make a conscientious decision to stay on the faithful, truthful, but excruciating path to produce quality research following widely and internationally accepted practice or find ways and means to short-circuit their research productions. A small step on the wrong path is opening the floodgates of poor, mediocre, and unethical research practices that will stigmatize one's guilt or living an academic life of questionable conscience.

- **Conscientious Academic –** Being an academic is no easy job. Half of the academic's side is to be a role model to students in teaching, learning, sharing, guiding, and molding them into upright citizens with competent knowledge, skills, abilities, and social-cultural norms and behaviors. The other half is to further one's knowledge and skills through development, of which research is part and parcel of academic life. Pressures coming from both sides have made academic life a difficult choice. As a human being, there is also the additional social and family life. The academic has to delicately balance this "work-life balance" and find one's equation. Of these four pressures in a pressure cooker, teaching-learning, guiding the students' moral-ethical development, self-

development, and social-familial commitments, the academic is faced with a crucial decision of prioritization, and mostly, research is short-changed as it is easily short-circuited as there are ways and means to sideline this, the quality of it is debatable, as long as one is not caught, but one can blame others when one's paper is not accepted. Being a competent academic while balancing the "quality work-life decision" is a delicate decision. Quality development and publication is a conscientious personal decision that only one can decide on. Once an academic decides on the type of academic one wants to be, then decide on the type of Research one wants to publish.

Conclusion

The aims of this paper have faithfully provided an objective review of the basic requisites of a journal paper, the faith in understanding and delivering on these requirements, the faithless representation of research requirements that bring about faulty or failed papers, and some faithful common-sense approaches to deal with these misunderstandings and misrepresentation of what a Scopus Indexed journal requires to meet paper acceptance and publication.

It has also attempted to provide an insight into the implications of what is expected of the research and how the paper will be viewed by the Editor and the public when published. Rigidly adhering to all essential research requirements can increase the length but not the quality of the papers. Thinking through the whole paper outcome, what is needed to make a great impact, and what increases the seamless flow of logic consistency and coherence are some simple pragmatics that will help increase the quality of the paper and its impact.

The bottomline is quality research development, and publication is a highly personal decision that only an academic can conscientiously decide on to balance "quality work-life balance delicately" and the type of academic that one decides on and will walk the hard, agonizing journey as opposed to the wily journey that set quality research from mediocre research, an upright ethical academic from a devious academic mostly short-changing one's students in one's care, and jeopardizing one's "work-life balance equation."

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ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS' RESPONSES THROUGH INTERNATIONAL CULTURAL EXCHANGE PROGRAM IN *KAMPUNG LALI GADGET,* EAST JAVA, INDONESIA

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ABSTRACT

This study is expected to explore the students' intention to have this program. Besides that, it also provides evidence about the handicap of having the cultural exchange program to visit *Kampong Lali Gajet* and other problems during the visit in this region. In general, an international cultural exchange program for the opinion leaders, the host, the guests, or the participants involved has several benefits. Therefore, the purposes are intended to (1) improve the relationship with other nations, (2) get strategies for networking (3) get skill of interpersonal communication skills. This study is a qualitative study that explores the phenomenon of international cultural exchange programs done by students and faculties from different countries: Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines. The sample of this Study are Malaysia and Philippines students. The data are collected in the form of interviews and observation. The data was analyzed based on the process from open codes to axial codes. The findings of this research are participants in the study believe that the program serves the purpose of sharing common traditional games, recognizing cultural differences, and fostering connections through shared interests.

Keywords: *International cultural exchange, exploration, kampung lali gadget*

Introduction

In the program of the national education system, there is a strategy depicted in the term of *Merdeka Belajar*. All universities in Indonesia have implemented this term. Learning is not only in the classroom but also outside the classroom. Now, the national education system incorporates a strategy called *Merdeka Belajar*, which universities in Indonesia implement. *Merdeka Belajar* emphasizes learning beyond the confines of the classroom (Merdeka, 2020). Its goal is to cultivate a global perspective among university students and promote tolerance. This objective should be integrated into relevant programs. One such strategy is the students' international cultural exchange program, which equips them with the skills and knowledge needed to understand and engage with diverse cultures worldwide. Through this program, students can develop their understanding of international relationships and interact with peers and nations from various countries.

More specifically, today, Universitas Nahdlatul Ulama Surabaya (UNUSA), Indonesia, has a program of international cultural exchange program. This program—for the time being—involves three countries: Indonesia, Philippines, and Malaysia. This international cultural exchange is conducted to provide students from different countries with knowledge and skills about cultures in different countries. The place chosen is in the Village of *Kampung Lali Gajet*, Sidoarjo, East Java, Indonesia.

The research on the exploration of the students' international cultural exchange program has not yet been conducted. This is the first time the research on a cultural exchange program in Wonoayu, Sidoarjo, East Java, Indonesia. There were some studies done related to cultural exchange programs. One of the studies was done by O'Down (2020). This study focused on using the model of a cultural exchange program. One of the evidence explored in this study is about the lack of access to services, language barriers for exchange and the like. They were aware of the importance of getting information. They also think that language interpreters can help them get information about what they have visited.

Another study concerning the cultural exchange program was done by Mulvey, B. (2020). It was the cultural exchange exploration in China. It was found that Chinese families always send their children to study abroad in order to make them more global. They also want to make the education standard increase. This can be done by having an internationalization program. Another finding showed that Chinese students want to assimilate them with Western people. Thus, it is a matter of getting global with other nations.

It has been noted that O'Down (2020) found the factor being a lack of information about the place they visited, and Mulvey (2020) found one of them is the students' eagerness to get assimilated with the Western people or other nations, and this they believe they can improve their education standard. Yet, a study by Han (2022) was also done in China's internationalization program. This study explored the program of internationalization program done in higher education. It was explored that the students from this program experienced professional development. They can expand their academic networks. The students also felt that there was a handicap in the internationalization program dealing with mobility handicaps. Thus, the previous studies that explored the exchange program or internationalization program

by university students have provided us with at least three kinds of evidence. One is to get information about other nations but lack of access to information. In that case, they did an exchange program. Besides that, the evidence being explored also deals with the intention of the students to get global and, therefore, assimilate with other nations. Finally, the evidence being explored from the previous studies is related to the intention to improve their education standard, which can be identified by having networks.

Based on the condition of Universitas Nahdlatul Ulama Surabaya (UNUSA), which has a program with international cultural exchange, and the national education system with its *Merdeka Belajar*, the researchers want to explore the program that is being conducted this year (2022). The research is also motivated by previous studies (O'Down, 2020; Mullvey, 2020; Han, 2022) which also explored the internationalization program. Therefore, in this present study, the researchers try to explore the international cultural exchange program, which is done by Universitas Nahdlatul Ulama Surabaya together with two foreign countries' students: Malaysia and the Philippines. In this study, the researchers try to explore such as (1) what aspects the students can learn from their visit to Kampung Lali Gajet, Wonoayu, Sidoarjo, East Java, Indonesia. (2) What the students want to expect from this international cultural exchange program by visiting the village of Kampung Lali Gajet in Wonoayu, Sidoarjo, East Java, Indonesia, after they go home to their countries. (3) What kinds of handicaps do they find during this international cultural exchange program in visiting the *Kampung Lali Gajet*, Wonoayu, Sidoarjo, East Java, Indonesia.

In general, an international cultural exchange program for the opinion leaders, the host, the guests, or the participants involved has several benefits. Therefore, the study has its aims, purposes, and objectives as the following:

Aims

This research aims to explore the implementation and impact of the international cultural exchange program conducted by Universitas Nahdlatul Ulama Surabaya (UNUSA) in collaboration with the universities of Malaysia and the Philippines. The study seeks to understand the experiences, expectations, and challenges faced by students participating in this program, particularly during their visit to *Kampung Lali Gajet*, Wonoayu, Sidoarjo, East Java, Indonesia. This research aims to contribute to the broader understanding of the *Merdeka Belajar* strategy and its effectiveness in fostering global perspectives, tolerance, and educational standards through cultural exchange.

Purpose

The purpose of this research is to gather and analyze data on the specific aspects of cultural learning, expectations, and challenges encountered by students during the international cultural exchange program. By doing so, the study would provide valuable insights into how such programs can be improved to serve the goals of Merdeka Belajar better*,* enhance international relations, and facilitate students' professional and personal development. This research also intends to identify potential solutions to the problems faced during the exchange, thereby aiding in the refinement of future programs.

Objectives

Therefore, the objectives are intended to (1) improve the relationship with other nations, (2) get strategies for networking (3) get skill of interpersonal communication skills (Palinkas et al., 2009). Besides that, it is also expected to (4) have innovation for certain conditions through the diffusion of information (Sahin et al. (2006) and adoption after getting the new information that is appreciated. Finally, it is also expected to (5) increase the students' experience (Oldenburg & Glanz, 2008).

This study is expected to provide information about the students' intention to have this program. In other words, this study explores what the students' intention is probably in the program of cultural exchange. Besides that, it also provides evidence about the handicap of having the cultural exchange program to visit *kampong Lali Gajet* and other problems during the visit in this region and also possible solutions. This can also provide a solution.

Table 1: List of the Questions

No	Questions	The Expected Response
1	What do you think about this program of exchange visiting the traditional games at this kampong Lali Gadget?	Opinions about the exchange program
2	What do you expect from this, when you have been back to your country?	Expectations for Possible Transformation
3	Do you want to come again to Indonesia, especially the UNUSA campus, next time for further programs?	Sustainability and Satisfaction

Theoretical Framework

Cultural Exchange

Cultural exchange is sharing different ideas, traditions, and knowledge with someone who may be coming from a completely different background than our own, and this can provide some benefits for the participants. For example, there is a program conducted by the International Youth Exchange (ICYE) related to cultural exchange between nations (ICYE, 2022). According to this institution, with the international cultural exchange program, educational institutions can exchange information about different cultures. In addition, with cultural exchange, participants can experience and learn cross-cultural opportunities between nations. The aim is to build the potential of the participants, especially the younger generation, regarding their competence. More importantly, it can also provide the participants strategy for networking with other nations as the skill of interpersonal communication within and between organizations and communities. Even it may also lead to the adoption of new behaviors (Palinkas et al., 2009).

International cultural exchange is also good for innovation for a certain condition According to the theory of diffusion and innovation (Sahin, 2006). Practically, the diffusion of any information, e.g., cultures or values, can be communicated through certain channels, and the international cultural exchange is one of those channels. Sending the students to other countries can also be the process of getting new information from different countries (diffusion). They

finally learn new things, including the cultures. They can adopt and appreciate the culture to increase their experience (Oldenburg & Glanz, 2008). Therefore, international cultural exchange is considered one of the channels which are in the form of social networks comprised of peers and opinion leaders: the participants and the host as the leaders transforming the values. For that reason, organizing cultural exchanges can be done by sending university students to various countries with different cultures.

Interpersonal Interaction

In behavioral theory, especially regarding interpersonal interactions, the focus lies on human relations, starting from the lower level, namely subordinates or subordinates, to the upper level, namely leaders. Therefore, social interaction within the scope of the international cultural exchange program will also have an impact on their behavior. They will respond to the cultural values they see and experience (Graham, 2018). Furthermore, in the context of social interaction, international cultural exchange is an important means of developing participants' cognition, for example, their emotional feelings psychologically. This can also provide university students with channels of communication for social interaction.

Benefits of International Cultural Exchange

There are some benefits of international cultural exchange. The international cultural exchange can provide the participants with their confidence and independence. Besides that, this program can also improve relations between the countries of the participants. The most important thing of international cultural exchange is to improve the people's understanding of other cultures (Sun et al., 2019).

Self-Confidence and Independence

Self-confidence can be built by interacting with more people from different countries. In order to be self-confident, any university student should get involved in social interaction with different people from different countries. This is important because when the students find new friends they will build the relationship and be self-confident. The social interaction with different people from different countries makes them feel more and more confident (Sun et al., 2019).

Improving Relations

Improving a good relationship among the people requires a sustainable program for the development of a certain goal. This can be done by creating a good climate among the members or institutions (Fonseca et al., 2020). Therefore, the parties in the community or associations should have the goal they want to achieve together. This is also inline with the result of a study by h Ayeni. (2012), the goal in education institutions is regarded as a significant factor in improving the relationship between principals and teachers. In this case, by having a shared goal, they can improve a sustainable relationship. They need the application of a goal-oriented school and community partnership. Only do they create the goal they want to achieve together can they improve their relationship. In summary, that goal-oriented program can lead to a sustainable relationship between the two parties, institutions, or organizations.

Understanding Other Cultures

Understanding other cultures is good for increasing the individuals' sense of collaboration. According to Huang (2019), understanding other cultures needs knowledge, and relationships with others can gain this knowledge. Implicitly, understanding other cultures can also improve a good relationship. Yet, it requires knowledge, and this knowledge is considered human capital.

In other words, gaining an understanding of different cultures plays a crucial role in fostering collaboration among individuals. As Huang (2019) points out, this understanding necessitates knowledge, which can be acquired through interactions and relationships with others. More importantly, understanding other cultures not only enhances relationships but also contributes to the development of human resources. In addition, understanding other cultures promotes collaboration among individuals, as Friedman and Liu (2013) suggest. This requires knowledge, which can be obtained through interpersonal relationships. By improving relationships and fostering the development of human capital, understanding different cultures has significant benefits.

Therefore, the cultural exchange program by the university faculties and students is one of the most important strategies to promote understanding among the nations. Based on the theoretical framework above, it can be synthesized for this study to focus on the exploration and find the evidence related to the problems of cultural exchange and the solution. First of all, the theoretical construct deals with interpersonal interaction as the behavioral theory that emphasizes interpersonal interactions it focuses on relationships from subordinate to leader levels (Graham, 2018). Within international cultural exchange programs, it is obvious that the participants engage in social interactions, shaping their behaviors in response to encountered cultural values. Such exchanges also enhance cognitive development, including emotional intelligence, and provide avenues for social interaction among university students. Secondly, this theoretical framework concerning the cultural exchange program has some benefits. It is constructively argued that international cultural exchange can enhance the participants' confidence and independence, fostering cross-country relationships and enhancing cultural Understanding (Sun et al., 2019). Thirdly, cultural exchange programs make the individuals cultivate self-confidence among university students. Socializing with peers from various countries facilitates relationship-building nurturing confidence over time (Sun et al., 2019).

Besides the three points above, another great impact of the cultural exchange program is to establish shared goals and foster sustainable relationships, a principle applicable not only in educational institutions but also in broader community settings (Fonseca et al., 2020; Ayeni, 2012). Finally, a cultural exchange program can make the participants understand other cultures which can promote collaboration and the development of human capital. This understanding, facilitated through interpersonal interactions, enhances relationships and contributes to cross-cultural cooperation (Huang, 2019; Friedman & Liu, 2013). Cultural exchange initiatives by universities play a vital role in fostering global understanding and cooperation.

For viewing the cultural exchange programs, te researchers should explore whether the findings of the research itself evidently prove the points above. At least, there must be categorization unto the above framework such as collaboration, communication, and understanding team for their expectation of to be skillful personal interaction, cultural understanding, sharing a goal and fostering relationship, and enhancing the cultural cooperation.

When being synthesized, the arguments in the framework above can be constructed as the synthesis of the study that focuses on exploring and evidencing the impact of cultural exchange programs. Key points include such as the following:

1) ***Interpersonal Interaction***: Examining how social interactions in cultural exchange programs influence participant behaviors, emotional intelligence, and social interaction skills (Graham, 2018).
2) ***Benefits of Cultural Exchange***: Investigating the enhancement of self-confidence, independence, cross-country relationships, and cultural understanding through cultural exchange programs (Sun et al., 2019).
3) ***Shared Goals and Sustainable Relationships***: Assessing the role of shared goals in fostering sustainable relationships within educational institutions and broader community settings (Fonseca et al., 2020; Ayeni, 2012).
4) ***Cultural Understanding and Collaboration***: Evaluating how cultural understanding promotes collaboration and human capital development through interpersonal interactions (Huang, 2019; Friedman & Liu, 2013).

Based on the theoretical bases with the constructs related to the theories above, the researchers should categorize these elements to assess their impact on personal interaction skills, cultural understanding, shared goals, relationship fostering, and cross-cultural cooperation. This framework provides a comprehensive basis for exploring the multifaceted benefits and mechanisms of international cultural exchange programs. This can be demonstrated in Figure 1.

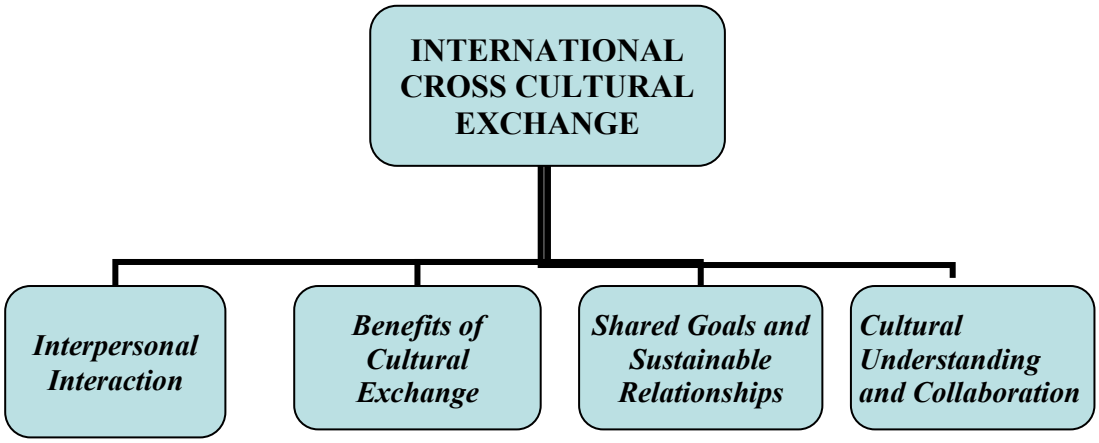

Figure 1: The Conceptual Framework of International Cross-Cultural Exchange

Methodology

This study is a qualitative study that explores the phenomenon of international cultural exchange programs done by students and faculties from different countries: Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines. This tries to get a clear picture of the international cultural exchange program from the perspectives of both the universities" students and faculties. The research problem is formulated into such as what the universities' students and faculties'

perception of the international cultural exchange program. What do they expect from such a program, and whether they still want to have this program for the future.

Sample

When considering the sample, this study has its sample taken by purposive sampling with the criteria (Campbell et al., (2020) such that the students are from different countries: Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand. Another criterion is that the respondents have never met and they visit the place in other countries especially Malaysia and Philippines students to Indonesia.

Data Collection

The data are collected in the form of interviews and observation. The interview was done with students from different countries: Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand. Besides that, the interview was also done with the program coordinator and the officers of staff at the *Kampung Lali Gajet* program. They were asked the questions as presented in Table 1. The observation was done by the researchers who got involved in this international cultural exchange program: Observant and participants as well (Noble and Heale, 2019). In this research, there were 12 from the Philippines, 7 from Malaysia, and 15 from Indonesia in Kampong Gazette, Sidoarjo, and East Java, but they were represented by three students for each being interviewed in depth, with the questions based on the conceptual framework. The data were gathered based on the framework as in the conceptual framework as in Figure 1.

Data Analysis

The data was analyzed based on the process from open codes to axial code (William & Moser, 2019) as follows:

1. The information from the sources of interview and observation is collected and transcribed.
2. The collected data are classified into the domains (McGowan et al., 2020)
3. The information that is classified into the domain is then defined into themes (Williams and Moser, 2019). (Figure 2)
4. The data triangulation is done from different sources (data triangulation: interview, observation), triangulate (three people), and interpreted finally, it can be done for inference or conclusion (Noble and Heale, 2019).

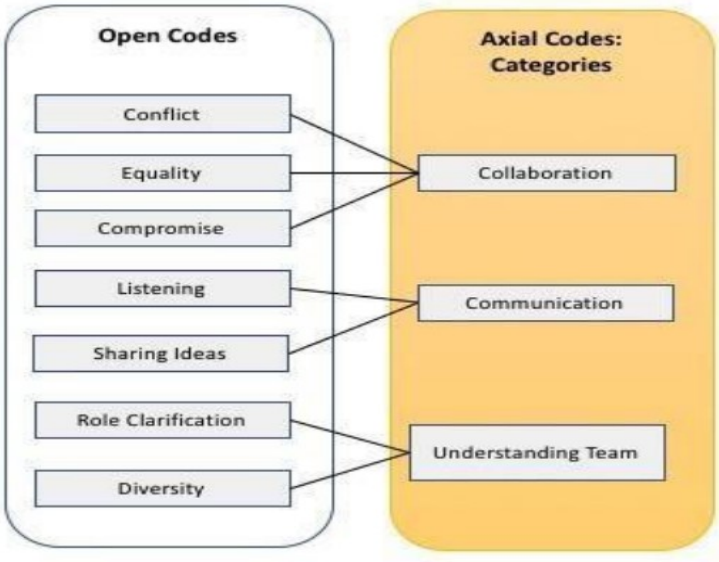

Figure 2: The Example Coding Process (William & Mores, 2019)

Findings and Discussions

Findings

This section starts with the data collection from the responses by the participants of the international cultural exchange program. The information was from the students and faculties from three countries: Malaysia, the Philippines, and Indonesia. The responses from the university students are presented in Table 2, while those from the universities' faculties are in Table 3.

The students from the Philippines:

Table 2: Responses from the Universities' Students and Faculties

INFORMANT 1 (female)	Questions	INFORMATION DATA	CODES/ THEMES	Inferences (Summary)
	1: What do you think about this program of exchange visiting the traditional games at this kampong Lali Gadget?	Actually, it is fun because we can get together with other students from different countries, especially Indonesian students. But, I think we have similarities about the traditional games, Sir. Like you, this one (while pointing the "*Egrang* game" to the interviewer, the researcher). But we don't have the other one	**1: Cultural Exchange**: The respondent expresses the idea that participating in the activity is enjoyable because it allows them to interact with students from different countries, particularly Indonesian students. This suggests that the theme of cultural exchange is present, highlighting the opportunity for individuals from diverse backgrounds to come together and share their cultural experiences. **2: Shared experience:** The respondent mentions a common	In summary, the semantic meaning of the theme in this response is about the joy of cultural exchange, the sharing of common traditional games, and the recognition of differences in cultural practices. This provides insights into the ways in which people from different backgrounds come together and

		(while pointing to *Gapyak*, the circle-wood footwear).	interest in traditional games, specifically pointing out the "Egrang game" as an example of a game they share with the interviewer. This indicates a shared cultural experience and interest in traditional activities, emphasizing the common ground between individuals from different backgrounds.	connect through shared interests and experiences while also acknowledging the diversity that exists within cultures.
	2. What do you expect from this when you go back to your country, the Philippines?	I try to introduce the games that are not there in my country, but they are there in Indonesia. I will tell my friends and try to have the games so that we can get more traditional games from Indonesia.	**1: Knowledge Sharing**: The respondent expresses a proactive effort to introduce games from Indonesia to their country, indicating a willingness to share cultural knowledge. This reflects an interest in promoting cross-cultural exchange by bringing elements of Indonesian culture to their own. Interest in Traditional Games: The respondent's intention to introduce and play games not present in their country underscores a strong interest in traditional games. It shows a desire to explore and appreciate the cultural significance and entertainment value of these games. **2: Promotion of Culture**: The respondent's goal of telling their friends and acquiring these games implies a broader interest in promoting and preserving Indonesian culture. This can be seen as a positive act of cultural appreciation and cross-cultural enrichment.	In summary, the semantic meaning of the theme in this response is about the respondent's active role in facilitating cross-cultural knowledge sharing and adopting elements of Indonesian culture, particularly traditional games. It highlights the importance of cultural exchange, a genuine interest in traditional games, and a positive approach to promoting and celebrating cultural diversity.
	3. Do you want to come again to Indonesia, especially the UNUSA campus, next time for further programs?	I expect so if there is another chance, but I might have graduated from college. It should be by the students of my juniors. Well, I think it is good also.	**1: Sustainability:** The respondent expresses an expectation that, in the future, if there is another chance for a particular activity or event, it should be organized by students who are their juniors. This indicates a willingness to pass on the responsibility and opportunities to the next generation of students. **2: Succession:** The mention of having possibly graduated from college by the time another opportunity arises indicates a recognition of the natural transition in roles and responsibilities that occurs as students progress through their	In summary, the semantic meaning of the theme in this response is about the expectation and willingness to pass the responsibility of organizing certain activities or events to the next generation of students, recognizing the importance of a smooth transition and expressing a positive outlook on this practice.

			academic journey. The respondent acknowledges that it's appropriate for their juniors to take the lead. Positive Attitude towards Succession: The phrase "I think it is good also" reflects a positive attitude towards this transition. The respondent views it as a positive and appropriate practice for students to continue organizing such activities, ensuring the continuity of the tradition.	
INFOR MANT 2	**Questions**	**INFORMATION**	**OPEN CODES/ THEMES**	
	1: What do you think about this program of exchange visiting the traditional games at this kampong Lali Gadget?	It is nice to be **here with your students**. I really enjoy the games, though I was in trouble trying to play with *Egrang*. I finally could do it and even won the competition. (She is the first winner in the competition of *Engram* among the students from three countries: Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines.)	**1: Sharing Experience:** The respondent expresses that being with the students and participating in the games is a pleasant experience. This indicates that they find joy and satisfaction in the activity, reflecting a positive sentiment. **2: A challenge**: The mention of being in trouble while trying to play Egrang highlights the challenges encountered during the game. This element of challenge adds depth to the experience, indicating that the respondent had to overcome obstacles. **3: Competition for Achievement**: The respondent's statement about finally being able to play Egrang and even winning the competition highlights a sense of achievement. The victory in the competition is a significant accomplishment, indicating their skill and determination. **4. Networking**: Interactions with Students from Different Countries: The reference to being with students from three countries, Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines, suggests an international and cross-cultural dimension to the experience, emphasizing the diversity and interaction among students from various backgrounds.	In summary, the semantic meaning of the theme in this response is about the enjoyment of the experience, the challenges faced and overcome, the sense of achievement in winning a competition, and the international aspect of interacting with students from different countries. It portrays a positive and memorable experience of participation and success in a competitive setting.
	2. What do you expect from this	Yes, Sir. I will also share the video of this visit to	**1: Sharing of Experience**: The respondent expresses their	In summary, the semantic meaning of the theme in

	when you go back to your country, the Philippines?	my friends in my college (Philippines)	intention to share the video of their visit with their friends in their college in the Philippines. This demonstrates a desire to pass on the experience to others, suggesting an act of sharing and disseminating knowledge or memories. **2: Dissemination of Information**: The mention of sharing the video with friends implies a broader goal of disseminating information about the visit, the activities, or the cultural exchange to a wider audience. It highlights the importance of spreading the knowledge gained from the experience. **3: Building Relationships**: The act of sharing the video with friends in the Philippines reflects a cross-cultural connection, as it involves conveying experiences and insights gained during interactions with individuals from different countries. It emphasizes the value of intercultural communication.	this response is about the respondent's intention to share their experience and video with friends, emphasizing the importance of disseminating information and fostering cross-cultural connections. It showcases a proactive approach to connecting and communicating with others about their experiences.
	3. Do you want to come again to Indonesia, especially the UNUSA campus, next time for further programs?	If we have another opportunity, I will also join this program so that we can continue our collaboration	**1: Sustainability:** Desire for Continued Participation: The respondent expresses a clear desire to join the program again if another opportunity arises. This indicates a strong interest in continuing their involvement in the program, emphasizing the value they place on participation. **2: Collaboration:** The mention of wanting to continue the program in order to "continue our collaboration" underscores the importance of collaborative efforts. It suggests that the respondent values the relationships and partnerships formed through the program and wishes to maintain and build upon them. **3: Commitment to Long-Term Engagement**: The response implies a commitment to sustained engagement and collaboration. It reflects a forward-looking perspective and a willingness to	In summary, the semantic meaning of the theme in this response is about the respondent's strong desire for continued participation in the program and their emphasis on maintaining and expanding collaborative relationships. It highlights a commitment to ongoing engagement and collaboration in the future.

			invest time and effort in the program for the long term.	
INFORMANT 3 (female)	**Questions**	**INFORMATION**	**OPEN CODES/ THEMES**	
	1: What do you think about this program of exchange visiting the traditional games at this *kampong Lali Gadget?*	It is so unique to see this village. The first time, I enjoyed the food. What is it? (while pointing at *Gethuk* ((cake made from Cassava)). (at this moment, the researcher told her the name of the cake*: Gethuk").* For the game, I like the *egrang,* though it is difficult to play with it. (*She had known the name because it was introduced when they arrived at the Kampong Lali Gadget.)*	1. a). Learning something new about the food) 1. b) accepting the culture (similar to her culture in her country, Philippines))	
	2. What do you expect from this when you go back to your country, the Philippines?	I want this cultural exchange can be followed up next year.	2. a) sustainability expectation	
	3. Do you want to come again to Indonesia, especially the UNUSA campus, next time for further programs?	We can do it again next time, Sir.	3. a) follow up/ Sustainability	All expressed fascination with the village, particularly enjoying the unique experience. During her first visit, she appreciated the local food, specifically pointing to a cake made from cassava called Gethuk. The researcher informed her of the cake's name at that moment. Later, she mentioned liking the traditional game of egrang despite finding it challenging to play. She was already familiar with the name as it had been introduced to her upon arriving at Kampong Lali Gadge.

The Faculties/ Teachers

INFORMANT 1 (teacher/ faculty)	Questions	INFORMATION DATA	CODES/THEMES	INFERENCES
1. Malaysia	1: What do you think about this program of exchange visiting the traditional games at this kampong *Lali Gadget*?	I believe it is good, Sir. I just now looked around at my students playing some games with other students from the host (interviewer: Indonesia) and also from Malaysia. Actually, the one who is playing the game over there is my student for a Master's degree, not an undergraduate. She looks so interested in that game (researcher: while looking at the *Egrang* game).	1. a) accepting friendship (togetherness) 1. b) accepting Culture Similarity. *Egrang* is the same in the Philippines. It is not only in Indonesia.	
	2. What do you expect from this when you go back to your country, the Philippines?	At least, the students can get in touch with different students from different countries so that they can understand one another. It is interesting, Sir. We also like the traditional drink, Sir. What is that? (while pointing at the drink being provided by the host of Kampong *Lali Gadget*, the owner. And. It is "*Beras Kencur"*, the traditional drink made from rice and ginger).	2. a) accepting/ Increasing understanding among the nations 2. b) accepting eating the Food and Drink (students exchange can be related to Food and Drink, not only culture)	.
	3. Do you want to come again to Indonesia, especially the UNUSA campus, next time for further programs?	I think so. We can also keep in touch so that we can continue this program.	3. a) willingness to have a follow-up/Sustainability.	The speaker expressed satisfaction, stating that the ongoing activities were good. Observing their Master's degree students actively participating in games with students from both Indonesia and Malaysia, the speaker highlighted the valuable interaction between students from different countries, fostering mutual understanding. The speaker also mentioned an appreciation for the traditional drink called "Beras Kencur," made

				from rice and ginger, offered by the host at Kampong Lali Gadget.
INFORMANT 2 (teacher/faculty)	**Questions**	**INFORMATION DATA**	**OPEN CODES/ THEMES**	
1. Philippines	1: What do you think about this program of exchange visiting the traditional games at this kampong *Lali Gadget*?	I believe my students like it very much. I can also suggest to my college that we can also do this again in the future.	1. a) sustainability (wants to continue the program in the future) 1. b) Pride, seeing that his students got involved and engaged in the games with other students both from Indonesia and Malaysia.	
	2. What do you expect from this when you go back to your country, the Philippines?	My expectation is only to continue this program in the future. Maybe, the other students next time can also come here again with the same purpose.	2. sustainability	
	3. Do you want to come again to Indonesia, especially the UNUSA campus, next time for further programs?	All of us felt happy and satisfied. We can see our students and the other students from Malaysia and the Philippines were friendly playing the game. It seem they had met before this event.	2. Satisfaction 3. Friendship	All express a positive outlook, believing that their students enjoyed the experience. They mentioned the possibility of suggesting to their college to repeat such programs in the future, expressing the expectation for continuity. The speaker expressed happiness and satisfaction, observing friendly interactions between their students and students from Malaysia and the Philippines during the event, noting a sense of camaraderie as if they had met before.
INFORMANT 3 Indonesia	1: What do you think about this program of exchange visiting the traditional games at this kampong *Lali Gadget*?	We can reevaluate our plans as they hold significant importance for both the university and its students. For the university, it aligns with our vision and mission to gain recognition within the ASEAN region. For the students, it offers valuable opportunities for cultural exchange and fostering	1. a) achieving the university vision (wants to continue the program in the future) 1. b) Cultural exchange and understanding among the students	

		friendships that promote better mutual Understanding		
	2. What do you expect from this when you go back to your country, the Philippines?	Gaining exposure to managing international programs is essential. It also enhances students' ability to collaborate effectively within a global team, working alongside peers from diverse nations	1. Management skill 2. team and collaboration	
	3. Do you want to continue again for further programs?	Based on our being satisfied with a collaboration like this, we will continue our program for making this suitanable.	4. Satisfaction and 5. Sustainability	All emphasize the importance of reevaluating plans, citing their significant impact on both the university and its students. For the university, the plans align with the vision and mission, aiming for recognition within the ASEAN region. For students, the plans provide valuable opportunities for cultural exchange, fostering friendships, and promoting mutual understanding. Additionally, exposure to managing international programs is seen as essential, enhancing students' abilities to collaborate effectively in global teams with peers from diverse nations.

Discussion

The students' Perception of the International Cultural Exchange

In the first finding: First of all, they think that it is for sharing common traditional games and the recognition of differences in cultural practices. In other words, this study provides insights into the ways in which people from different backgrounds come together and connect through shared interests and experiences while also acknowledging the diversity that exists within cultures. These findings are in line with the argument by Huang (2019) for getting knowledge, social interaction, and improving good relationships.

Secondly, they think that their active role is to facilitate cross-cultural knowledge sharing and adopting elements of Indonesian culture, particularly traditional games. It highlights the importance of cultural exchange, a genuine interest in traditional games, and a positive approach to promoting and celebrating cultural diversity. This is also suggested by Friedman

and Liu (2013); the activities are for cultural exchange and also for promoting understanding among the nations.
Thirdly, the semantic meaning of the theme in this response is about the expectation and willingness to pass the responsibility of organizing certain activities or events to the next generation of students, recognizing the importance of a smooth transition and expressing a positive outlook on this practice.

The second finding: First of all, they think that it is the enjoyment of the experience, the challenges faced and overcome, the sense of achievement in winning a competition, and the international aspect of interacting with students from different countries. It portrays a positive and memorable experience of participation and success in a competitive setting.

Secondly, they think that it is for sharing their experience and videos with friends, emphasizing the importance of disseminating information and fostering cross-cultural connections. It showcases a proactive approach to connecting and communicating with others about their experiences.

Thirdly, they think that it is due to a strong desire for continued participation in the program and their emphasis on maintaining and expanding collaborative relationships. It highlights a commitment to ongoing engagement and collaboration in the future.

The third finding: First of all, they think that it is expressing something fascinating particularly enjoying the unique experience. During her first visit, she appreciated the local food, specifically pointing to a cake made from cassava called Gethuk. The researcher informed her of the cake's name at that moment. See also as studied by Fonseca et al. (2020), it is for creating a good climate among the members or institutions. Later, she mentioned liking the traditional game of egrang despite finding it challenging to play. She was already familiar with the name as it had been introduced to her upon arriving at Kampong Lali Gadge. Thus, as argued, it can also for self confidence (Sun et al., 2019).

Secondly, they think that it is for stating that the ongoing activities were good. Observing their Master's degree students actively participating in games with students from both Indonesia and Malaysia, the speaker highlighted the valuable interaction between students from different countries, fostering mutual understanding. The speaker also mentioned an appreciation for the traditional drink called "Beras Kencur," made from rice and ginger, offered by the host at Kampong Lali Gadge.

Thirdly, they think that it is like the traditional game of egrang, despite finding it challenging to play. She was already familiar with the name as it had been introduced to her upon arriving at Kampong Lali Gadge.

In summary, in the first finding, participants believe that the purpose of the program includes sharing common traditional games, recognizing cultural differences, and connecting through shared interests. They also emphasize the importance of facilitating cross-cultural knowledge sharing, adopting elements of Indonesian culture, and passing on the responsibility of organizing activities to the next generation. This is as the previous studies such as Han (2022) and Huang (2021).

In the second finding, participants perceive the program as an opportunity for enjoyable experiences, overcoming challenges, achieving success in competitions, and interacting with students from different countries. They express a desire to share their experiences videos, and maintain collaborative relationships for continued participation in the program. This emphasizes the previous studies by Ayeni (2012) and Han (2022), and especially by William & Mores (2019).

In the third finding, participants express fascination with the unique experience of visiting a village, enjoying local food like Gethuk, and appreciating traditional games such as egrang. They also highlight positive interactions between students from different countries and express appreciation for a traditional drink called "Beras Kencur" offered by the host at Kampong Lali Gadget. O'Down, (2020) and Friedman & Liu (2013)

Conclusion

In conclusion, participants in the study believe that the program serves the purpose of sharing common traditional games, recognizing cultural differences, and fostering connections through shared interests. They emphasize cross-cultural knowledge sharing and the adoption of Indonesian cultural elements, highlighting the importance of cultural exchange and promoting diversity. Additionally, there is a willingness to pass on the responsibility of organizing activities to the next generation. The second finding emphasizes the positive and memorable aspects of the program, including enjoyment, overcoming challenges, and international interactions.

Participants expressed a desire for continued participation, sharing experiences, and maintaining collaborative relationships. In the third finding, participants express fascination with unique experiences, enjoying local food, and appreciating traditional games. Positive interactions between students from different countries are highlighted, along with an appreciation for traditional drinks.

However, based on the evidence above, the researchers did not find any crucial problem. Therefore, suggestions merely on how to make this cultural program sustainable so that the above benefits can become the student's global knowledge through their experience joining the international cultural exchange program.

This finding implies that universities such as they can make use of the students' international cultural exchange for the purposes found in these findings. They can interact socially and understand each other by sharing experiences and exchanging not only their science and knowledge but also cultural aspects, like traditional games and foods.

Acknowledgments

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VIETNAMESE LECTURERS' CONCERNS ABOUT BLENDED LEARNING IMPLEMENTATION: INSIGHTS FROM CONCERNS-BASED ADOPTION MODEL

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ABSTRACT

Blended learning has been increasingly implemented in higher education with the desire to transform teaching and learning. However, limited literature focuses on the perspectives of teachers who play a crucial role in adopting blended learning. This mixed-methods study utilized the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (Hall & Hord, 2006) to assess the stages of concerns among lecturers and their specific concerns regarding the top-down decision to adopt blended learning in a Vietnamese university. The Stages of Concerns Questionnaire was administered to 165 academic staff to explore their group concern profile, and follow-up semi-structured interviews were then conducted with 16 lecturers to delve into their specific concerns. The findings showed that the lecturers were early adopters of blended learning, exhibiting strong concerns about the adoption, particularly those unrelated and self-focused. The research also indicated that lecturers experienced instructional ambiguity in understanding the essence of blended learning, technological apprehension, workload stress, and skepticism about student learning autonomy. However, there were also encouraging indicators, such as the lecturers' readiness to learn about blended learning, their enthusiasm for intradisciplinary cooperation, and their flexibility in applying the teaching strategy. These insights help policymakers better understand the concerns and viewpoints of the lecturers. Furthermore, the conclusion of this paper includes some suggestions for improvement.

Keywords: *Blended learning, Concerns-Based Adoption Model, CBAM, Vietnamese higher education*

Introduction

Blended learning, a pedagogical approach adopted in universities in the late 1990s (Edward et al., 2018; Tutal & Yazar, 2021), has been widely used in higher education for nearly twenty years (Smith and Hill, 2019: 383). It is considered an improvement for both the traditional in-person mode of instruction and the fully online mode (Rasheed et al., 2020: 139), as it combines the best components of the two modes (Yen & Lee, 2011). This pedagogical approach is expected to be the "transformation of classroom environment from teaching to learning" (Edward et al., 2018: 2558). In this regard, students are encouraged to be fully involved in the learning process, think critically, and enhance their commitment and competence (Smyth et al., 2012). As a result, blended learning has gained recognition as a pedagogical trend that should be increasingly embraced in higher education (Hrastinski, 2019; Smyth et al., 2012).

In Vietnam, the adoption of blended learning was not widespread until the outburst of the pandemic. According to a research project conducted at the ministry level in 2017, only 19 out of 235 Vietnamese higher education institutions were reported to offer either fully online training programs or blended learning initiatives, highlighting the novelty of blended learning in the country at that period (Open University Ho Chi Minh City, 2021). The Covid-19 pandemic has then created a significant impetus for blended learning to expand. In practice, most Vietnamese tertiary institutions have informed their adoption of blended learning by integrating a learning management system (LMS) into their educational practices (Tang & Tien, 2020). This pedagogical innovation has also been implemented in a variety of disciplines, such as chemistry (Dai et al., 2021), English as a foreign language (Nguyen & Stracke, 2021), and business (Das et al., 2019). Despite the rising number of courses within the LMS environment, there is uncertainty about the quality of these courses due to poor technology facilities, lack of online synchronous and asynchronous interactions, and incapability to teach and manage online sections (Tang & Tien, 2020). Thus, purely traditional face-to-face learning is "still deep in the mind of learners" (Tang and Tien, 2020: 306), while the quality of online learning is still raising doubts (Tang & Tien, 2020).

To make a transition to blended learning, teachers are expected to change their teaching and interactions with their students (Pizzi, 2014) as the teacher drives what occurs inside the classroom. While the existing literature shows a noticeable number of studies on students' acceptance of blended learning, there is a dearth of research from teachers' perspectives (Smith & Hill, 2019).

Our study was carried out in one of the pioneering universities in Vietnam regarding technology integration. The school started using an LMS in 2016 and approved the project proposal mandating blended learning in 2020. Despite this progressive stance, our observations revealed a lack of proactive measures taken during the adoption of blended learning to identify where lecturers are standing in the adoption process or gather their perspectives on the initiative.

As an insider, the first author of this paper perceived that the adoption of blended learning among lecturers was superficial, marked by significant concerns and discomfort with this instructional approach. This motivated our study to employ the Concerns-Based Adoption Model to explore lecturers' concerns regarding blended learning adoption. The model allowed us to diagnose the level of adoption among lecturers and examine their concerns comprehensively, including both positive and negative aspects.

In essence, our research aimed to address two primary research questions:

1. What are the current levels of adoption of blended learning among lecturers at the university?
2. What are the specific concerns, both positive and negative, that lecturers have regarding the adoption of blended learning?

The research findings aim to provide decision-makers with valuable insights into lecturers' concerns regarding blended learning. By understanding these concerns, decision-makers can take appropriate actions to address them and support lecturers in successfully implementing blended learning initiatives. The research also aims to reach educators and administrators in the early stages of adopting blended learning in similar educational settings.

Literature Review

Blended Learning: The Concept and the Necessary Shift in Research Focus

The concept of blended learning recently seems to be a buzzword in education. It is sometimes referred to as hybrid, mixed-mode, integrated, or flexible learning. The two most frequently cited definitions of blended learning in literature are those proposed by Graham (2006) and Garrison and Kanuka (2004) (Hrastinski, 2019). While Graham (2006) suggested that "blended learning systems combine face-to-face instruction with computer-mediated instruction" (Graham, 2006: 5), the definition of Garrison and Kanuka (2004) was slightly narrower by adding a qualitative dimension of a 'thoughtful integration" (Garrison and Vaughan, 2013: 96) between the two mentioned ingredients (Müller & Mildenberger, 2021). Later, Graham also improved their description of blended learning as "the strategic combination of online and in-person instruction" (Graham, 2019: 11). Despite such attempts to characterize blended learning, the term remains an inclusive concept covering all modes of technology-mediated learning, except pure online and physical classroom learning. According to Smith and Hill (2019), this all-encompassing concept of blended learning, which may be purposeful, is problematic and ambiguous, leading to a myriad of diversified blended learning practices. Surprisingly, a consensus is that blended learning definitions should maintain flexibility (Huang et al., 2021). Such flexibility is expected to enable innovation (Garrison & Vaughan, 2013) and motivate the uniqueness of institutional blended learning (Moskal et al., 2013).

With the synergy of face-to-face learning and online learning, blended learning can optimize the advantages of both learning modalities (Poon, 2014). Many review papers (Smith & Hill, 2019; Zhang & Zhu, 2018) have shown that blended learning can improve learning outcomes, motivate students, increase engagement, enhance learning and teaching experiences, and encourage interactions, collaborations, and autonomy. Its benefits have been well documented and rehearsed through a significant number of empirical studies evaluating the effectiveness of blended learning (Van Laer & Elen, 2020). Due to such a saturation, there has been a concurrence that the focus should shift from bottom-up, small-scale, individual, and outcome-orientated studies to institutional adoption studies (Huang et al., 2021; Smith & Hill, 2019; Zhang & Zhu, 2018).

When it comes to institutional adoption, understanding the stakeholders' attitudes who ultimately decide the fate of the adoption is the first step (Hall & Hord, 2006). However, while students' beliefs, attitudes, and motivations have been explored abundantly, the acceptance of lecturers who are the primary direct adopters of blended learning has not received adequate attention (Anthony et al., 2020; Smith & Hill, 2019).

Existing Insights into Lecturers' Perspectives on Blended Learning Adoption

Halverson et al. (2014), cited by Smith and Hill (2019), reported that only 3,6% of the studies in their analysis focused on either faculty or administrator perceptions about implementing blended learning. Since then, there have been recognizable efforts to examine teachers' perspectives on this matter (Alvarez, 2020; Anthony et al., 2021, 2022; Boelens et al., 2017; Brown, 2016; Graham, 2019).

Nevertheless, most of the prior studies focused solely on a particular category of blended learning or one component of blended learning alone. For example, Akcayir and Akcayir (2018) examined the benefits and constraints of implementing the flipped classroom rather than considering blended learning as a holistic instructional approach. Their study specifically highlighted the technological difficulties that lecturers encountered. Meanwhile, Brown (2016) systematically reviewed the existing literature on faculty members' adoption and utilization of online tools for in-person instruction. The study revealed six influences faced by lecturers in adopting blended learning, which include engagement with technology, workload, institutional factors, lecturer attitudes and beliefs, and professional development (Brown, 2016). While these studies provide valuable insights, they do not offer a comprehensive understanding of lecturers' perceptions of implementing blended learning as a whole.

Some other studies have aimed to address this gap by examining lecturers' attitudes toward blended learning as a comprehensive approach that incorporates both online and on-site components. These studies primarily aimed to uncover the reasons behind lecturers' reluctance to adopt blended learning. For instance, in Ocak's (2011) study, 117 lecturers from four universities were interviewed, revealing the major barriers they faced when embracing blended practices. These barriers included complex and time-consuming instructional processes, poor planning and communication, teacher concerns regarding lack of institutional support and role stability, and technical issues, particularly difficulties with new technologies and limited internet access (Graham, 2019). Similarly, Alvarez (2020) conducted a qualitative study at a university in Manila, Philippines, identifying five obstacles to blended learning adoption: technological challenges, instructional concerns, class size issues, limited technical support, and collaboration difficulties. Lecturers' acceptance of blended learning, according to Anthony et al. (2020), is also shaped by their experience, dedication level, motivation, adaptability, and the quality of the system involved.

In Vietnam, blended learning is in an early stage of development. Like the global landscape of blended learning research, the extant studies on blended learning in Vietnamese contexts mainly aim to explore students' perspectives more than teachers' or administrators' perspectives (Dinh et al., 2021; Ho et al., 2022; Le & Johnson, 2022). Recently, lecturers' voices about blended learning adoption seem to attract more attention from researchers (Cao, 2022; Hoang, 2015; Le et al., 2022; T. H. Nguyen, 2019; Pham & Nguyen, 2021; Phuong et al., 2022). Several studies have attempted to define the current stage of Vietnamese lecturers' adoption process regarding blended learning, with the majority indicating that Vietnamese lecturers predominantly remain in the early stage of adopting blended learning in their teaching (Cao, 2022; Dai et al., 2021; Hoang, 2015; Tang & Tien, 2020). Additionally, prior research has shed light on the perspectives of faculty teaching in Vietnamese universities. On the one hand, they exhibit a favorable attitude toward the potential impact of blended learning on their students' learning (Phuong et al., 2022). On the other hand, they reveal diverse concerns restraining their adoption. These concerns may include informational concerns, reflecting apprehension about their lack of understanding of the nature of blended learning (Hoang, 2015; Le et al., 2022). Some

concerns are personal, arising from comparisons between the requirements of blended learning and their current competence, particularly their technological competence (Cao, 2022; Hoang, 2015; Tang & Tien, 2020). Other concerns are related to managerial aspects, such as inadequate infrastructure and technology, insufficient institutional policies and support, and large class sizes (Le et al., 2022).

Identified Research Gaps or Motivations for the Study

While the findings of earlier studies are significant, further research is necessary to explore the viewpoints of Vietnamese lecturers regarding the adoption of blended learning. Faculty members play a critical role as major change agents and are essential in the planning and implementation of blended learning (Smith and Hill, 2019: 395). Therefore, knowing where lecturers currently are in the adoption process can help to inform appropriate interventions supporting their implementation of blended learning. As mentioned above, a common conclusion from the previous studies conducted in Vietnam is that lecturers are still early adopters of blended learning. However, most of those studies are qualitative case studies with a modest sample size (Le et al., 2022; Le & Johnson, 2022; Pham & Nguyen, 2021; Thi Thao Nguyen et al., 2021). Therefore, employing a quantitative investigation grounded in a reliable framework to measure their level of adoption would effectively fill the existing research gap on this matter.

In addition, institutional blending is a sizable change in lecturers' professional practice, and it may be resisted due to lecturers' reluctance (Huang et al., 2021; Porter et al., 2014). It is essential not only to identify factors influencing the lecturers' adoption, particularly the constraints, but also to gain a comprehensive understanding of lecturers' perspectives, including their worries, care, and opinions. In this way, both supportive and restraining voices could be heard, providing a more unbiased and insightful comprehension of the lecturers' emotional reactions towards blended learning. To gain such a nuanced understanding, the study integrated a qualitative component to shed light on lecturers' concerns regarding the adoption of blended learning.

This study aimed to support lecturers in introducing blended learning at a Vietnamese university, where no prior investigations had been conducted to explore their viewpoints. To address the above gaps, it was designed to explore the lecturers' perception of their blended learning adoption both broadly and deeply. On the broad dimension, we quantitatively assessed the level of adoption among the lecturers. On the deep dimension, we investigated their particular verbal responses to the adoption. This approach enabled us to capture the overall picture of the adoption and to identify the key factors that facilitated or hindered their implementation.

Theoretical Framework

In this study, the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM) was used to explore lecturers' current concerns about the implementation of blended learning. The CBAM is a well-established conceptual framework that originated from Fuller's work (Fuller, 1969), first proposed by Hall and Dossett (1973), and subsequently refined through various studies, including Hall (1977), Hall and Hord (1987), Hall and Hord (2006), and George et al. (2006). Rooted in change science (Olson et al., 2020), the CBAM asserts that change is not merely an event but a developmental process that begins at the individual level (Hall & Hord, 2006).

The CBAM framework encompasses three main diagnostic dimensions: the Stages of Concern (SoC), which explores individual feelings of change agents, describing how they perceive and how they feel about the innovation; the Levels of Use, which depict behavioral profiles or patterns of users when adopting the innovation; and the Innovation Configuration which defines different ways of implementing the innovation. However, due to time constraints and the preliminary nature of the research, we decided to probe solely into lecturers' SoC about implementing blended learning in this research.

The SoC defines concerns as affective reactions to change. Concerns embrace "feelings, perceptions, preoccupations, thoughts, considerations, motivations, satisfactions and frustrations that collectively describe an individual's stage" (Dunn and Rakes, 2011: 44) when encountering an educational innovation. The SoC consists of seven stages of concern: Awareness (Stage 0), Informational (Stage 1), Personal (Stage 2), Management (Stage 3), Consequence (Stage 4), Collaboration (Stage 5), and Refocusing (Stage 6). These constructs fall under four major categories: unrelated concerns, self-concerns, task concerns, and impact concerns. Being exposed to an innovation can trigger its adopters' concerns, which may be facilitating or constructing its implementation. As the CBAM posits that change is a developmental growth, teachers' concerns move from lower-level concerns to higher-level concerns, particularly from unrelated concerns (teachers are unconcerned), to self-concerns (teachers focus on self-stuff), to task concerns (teachers are concerned about the implementation of the task) and finally to impact concerns (teachers are concerned about the adoption's impact on their students). However, the findings of some prior studies concluded that concerns do not usually follow a linear development, and they are not mutually exclusive. It is very often that a teacher may experience multiple stages of concern. Those stages may overlap and vary in intensity (Ashrafzadeh & Sayadian, 2015; Dele-Ajayi et al., 2021).

Table 1: Stages of Concerns

Unrelated concerns	*Stage 0: Awareness* The individual at this stage has little knowledge or shows little interest and engagement with the proposed innovation.
Self concerns	*Stage 1: Informational* The individual at this stage has a general awareness of and interest in learning more about the innovation. They would like to discover impersonal and substantive details of the innovation.
	Stage 2: Personal The individual at this stage is uncertain about the demands of the innovation, wondering if their skills and ability meet the requirements and how the innovation rewards and affects them.
Task concerns	*Stage 3: Management* The individual at this stage has concerns about logistics, administration, organization, and resources available for the innovation.
Impact concerns	*Stage 4: Consequence* The individual at this stage concentrates on the influence of the innovation on students and thinks about whether changes need to be made to improve students' outcomes.
	Stage 5: Collaboration The individual at this stage focuses on actively working with others to implement the innovation and make it workable.
	Stage 6: Refocusing The individual at this stage indicates interest in making significant changes of modifying, developing enhancing, or even replacing the innovation.

The SoC has been widely used to probe into the stages of concerns of teachers when adopting a technology-related innovation (Al-Furaih & Al-Awidi, 2020; Ashrafzadeh & Sayadian, 2015; Eutsler & Long, 2021; Haines, 2018; Hao & Lee, 2015). Yet, to the authors' knowledge, only one study reported on 152 Social Science faculty members' stages of concern about introducing

a flipped classroom, a model of blended learning, into their teaching practice (Jong, 2019). The research, a quantitative study using SoC, revealed that the teachers had high levels of informational concerns and management concerns. From the findings, Jong (2019) suggested more precise interventions addressing what the teachers actually needed when flipping their classes, especially in terms of information about this teaching approach and its related logistics.

In the current study, blended learning emerged as a mandated educational innovation within the investigated university. While it was claimed to be integrated into the university's teaching and learning routines, a reliable tool was needed to evaluate the extent to which lecturers were embracing this innovative teaching approach and to identify the factors influencing their adoption. The CBAM, particularly the SoC, was selected as the research framework. Firstly, the CBAM, by investigating users' concerns, allows for a comprehensive understanding of the progression of adoption, from initial awareness to full integration. Therefore, in this research, the CBAM facilitates the examination of lecturers' affective perceptions towards blended learning, thereby shedding light on their position in the adoption process. Secondly, the CBAM is a well-established instrument in educational settings for measuring innovations. Specifically, it has been applied in higher education contexts in developing countries similar to the Vietnamese context (Al Masarweh, 2019; Al-Furaih & Al-Awidi, 2020; Dele-Ajayi et al., 2021). Its tools, including the SoC, have undergone extensive testing in multiple studies, consistently demonstrating validity and reliability (Cardoza & Tunks, 2014; Dele-Ajayi et al., 2021; Dunn & Rakes, 2011; George et al., 2006; Jong, 2019). Thirdly, applying CBAM can produce timely feedback and pave the way for data-driven actions to enhance progressive educational change (Olson et al., 2020), especially to inform, assess, and support professional development (Saunders, 2012). In this study, the SoC questionnaire was applied to depict lecturers' user profiles of blended learning, thereby defining their level of adoption. Furthermore, for qualitative data, the SoC guided the design of the data collection instrument and the coding process later. Based on the findings, implications to enhance blended learning adoption among Vietnamese lecturers were proposed.

Methodology

Research Design

This study utilized a mixed methods research design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018) within a case study. As a snapshot of lecturers' current concerns about blended learning in the early implementation phase, this cross-sectional research underwent two distinct stages. The first involved the administration of the Stages of Concern Questionnaire (SoCQ), spanning from December 5th to December 26th, 2023, while the second stage encompassed semi-structured interviews conducted from January 6th to January 31st, 2023. Consequently, the quantitative results regarding the blended learning adoption were not only acquired but also clarified in greater detail, particularly concerning the nuanced voices and perspectives of participants. This approach enabled the uncovering of the underlying mechanisms behind the observed trend (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, 2018).

Sample Size and Sampling Recruitment

In selecting participants for this study, certain criteria were established to ensure the sample's relevance and representation. The study was conducted at a Vietnamese public university

known for its early adoption of blended learning, chosen for its accessibility to one of the authors, which facilitated ethical approval and participant recruitment. The target population comprised the academic community of the university. It was decided to exclusively include full-time lecturers, as they were deemed more likely to offer a comprehensive representation of teaching practices and to align with instructional policies compared to their part-time counterparts. Physical education instructors were deliberately excluded due to their limited utilization of blended learning, resulting in a total of 483 lecturers meeting the inclusion criteria.

Participants for Quantitative Data: For the quantitative phase, efforts were made to maximize the sample size. The SoC questionnaire was distributed via email to the sampling frame of 483 full-time lecturers, resulting in a return of 178 responses. Subsequently, 13 responses were excluded due to incompleteness or anomalies, leaving a final sample size of 165 responses, which accounted for 35% of the total full-time academic staff (Table 2). It should be noted that while these responses provided valuable insights, they may not fully represent the diverse academic community in terms of disciplines, experience with blended learning, and demographics.

To address potential limitations in sample representativeness, statistical analyses were conducted to examine the relationship between lecturers' stages of concern regarding blended learning and demographic variables. Specifically, t-tests and analysis of variance (ANOVA) were employed to explore how these demographic factors may influence lecturers' concerns about blended learning adoption. Further discussion on the potential impact of sampling limitations, as well as the results of the t-tests and ANOVA, are provided in subsequent sections of this study.

Table 2: Demographics of Participants for Quantitative Data

	Frequency	Percent		Frequency	Percent
Gender			*Age*		
Male	66	40.0	< 30	10	6.1
Female	99	60.0	30 – 39	61	37.0
Academic degree			40 – 49	55	33.3
Bachelor's	3	1.8	50 – 59	35	21.2
Master's	106	64.2	> 60	4	2.4
Doctorate	56	33.9	*School of*		
Time of using BL			Economics	16	9.7
Never	51	30.9	Management	13	7.9
< 1 year	51	30.9	International Business – Marketing	7	4.2
1 – 2 years	34	20.6	Public Finance	4	2.4
3 – 4 years	19	11.5	Finance	11	6.7
5 – 6 years	7	4.2	Banking	17	10.3
> 6 years	3	1.8	Accounting	21	12.7
Self-perceived competence of using BL			Economic Mathematics – Statistics	4	2.4
Undefined (vague awareness of BL)	14	8.5	Business Information Technology	7	4.2
Non-user	32	19.4	Social sciences	11	6.7
Novice	37	22.4	Law	11	6.7
Pre-intermediate	58	35.2	Government	3	1.8
Intermediate	21	12.7	Foreign Languages	33	20.0
Old hand	3	1.8	Tourism	6	3.6
Past user	0	0.0	International School of Business	1	0.6

Note: BL = Blended Learning

Participants for Qualitative Data: At the conclusion of the questionnaire, respondents were given the option to provide their email addresses if they were willing to participate in follow-up interviews. Interested participants provided a total of 23 email addresses. From this pool, we purposively selected 16 participants to ensure representation across various demographic factors such as gender, experience with blended learning, academic degree, age, and discipline. This selection process aimed to achieve the best consistency with the sample size and demographic distribution observed in the quantitative stage of the study while also maximizing the range of perspectives.

Data Collection

For Quantitative Data: To collect quantitative data on teachers' concerns about blended learning implementation, we adopted the SoCQ. According to George et al. (2006), the SoCQ was developed to provide a quick-scoring measure of the seven Stages of Concern about an innovation" (p. 11). It is a quantitative tool of SoC that "measures what a teacher or user is feeling about an innovation" (p.ix). The main part (the statement section) of the SoCQ consists of 35 items, 5 items exploring one stage of concern. The items are listed in a mixed order and use an 8-point Likert scale indicating the increasing intensity of concern. Particularly, respondents are supposed to rate 35 statements among *irrelevant* (0), *not true of me now* (1, 2), *somewhat true of me now* (3, 4, 5), and *very true of me now* (6,7). Examples of the statements can be seen in Table 4, which lists five items of Stage 1.

Table 3: Demographics of Participants for Qualitative Data

Participant	Gender	Age (Years)	Academic degree	Teaching experience	Time of using BL	Self-perceived competence of using BL	School of
Lecturer 1	Male	25	Master's	6 months	6 months	Novice	Law
Lecturer 2	Female	48	Master's	25 years	N/A	Non-user	Foreign Languages
Lecturer 3	Female	41	Doctorate	18 years	6 years	Pre-intermediate	Banking
Lecturer 4	Male	41	Mater's	18 years	N/A	Non-user	Business Information Technology
Lecturer 5	Female	31	Mater's	9 years	1 year	Novice	Foreign Languages
Lecturer 6	Male	56	Doctorate	13 years	N/A	Non-user	Economics
Lecturer 7	Male	47	Doctorate	24 years	10 years	Intermediate	Law
Lecturer 8	Male	35	Doctorate	13 years	5 years	Pre-intermediate	Finance
Lecturer 9	Male	37	Mater's	6 years	4 years	Intermediate	Business Information Technology
Lecturer 10	Male	30	Master's	8 years	1 year	Novice	Foreign Languages
Lecturer 11	Male	41	Doctorate	8 years	2 years	Intermediate	Economics
Lecturer 12	Female	44	Doctorate	16 years	4 years	Novice	International Business
Lecturer 13	Female	43	Master	20 years	N/A	Non-user	Foreign Languages
Lecturer 14	Female	40	Doctorate	17 years	2	Novice	Economics
Lecturer 15	Male	47	Doctorate	24 years	15	Old hand	International Business
Lecturer 16	Female	28	Master's	6 years	2 years	Novice	Tourism

Note: BL = Blended Learning; N/A = Not Available

Table 4: Items Exploring Stage 1 Concerns

Item number	Item
6	I have very limited knowledge of the innovation
14	I would like to discuss the possibility of using the innovation
15	I would like to know what resources are available if we decide to adopt this innovation
26	I would like to know what the use of the innovation will require in the immediate future
35	I would like to know how this innovation is better than what we have now

The current study obtained the license to use SoCQ granted by the American Institutes for Research, which possesses the CBAM tools and publications instructing their usage. There were two main parts in our Vietnamese SoCQ employed in this research. The first part was to collect the participating lecturers' demographic information, including gender, age group, discipline, years of using blended learning, and perceived competence of this approach (see Table 2). The second part consisted of 35 SoC items. In this part, we minorly changed the original items by replacing the term "innovation" with "blended learning," then, two researchers independently translated the questionnaire into Vietnamese. The two translations were then compared and discussed among Vietnamese authors. The agreed translation was later sent to two experienced Vietnamese English lecturers for language accuracy and appropriateness checking. Sequentially, we transferred the questionnaire to Qualtrics and sent the link to 8 lecturers for piloting. Comments on language use, cover letter, and layout were collected and considered to finalize the official version, which was then emailed to the lecturers.

As a widely used tool, the validity and reliability of the SoCQ have been confirmed in various studies (Al-Furaih & Al-Awidi, 2020; Dele-Ajayi et al., 2021; Dunn & Rakes, 2011; George et al., 2006; Jong, 2019). However, the researchers found it necessary to examine the internal reliability of all stages of concern featured in the revised questionnaire. Using the SPSS 26, we computed Cronbach's alpha for each stage. As illustrated in Table 5, all the Cronbach's alpha coefficients surpass 0.7. This outcome strongly suggests that the Vietnamese version of the SoCQ utilized in our research attains commendable reliability.

Table 5: Alpha Reliability for the SoCQ Subscales for the Surveyed Sample

Stages of concern		α reliability
0	Awareness	0.71
1	Informational	0.81
2	Personal	0.86
3	Management	0.85
4	Consequence	0.85
5	Collaboration	0.83
6	Refocusing	0.79

For Qualitative Data: We conducted 16 semi-structured interviews with 16 lecturers who accepted the interview request. Each interview was approximately one-hour long and done in Vietnamese. We believe that the use of the native language could allow the participants to express their thoughts more comprehensively than the use of English. All the interview sessions were conducted online on Google Meet due to the convenience of the participants. The researchers decided to use semi-structured interviews because they are "neither rigid nor too open and allow new questions if needed to be brought up" (Aung et al., 2021, p. 601). The prompts of the interviews were mostly developed from SoCQ to get an in-depth understanding of particular concerns that lecturers held about blended learning) (see Table 6).

Table 6: Semi-structured Interview Prompts

Focus	Prompt
General	Have you implemented blended learning in your teaching practice? - If no, why haven't you? - If yes, why have you? How long have you implemented it? What advantages and disadvant do you have when implementing it?
Stage 0	How much are you interested in blended learning?
Stage 1	Currently, what do you want to know about blended learning?
Stage 2	How do you think the implementation of blended learning can affect you personally?
Stage 3	What do you think it takes you logistically to implement blended learning?
Stage 4	How do you think blended learning affects your students?
Stage 5	How willing are you to coordinate your efforts with others to maximize the blended learning's effect
Stage 6	Do you have any ideas about something that would work even better than the blended learning you doing?

Data Analysis

For the quantitative data derived from the SoCQ, we opted for the profile analysis as it stands out as the most comprehensive and commonly employed method (George et al., 2006). Initially, with the use of SPSS 26, we calculated raw scores for each participant across all stages. Next, the average raw scores for six stages were computed for the entire sample. These mean raw scores were then converted into percentile scores using the provided conversion table in the SoCQ manual (George et al., 2006). Subsequently, we generated a visual graph to portray the group profile, which was later interpreted following the guidelines set by George et al. (2006). The final step involved conducting a T-test and ANOVA to examine whether lecturer demographics, which include gender, age group, academic degree, duration of using blended learning, and perceived competence in using blended learning, could predict their concerns.

For the qualitative data, interview recordings were transcribed and then sent back to the participants for accuracy checking. After confirmation, the transcripts were uploaded to NVivo 11. The analysis of interview transcripts (Figure 1) utilized thematic analysis, following a five-phase process of qualitative data analysis proposed by Bingham (2023). This approach incorporated both deductive and inductive coding strategies to comprehensively examine the data, facilitating proper recognition of participants' voices while allowing for a more theory-driven analysis (Proudfoot, 2023). Additionally, the process involves guided memoing and analytic questioning, contributing to the trustworthiness and rigor of the study (Bingham, 2023).

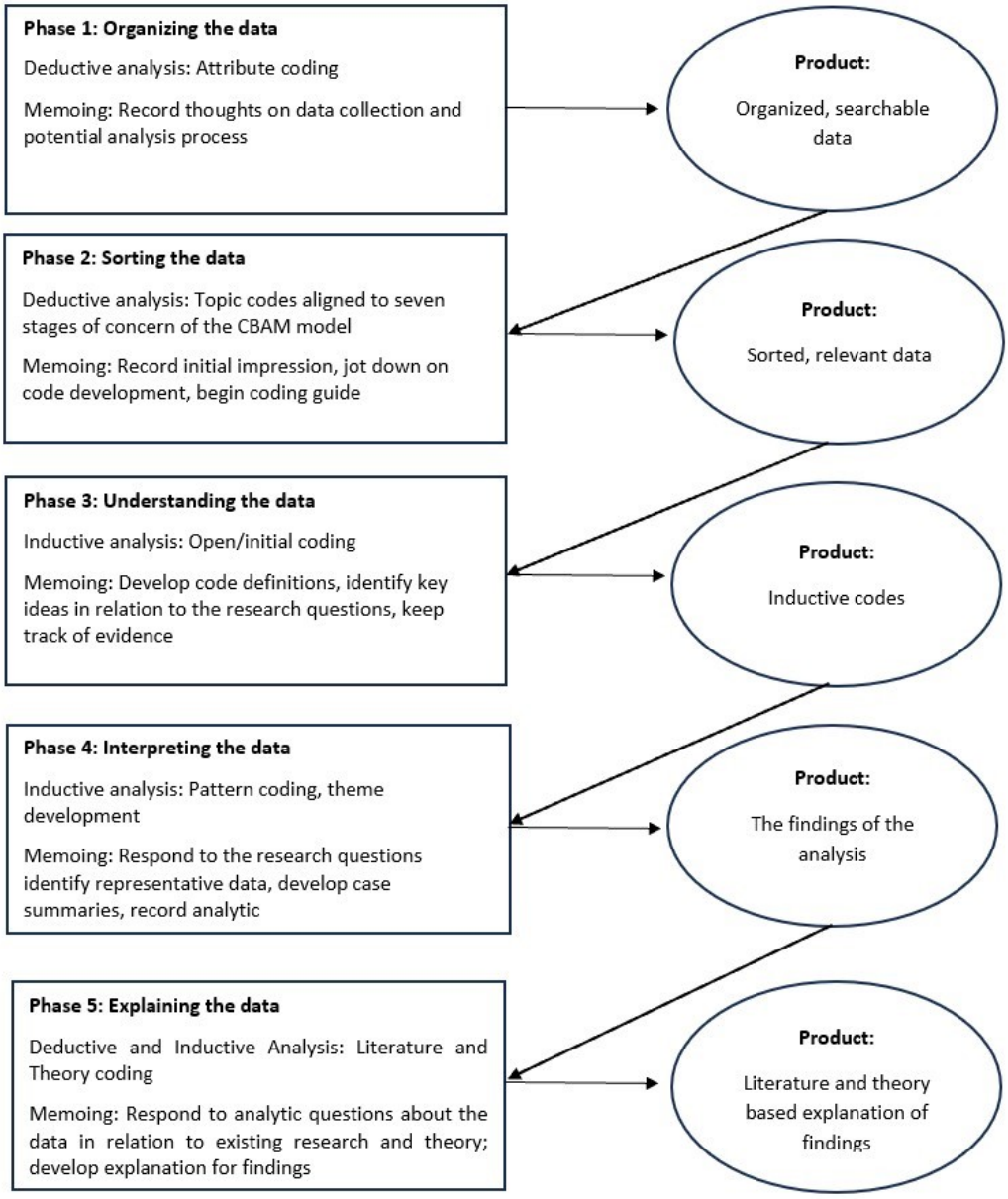

Figure 1: The Five-phase Qualitative Data Analysing Process (Adapted from Bingham (2023))

To ensure coding reliability, four out of sixteen transcripts (25%) were coded independently by two researchers. The inter-coder agreement initially reached 88%. Disagreements were resolved after discussion, and the final inter-coder agreement was 96%, providing satisfactory inter-coder reliability. Afterward, the primary coder assumed the responsibility of autonomously coding the remaining data. During the coding process, we retained the transcripts in Vietnamese. When the coding was completed, the two researchers independently translated all coded data into English. The translations were then contrasted to produce the final translation. Finally, the emerged categories, themes, and patterns were analysed and compared against the SoCQ results.

Ethics Considerations

The research obtained ethics approval from the relevant university's Ethics Committee and permission to access faculty members' email lists. Participants were informed about the research before data collection, and explicit consent forms were obtained to ensure voluntary participation. The anonymity of questionnaire respondents and the confidentiality of interviewees were assured throughout the research.

Findings

This section presents the findings from the study, organized into two main parts: quantitative results from the survey and qualitative insights from the interviews. The quantitative part will cover the survey results, including the SoC profile and demographic analysis. The qualitative part will delve into the themes and sub-themes identified through the interviews, highlighting both constraining and enabling factors affecting lecturers' adoption of blended learning.

Quantitative Findings: The Current Stage of Blended Learning Adoption among Lecturers According to the Concerns-Based Adoption Model

The survey results presented a contrasting scenario between the lecturers' group SoC profile and their self-assessment of blended learning competence: The participants expressed optimism about their adoption, with 69.1% stating prior practice and 49.7% perceiving themselves at the pre-intermediate, intermediate, or advanced level in using blended learning. However, their group SoC profile presented numerically in Table 7 and graphically in Figure 2, indicated that they were still in the early phase of adopting this pedagogical innovation.

The SoC profile aligns with the non-user profile as defined by the SoC manual (George et al., 2006). Specifically, its shape is characterized by highest intensity in the lower-level stages (Stage 0, Stage 1, Stage 2), moderate in the intermediate stage (Stage 3), and lowest in the higher-level stages (Stage 4, Stage 5, and Stage 6). From the profile, we can see that the participants, in general, were not fully aware of blended learning. In fact, they had a higher interest in other matters (indicated by a high percentile score in Stage 0). As Stage 1 and Stage 2 are also high, it can be inferred that the lecturers were willing to learn about this innovation, but they also held significant personal concerns regarding the demands and impacts of blended learning on them. Their concerns about logistical aspects (Stage 3), the influence of blended learning on their students (Stage 4), and collaboration with others (Stage 5) were not currently prominent priorities. Notably, a tailing-up of Stage 6 can be a warning of potential resistance from the lecturers (George et al., 2006).

Table 7: Mean and Percentile Score of Each SoC Stage

Stage of Concern		Mean	Percentiles
0	Awareness	15,15	87
1	Informational	24,55	89
2	Personal	25,42	86
3	Management	20,79	80
4	Consequence	26,3	60
5	Collaboration	23,22	60
6	Refocusing	22,13	73

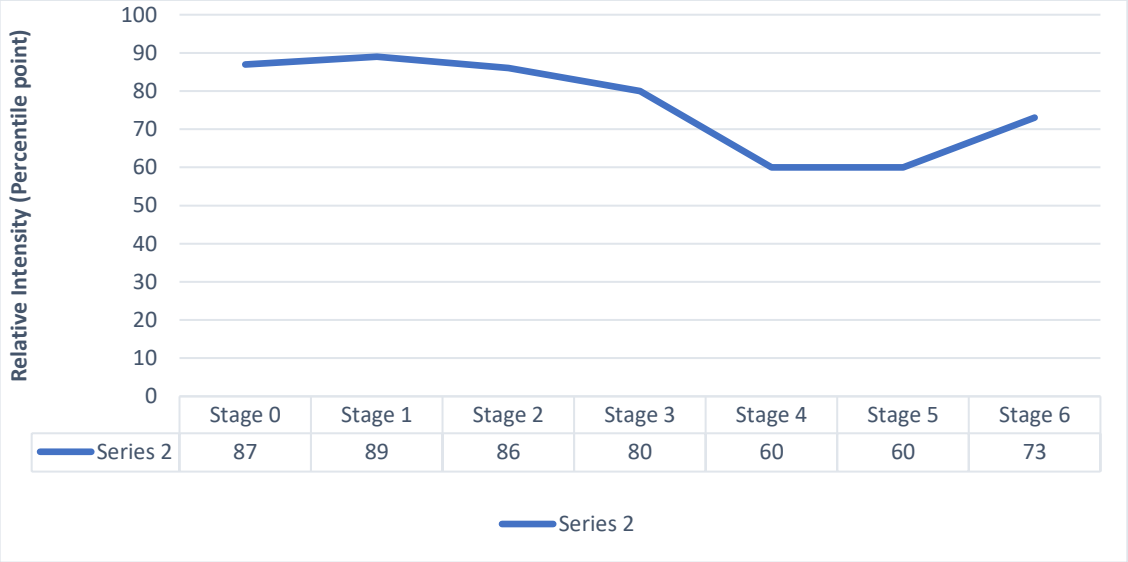

Figure 2: The Lecturers' Stages of Concern Profile

Regarding the relationship between lecturers' stages of concern and demographic variables, the independent sample T-test showed no significant differences between teachers' intensity of concern by their gender. In terms of the results from the one-way ANOVA, age, academic degree, and time of using blended learning were not significant predictors of teachers' concern levels. However, significant differences were observed in Stage 3 (Management) according to lecturers' self-perceived competence in using blended learning, as well as in Stage 5 (Collaboration) regarding lecturers' discipline.

The post hoc test was then conducted to unveil the differences further. As a result, the old hands (M = 0.7) and the intermediate users (M= 2.4) were significantly less concerned about management aspects than the non-users (M = 3.2) and the undefined ones (M = 3.6). These findings suggest that increased confidence in using blended learning is associated with reduced anxiety about its logistics. Regarding the relationship between Stage 5 (Collaboration) and discipline, an important finding emerged: lecturers from Business Information Technology school (M = 6) exhibited significantly greater interest in collaborative work than their counterparts in Banking (Sig. = .001), Foreign Languages (Sig. = .002), Government (Sig. = .012), Mathematics – Statistics (Sig. = .025), and Economics (Sig. = .028).

Qualitative Findings: Lecturers' Concerns about Blended Learning Adoption

The analysis of interview data revealed some lecturers' prominent concerns regarding implementing blended learning. These concerns were sub-themes that emerged from coding, categorizing, and synthesizing interview data. These concerns were mapped into different stages of concern, ranging from Stage 1 (Informational) to Stage 6 (Refocusing). We decided to exclude Stage 0 (Awareness) from our consideration due to its focus on participants' level of interest. While the survey results indicated a relatively high percentile score in Stage 0, meaning blended learning was not a central aspect of the lecturers' thinking and work, it was observed that the interview participants consisted mainly of individuals with a significant interest in this instructional innovation. This was not surprising as interview participants typically exhibited

a notable interest in the researched topic. To ensure unbiased findings, we chose not to include the results related to Stage 0 in our report.

The findings on lecturers' specific concerns about the adoption of blended learning are summarized in Table 8. The sub-themes presented in the table represent the predominant concerns identified throughout the analysis and their corresponding SoC. These concerns were subsequently categorized into two overarching domains: constraining and enabling factors. This categorization allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the positive and negative aspects of lecturers' perceptions of the implementation of blended learning.

Table 8: Summary of Emerged Themes and Sub-themes

Theme	Subtheme	Corresponding SoC
Constraining factors	Instructional ambiguity	Informational (Stage 1)
	Technological apprehension	Personal (Stage 2)
	Workload stress	Management (Stage 3)
	Scepticism about student autonomy	Consequence (Stage 4)
Enabling factors	Learning readiness	Informational (Stage 1)
	Intradisciplinary collaboration enthusiasm	Collaboration (Stage 5)
	Adaptability	Refocusing (Stage 6)

Constraining Factors Affecting Lecturers' Blended Learning Adoption: Constraining factors encompass the hurdles arising from the lecturers' self-concerns (instructional ambiguity and technological apprehension), their task-related concerns (workload stress), and their impact concerns (skepticism of student autonomy).

First of all, the uncertainty about the nature of blended learning was one of the most noticeable findings of our study. This sub-theme aligned with the lecturers' high level of informational concerns (Stage 1), yielding their strong demand for information on blended learning. 11 out of 16 interviewees stated that they heard about blended learning from training courses held by the university but still felt confused about the essence and the practices of blended learning.

> I attended some training courses at our university when we moved to teaching online. Some methods were mentioned in the courses, such as flipped learning, blended learning, or hybrid learning, but I am still unclear about the differences between them. Which one will be employed at our university? Is what we are doing blended learning? I am not really sure about those. (Lecturer 12)

When asked to share their current understanding of this concept, the participants provided varied definitions. Some participants believed that simply using video conferencing tools like Zoom, Google Meet, or Microsoft Teams constituted blended learning. Others associated blended learning with the integration of technology into teaching. Some mentioned that blended learning involved a combination of online and offline teaching, but they expressed uncertainty regarding the underlying principles and specific implementation details.

Another noteworthy self-concern observed among the lecturers in this study was their technological apprehension. This concern fell into the category of personal concerns (Stage 2) since it stemmed from the lecturers' comparison of their capabilities with the requirements of blended learning. A significant portion of the participating lecturers, especially those aged over forty, displayed little confidence in integrating technology into their teaching practice.

Consequently, some lecturers exhibited hesitance towards adopting the blended learning approach.

> I am not good at using technology, so I don't think I can do well with this approach. I can only do simple tasks with technologies such as designing PowerPoint slides or using search-based tools. And I am afraid that I can't deal with technical issues when teaching with technology. I feel pretty worried about this. (Lecturer 2)

Additionally, the lecturer participants expressed significant workload stress associated with implementing blended learning. This concern was voiced by lecturers who had already adopted blended learning as well as those who had not yet incorporated this teaching approach. They anticipated or experienced a sense of being overwhelmed when handling multiple tasks simultaneously, such as designing teaching and learning activities, managing student progress, and curating and developing teaching materials, all within limited time constraints.

> I have been using blended learning with my classes for a couple of years, and I realize there are many things to do, including making videos, designing quizzes, searching for reference materials, assigning tasks, marking, and giving feedback. It takes time to prepare lessons as I have to develop materials for both the LMS and physical classes. (Lecturer 8)

Meanwhile, several lecturers expressed their skepticism regarding the impact of blended learning due to their students' low learning autonomy. They speculated that students' performance could be unsatisfactory due to a perceived lack of autonomy in their learning process.

> I think students need to be self-disciplined when learning with this approach. They, albeit with lecturers' facilitation, must do things by themselves, so I am a bit concerned about student learning autonomy levels at our university. If students are not engaged in learning activities, I am afraid that their academic performance will be negatively affected. (Lecturer 14)

Enabling Factors Affecting Lecturers' Blended Learning Adoption: In addition to the identified constraints, the interviews with the lecturer participants uncovered enabling factors indicating their positive attitudes towards implementing blended learning. The enabling factors comprising learning readiness, intradisciplinary collaboration enthusiasm, and adaptability corresponded to the stage of informational concerns, the stage of collaborative concerns, and the stage of refocusing concerns, respectively.

An important finding of this study was the participants' strong sense of learning readiness regarding blended learning. On the one hand, the interviewed lecturers confessed their uncertainty about the nature of blended learning, as highlighted in the subtheme "Instructional Ambiguity." On the other hand, they exhibited a notable eagerness to acquire knowledge about this pedagogical approach.

> First and foremost, I need to understand the essence of blended learning properly, how it differs from online and face-to-face teaching, and how to implement it correctly. Additionally, I aim to grasp the correct methods for effectively implementing blended learning. (Lecturer 13)

Some participants expressed a need for additional training from the school, while others acknowledged their knowledge of blended learning but felt uncertain as it was mainly acquired

through self-learning in an unsystematic manner. These participants sought validation and confirmation of their understanding. Interestingly, the only participant claiming to have sufficient knowledge of blended learning was a veteran with approximately 15 years of experience in its implementation.

In terms of collaborative spirit, the study revealed that the lecturers expressed interest in engaging in collaborative efforts within their discipline when it came to blended learning. They expressed a desire to learn from their colleagues and leverage their experience in various aspects, such as creating teaching materials, designing activities, and producing lecture videos. However, they showed hesitation and uncertainty when it came to interdisciplinary collaboration or leading the collaboration.

> I am willing to collaborate with colleagues to implement blended learning in my courses. Still, I am unsure if collaborating with those teaching different fields of knowledge works, as each discipline has its characteristics. We cannot have one size that fits all. (Lecturer 12)

> I am more than happy to participate in experience-sharing sessions regarding applying blended learning, of course, as an attendee. (Lecturer 2)

Finally, the study highlighted the presence of adaptive teaching strategies among the lecturers, as revealed through their responses regarding suggestions for an alternative approach that could potentially yield better results than blended learning. While the participants expressed no intention of completely replacing blended learning or making drastic changes, they expressed a strong desire to make adaptations to suit their specific teaching contexts. Factors such as targeted learning objectives, class size, students' academic level, and students' engagement were considered by the lecturers. They emphasized the importance of varying the teaching script and the proportion between online and in-person work according to different classes and lessons.

> I absolutely need to make changes. Actually, I have to customize my way of doing blended learning according to the characteristics of each class. For example, the size of a class, if it is a large class, I'll do it this way, but if it is a small class, say 20, I'll do it differently. (Lecturer 3)

Discussion

One essential finding from this study was that lecturers predominantly remained in the initial stages of adopting blended learning. They did not fully embrace blended learning and expressed a lack of comfort with this shift. This reluctance corresponded with previous research conducted in Vietnamese higher education institutions regarding blended learning adoption (Cao, 2022; Le et al., 2022; Pham & Nguyen, 2021). For instance, Le et al. (2022) reported a lack of knowledge among participants on how to implement blended learning in English teaching effectively. Similarly, Cao (2022) concluded that lecturers still harbored concerns and exhibited apprehension towards blended learning. A possible explanation for this reluctance could be that the implementation of blended learning was primarily a top-down decision within the surveyed university, lacking detailed guidelines on implementation, leveraging instructional benefits, and providing poor professional development (Hoang, 2015; Le & Johnson, 2022).

From a quantitative perspective, the lecturers' adoption of blended learning was superficial, as indicated by their intense concerns across all categories. When comparing the SoC profile observed in this research with typical non-user profiles outlined by George et al. (2006) and

those identified in other CBAM-based studies on technology adoption in education (Dele-Ajayi et al., 2021; Lochner et al., 2015; Olson et al., 2020), notable differences emerged. While the SoC profile in this study exhibited a similar trend to the mentioned profiles, it displayed significantly higher intensity across all stages of concern and a reduced disparity between the assessed stages, suggesting a more uniform level across the stages. The heightened intensity of concerns observed in almost all stages can be explained by the superficial adoption of blended learning among the lecturers. Despite the university's encouragement for blended learning implementation since 2016, the execution often lacked depth. This resulted in lecturers maintaining significant early concerns while feeling compelled to integrate this instructional approach into their teaching practices, thereby leading to management and impact concerns. Such distinct characteristic also implies that reactions to adoption can vary significantly and may not conform to predefined patterns and that concern stages are concurrent and overlapping (Ashrafzadeh & Sayadian, 2015; Dele-Ajayi et al., 2021). Therefore, it is recommended that the stages of concern proposed by the CBAM should be viewed as categorical rather than linear steps.

Other interesting insights emerged from examining the relationship between the lecturers' stages of concern and their demographic variables. The findings indicated no significant differences in lecturers' concerns about adopting blended learning based on gender, age, academic degree, and years of using blended learning. This aligns with results from several prior studies employing the CBAM to investigate lecturers' concerns about integrating technology in teaching, as seen in studies by Dele-Ajayi et al. (2021) and Al-Furaih and Al-Awidi (2020). Regarding the relationship between lecturers' self-assessment of blended learning competence and their managerial concerns, it was observed that the more confident lecturers were about blended learning, the less they were concerned about managerial aspects. Notably, the study revealed a connection between the lecturers' discipline and their collaborative concerns. Similar findings have been noted in literature; for instance, McKissic (2012) observed that science teachers were more adept at integrating technology into their practice than arts and humanities teachers. Al-Furaih & Al-Awidi (2020) suggested that Mathematics and science teachers were better adopters of smartphone technology. In the surveyed university, where most taught disciplines are business-related, lecturers of Business Communication Technology exhibited significantly higher motivation to collaborate in adopting blended learning, possibly due to their superior technological competence. This suggests the potential for leveraging them as pioneers in organizing workshops or seminars to support their colleagues or initiating collaborative groups to facilitate the blended learning implementation process.

Qualitatively, through dialogues with the lecturers, the study provided richer insights into the underlying reasons behind these stages of concern, unveiling the factors influencing Vietnamese lecturers' adoption of blended learning, both constraining and promoting it. One major obstacle identified was their instructional ambiguity toward blended learning. This uncertainty possibly came from the all-encompassing nature of blended learning that we discussed in the section Literature Review. Another rationale was that lecturers were not adequately provided with information and knowledge about the innovation, indicating a top-down policy implementation without sufficient support, particularly in terms of professional development (Pham & Nguyen, 2021; Hoang, 2019). At the time this study was conducted, there was a noticeable absence of an institutional definition or clear guidelines for implementing blended learning. While the university did offer three training courses on blended learning, not all lecturers were able to attend. Even among those who did participate, many expressed that

the provided courses were inadequate in meeting their needs. Another significant concern was technological apprehension, as technology skills are perceived as crucial for effective blended teaching (Graham, 2019). If high levels of technology self-efficacy among lecturers could serve as a reliable indicator of their active application of blended learning (Cao, 2022), low technological competence contributed to resistance among participants (Aldosemani et al., 2019; Le et al., 2022; Pham & Nguyen, 2021; Tshabalala et al., 2014). This underscores the need for comprehensive support and professional development initiatives in terms of technology integration.

Additionally, lecturers expressed concerns about heavy workloads despite the anticipated time-saving benefits of blended learning (Arnett, 2016). Similar challenges of managing numerous tasks within a limited time have been observed in K-12 settings (Hanny et al., 2021) and tertiary environments (Borgerding et al., 2013). The concerns about the heavy workload may have arisen due to the inappropriate and unsuccessful implementation of blended learning (Le et al., 2022). Plus, it is important to acknowledge that integrating blended learning or any technology always incurs upfront costs, as teachers need time to learn and adapt to new methods. As lecturers gradually master blended learning and develop reusable resources, these initial costs are likely to diminish. While our research was conducted during the initial phase of blended learning, participants' negative assumptions and experiences of workload demands are understandable.

Furthermore, lecturers indicated skepticism about their students' autonomy. This concern is well-founded, as previous research has established an interrelationship between learner autonomy and academic performance within the blended learning environment (Günes & Alagözlü, 2020). Despite these concerns, the participants had a strong sense of optimism regarding the influence of blended learning on students. They believed that blended learning could positively impact students' learning outcomes and foster the technological competence required for effective engagement with blended learning.

On a positive note, the study highlighted some encouraging factors promoting blended learning adoption among lecturers. Participants demonstrated learning readiness, indicating a positive mindset and willingness to embrace change for the benefit of students' learning experiences. This positive attitude, if leveraged by appropriate support and resources, could have the potential to facilitate the effective adoption and implementation of blended learning. In addition, lecturers expressed enthusiasm for intradisciplinary collaboration. However, lecturers revealed their preference for being followers, receiving knowledge rather than taking on leadership roles in collaborations. This reluctance may stem from a lack of expertise in blended learning and technological skills, as well as cultural norms emphasizing conservatism and shyness (Truong & Wang, 2019). Finally, adaptability emerged as a crucial attitude among lecturers. This reflects their understanding that a one-size-fits-all blended learning approach may not be effective in meeting their students' diverse needs and characteristics. It also demonstrated their proactive approach to enhancing teaching practices and commitment to continuous improvement and professional growth (Collie et al., 2018). These findings underscore the promising potential of blended learning in successfully integrating into institutional practice when supported by comprehensive professional development initiatives and a conducive institutional environment.

The interaction between quantitative and qualitative findings underscores the complexity of lecturers' concerns. While the quantitative data quantified the prevalence and intensity of concerns, the qualitative data explained the reasons behind these concerns. Particularly, the

high levels of unrelated and self-focused concerns identified quantitatively were further elucidated by qualitative insights into the lecturers' experiences with instructional ambiguity, technological challenges, workload burdens, and skepticism about student autonomy. This holistic approach highlighted that a combination of insufficient institutional support and personal apprehensions drove the superficial adoption of blended learning. Simultaneously, the qualitative analysis revealed that, despite their apprehensions, lecturers also exhibited a positive attitude towards blended learning. This positive outlook can serve as a critical supportive factor for institutional blended learning adoption, indicating that appropriate actions should be taken to leverage this optimism and facilitate a more effective implementation.

Implications

The study's findings suggest that without addressing the identified concerns, lecturers are unlikely to integrate this instructional approach fully. This has several implications for practice and further research:

First, institutions must have clear communication and institutional guidelines. To eliminate confusion, institutions should provide a clear definition of blended learning. Additionally, issuing guidelines outlining requirements and evaluation criteria can support systematic implementation. By establishing clear communication channels and guidelines, expectations can be aligned, and a shared understanding can be created among lecturers and administrators.

Secondly, change facilitators should plan additional professional development initiatives that specifically address lecturers' instructional ambiguity, technological inefficiency, workload management concerns, and skepticism of student learning autonomy. It is recommended to design hands-on workshops, seminars, and mentoring programs conducted by qualified professionals in relevant fields. These initiatives will provide lecturers with practical guidance, exemplars, and support to create their teaching scripts and seamlessly integrate technology into their instructional practice. By equipping lecturers with such targeted, tangible, and ongoing professional development opportunities, educational institutions can enhance their confidence and competence in utilizing blended learning approaches, ultimately improving the overall quality of education delivery.

Thirdly, in order to spread blended learning institutionally and meet lecturers' needs for collaboration in doing blended learning, institutions should establish and encourage professional learning communities. These communities can provide a platform for lecturers to exchange expertise, share experiences, and support each other. By sharing the workload and promoting motivation, professional learning communities can alleviate concerns related to change adoption and contribute to the successful implementation of blended learning. In early adoption, it is essential to prioritize intradisciplinary collaboration. Once intradisciplinary collaboration is established and flourishes, lecturers will be better equipped to engage in fruitful collaboration across disciplines.

Fourthly, it is important to create a safe and encouraging environment for lecturers to experiment with blended learning. Rather than mandating change which could make lecturers react by adopting blended learning superficially, lecturers should be prepared step by step and given the freedom to take risks and reflect on their experiences. Acknowledging and celebrating the successes of blended learning pioneers can inspire others and promote a culture of innovation. Moreover, reducing workload, providing teaching assistants, and establishing technical support teams can alleviate concerns and reassure lecturers about the work burden

and the technical aspects of blended learning. Additionally, providing funds or incentives can further motivate lecturers to embrace blended learning.

Finally, in addition to addressing lecturers' concerns, it is crucial to conduct further research on their experiences and practices in implementing blended learning. Future studies should aim to explore lecturers' specific needs for support and professional development, taking into account contextual factors that influence their adoption of blended learning, such as institutional support, availability of resources, and adequacy of infrastructure. Understanding these aspects will not only enhance our knowledge of lecturers' perspectives on blended learning but also inform the design of targeted interventions and effective support mechanisms that empower lecturers to embrace the instructional approach. Moreover, conducting longitudinal studies that track the development trends of blended learning adoption in higher education settings will enable us to gain insights into the long-term impact and evolution of blended learning practices. As such, researchers can identify emerging trends, challenges, and opportunities, facilitating the continuous improvement and advancement of blended learning pedagogy.

Limitations of this research

The low return rate of the survey (35%) and limitations in participant recruitment might have raised concerns about the representativeness of the sample for the target academic population. Additionally, another limitation of this research is its sole focus on the first dimension of the CBAM, neglecting the Levels of Use and Innovation Configuration. This narrow focus, to some extent, limits the comprehensive understanding of lecturers' adoption and utilization of blended learning. Consequently, caution is advised when extending the generalization of the findings into practical applications, as the broader spectrum of adoption behaviors and implementation strategies has not been fully explored in this study.

Conclusion

This research is one of the pioneering studies using the CBAM model to examine blended learning adoption. Its main finding revealed that the participant lecturers were at the initial stage of adopting blended learning, tended to adopt it superficially, and had high self-concerns about its implementation. The study also highlighted specific prominent concerns among the lecturers who were required to use this teaching approach. On the one hand, the lecturers encountered uncertainty about the essence of blended learning, low confidence in their technological skills, difficulties in managing multiple tasks, and concern about students' learning autonomy. On the other hand, on a positive note, they showed their willingness to learn, eagerness to do an intradisciplinary collaboration, and readiness to adjust blended learning to their teaching practice. The goal of this research was to raise awareness among change facilitators and researchers about lecturers' concerns regarding blended learning while also providing implications for resolving their hindering concerns and promoting their supportive ones. Ultimately, the aim was to contribute to developing an effective roadmap for integrating blended learning in educational institutions.

In general, the research reinforced the consistency of CBAM theory in the early adoption of an innovation. Furthermore, it echoed previous studies' results on teachers' perceptions of blended learning, especially those conducted in Vietnamese contexts. Therefore, the CBAM can be reliable for measuring blended learning adoption. However, this application should be cautious

as our research reconfirmed that concern stages identified by the CBAM model are not necessarily sequential. In fact, adopters may experience different stages of concern simultaneously. This is because teacher change is a complex process that does not follow a linear path. Therefore, when applying the CBAM to examine blended learning adoption or any other innovation adoption, researchers should consider stages of concern as categorical rather than sequential.

Statements and Declarations

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Conflict of Interest Statement

All authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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EFL LEARNERS' READINESS AND CHALLENGES FOR IMMEDIATE ONLINE LEARNING: A CASE STUDY IN VIETNAM

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ABSTRACT

The world has been grappling with a pandemic of unprecedented severity. This has affected both social and economic aspects of life, including education. In most parts of the world, schools and universities have been at least partly closed, and online learning has become more prevalent than ever before. The paper presents the findings of a quantitative study examining the readiness of EFL students for online learning in Vietnam and identifies difficulties in online learning in late 2021. A questionnaire with 7 parts was employed to gather data, which was then analyzed using SPSS. The participants were 1,099 EFL undergraduate students. The findings reveal that EFL students in Vietnam have a high level of readiness for online learning. There is no significant statistical difference in the level of readiness of male and female groups of students for online learning. However, students' class levels are found to have an impact on students' readiness. Students are found to experience challenges such as difficulties in a distracting environment, and technical issues. It is highly recommended that universities should provide students with consistent technical support and necessary training for their online learning. In addition, suitable online learning activities, specific guidelines for online learning, course requirements, and suitable teaching pedagogies with varied activities need to be designed carefully to increase students' online learning readiness.

Keywords: Online learning; EFL students; computer/ internet self- efficacy; self-directed learning; motivation for learning, learner control; online communication self-efficacy

Introduction

The world has been grappling with a pandemic of unprecedented severity since the outbreak of COVID-19 in early 2020. All sectors have been seriously affected, especially education. Schools and universities have been suspended worldwide to prevent the fast spread of the coronavirus, resulting in a quick move from face-to-face learning to online learning. In Vietnam, the Ministry of Education and Training immediately enacted suitable policies and guidance[1] for the shift from face-to-face learning to online learning (Pham & Ho, 2020). However, the application of online learning without much preparation has caused many problems for both teachers and students. (Al-Mohair & Alwahaishi, 2020; Koo, 2008; Nguyen & Nguyen, 2021). Teachers' lack of preparation and students' lack of experience in online learning is found to be responsible for boredom in online classes when the strategies adopted are not either suitable or sufficient for effective online classes (Derakhshan et al., 2021; Derakhshan et al., 2022; Huang & Zheng, 2022). In addition, the quality of online learning is basically determined by students' readiness for learning in that form (Hung et al., 2010). According to Hung et al., the level of students' readiness for online learning is determined by five dimensions: computer/internet self-efficacy, self-directed learning, motivation for learning, learner control, and online communication self-efficacy.

Many studies have been conducted recently on online learning and online teaching at the tertiary level. Specifically, Tang et al. (2021) investigated the readiness of students in higher education in regard to motivation, learning readiness, technology readiness, and students' self-efficacy. The study revealed that post-graduate students were better prepared for online learning than undergraduate students. Another quantitative study implemented in India indicated that learners in higher education had positive perceptions of online learning, and the level of acceptance of online learning was high (Khan et al., 2021). Research done in 13 European countries showed that although universities in those countries quickly adapted to the new teaching context, passive delivery of lessons, and a lack of interaction were recognized in online learning (Tartavulea et al., 2020). Learner readiness for online learning, however, varies from one institution to another, and the level of readiness is impacted by many factors, such as ICT skills, motivation, and training (Sulaiman et al., 2021). Chung et al. (2020) discovered that Malaysian learners' readiness for online learning was only at a moderate level. Facility, teaching methodology, and ICT skills are recognised as the major constraints of online learning and teaching (Allen et al., 2014; Daniel et al., 2016; Khan et al., 2021; Tartavulea et al., 2020).

During the COVID-19 era, online learning environments have been observed to elicit negative emotions such as boredom among learners. Students in Iran were found to experience more boredom in online classes than in normal classes (Pawlak et al., 2021). Similarly, teachers also encountered such boredom in their online instruction, as revealed in the study in China with the participation of 216 EFL teachers (Wang, 2023). Such feelings can be divided into three categories: student-related, task-related, and teacher-related ones. It is suggested to solve such negative feelings by the use of engaging tasks or materials, suitable teaching methods, and teachers' humor to enhance classroom interactions and students' participation (Wang, 2023).

[1] From Ministry of Education and Training. (2020). *Official Dispatch: Guidelines for teaching via Internet, TV for general and regfor general and regular education institutions during the schools' closure by COVID-19 pandemic in 2019–2020 academic-year*. Hanoi, Vietnam.

Research on immediate online learning, which has been implemented in Vietnam, shows that students have similar negative feelings, and their level of readiness for online learning is not very high. Nguyen and Nguyen (2021) found that lecturers were not very ready for their online teaching due to capability and pedagogical changes and a lack of ICT knowledge and skills, although universities had real-time support and policies for their online lesson delivery. Another study conducted at one university revealed that lecturers of English in Vietnam were not really ready for online teaching (Vo & Pang, 2021). EFL students at the University of Foreign Language Studies were observed to experience a decrease in motivation, self-efficacy, and cognitive engagement, while there was a significant improvement in their adaptability to new technologies (Phan et al., 2021). Nguyen and Le (2021) discussed the impact of Learning Management Systems (LMS) on EFL learners' autonomy. The research found that EFL learners in a university in central Vietnam had positive perceptions of LMS and that the use of LMS helped to improve learners' autonomy in English courses with "on/off" online mode in 2020. Similar levels of boredom to what was found in China and Iran (Pawlak et al., 2021; Wang, 2023) is identified in the Vietnamese context. Negative feelings in online classes, like boredom and anxiety among both learners and teachers in emergency virtual environments, caused by many factors such as ICT issues, teachers' lack of methodologies for online instruction as well as restricted activities are recognized in the Vietnamese context (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2021; Vo, 2023; Vo & Nguyen, 2023).

The limitation of these studies is that they were all conducted on a small scale—i.e., in one university with a limited number of participants. Therefore, studies should be carried out on a larger scale to gain a greater insight into online learning among EFL students in Vietnam. In addition, such research focused on some specific aspects of online learning like students' motivation or the use of tools in online learning and teaching. Further studies should be done to gain insight into EFL students' readiness for online learning, which could help to clarify the findings of other studies on online learning and teaching.

The current study was conducted in late 2021 to contribute to the understanding of how ready EFL students were for online learning in Vietnam. The level of readiness for online learning was identified through quantitative research. The research aims to answer the research questions.

(1) How ready were EFL students for immediate online learning in Vietnam?

(2) What challenges did EFL students encounter in immediate online learning in Vietnam?

The two hypotheses are also tested in the study.

(1) Gender affects EFL students' levels of readiness for immediate online learning.

(2) Class level affects EFL students' levels of readiness for immediate online learning.

Literature Review

Computer-Assisted Language Learning and Online Teaching

Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) dates back to the mid-1950s when technology was gradually applied in language teaching (Khamkhien, 2012). CALL is defined as "the search for and study of applications of the computer in language teaching and learning" (Levy, 1997, p. 1). CALL is understood as "a research field which explores the use of computational methods and techniques as well as media for language learning and teaching" (Gamper & Knapp, 2002, p. 329). With the rapid development in technology, CALL has gained increasing popularity, especially since the internet has become available in most areas in the world.

Currently, amid the impact of COVID-19, online teaching has been implemented worldwide to maintain learning and teaching. Both asynchronous and synchronous modes have been adopted for fully online teaching (Vo, 2021; Vo & Pang, 2021). CALL tools like software, platforms, audio, or video are utilized for online teaching. However, the sudden move from face-to-face teaching to online teaching has caused teachers and students many difficulties, especially in developing countries where teaching conditions are poor (Al-Mohair & Alwahaishi, 2020; Chandrasinghe et al., 2020; Mohamad et al., 2020; Tartavulea et al., 2020). Constraints like changes in facility, lack of ICT skills and knowledge, and out-of-date pedagogical knowledge and skills commonly prevent the delivery of effective lessons (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2021).

Online Learning

Since the initial development of the internet, it has quickly become an essential technology for all aspects of life, including education (Richard & Haya, 2009). The terms "e-learning", "distant learning," and most recently, "online learning" refer to the use of internet-based technology in education. Online learning is defined as "the use of information and communication technologies to enable the access to online learning/teaching resources" (Richard & Haya, 2009, p. 30). Online learning can be implemented synchronously and asynchronously, or both modes can be combined (Nguyen & Pham, 2021; Vo, 2021). In synchronous online learning, online meetings are organized as virtual classes using different tools such as Zoom, Google Meet, or MS Teams. In this case, students are not allowed flexibility in scheduling their learning, and such meetings restrict their class activities due to their limited functions (Vo & Pang, 2021). For example, it is not easy for teachers to implement group work or collaborative learning activities in online meetings.

In contrast, with asynchronous online learning, students have the chance to create their learning paths and timetables, while online classes are created on such platforms as Learning Management Systems (LMS) or Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environments (MOODLE). However, this kind of learning mode does not allow students and teachers to have meetings, resulting in fewer interactions. Therefore, some teachers and schools prefer to employ a combination of both kinds of learning.

Learner Readiness for Online Learning

The concept of learner readiness for online learning originated from some studies in the twentieth century. According to Warner et al. (1998), learner readiness refers to learners' choice of online teaching mode, their confidence in using electronic tools for online communication in learning, and the ability to get involved in autonomous learning. Sulaiman et al. (2021) defined learner readiness as the ability to continue and adapt to remote learning in regard to motivation, the ability to use technological devices, and the availability of electronic devices and software for online learning, as well as self-directed learning.

Online learner readiness is a very critical factor in deciding the success of online learning. Online learning readiness shows students' level of readiness to participate in the online learning mode. Readiness is explained by sub-dimensions in the literature (Martin et al., 2020). Readiness is found to involve some kinds of self-efficacy, the ability to perform tasks. In an online learning environment, efficacy is the student's ability to use equipment like computers to perform their online learning activities and to interact with peers and teachers for successful learning (Martin et al., 2020). Attitudes, abilities, emotional reactions, and personal characteristics of students in online learning, which is defined as self-directed learning (Hung et al., 2010), contribute to the

formation of learners' readiness in an online environment. In online learning when students have to study themselves in a rather isolated environment without real interaction, students need to have the ability to self-control so that they can manage their study effectively. Learner readiness is also decided by students' motivation, which drives students to move forward in their learning (Vo et al., 2022).

In other words, a review of the literature shows that learners' online learning readiness involves five dimensions: computer/internet self-efficacy, self-directed learning, motivation for learning, learner control, and online communication self-efficacy (Hung et al., 2010; Martin et al., 2020; Nguyen, 2015; Rasouli et al., 2016; Sulaiman et al., 2021). Studies have been done to research the measurement of online learning readiness with instruments to measure students' online learning readiness (Hung et al., 2010; Martin et al., 2020; Sulaiman et al., 2021).

Computer/Internet Self-Efficacy

Online learning involves the process of online lesson delivery, so students' ICT ability is essential to their learning. The concept of "self-efficacy" is understood as people's judgments of their ability to organize and perform courses of action to obtain certain levels of performance. Computer self-efficacy is defined as people's ability to use a computer to perform a task (Bandura, 1986). However, computer self-efficacy does not simply refer to the ability to use computers/software but also denotes people's willingness to use computers/software. According to Hung et al. (2010), computer/internet self-efficacy is defined as learners' "perception of their ability to use computer to accomplish a task, such as using software to analyze data" (p. 1083). In this study, computer/internet self-efficacy is understood as learners' ability to use ICT skills and knowledge in online learning, as well as their perception of their capability for such ICT applications in online learning.

Self-Directed Learning

The term "self-directed" learning can be traced back to the 60s when it was identified as an important part of adult education (Loeng, 2020). In self-directed learning, learners take initiative and responsibility for their learning. They set goals for their learning and actively work to achieve such goals. In self-directed learning, learners are the center of the act of learning. In other words, self-directed learning refers to the process by which learners take responsibility for identifying their learning needs and objectives and assessing their learning outcomes (Hung et al., 2010; Knowles, 1975; Sulaiman et al., 2021).

Self-directed learning consists of three factors: Sociological, Pedagogical, and Psychological, which all emphasize the independence and learner-centered features in the learning process (Long, 1989). Sociological factor emphasizes learners' social independence in the learning situation (Long, 1990). Online learning with the use of websites is considered as one example of self-directed learning in this sense. The Pedagogical factor similarly emphasizes the pedagogical procedures learners use to achieve their learning goals. Psychological factor refers to the individual characteristics of learners such as skills and abilities to self-direct their learning.

In immediate online learning, when learners are isolated at home due to social distancing measures, self-directed learning plays a key role in the success of education. The ability to self-direct helps learners to proceed at their own pace of learning and depend less on teachers' monitoring in the virtual environment. In this research, self-directed learning is recognized as learners' initiative to control their learning to achieve their goals.

Learner Motivation

Another factor that greatly contributes to students' success in the process of online learning is learners' motivation (Saadé et al., 2007). Motivation, which includes both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, is defined as students' desires and efforts to achieve their goals (Gardner, 1988). Intrinsic motivation refers to the cognitive, social, and physical development linked to learners' growth in knowledge and skills, while extrinsic motivation relates to outside factors such as the wish to attain higher learning outcomes (Hung et al., 2010; Ryan & Deci, 2000). In online courses, motivation is associated with diverse factors such as teachers, classmates, satisfaction with course content, and so on. In this study, motivation is defined as a factor significantly driving students' efforts, performances, and desires/needs to achieve their goals in learning.

Learner Control

Learner control increases the effectiveness of lessons as well as maximises students' performance in learning. Learner control refers to learners' chances to have control of their instruction and opportunities to apply their individualized approaches in their courses. Students are permitted to choose the amount of lesson content, sequence, and pace of learning to give themselves maximum freedom in learning (Hung et al., 2010). In online classes, learner control reflects the level of students' preferences or choices of materials, learning styles, and pace of learning (Sulaiman et al., 2021). In online learning, students are easily distracted by outside factors such as noise, instant messages, and internet use. Therefore, the ability to take control of their learning is essential. In this study, learner control is understood as their control over their online learning activities like getting rid of online distractions, keeping on track with learning activities, and controlling learning activities.

Online Communication Self-Efficacy

Online communication self-efficacy is the final important aspect to be considered in students' readiness for online learning. In order to maintain the effectiveness of online lessons, interactions among students and between students and teachers should be created through different forms of online communication, such as forums and chat boxes (Vo & Pang, 2021). Students with different characteristics may have various levels of willingness to participate in online communication. It is found that shy students may engage more in online communication than face-to-face (Hung et al., 2010; McVay, 2001). In other words, online communication self-efficacy is an essential dimension of online learning readiness.

Method

The study was conducted in late 2021 in Vietnam when the COVID-19 pandemic was still ongoing. Many universities located in large cities where COVID-19 was prevalent, such as Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, and Danang, had been suspended, and online learning had been implemented throughout the first semester of the 2021-2022 school year. In other parts of Vietnam, hybrid learning was selected to maintain students' learning.

Research Setting

In late 2021, students at most universities in Vietnam finished their first semester of the 2021-2022 school year. Students in some universities experienced online learning for the whole semester. Due to the seriousness of the COVID-19 pandemic in Vietnam, they stayed with online

learning during the first month of the second semester and were expected to return to normal learning after the Lunar New Year when they had two shots of the COVID-19 vaccine.

Research Design

In order to obtain a thorough description of how ready EFL Vietnamese students are for online learning and the challenges they encounter, a quantitative approach was selected for the study on a large scale. The study was carried out with 1,099 EFL students in Vietnam. The research focused on undergraduate students at the tertiary level.

Research Instrument

The research is grounded in the framework developed by Hung et al. (2010) and Sulaiman et al. (2021), in which learner readiness is measured through the five dimensions: computer/ internet self-efficacy, self-directed learning, learner motivation, learner control, and learner motivation. The questionnaire consisted of 7 parts as well as open-ended questions for assessing difficulties in online learning.

Research Validity and Reliability

The research validity and reliability were obtained through the careful design of both the research and its instrument, the questionnaire. The questionnaire was developed from previous studies (Hung et al. (2010); Sulaiman et al. (2021). The questionnaire was sent to two TESOL experts for validation. Both of them are Doctors of Philosophy in TESOL who have more than 20 years' of experience in language teaching and researching. Thanks to their comments, the questionnaire was edited to serve the research better.

A high level of reliability was obtained through a pilot study. The pilot study was conducted with 100 students, of whom 34% were first-year students, 20% second-year students, 26% third-year students, and 20% fourth-year students. The reliability of the pilot study is excellent, with Cronbach's alpha of .962. After the pilot study, some minor changes related to the comprehensibility of the questionnaire items were made. In addition, the main study also has a very high level of reliability with Cronbach's alpha of.956 The reliability of each dimension of the questionnaire was excellent, with Cronbach's alpha of .854 for computer/internet self-efficacy, .849 for self-directed learning, .849 for motivation for learning, .902 for learner control, and .808 for online communication self-efficacy.

Research Sampling

The study focuses on regular undergraduate students majoring in English in Vietnam. Although Vietnam was seriously affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, not all universities transitioned completely to online learning. Some universities might have hybrid learning or some days of the semester with online learning. The questionnaire on Google Forms was sent to EFL undergraduate students in universities via email, Facebook, and Zalo. Participants were selected based on two basic criteria. First, they must be undergraduate students majoring in English. Secondly, they must have completed online learning during the first semester of the 2021-2022 school year. Students from universities where hybrid learning was implemented were not eligible for the study.

Overall, 1,123 EFL students responded to the questionnaire, but 24 of them were ineligible for the study because they were either post-graduate or high school students. The final number of participants in the research was 1,099. All of the participants studied online for the entire first semester of the 2021-2022 school year. In terms of level, 27.8% were first-year students, 36.7% were second-year students, 21.2% were third-year students, and 14.4% fourth-year students. As might be expected in the field of language education in Vietnam, the percentage of female students outnumbered that of males, accounting for 93.2% and 6.8%, respectively.

Table 1: Demographic Features of Research Participants

Levels	Gender		Total
	Males	Females	
First year students	22 (7.2%)	283 (92.7%)	305 (27.8%)
Second year students	25 (6.2%)	378 (93.7%)	403 (36.7%)
Third year students	11 (4.7%)	222 (95.2%)	233 (21.2%)
Fourth year students	17 (10.7%)	141 (89.2%)	158 (14.4%)
Total	75 (6.8%)	1024 (93.2%)	1,099 (100%)

Data Analysis

The quantitative data was analyzed using the IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 16. In the study, descriptive statistics, including mean values, standard deviation values, maximum values, and minimum values, were calculated. In addition, inferential statistics such as independent sample T-tests and MANOVA tests were conducted to check whether there were significant statistical differences among groups of male and female students and groups of first-year, second-year, third-year, and fourth-year students.

Results

Students' Learning Conditions

As shown in Table 1, laptops are the equipment most used for online learning (84.9%), followed by smartphones (15.1%). Desktops and other items like tablets fill out the table at 1.9% and 0.9%, respectively. In other words, laptops are the most common and preferable devices for EFL students' online learning.

Table 2: Devices for Online Learning

Devices	Laptop	Smartphone	Desktop	Others
Percentage	84.9%	15.1	1.9%%	0.9%

Overall, 84.9% of devices for EFL students' online learning are their personal property, while 13.6% of the devices belong to their families. The percentage of participants who have to rent devices for their online learning is 1.5%.

Table 3: Device Ownership

Ownership	Personal Property	Family-Owned	Rented
Percentage	84.9%	13.6%	1.5%

Of the EFL students surveyed, 67.8% have moderate internet speed, while 16.1% and 0.6% have fast or very fast internet speed, respectively. Only 1.4% of students suffer from very slow internet connections.

Table 4: Internet Speed

Speed	Very Slow	Slow	Moderate	Fast	Very Fast
Percentage	1.4%		67.8%	16.1%	0.6%

The result of the questionnaire also indicates that 75% of the participants used Wi-Fi for their studies while 17.9% have cable internet, and 6.9% use 3G or 4G for their internet connection. Most students study online at home (98.2%), whereas 0.5% go to an internet cafe and 1.1% study at relatives' or friends' houses.

Generally, EFL students have relatively good conditions for their online learning, and because they have had a whole semester of online learning, most of them do online learning at home.

Learners' Readiness

A 5-point Likert scale questionnaire was utilized for the research. The interval is 0.8 (i.e., interval =N-1/N, N=5). It indicates that 1.00 to 1.80 means a very low level of readiness; 1.81 to 2.69 represents a low level of readiness; 2.61 to 3.40 shows a moderate level of readiness; 3.41 to 4.20 represents a high level of readiness; and 4.21 to 5.00 indicates a very high level of readiness (Dorsah, 2021; Hung et al., 2010).

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics

Dimensions	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Computer/Internet efficacy	1,099	1.00	5.00	3.8276	.71104
Self-directed learning	1,099	1.00	5.00	3.7636	.68314
Learner control	1,099	1.60	5.00	3.8491	.61985
Motivation for learning	1,099	1.43	5.00	3.9717	.61591
Online communication efficacy	1,099	1.29	5.00	3.6389	.71366

The mean values for all the dimensions vary from 3.6389 to 3.9717. According to Dorsah (2021) and Hung et al. (2010), such mean values indicate that the surveyed participants generally have a high level of readiness for all five dimensions. The COVID-19 pandemic first affected Vietnam in early 2020, and Vietnam quickly took action to prevent the fast and widespread spread of the virus with the closure of schools and universities in areas where COVID-19 was traced (Phan et al., 2021). Therefore, students in major cities underwent several times learning online beginning in early 2020. That explained why, in this study, students were identified as having a high level of readiness for online learning.

Among the five dimensions, EFL students are found to be the least ready for online communication efficacy (mean value=3.6389), while they are most ready in terms of motivation for online learning (mean=3.9717). In an online environment, interaction is limited and requires support from online platforms and teachers (Vo & Nguyen, 2023). That is the reason why the mean value of this dimension is the lowest, denoting that students are least ready for online communication. Surprisingly, students show the highest readiness in the motivation dimension. Students were familiar with online learning after 2 years, and studies reveal that students accepted online learning because they understood the situation and wanted to avoid being affected by COVID-19 (Phan et al., 2021). Therefore, their motivation for online learning is high. The readiness for learner control dimension (mean value=3.8491) is the second highest,

higher than self-directed learning and computer/internet efficacy (mean value=3.7636, mean value= 3.8276). Students' high level contributes to the level of readiness to control and self-direct themselves.

All in all, EFL students in Vietnam were found to have a high level of readiness for online learning as of late 2021. Among the five dimensions, students are the least ready in terms of online communication efficacy, while they are the most ready in terms of motivation for learning.

Gender Difference

The means for all the five dimensions are not much different between the two groups of male and female EFL students, as shown in Tables 6 and 7. As illustrated in the tables, the number of female students surpassed that of their male counterparts, as is usual in language education in Vietnam. Both share the highest mean values in the motivation for learning dimension (mean value =3.9698 for female students, mean value= 3.9981 for male students). Yet, while female students have the lowest mean value in online communication efficacy, male students have the lowest mean value in self-directed learning. Male students are found to have higher mean values for computer/internet efficacy and online communication efficacy, but they have lower mean values than female students in all other dimensions.

Table 6: Gender Group Statistics

Dimensions	Gender	Number	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error Mean
Computer/Internet efficacy	Female	1,024	3.8198	.71106	.02222
	Male	75	3.9333	.70711	.08165
Self-directed learning	Female	1,024	3.7666	.68510	.02141
	Male	75	3.7219	.65881	.07607
Learner control	Female	1,024	3.8515	.61734	.01929
	Male	75	3.8173	.65664	.07582
Motivation for learning	Female	1,024	3.9698	.61282	.01915
	Male	75	3.9981	.66042	.07626
Online communication efficacy	Female	1,024	3.6321	.71453	.02233
	Male	75	3.7314	.69984	.08081

The independent sample T-test reveals no significant difference between female students and male students' readiness for online learning when all significant values are greater than 0.05, as shown in Table 7.

Table 7: Independent Sample T- Test- Gender Difference

Dimensions	F	Sig.	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Computer/Internet efficacy	.227	.634	.182	-.11351
Self-directed learning	.271	.603	.585	.04470
Learner control	.585	.04470	.646	.03413
Motivation for learning	.646	.03413	.701	-.02830
Online communication efficacy	.042	.837	.245	-.09931

Level Difference

Table 8 shows that there are differences in means for all dimensions among the four groups of students by academic year. Specifically, for computer/Internet efficacy, the level of readiness increases according to students' levels. The fourth-year students have the highest level of readiness for computer/Internet efficacy (mean value =4.0475), followed by the third-year students' readiness for that dimension (mean value =3.8677), while the first-year students have the lowest one (mean value= 3.6978). Regarding the second dimension (self-directed learning), the highest level of readiness belongs to the third-year students, with a mean of 3.8124. The fourth-year students have the second highest level of readiness for this dimension (mean value = 3.7785), while the first- and second-year students fill the third and fourth places in the table with mean values of 3.7621 and 3.7306, respectively. Interestingly, for the other three dimensions, the third-year students also have the highest level of readiness (mean value=3.8464 for learner control, mean value=4.0193 for motivation for online learning, mean value=3.7149 for online communication efficacy). For learner control and motivation for learning, the fourth-year students have the lowest level of readiness (mean value=3.8304, mean value=3.8892, respectively), while the first-year students have the lowest level of readiness for online communication efficacy (mean value=3.5082).

Table 8: Level Difference Statistics

Year		Computer/ Internet efficacy	Self-directed learning	Learner control	Motivation for learning	Online communication efficacy
First year	Mean	3.6978	3.7621	3.8410	4.0150	3.5082
	N	305	305	305	305	305
	Std. Deviation	.70790	.68089	.63057	.62220	.75144
Second year	Mean	3.8164	3.7306	3.8643	3.9438	3.6657
	N	403	403	403	403	403
	Std. Deviation	.73437	.70559	.63294	.64716	.73220
Third year	Mean	3.8677	3.8124	3.8464	4.0193	3.7149
	N	233	233	233	233	233
	Std. Deviation	.69154	.64872	.60007	.55432	.64087
Fourth year	Mean	4.0475	3.7785	3.8304	3.8892	3.7107
	N	158	158	158	158	158
	Std. Deviation	.62759	.68037	.59848	.60090	.66342
Total	Mean	3.8276	3.7636	3.8491	3.9717	3.6389
	N	1099	1099	1099	1099	1099
	Std. Deviation	.71104	.68314	.61985	.61591	.71366

A MANOVA test was used to test whether the level of students affects their readiness for online learning, revealing that the levels of students significantly impacted their readiness for online learning when p=0.00 was less than 0.05.

Table 9: MANOVA Test: Level Difference

Value	F	Hypothesis df.	Error df.	Sig.
.919	6.209	15.000	3.012E3	.000

Generally, the third-year students have the highest level of readiness for online learning with the highest mean values for the four dimensions. The fourth-year students have the highest level of readiness in regard to computer/Internet efficacy, but they have the lowest readiness for learner control, motivation for online learning, and online learning communication efficacy.

EFL Students' Challenges in Immediate Online Learning

Open-ended questions were used to collect data about constraints EFL students in Vietnam had to confront in immediate online learning. There are two themes found in the analysis of the data: difficulties due to distracting environment and technical issues.

Distracting Environment

A distracting environment was a major challenge for Vietnamese EFL students in their immediate online learning. Immediate online learning was conducted when students were at home; as a result, they had to confront many issues regarding their learning environment. 36% of students responding to the questionnaire stated that they did not have a quiet environment for learning. Some sub-themes also emerged, including a noisy learning environment and lack of privacy. In Vietnamese families, especially in rural areas where the living standard is low, not all family members have a room. Often, children in one family have to share a room. Some students have to study in the living room, where all family members often gather to watch television.

Furthermore, in Vietnam, many families are extended, with grandparents living with their children and grandchildren. In such crowded families, students may face difficulties with regard to a lack of privacy for their online lessons. Another subtheme is students having to study in a noisy environment. In a situation where all family members are at home due to the application of a large and strict social distance, students hardly have a quiet environment for their learning. In addition, when shops, restaurants, and small businesses are closed, singing karaoke for entertainment is common in Vietnam, which causes great difficulties for online learning.

> *"I could not concentrate on my studies, especially when social distance was implemented. All the family members were at home, and our small house was noisy. My younger sister is naughty, and she wanted me to play with her and kept interrupting my online classes."*, said one fourth-year student.

> *"I found it difficult and stressful when staying at home and learning online. I do not have my room and three of us, me and my two brothers, have to study in the living room. I could not turn on the camera and mic for my classes."*, cited a second-year student in response to a question regarding difficulties in online learning.

> *"My neighbors sing Karaoke all day and I cannot have time to rest and study. I was a little ashamed when I turned on my mic to answer my teacher's questions in such noise"*, complained a third-year student.

Technical Issues

Though EFL students were found to have a good level of computer-efficacy for their, technical issues are mentioned as difficulties during immediate online learning by 24% of EFL students. According to a number of students, technical problems may occur during their virtual classes, causing a low efficiency of their online learning. The subthemes that emerged from the research are internet connection and the stability of platforms. Internet connection is cited as one challenge in online learning by 67% of those who considered technical issues as their challenges. The stability is mentioned by the lower percentage (36% of those listing technical issues as their difficulties in online learning). One student complained, *"I have to stop learning several times because of the unstable internet. As a result, I missed some parts of the lesson."*

Discussion

The research shows that Vietnamese EFL students show a high level of readiness for online learning in the COVID-19 context in 2021. After approximately two years with "on/off" modes of online and offline learning, students have gotten used to online learning and generally have better conditions and preparedness. The study conducted by Hung et al. (2010) revealed a similar result, in which a very high level of readiness for online learning was recorded in Taiwan. Pre-service teachers in Ghana were also found to be ready for emergency online learning in 2021 (Dorsah, 2021). In India, though students have to face many challenges, they still have positive attitudes and readiness for the sudden use of online learning. Malaysian students are discovered to be generally ready for online learning (Chung et al., 2020). A study conducted in early 2021 at a university in Vietnam indicates that university students in Vietnam generally accepted the switch from face-to-face learning to online learning and became familiar with and were well-prepared for online learning in 2021 (Phan et al., 2021). In Indonesia, students have a high level of enthusiasm for online learning, contributing to their readiness for remote learning (Purwadi et al., 2020). According to Nguyen et al. (2021), Vietnamese students have a high level of acceptance of online learning in the COVID-19 context due to their high level of readiness for online learning after two years of experiencing such online learning mode.

According to the findings of this research, there is no significant difference between the readiness of male and female EFL students in Vietnam. Similarly, in Taiwan, there is no difference in the level of readiness for online learning between male and female groups (Hung et al., 2010). Yet, research from Malaysia found that female students are more ready for online learning (Chung et al., 2020). According to Tang et al. (2021), differences are identified in regard to the readiness of male and female students for online learning in Hong Kong, where female students are more ready for online learning than male students.

Students' levels by academic year are found to influence the level of readiness among EFL students in Vietnam. This finding agrees with those of previous studies on learner readiness for online learning. Rasouli et al. (2016) found that there is a significant statistical difference in readiness for online learning between undergraduate students and post-graduates. In Malaysia, degree students are more ready for online learning than diploma students. In Hong Kong, post-graduate students are found to be more ready for online learning than their graduate counterparts (Tang et al., 2021). In other words, students at higher levels are more ready for online learning than those at lower levels.

In spite of the high level of readiness, Vietnamese EFL learners have to confront many difficulties in immediate online learning. Specifically, difficulties in distracting environments

and technical issues are what EFL Vietnamese students encounter most during their online learning. According to Phan et al. (2021), students in Vietnam have to deal with many obstacles including technical issues, making online learning less effective. In some Asian countries, facilities also cause certain difficulties for both teachers and learners in the process of implementing online learning (Ergene & Türk Kurtça, 2020). Even in more developed countries like Turkey or Poland, the facility is also an obstacle to online learning (Bączek et al., 2021; Şenel & Şenel, 2021).

Implications

Although the level of readiness for online learning in Vietnam is recognized to be high, several suggestions are made to increase the level of students' readiness and diminish students' difficulties in online learning, as it is considered to be the key factor in online learning success (Dangol & Shrestha, 2019; Vo et al., 2022). Firstly, training on how to use online tools and platforms involved in online learning should be organized for students so that they are well-equipped with the proper technical skills. Secondly, real-time support should be provided. The university ought to employ some technical support teams that are available to assist students in a timely manner when they encounter technical issues during their online study. In addition, lecturers should facilitate students' online learning with specific guidelines for online assignments, discussions, or tests. The computer/ internet efficacy level of students should be one element to be included in the curriculum, especially for English major students who may be working as teachers later. Computer-assisted language learning and computer literacy should be compulsory subjects of the curriculum so that student's ability to use technology in their learning, as well as their future careers, is enhanced. As found in the study, students' class level has certain effects on students' readiness for online learning due to their various experiences with online learning. Therefore, more training and support from teachers should be delivered to first-year students so that they can quickly adapt to the new learning environment.

In the study, online communication efficacy is found to be the least ready factor among the five, as discussed in the findings section. In order to improve students' online communication efficacy, it is suggested that the following needs to be applied. Despite the availability of online learning tools, online instruction is still found to focus more on student-to-content and student-to-instructor interactions, which results in fewer student-to-student interactions (Thompson & Ku, 2006). In order to increase interaction among students, online collaborative learning can be conducted through classroom activities such as project-based learning, online discussions, or peer assessment (Vo & Nguyen, 2023). Interesting and varied online activities are also necessary to enhance communication efficacy in online learning. Forums, online discussions, and group work should be organized frequently to increase students' interactions in online learning.

Online communication efficacy is also pertinent in relation to the issue of boredom in online learning. According to Derakhshan et al. (2022), due to fatigue from the pandemic and social distancing measures combined with less engagement in the process of teaching and learning in the virtual environment, students are likely to feel bored in emergency online classes even with regular activities like routine homework checking, writing-based activities, and reading based activities. More activities that increase learner engagement are recommended to increase students' interaction for a decrease in boredom (Derakhshan et al., 2021; Derakhshan et al., 2022). According to Wang et al. (2021), teachers in language education should be equipped with a better understanding of positive psychology, which serves as a basic foundation for teachers to create enjoyable learning environments for their students so that negative feelings in learning can be reduced.

This study has revealed that students' self-directed learning and learner control are at a good level in online learning. This high level of readiness, however, can also be enhanced with some following suggestions. Self-directed learning and learner control can be facilitated if lecturers have specific guidelines and support for students during the online learning process. The level of self-directed learning can be raised if students are provided with concrete requirements whereby students are able to navigate their learning appropriately. In addition, detailed testing and assessment guidelines, as well as the inclusion of expected learning outcomes, are useful for students to know exactly what they are expected to gain from the course so they have a better sense of self-directed learning and learner control during their study. The institution also needs to take part in the process of increasing students' self-directed learning and learner control through regular support and updated policies.

Conclusion

This study provides a detailed picture of the readiness of Vietnamese undergraduate EFL students for online learning in late 2021. The findings reveal that students have a high level of readiness for immediate online learning. There are no significant differences in the level of readiness between EFL male and female students, while the students' level has a discernible impact on their readiness for online learning. Despite the high level of readiness, EFL students in Vietnam face many difficulties due to distracting environments and technical issues.

To increase EFL students' level of readiness and reduce the challenges students encounter in online learning, it is recommended that support from the university in the form of training should be provided. Furthermore, appropriate teaching pedagogies with more interactive activities should be implemented with careful and specific guidelines for more effectiveness.
Though the research has some limitations because the sample may not represent a very large population, the research is a good source of references for further studies on online learning in Vietnam. As the research sample in this study is a pioneering effort that focused only on undergraduate students, further research with a greater variety of participants should be conducted to gain a better understanding of the readiness of Vietnamese students at all levels for online learning. Some factors like learning styles, individual capabilities, or teaching methods that may affect students' online learning should also be taken into consideration in further research. In addition, the five dimensions of learner readiness for online learning (i.e., computer/internet self-efficacy, self-directed learning, motivation for learning, learner control, and online communication self-efficacy) can be further studied separately for deeper insights into each dimension.

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