

Video Recorded Presentations (VRP) and their impact on students' learning: A mixed method research on blended mode programs at MNU

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ABSTRACT *Accommodating technology and flexibility in distance education have been part of higher education in the last decade at several higher education institutions of the Maldives. Blending technology in teaching and learning has increased higher education opportunities across the Maldives. This study was conducted to explore the impact of Video Recorded Presentations (VRP) on students' learning when used as an assessment tool for blended learning students of the Maldives National University (MNU). Adopting a mixed method approach, the study was conducted among students involved in blended learning, who had submitted assessments using VRP. Lecturers from MNU who assessed the VRP contributed to the study by adding their observation on students' learning from the videos. The students were chosen among learners who submitted assessments using VRP from July 2017 to the end of 2018. Both groups, students and lecturers, expressed that the use of VRP as an assessment tool increased student's confidence in their presentation skills and provided the opportunity to self-evaluate and submit the best performances. Although there were challenges in VRP recording and submission, students and lecturers found it as a convenient alternative method for in-class presentations that allow useful learning opportunities for blended learners.*

Keywords: blended learning, distance learner, video recorded presentations, presentation skills, self-confidence, self-evaluation.

The Maldives is a small island nation in the Indian Ocean spread across 717 kilometers from Sri Lanka and 430 kilometers from India. The unique archipelago of Maldives consists of approximately 1190 islands contributing to twenty-six atolls. The population of Maldives is spread across the country in small communities separated by sea. Technology based Distance Education (DE) had been one of the strategic options to reach the unreached with higher education opportunities. Hence, DE options were adopted by higher education institutes parallel to traditional methods in the Maldives in the last decade. Although the traditional delivery models were considered more promising, involvement of technology in the delivery enhanced the teaching and learning. Blended Learning (BL), one of the distance education delivery models, was adopted by MNU to reach the maximum population of Maldives. Introduction of BL in 2010 at Centre for Open Learning (COL), MNU, created a pathway for prospective students even in remote locations to have access to flexible study options. Compared to traditional programs, BL students spent minimum hours of face-to-face interaction and contributed to learning through interactive learning activities from Moodle platform, the Learning Management System (LMS). Other means of social platforms and applications such as Facebook or Viber were used to enhance student learning in the blended programs. Assessment tasks such as oral presentations take hours to complete in

a large class. Hence, learners and educators found the time management issues in oral presentations as a challenge in the limited face-to-face sessions. To overcome the challenges involved in managing facilitation of the programs in minimized face-to-face sessions, Video Recorded Presentation (VRP) was chosen as one of the options to replace in-class presentation for assessments. Furthermore, VRP was chosen by lecturers as a better option for students to complete presentations in their own time so that students had the opportunity to review their performance and improve presentations before submission.

Aims and Objectives

The aim of this study was to explore the impact on students' learning using VRP as an assessment tool. Accordingly, the main research questions were;

- How does the use of VRP as an assessment component impact on students' learning in blended mode programs?
- What benefits do students gain in the preparation of VRP as an assessment component?
- What challenges do students face in the completion of VRP?
- How does VRP impact blended learning student performance?

Procedure

Students enrolled in different programs, Bachelor of Teaching Islam, Bachelor of Teaching Primary, Bachelor of Teaching Primary-Dhivehi / Islam and Bachelor of Dhivehi Language and Literature, CST275 Teaching & Learning Science, EST103 Instructional Psychology and CST265 Teaching & Learning Mathematics I, were assigned to prepare VRP as part of their assessment. Students had the opportunity to self-assess the recordings or get expert or colleague advice on their performance and produce the best performance. The submissions were saved onto mobile devices including pen drive, CD, while some were uploaded to Google Drive, Dropbox or OneDrive and shared with the lecturer, to be assessed. Data collected on students' experience and lecturers' observations contributed to seek answers for the research questions.

Literature

Blended Learning is a concept that integrates teaching and learning instructions which incorporates face-to-face and ICT supported teaching enhancing collaborative eLearning (Danguwal & Lalima, 2017). Recent research highlight that blended learning provide the finest learning environment for learners where collective eLearning tools create teaching and learning opportunities among learners (Vaughan, 2014). If applied on a timely manner, with relevant tool, blended learning can be a better solution that can address several challenges that exist in the current education system. (Danguwal & Lalima, 2017). Hilliard (2015), added that universities across the globe are looking for options through software programming, intending flexible delivery and assessment of students' work for

which the top management has to provide infrastructure to support BL. Hence, to support flexible delivery in BL, experts have introduced number of learning management systems and applications. Most of the systems and applications used in the facilitation of blended learning, across the world, are based on open source software.

Microsoft Office skills were used by learners and facilitators to create learning materials, assessments and to manage other communications for flawless learning. PowerPoint presentations were used by academics on a large scale to minimize preparation time and provide short notes to students. Symbolic representations, relative images, audio, and video-enhanced PowerPoints are becoming more suitable for educators (Khodabandehlou, 2017). Oral presentations supported by PowerPoint presentations attracted learners for its flexibility in the use of mastering subject content and presentation skills (Murugaiah, 2017).

The opportunity to do oral presentations was essential for learners to improve performance based skills necessary for their future jobs. Good content organisation and designing, and excellent delivery skills are required for a successful performance in oral presentations (Ritchie, 2016). In addition to this, Ritchie stated that students benefit from video presentations by developing their presentation skills and presentation abilities. Moreover, video presentations allow students to self-assess their performance over and over again before the final submission.

However, the challenges involved in video recording is an essential part of the process that need to be addressed. Technical challenges such as time schedule, equipment for recording, playback and other logistical difficulties are there that needs to be managed carefully when developing a video recording (Christianson et al., n.d.). In addition, bad or low sound quality, wrong delivery formats, miscommunication of a message, and changing the recording in the editing process and are common problems experienced in recording videos.

Methodology

A mixed-method approach was used to collect, analyze, and interpret the data for this study. A combination of quantitative and qualitative data could provide relevant data to answer the research question (Creswell, 2009). Quantitative data was collected using an e-Questionnaire from the students and qualitative data was collected from the lecturers using a semi-structured interview.

The sample frame was MNU students who submitted oral presentation assessments in video format and lecturers who assessed the VRP from July 2017 to 2018 at Center for Open Learning. Non-probability, purposive sampling technique was used to select samples for the qualitative component. The entire student population who submitted VRP from Lh, R, GA, Ba, & Dh Outreach Centre and Malé Campus was less than hundred, hence the whole population (n=76) was considered as the sample. Purposive sampling cannot be used in situations where the researcher needs to reach the target sample quickly (Trochim, 2020). Hence convenience sampling technique was used to select the sample for lecturers (n=6) These (n=6) lecturers consented to participate as informants for this research project.

Participants were informed of the purpose of the research prior to the administration of the e-questionnaire. The e-questionnaire included multi-

scaled questions based on the criteria proposed by Cavanagh et al., (2014). The questionnaire was shared with two other program coordinators to confirm validity of the questions. The questionnaire was converted to e-format using Google Forms and shared with students via Viber application. Viber was chosen as the medium to reach students as it was the common platform used by students for regular communication and the shortest route to reach most of the students in the islands. The collected data was analyzed using SPSS software to get the common patterns in students' presentations skills as well as understand self-confidence and challenges they experienced in the process of VRP.

Lecturers who assessed the VRP were included as the contributors to qualitative data. One lecturer from each center who assessed and evaluated VRP were chosen to participate in the research. The questions used in the interview were developed based on the presentation-assessment criteria used at Macquarie University. The criteria was used by Cavanagh et al. (2014) in their research, investigating video-based reflection system on pre-service teacher's oral presentation. The criteria were based on the quality of overall presentation performance, which includes: quality of body-language; the quality of words used; the alignment between body-language, voice and words; the confidence of the presenter; clarity of the presentation; the extent to which the presenter was engaging; and the appropriateness of the presentation. As the lecturers were located in different islands, face-to-face meetings and telephone interviews, where applicable, were used as the mode of interviewing in the research. The interviews were scheduled with the confirmation from the participants and conducted accordingly. Responses were transcribed and common statements relating to presentation skills, confidence and challenges in assessing were identified and categorized based on the themes that emerged. Additionally, the data collected were analyzed to understand overall impact of VRPs on students learning.

Results

The data collected using mixed-method approach were analyzed to find out the impact of VRP on student learning from students' and lecturers' perspective. The analyzed data included demographic data, experiences and challenges in the process of VRP preparation, VRP assessing, and the overall impact described by students and lecturers.

Students

Demographic Data

The data represented in this part highlights various demographic attributes of the student respondents. The study consisted of 68 students from Lh, R, GA, Ba, & Dh Outreach Centres and Malé Campus. Among the 68 respondents, 20 (29%) were male and 48 (71%) were females (Table1). The participants constitute 47% from the Bachelor of Teaching Primary-Generic, 27% from the Bachelor of Dhivehi Language and Literature, 18% from the Bachelor of Teaching Islam and 8% from Bachelor of Teaching Primary-Dhivehi/Islam.

Table 1
Demographic information of the students

| | Gender | Enrolled Program |
|-----------------|---------|------------------|
| | Valid % | Valid % |
| Male | 29 | |
| Female | 71 | |
| BTCH(P)-Generic | | 47 |
| BDLL | | 27 |
| BTI | | 18 |

VRP Submission

VRP submissions varied in number among participants indicating majority of the students submitted more than two VRPs assessments from July 2017 till the end of 2018 in their respective programs. The VRPs submitted were in Dhivehi and English language. Data analysis showed that 18 students (27.7%) had submitted one VRPs, 25 students (38.5%) submitted two VRPs and 11 students (16.9%) had submitted three VRPs. In addition to this, participants who were located in different parts of the Maldives used different mediums to submit VRP. Analysis showed that, 9 students (13.6%) submitted in a CD, 24 students (36.4%) in a pen drive, 1 student (1.5%) shared from OneDrive, and 23 students (34.8) shared from Google Drive while 9 students (13.6%) used other methods as summarized in Figure 1.

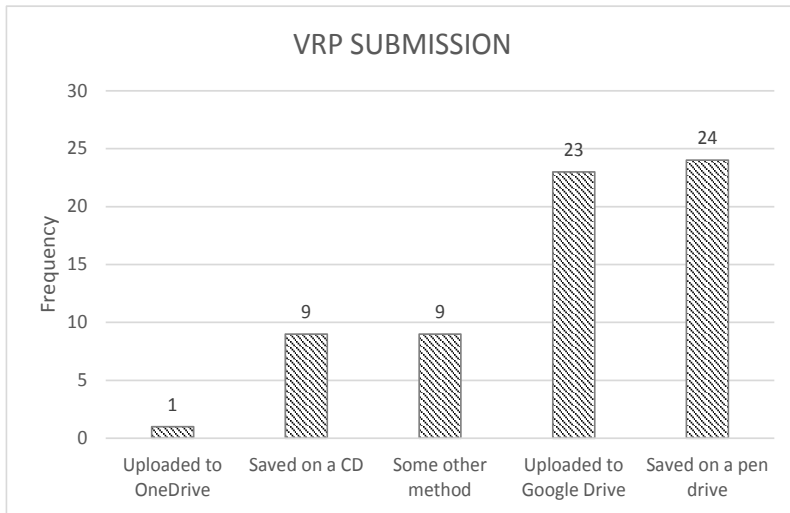


Figure 1. Students preferred different ways to submit VRPs.

VRP Preparation

The preparations required for VRP assessment was familiar to most students and available resources varied from student to student. According to the analysis there was a common pattern of experiences identified among the students while preparing the VRP. On average, more than 85% of students agreed that they spent more time in the preparation of VRP than in-class presentation assessments. They were also more comfortable to present to colleagues, in a familiar classroom in the absence of the lecturer. The students felt comfortable to bring variation to voice in the presentation, and found VRP as an appropriate tool for distance learners. In addition to this, most of the students agreed that having presentations re-recorded before submission is made it be. The re-recordings were found to be done until the students were satisfied with their own performance. Moreover, the reasons for re-recording include improving presentation skills such as: improving contact with the audience, voice variation, posture and facial expression, time adjustment and format used in the presentation. In all, students had the opportunity to self-evaluate the assessment task before submission.

Challenges

In the process of VRP, students were in different conditions and hence, had experienced some challenges. According to the analyzed data, the common challenges mentioned by the students included technical assistance such as appropriate camera, lighting, and sound management techniques. The internet speed / bandwidth issues experienced by students while uploading VRP to OneDrive and Google Drive was shared as one of the common and major challenges in the process of submission.

Lecturers

Demographic Data

Six lecturers participated in the research as the assessors of VRP. They included 2 males and 4 females altogether. The analysis of the results indicated that 3 lecturers facilitated BTCH(P)-Generic, 2 facilitated BDLL, 1 facilitated BTI and 1 facilitated BTCH(P)- Dhivehi/Islam (Table 2). The data shows that each of the participants assessed at least ten VRPs. Out of the six lecturers, 4 have assessed ten to twenty VRPs, 2 lectures have assessed 20 to 40 VRPs, while one of the lecturers had assessed more than 40 VRPs. Overall, majority of the participants had experience in assessing VRPs of the target population.

Evaluation of presentation skills

The data gathered on the presentation skills observed from students VRP and its relevance and impact on BL students were attained through interview questions. The first question for the participants was on the use of students' body language (body posture, hand, arm gestures, eye contact, expressive gestures, facial expressions, etc.) and use of voice variation (appropriate volume, clear enunciation, variety, etc.). Students voice in the presentations were audible, and clearly heard in the VRPs according to the lecturers. In addition, majority students seemed confident and not conscious of the camera and audience as seen from the videos.

The majority of the lecturers found that the use of body language was maintained by students while presenting to the audience and camera. Some quotes supporting the analysis were as follow.

- “Very good!”
- “Very good! Not conscious of the camera”
- “Good eye contact”
- “They were practicing teachers, so very good.”
- “They were loud and clear”.

The second question was based on the use of language (expressive language, structure, relevant to the audience). Data showed that the usage of language by majority of the students was appropriate, and expressive in content delivery. The content was well delivered although there were few cases with grammatical mistakes in the presentations. The VRP with highest grammatical mistakes were noted to be found in VRP submitted in the English language.

Table 2
Gender and number of programs facilitated by the lecturers

| | Gender | Facilitated program | Lecturers who assessed VRP |
|------------------------|--------|---------------------|----------------------------|
| Male | 2 | | |
| Female | 5 | | |
| BTCH(P)-Generic | | 3 | |
| BDLL | | 2 | |
| BTI | | 1 | |
| BTCH(P)- Dhivehi/Islam | | 1 | |
| Less than 10 VRP | | | 0 |
| Between 10 and 20 VRP | | | 4 |
| Between 20 and 40 VRP | | | 2 |
| More than 40 VRP | | | 1 |

The third question was focused on the overall confidence of students in VRP and whether the performance would improve if presentations were done in the regular classes. The data revealed that majority students have shown very good performance in their presentation skills, although the experience was new to some students. In addition, students were very confident and looked comfortable in their chosen space for the presentation. Overall, lecturers concluded that student’s performance seemed similar when compared to performance in the regular classes.

The fourth question focused on the challenges experienced by the lecturers in the process of assessment and evaluation of the VRP. Data showed that even though most VRP had no issues, some challenging issues were identified in VRP assessing process. Poor audio quality, poor lighting, background noise, and the file format of VRP submitted in CD and pen drive were the major areas identified by the lecturers as challenges in assessing student submissions. The last question was on the appropriateness of using VRP as an assessment tool for distance learners. The majority of the participants completely agreed saying that VRP was one of the best options to meet the needs and current trends in distance learning for the dispersed student population of Maldives. Some of the benefits commonly mentioned by the participants included, opportunity for students to submit the best performance and flexibility in the overall VRP process.

In addition, the data also showed common agreement by assessors highlighting that assessors also got the flexibility to assess VRP in their own time so that the students' competencies were evaluated better by watching the performance multiple times when required. Moreover, a lecturer suggested that student should be given clear instructions on the VRP process, how to use the best available equipments and technical support at island level.

Conclusion

The study was aimed to explore the impact of VRP on BL students of MNU. Most of the students who participated in the study had the experience of VRP submissions and found it a convenient method to submit assessments. Students spent maximum time to prepare, produce self-evaluate, and submit the best performance for assessing. Students had more than one option to submit the assessments instead of being physically present to submit the VRP. Similarly, lecturers expressed that the body language, students' confidence level, language usage showed almost the same level of performance as in class. The challenges associated with VRP were mostly the limited technical resources such as appropriate camera, lighting, sound management and the low bandwidth in the island communities. Hence, it is recommended that lecturers do a need analysis of the resources available for students and provide possible solutions for future VRP. The use of smart phones, mobile applications, the audio-visual rooms in schools, teacher resource centers can minimize some afore mentioned challenges. In addition to this, faculties could identify and provide data packages to students who have low band-width internet.

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