

Perceptions of Secondary School Students Towards the Use of Wakelet Students' Ambassador Programme

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Abstract

Blended learning is the integration of digital tools in supplement to teachers' teaching in class. Although blended learning has been implemented in higher institutions for decades, blended learning has only been practised in Malaysian secondary schools since Movement Control Order (MCO). Teachers have started using technological platforms such as Google Meet, Google Classroom, YouTube, WhatsApp and Telegram to share information with students heavily since most of the daily lessons could only take place using online platforms at that time. Due to that, there are not many studies on the use of blended learning among secondary school students. Thus, this study investigates secondary school students' perceptions regarding the use of blended learning and Wakelet Students' Ambassador Programme. The subjects were a sample of 50 Form 3 students in Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Taman Universiti, Johor Bahru. Students' perceptions regarding blended learning and the Wakelet Students' Ambassador Programme were gathered through mixed mode methods that included observation, questionnaire and interviews. The findings of the study show that the majority of the respondents favoured blended learning and all of them liked to use Wakelet Students' Ambassador Programme. Among the reasons they favoured the use of the Wakelet Students' Ambassador Programme are that it is an interesting programme, they could learn a lot from their friends or online resources and they felt a sense of accomplishment by completing the project. To sum up, the Wakelet Students' Ambassador Programme is indeed a wonderful programme that can be utilised in teaching all kinds of subjects. This is because the Wakelet Students' Ambassador Programme is a student-centred approach that stimulates students' thinking skills and promotes students' collaboration. Hopefully, blended learning and the Wakelet Students' Ambassador Programme will be widely practised in Malaysian secondary schools.

Keywords: blended learning, student-centred approach, critical thinking skills.

INTRODUCTION

In the current era marked by rapid advancements in information technology, there is a pressing demand for a pedagogical or teaching approach that resonates with our students. This need stems from the contemporary inclination of students towards integrating technology into their learning processes. As asserted by Jabbar (2022) and Haleem et. al. (2022), the traditional teaching methodology must be augmented with digital learning. In essence, there is a necessity to embrace a teaching approach that incorporates digital tools beyond conventional daily classroom instruction.

Teachers are encouraged to proactively develop or adapt existing digital tools to align with the learning environment and cater to the specific needs of students (Abdul Ghafar et al., 2022; Sudin et al., 2022; Mohamad Samuri et al., 2019). The fusion of teacher-led instruction in the classroom with the integration of technological tools is commonly referred to as blended learning. According to Annamalai (2019), blended learning shows superior learning outcomes compared to the traditional teacher-centred approach. This superiority is attributed to the flexibility inherent in blended learning, allowing students to pursue further independent learning beyond their daily in-class lessons.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Although blended learning has become commonplace in higher education institutions, its widespread adoption in secondary schools remains limited. Teachers have recently begun utilising technological platforms such as Google Meet, Google Classroom, YouTube, WhatsApp, and Telegram to disseminate information to students, particularly in response to the Movement Control Order (MCO) enforced during the COVID-19 pandemic (Hasbullah et al., 2022; Nasir & Mansor, 2021). The lockdown period necessitated the shift to online platforms for daily lessons, prompting teachers to update their knowledge of educational tools for effective remote instruction.

In the aftermath of the lockdown, teachers have continued incorporating online platforms such as WhatsApp, Telegram, and Google Classroom alongside traditional in-class teaching to assign homework to students. This shift is indicative of teachers recognising the benefits and importance of leveraging online educational tools in conjunction with their regular classroom instruction. Despite numerous studies exploring blended learning in higher education, there remains a noticeable research gap concerning its application in secondary schools (Mustapha et. al., 2022).

To address this gap, the study implemented the Wakelet Students' Ambassador Programme to examine students' perspectives on blended learning. This programme comprising six learning stages - Curation, Critical Thinking, Creativity, Collaboration, Presentation and Portfolio - required students to create various Wakelet collections for each stage. The Wakelet Students' Ambassador Programme was chosen as it is a student-centred programme that encourages independent learning through online resources such as YouTube, Quizziz, Wakelet, and websites. Additionally, the programme promotes critical

thinking and collaboration among students, fostering teamwork to accomplish the given tasks. Finally, this programme enhances students' sense of accomplishment as they showcase their certificates and achievements in the final task. The research theme for the Wakelet Students' Ambassador Programme focused on the 'Family', aligning with one of the main themes in the secondary school English syllabus.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This study is guided by two main objectives as below:

- i. To identify students' perceptions of the use of blended learning.
- ii. To identify students' perceptions of using the Wakelet Students' Ambassador Programme.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Blended Learning

Rahman et. al. (2020) assert that blended learning is viewed as a new method of teaching that does not solely focus on teachers as information providers but it also includes students as well. This mode of learning empowers students with autonomy while ensuring their progress is supervised. To provide students with more appropriate access to quality learning experiences, educators need to discover effective and flexible delivery models, as highlighted by Jabbar (2022), who emphasises the opportunity for institutions to optimise classroom space and resources through blended learning. Students who develop positive perceptions of blended learning are likely to increase their engagement and become more active in this learning environment. The blended approach effectively cultivates self-directed learning and intrinsic motivation among students, encouraging them to pursue further learning independently (Rahman et. al., 2020).

The Concept of Blended Learning

Blended learning, as Gustiani (2020) notes, originated in the field of corporate human resource training to address constraints in traditional face-to-face teaching, such as limited class sizes, scheduling issues, and high training costs. Major corporations like IBM and Boeing have, since the 1960s, utilised communication technology to train large numbers of employees simultaneously. The primary goal of blended learning is to overcome human resource constraints and optimise training effectiveness. This approach, however, extends beyond corporate settings and is equally applicable in educational institutions.

Thus, this study utilised the Wakelet Students' Ambassador Programme as a blended learning tool to improve students' language learning. Students' perceptions of blended learning and the Wakelet Students' Ambassador Programme were gathered through a mixed-methods approach, incorporating questionnaires, observation and interviews.

Wakelet Students' Ambassador Programme Overview

As highlighted by Quah (2023), Wakelet is an online platform offering a versatile array of functions for educators and students. It serves as a repository for storing important links from various sources, including websites, blogs, social media posts (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram), YouTube videos, and photos. Educators can also enhance the learning experience by uploading self-recorded video lectures, providing valuable resources for independent student study.

The Wakelet Students' Ambassador Programme is a purposeful initiative designed to improve student's learning experiences through the Wakelet platform. Comprising six distinct stages — Curation, Critical Thinking, Creativity, Collaboration, Presentation and Portfolio—the program engages students in diverse tasks at each stage.

In the Curation stage, students introduce themselves using a Wakelet collection, while the Critical Thinking stage prompts them to present both sides of a topic, such as the advantages and disadvantages of keeping pets. The Creativity stage encourages creativity as students design a flag symbolising Wakelet. In the Collaboration stage, students collaborate to create a collection, which they then present in the subsequent Presentation stage. The final Portfolio stage requires students to showcase their achievements. Figure 1 illustrates the six collections students produce in the Wakelet Students' Ambassador Programme.

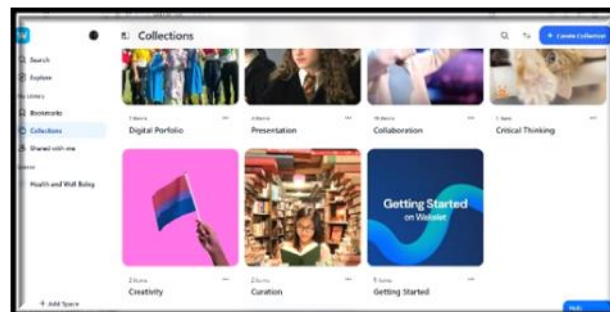


Figure 1: Wakelet Students' Ambassador Programme

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a mixed-mode research approach, utilising participant observation, questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews to collect comprehensive data. At least 3 data collection methods were used to triangulate the data for the findings. The case study design was chosen in this study as it provides the researcher with the opportunity to conduct a more detailed examination of the subjects.

Research Sample

The study's sample comprised 50 Form 3 students from Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Taman Universiti, Skudai, Johor Bahru. Selection criteria favoured older students, as they were deemed more suitable for online learning (Romero & Usart, 2014). In this context, "older students" refer to those who are more advanced in age. Thus, Form 3 students were chosen for their comparative maturity compared to lower-form students. Lower-form students encompass Form 1 and 2 students, aged thirteen and fourteen, while upper-form students comprise Form 4 and 5 students, aged sixteen and seventeen. Notably, upper-form students were excluded from this study as they were preparing for public examination.

Research Procedure

This study consists of six stages, encompassing a blend of traditional in-class teaching and online learning facilitated through the Wakelet digital platform.

1st Task (Curation)

1. Students were taught in class about ways for self-introduction.
2. Students took turns to present about themselves in front of the class.
3. Students did a curation about themselves including information about their name, school, favourite food, drinks, hobbies, dream country, pets, songs and others.
4. Students did a Wakelet collection introducing themselves.
5. The collection for the 'Curation' stage is depicted in Figure 2.



Figure 2: Sample of Curation collection

2nd Task (Critical Thinking)

1. The teacher introduced the topic 'The Advantages and Disadvantages of Keeping Pets' to students during class.
2. Students had a class discussion on the given topic.
3. Students were tasked with researching additional information online regarding the topic.

4. Students created a collection using the Wakelet platform about ‘The Advantages and Disadvantages of Keeping Pets.
5. The collection for the ‘Critical Thinking’ stage is illustrated in Figure 3.

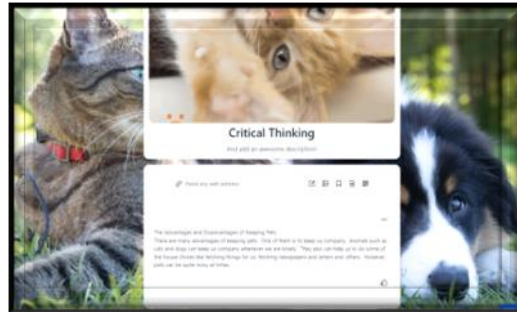


Figure 3: Sample of Critical Thinking collection

3rd Task (Creativity)

1. Students created a Wakelet flag based on the guidelines given by the teacher.
2. Students presented the flags they had drawn in front of other students.
3. Students did a Wakelet collection about the Wakelet flag using the Wakelet platform.

4th Task (Collaboration)

1. Students collaborated on a shared collection titled ‘My Favourite Songs’.
2. Students exchanged their collection links with other students.
3. Students added diverse content such as pictures, YouTube videos or texts to their friends’ shared collections.
4. The collection for the ‘Collaboration’ stage is shown in Figure 4.

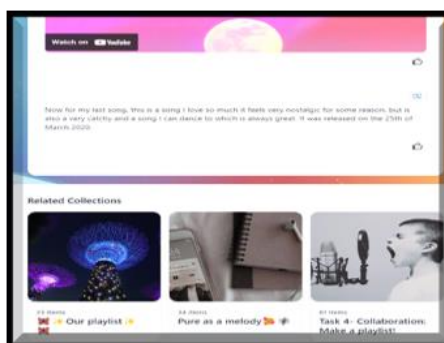


Figure 4: Sample of Collaboration Collection

5th Task (Presentation)

1. Students presented the collections they had curated in front of the class, followed by feedback from their peers.

6th Task (Portfolio)

1. Students compiled a portfolio about themselves including certificates and favourite photos from competitions.
2. Students shared their collections with their teachers and friends once they had completed the task.
3. The collection for the 'Portfolio' stage is shown in Figure 5.



Figure 5: Sample of Digital Portfolio Collection

FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

The findings of this study were derived from a comprehensive set of data collection methods, including questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and observation. The data from the questionnaires were analysed using Microsoft Excel, where the total responses for each item were aggregated and organised into tables for presentation. Concurrently, the qualitative data from interviews and observation were synthesised using a thematic approach. Students' responses in the interviews were systematically categorised under distinct headings to facilitate a comprehensive understanding of the emerging themes.

Findings from Questionnaire

The questionnaire used in this study consists of three parts. The first part gathered students' demographic information, encompassing details such as name, gender and class. Subsequently, the second part of the questionnaire gathered students' opinions regarding the use of blended learning. Finally, the third part of the questionnaire gathered students' opinions regarding the use of the Wakelet

Students' Ambassador Programme. The outcomes from the questionnaire were methodically compiled and graphically presented in the form of tables and charts.

Students' Perceptions of Blended Learning

Table 1 provides an overview of students' perceptions of blended learning.

Table 1: Students' Perceptions of Blended Learning

No. Statement	Number of Students	Number of Students	Total Number of Students	Percentage of Students
	(Strongly Agree)	(Agree)	(Strongly Agree and Agree)	(Strongly Agree and Agree)
1. Blended learning makes my lesson more interesting.	9	35	44	88
2. I can gain a lot of information from blended learning.	10	37	47	94
3. Blended learning helps me to understand my lesson better.	8	34	42	84
4. Face-to-face learning and online learning are related to each other.	13	17	30	60

Table 1 shows that the majority of the respondents preferred blended learning. 88% of the respondents expressed positive responses towards the statement 'blended learning makes their lesson more interesting'. This inclination is likely attributed to the student's ability to access a wealth of information from online resources, complementing the in-class instruction provided by their teachers.

Furthermore, 94% of the respondents showed positive responses regarding the statement that 'they could gain a lot of information from blended learning'. Additionally, 84% of the respondents conveyed positive responses towards the statement 'blended learning helps them to understand their lesson better'. These findings underscore the efficacy of blended learning as a preferred learning platform, enabling students to access diverse resources, including YouTube, images, texts, and online articles, thereby enhancing their comprehension of the curriculum.

Reasons Students Prefer the Wakelet Students' Ambassador Programme

The factors contributing to students' preferences for the Wakelet Students' Ambassador Programme were gathered as part of the questionnaire in this study. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: The Reasons Students Like to Use Wakelet Students' Ambassador Programme

No.	Statement	Number of Students Agree with the Statement	Percentage of Students Agree with the Statement
1.	It is interesting.	40	80
2.	I can get a lot of information from Wakelet.	42	84
3.	I can collaborate with my friends on the project.	43	84
4.	I feel a sense of accomplishment.	45	90

Table 2 shows the reasons students express a liking for the Wakelet Students' Ambassador Programme. Noteworthy benefits identified by students include finding the program interesting (80%), the ability to access a wealth of information (84%), opportunities for collaboration with peers (84%) and a heightened sense of accomplishment (90%). The program effectively complements traditional in-class teaching, providing students with multifaceted learning experiences that combine the teacher's instruction with information gleaned from online resources.

Online materials that students can get while undergoing the Wakelet Students' Ambassador Programme include different resources from YouTube, websites, live worksheets, and various other online platforms. This versatility stems from Wakelet's capacity to seamlessly integrate with nearly all online platforms through the links attached to it (Quah, 2023).

Findings from Semi-Structured Interviews

The semi-structured interviews conducted with students post-implementation of the Wakelet Students' Ambassador Programme aimed to delve deeper into their perspectives. The adapted questions from Tosun (2015) served as a foundation for exploring various aspects:

1. What is your general opinion about traditional, face-to-face learning? Why?
2. What do you like about blended learning?
3. What do you like about the Wakelet Students' Ambassador Programme?
4. What have you improved after using the Wakelet Students' Ambassador Programme?

Thematics analysis was employed to extract meaningful insights and the results are organized under different themes. Table 3 encapsulates key highlights from the interview sessions with selected respondents.

Table 3: Interview Sessions with Selected Respondents

Respondent 1			
Person	Response	Preliminary codes	Final code / Themes
Student (interviewee)	Hello everyone. My name is [name hidden]. I am from SMK Taman Universiti.	Respondent’s name and school	Self-introduction session by respondent
Teacher (Interviewer)	Hi [name hidden]. How are you today?	Respondent’s condition	
Student (Interviewee)	Hi teacher. I am fine. Thank you.		
Teacher (Interviewer)	What is your general opinion about traditional, face-to-face learning?	Respondent’s perception towards learning face-to-face	Respondent’s perception towards learning face-to-face
Student (Interviewee)	In my opinion, I think it’s an interesting way to learn face-to-face but it’s definitely not better than learning online.		
Teacher (Interviewer)	What do you like about blended learning?	Benefits of blended learning	Respondent’s perception towards blended learning
Student (Interviewee)	Everyone loves online learning and I love online learning as well because it helps people with social anxiety so that I don’t have to socialise with other people. Moreover, it’s convenient. I can study anytime and anywhere I want.		
Teacher (Interviewer)	Have you ever used the Wakelet Students’ Ambassador Programme?	Respondent’s experience in using the Wakelet Students’ Ambassador Programme	Respondent’s perception towards the use of the Wakelet Students’ Ambassador Programme
Student (Interviewee)	Yes, I have		
Teacher (Interviewer)	What do you like about the Wakelet Students’ Ambassador Programme?	Benefits of using the Wakelet Students’ Ambassador Programme	
Student (Interviewee)	It’s an interesting programme that helps students and gives students opportunities to participate in programmes that are held by our school. On top of that, my creativity has improved since I started Wakelet Students’ Ambassador Programme. The Wakalet		

	Students' Ambassador Programme is also helpful when it comes to education. As I said before, I improved a lot after using the Wakelet Students' Ambassador Programme like my pronunciation, creativity and better English while writing essays and speaking.		
Teacher (Interviewer)	What have you improved after using the Wakelet Students' Ambassador Programme?	Improvements after using the	
Student (Interviewee)	As I said before, I improved a lot after using the Wakelet Students' Ambassador Programme like my pronunciation, creativity and better English while writing essays and also speaking.	Wakelet Students' Ambassador Programme	
Teacher (Interviewer)	Where will you use Wakelet?	Places of using Wakelet	Places of using Wakelet
Student (Interviewee)	I will Wakelet in both home and school.		
Teacher (Interviewer)	That's all for the interview. Thank you.	Ending	Ending
<u>Respondent 2</u>			
Person	Response	Preliminary codes	Final code / Themes
Student (interviewee)	Hi. My name is [name hidden]. I study at SMK Taman Universiti.	Respondent's name and school	Self-introduction session by respondent
Teacher (Interviewer)	Hi [name hidden]. How are you today?	Respondent's condition	Respondent's
Student (Interviewee)	Hi teacher. I am fine. Thank you.		
Teacher (Interviewer)	What is your general opinion about traditional, face-to-face learning?	Respondent's perception towards learning face-to-face	Respondent's perception towards face-to-face learning
Student (Interviewee)	In my opinion, traditional face-to-face learning immediate communication between teachers and students.		
Teacher (Interviewer)	What do you like about blended learning?	Benefits of blended learning	Respondent's perception towards blended learning
Student (Interviewee)	Online learning can help me learn more global knowledge shared by instructors around the globe that cannot be learnt in books.		
Teacher	Have you ever used the Wakelet Students'	Respondent's	Respondent's

(Interviewer)	Ambassador Programme?	experience in	perception towards
Student (Interviewee)	Yes, I have.	using the Wakelet Students' Ambassador Programme	the use of the Wakelet Students' Ambassador Programme
Teacher (Interviewer)	What do you like about the Wakelet Students' Ambassador Programme?	Benefits of using the Wakelet	
Student (Interviewee)	I enjoy working together with my friends through the different stages in the Wakelet Students' Ambassador Programme: Curation, critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, presentation and portfolio.	Students' Ambassador Programme	
Teacher (Interviewer)	What have you improved after using the Wakelet Students' Ambassador Programme?	Improvements after using the	
Student (Interviewee)	Wakelet Students' Ambassador Programme helps me to improve many skills such as communication so that I can communicate with my friends and family in fluent English.	Wakelet Students' Ambassador Programme	
Teacher (Interviewer)	Where do you use Wakelet?	Place of Using Wakelet	Place of Using Wakelet
Student (Interviewee)	I will use it at home.		
Teacher (Interviewer)	That's all for the interview. Thank you.	Ending	Ending

Students' Perceptions of Traditional, Face-to-Face Learning

One of the respondents voiced out that face-to-face teaching immediate interaction between teacher and students, allowing for direct clarification of any questions or concerns. However, it was noted that traditional learning confines students to the topics covered in the classroom. Another respondent highlighted a preference for online learning, emphasising the additional information available through online resources. As expressed by one of the respondents, "I think face-to-face learning is an interesting way to learn but it's definitely not better than learning online".

Students' Perceptions of Blended Learning

All interviewed students unanimously agreed that blended learning offers the most effective learning approach, enabling them to access supplementary information from online resources. They also could

get information from worldwide instructors. Having either a mobile phone or laptop at home, they emphasised the convenience of searching for information online. Responses included sentiments like, 'If we learn from teachers, the memories will be edged in our heart but if we learn online we tend to remember better'. Additionally, students noted the benefit of acquiring information from diverse online sources and the opportunity to learn from instructors globally, extending beyond their school teachers.

Students' Perceptions of Wakelet Students' Ambassador Programme

First and foremost, students uniformly agreed that the Wakelet Students' Ambassador Programme proved to be a useful programme for their learning journey. They acknowledged its role in providing additional knowledge from instructors worldwide, contributing to the enhancement of their confidence and alleviation of public speaking anxiety, given the absence of the need to speak in front of their peers. The program's accessibility and interesting nature further contributed to students' positive perceptions. Notably, students appreciated the global learning opportunities facilitated by the Wakelet Students' Ambassador Programme.

Students' Improvement in Using Wakelet Students' Ambassador Programme

The use of the Wakelet Students' Ambassador Programme yielded tangible benefits for learning. Students reported acquiring new vocabulary and improving their language skills through the integration of online materials. Additionally, the program facilitated the expansion of their knowledge base by allowing them to explore collections created by fellow Wakelet Students' Ambassadors around the world.

Findings from Observation

During the implementation of online lessons in the school computer room, students exhibited a high level of excitement, evident in their enthusiastic reactions upon learning about these sessions. Their excitement was particularly palpable when informed about utilising the computer lab for lessons, possibly marking the first experience for some in learning collectively in this setting.

The introduction of the Wakelet Students' Ambassador Programme also generated keen interest among students, fostering active participation in the learning process. Those already familiar with online platforms took on leadership roles for class projects, extending assistance to peers less acquainted with laptop usage. Notably, digitally competent students played a supportive role, guiding their peers through tasks such as signing into the Wakelet platform, creating accounts, and sharing YouTube links within their friends' Wakelet collections. This collaborative dynamics showcased positive learning environments where less experienced students had opportunities to learn from their more proficient classmates. The teacher played a pivotal role in encouraging turn-taking for laptop use and promoting mutual assistance among students during the Wakelet collection activities.

It was also observed that students were very interested in the activities conducted using the Wakelet Students' Ambassador Programme. In stark contrast to traditional teacher-centred methods, students were notably more engaged, refraining from idle behaviour such as sleeping or chatting with friends during lessons. Instead, they actively participated in the program, creating collections with added elements like YouTube links, animations and images to enhance their appeal.

In conclusion, students exhibited a keen interest in online activities and the Wakelet Students' Ambassador Programme, given its novelty to most of them. The diverse features within the Wakelet platform empowered students to explore independently, fostering not only teamwork but also leadership skills. A positive outcome was observed in improved essay writing skills, with students demonstrating the ability to construct longer sentences and incorporate more sophisticated ideas. Additionally, students displayed heightened motivation during English classes, actively engaging with the teacher's questions instead of resorting to inattentiveness or casual conversations.

DISCUSSION

The comprehensive analysis of results derived from observation, questionnaires and interviews indicates a positive reception of blended learning and the Wakelet Students' Ambassador Programme among the majority of respondents. In the questionnaires, 88%, 94%, and 84% of respondents expressed agreement that blended learning makes lessons more interesting, facilitates the acquisition of information, and enhances their understanding of lessons, respectively. Interviews further revealed that students appreciated the variety of resources available online and the global perspectives brought by worldwide instructors through online learning. Observations substantiated these findings, demonstrating active student participation during blended learning activities.

Moreover, the Wakelet Students' Ambassador Programme garnered significant praise from respondents. In the questionnaires conducted, 80% agreed that the programme was interesting, 84% believed it provided substantial information, 84% appreciated the collaborative aspects, and 90% felt a sense of accomplishment. Interviews highlighted students' enjoyment of working collaboratively, improving communication skills, and the perceived benefits to pronunciation, creativity and speaking skills. Observations substantiated these positive attitudes, showcasing increased motivation and active participation in subsequent English lessons.

These findings align with the assertion by Jabbar (2022) that blended learning should not only impart knowledge but also foster higher-order thinking skills, creativity, and critical learning skills, all crucial factors in students' learning.

The use of the Wakelet Students' Ambassador Programme has not only enhanced students' understanding but also made lessons more engaging and accessible. The integration of multimedia elements and the ability to leverage lessons prepared by educators worldwide, as supported by Quah (2023), have contributed to a dynamic learning environment. Additionally, students' collaboration and

seeking help from peers underscore the social and collaborative aspects facilitated by digital tools. In line with the findings of Haleem et. al (2022), digital technologies, exemplified by the Wakelet platform, emerge as powerful instruments facilitating instructional material creation and novel collaborative learning methods.

Despite the observed improvements in motivation and language skills following the implementation of the Wakelet Students' Ambassador Programme, a notable research gap remains concerning its effectiveness in improving students' language skills. To address this, future research efforts should incorporate rigorous quantitative studies. Such investigations will provide a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of the Wakelet Students' Ambassador Programme in improving secondary school students' language skills, contributing valuable insights to educational practices.

CONCLUSION

The integration of the Wakelet Students' Ambassador Programme as a blended learning tool is recommended for teaching various subjects as it consists of crucial stages for learning such as curation, critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, presentation and portfolio development. Apart from improving students' thinking skills, this program encourages collaborative efforts and promotes a sense of accomplishment, requiring students to showcase their contributions and certificates of achievement in the portfolio stage. It is anticipated that both blended learning and the Wakelet Students' Ambassador Programme will gain widespread across Malaysian secondary schools.

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