Research article

``Fall Program: Visual Ethnography'' -- A Case of Remodeling Cultural Exchange Program into an Academic Virtual Mobility

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Abstract.
For more than a decade, virtual mobility functioned as an add-on to a physical mobility and served as an inclusion strategy for Higher Education Institution in providing equality for diffable students. However, it has become the foremost option in time of the Covid-19 pandemic. This article describes the author's effort of remodeling the physical cultural exchange program into a credit-based virtual mobility. The aim is to provide an international constructive learning process of capturing students' own as well as other customs and ways of life into a video or photo collage using Visual Ethnography methods. The program was attended by 51 students coming from 6 countries. They were grouped in 11 small groups for which each was assigned a supervisor. In this program, the virtual and distant learning techniques were combined for delivering lectures, while blended learning technique was applied for live sessions. Participants' discussion and collaboration were mediated through agreed ICT-based tools within the group. In addition to lectures, a synchronous Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was held once a week to monitor student tasks and progress on their final project. The assessment was based on participants' engagement throughout the program and performance on completing the assigned tasks. The drop-off rate achieves 18% in which participants from Timor Leste contributed the highest rate due to the Internet connectivity issues.

Keywords: virtual mobility, visual ethnography, multidisciplinary distant collaboration, intercultural setting

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1. Introduction

Student virtual Mobility is not a new term despite of its becoming a trend in the last two years due to Covid-19 pandemic. Its concept has been evolved and developed well from the physical student mobility which has been applied in European Higher Education Institutions (HEI) for over 3 decades. Valtins and Muracova noted that Erasmus Program started in 1987 [1] becomes a prominent step in building the foundation of the virtual mobility concept. Erasmus is a program of student, professor and researcher exchange within European countries that provides participants' international experience, language training, new knowledge [1], intercultural competence [2] and networking. The main goal

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is to increase the internationalization of European HEIs which will proportionally increase the academic quality of HEI themselves [2].

The concept of student virtual mobility should not be confused with a distant learning. The last one is defined as a learning method in which teacher and students are separate in the spatial and time dimensions [3] and the distance is mediated by Internet-based technology such as email or streamed videos in which the communication is possibly done asynchronously [4], while virtual mobility is based on the idea which enables learners to "exchange and interact with teachers and other students from different countries by means of the latest Information and Communication Technology" [5]. The distant learning has been applied at Indonesian HEIs, even there is an open university which offer undergraduate degrees fully with distant learning approach. However, a virtual mobility is totally a new learning concept for us.

Due to Covid-19 pandemic, we were unable to offer our physical student exchange program which has been conducted for several years. After a year vacuum, we tried to find a breakthrough for our summer program which is an annual student exchange program focusing on learning Indonesian especially Javanese culture. On the other hand, the program decreed by the general directory of Higher Education Institution well known as *Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka* (MBKM) allows us to convert a non-credit-based student exchange activity into a credit-based course. This paper describes our pilot project on remodeling our cultural exchange program into an interdisciplinary course which is offered virtually.

The paper is organized as follows: the first section is the Introduction which describes the background of the activity. The phases of the program which comprise the strategies for designing instructional program, its Implementation and evaluation will be presented successively after the Introduction. The summary and conclusion will end this paper.

2. The Instructional Program Design

During June-August 2021, Indonesia was severely hit by the Delta variant of Covid-19. As its consequence, the summer program which is held annually seemed unlikely to occur as in the year 2020. As we had prepared some activities for summer program, we saw the urgency to shift its implementation in the late fall or spring and remodeled it into an academic virtual mobility program by learning the application of a specific subject, i.e., Visual Ethnography. Based on these reasons, our pilot virtual mobility program is coined "Fall Program: Visual Ethnography". The strategy of remodeling the offline cultural summer program into an academic virtual mobility which is assigned to 3

credits (3 SKS) comprises 4 phases: setting the objectives of the program, discussions and Meetings with the university stakeholders, literary study and developing a comprehensive syllabus. Each of this phase will be discussed thoroughly on the following subsections.

2.1. Setting the objectives of the program

The first step in designing the program is to set up the program objectives which are very important. As we know, the clear objectives of a program will create direction and guidance on how the program should run and enable us to establish the structure of the program. After some considerations, we set the objectives of our Fall Program as follows:

1. **Credit transfer**: The Fall program should be assigned 2-3 credits depending on the way each university involved in defining the conversion of 1 academic credit into minutes and hour in one semester. However, as the think-tanker and organizer of the program is under the Indonesian ministry of Higher Education, we constructed an academic activity which is equal to 3 credits or minimally to 136 hours.

2. **Student skill**: the designed Fall Program should be able to harness students' skill in solving the problem of remote collaboration and communication, managing their time, and working together in an international environment.

3. **Intercultural competence**: the Fall Program should give students new insights on their customs and ways of life in a methodological and structured way, provide them a chance to be involved in an intercultural environment of learning and stimulate their creativity in depicting their customs and ways of life.

4. **Language proficiency**: Students' English proficiency should be increased by joining this Fall Program.

5. **Networking**: lastly, it was expected that participants of the program are capable of maintaining their relation as an initial step in building an international networking.

2.2. Meetings with university stakeholders

To achieve the first goal as stated in the previous section, we did meets up consecutively with the head of office for student affairs and its staff, the vice rector in academic affair, the vice rector in partnership and human resource development, the head of Institute

of research and community service (LPPM) and its secretary, and also the head of Humanities department. In these meetings, we presented our proposal and discussed some possibilities of having credit transfer, the subject names, gathering new ideas, suggestions and feedback to elaborate our proposal. These meetings proved to be very beneficial in developing the concept and activity of our fall Program.

Realizing that the time shift from summer to fall might bring the consequence of limited participants from abroad, we explored a collaboration with our domestic partners, namely Universitas Dyana Pura (Undhira), Bali and Universitas Proklamasi 45, Yogyakarta (UP45) that welcomed this program and stated their commitment on being involved in this program. In the following meetings, we discussed each responsibility and job description. One of responsibilities of this consortium is to send the proposal to each of our university partners and invite their students to join in this Fall Program.

2.3. Literary study

While a virtual mobility is a new form for implementing student exchange program for us, we focused our literary study to find the concepts and differences between online learning-distant learning versus virtual mobility (incl. learning). After examining some articles, white papers and documentations on the related topics, we came to conclusion that firstly, online learning is a variant of distant learning, while virtual mobility is an enhancement of physical mobility. Secondly, both distant learning and virtual mobility programs make use of current ICT-based technology [6]. Virtual mobility depends fully on all virtual components of ICT supported learning environment [7]. In contrast, distant learning still combines traditional method of learning mediated through Information and Communication Technologies such as telephone, fax, e-mail, access to specific databases or post [3] for delivering the course materials.

The distant learning which includes online learning aims to open access to education and training which free learners from the time and geographical distance [3]. This means that it is possible to acquire a full degree program through a distant learning. In contrast, the main goal of virtual mobility is to provide a "cross-border collaboration with people from different backgrounds and cultures" [8], a means for working and studying together and to enhance the intercultural understanding and the exchange of knowledge [7]. With these aims, virtual mobility provides a chance for students enrolled from other universities to take part in some courses or project at a host university. Therefore, Corbela and Gonzáles [9] noted that the virtual mobility dimensions includes "the creation of virtual learning communities, virtual projects, the involvement of many

universities simultaneously in a course or project, and the facilitation of international collaboration learning and teaching.

The virtual mobility dimensions defined in [9] imply that virtual mobility requires partnership with other Higher Education Institutions (HEI), students' participation from different HEIs, staff involvement, managerial issues such as deciding which types of mobility will be performed. Regardless of mobility modes, physical or virtual ones, Moore and Henderikx [10] distinguish three types of mobility as follows:

1. **Exchange mobility and collaboration** which involves individual student to participate in a student exchange program and leads to enrich learning opportunities for students [10]. The curriculum run is the one from the host university.

2. **Networked mobility and collaboration** which involves a host university and its partners to run its home curricula independently of the other partners [10].

3. **Embedded mobility and collaboration** which offers students to choose for a joint program whose components are taught by different partners and on different locations either virtually or physically [10].

In our case study, we found out that virtual mobility has been offered either as an inclusion strategy for HEIs in providing equality for diffable students or those who have social and financial barriers [9], or as a complement to physical mobility [7]. In this case, the programs offered take form of four types, i.e., a virtual course or seminar, a virtual study program, a virtual work placement, and virtual support activities to physical exchange [7, 9, 11]. As a summary of our literary study, Table 1 presents some commonalities and differences between distant learning and virtual mobility.

2.4. Developing a comprehensive syllabus

The first step in developing syllabus, we conducted preliminary survey to Generation Z (Gen-Z) preference and behavior. A recent study reported in [12], Gen-Z tends to spend at least 11 hours for an online video services and 7 hours a week for Social Media. They learn more easily from these 'new' media that show strong characteristic of visualization. In any case, they prefer creating visual information and upload it to these media for fun. To facilitate Gen Z preference into a constructive learning process in an international level, we turned to Visual Ethnography which is a research method that blends "theory and practice of visual approaches to learning and knowing about the world and communicating this to others" [13].

TABLE 1: Some commonalities and differences between Distant Learning and Virtual Mobility.

Features/parameters	Distant/online Learning	Virtual Mobility
Goal	- providing education and training free from time & space barriers	- creating international experience in a framework of multicultural collaboration
ICT technology	- relying more on the asynchronous tools	- relying fully on synchronous tools, asynchronous tools become complementary
Mode of delivery	- asynchronous and synchronous	- synchronous and asynchronous
Students status	- registered within a host university	- either registered at partner universities or at host univ.
Student enrollment	- a full degree of a specific study program	- seminars, courses, work placement, student exchange programs
Student role	- independent learning process	- active interaction with teacher and other students from different countries.

Focusing on the Visual Ethnography as an offered subject, a comprehensive lesson plan and a credits-time-task mapping were formulated. In the lesson plan, we defined and described the learning outcome, course topics, learning strategy, learning objects, file format, duration of learning/activity, assessment form and grade percentage, while in a credit-time-task mapping file, we predicted the time allocation needed to do the required activities and assignments that corresponded to the proposed credits. Figure 1 presents the first three rows of our lesson plan. The student tasks are connotatively stated in the assessment form. This lesson plan has been through several revisions based on the feedback given from the university stakeholders and our HEI partners.

3. Implementation

The key issues that we considered in remodeling our non-credit cultural exchange program into an academic virtual mobility are credits and credit transfer, implementation methods, technology and tools, and participant recruitment and assessment processes.

3.1. Credits and credit transfer

As it has been mentioned before, we designed our Fall Program which offered the course on Visual Ethnography to be assigned 3 credits. 1 credit is equal to 50 minutes

lecture, 60 minutes for learning independently, and 60 minutes for completing the structured tasks such as assignments and a final project. Thus, 3 credits take minimally 136 hours for completing the whole academic activities in this program. Based on the fact that the course of Visual Ethnography is not always offered in our university partners, we gave them freedom to transfer the credits into one of the liberal arts subjects offered. At Universitas Kristen Duta Wacana (UKDW), this program is transferred into either International Service Learning (Kuliah Kerja Nyata - KKN) or Introduction to Culture appraisal.

Learning outcome	Course topics	Learning Strategy				Learning objects	File format	Duration (minutes)	Assessment form	Percent-age (%)
		Face-to-face learning	Virtually synchronous	Independent asynchronous	Collaborative asynchronous					
- students get the idea on the whole programs	Opening Ceremony		speeches, short lecture on Melanesian Indonesian, Briefing			video	.mp4, Zoom meeting, youtube	90		
- Students get to know what Visual Ethnography (VE) is. - Students are able to differentiate between VE methods and common photograpy and multimedia	*Introduction to Visual Ethnography*			lecture		video	.mp4 youtube	90	Lecture recap	5%
- Students know and are able to apply VE methods and observation techniques in gathering visual data.	Methods and Techniques of Visual Ethnography			lecture		video	.mp4 youtube	90	Lecture recap	5%

Figure 1: The first three rows of our lesson plan on Visual Ethnography conducted virtually.

3.2. Implementation methods

As this program is a pilot project for us, we wanted to make sure that the program run well. Therefore, we combined the virtual learning method with the distant learning method for the mode of course delivery, supervision, and communication and collaboration.

3.2.1. The course delivery methods

In our lesson plan, we designed 8 lectures which were **delivered asynchronously** in a form of a video uploaded on UKDW's YouTube account. The participants were expected to learn independently by watching the videos. The lectures cover theories, VE applications, case studies on VE and tutorials. The theory covers the introduction on Visual Ethnography, its methods and techniques which were meant to equip participants on doing Visual Ethnography well. Other lecture topics covered practical

theories and case studies on VE applications on different fields such as Sociology and Anthropology, Product Design, Architecture, Journalism, Social Media, as well as Game and App designs. Regarding the participants background, which is multidisciplinary, the tutorials were provided to give participants' capabilities on producing and editing video professionally. 2 Tutorials on Pecha Kucha presentation and public speaking were also conducted asynchronously. Pecha Kucha is a method of presenting ideas, story or any academic material with visuals guiding the way.

The synchronous and virtual learning techniques were applied on the opening ceremony which comprised speeches, an opening lecture on Melanesian Culture in Indonesia, program briefing, and announcements. The Focus Group Discussions (FGD) which took place every Friday afternoon were conducted synchronously as a means of having discussion on the courses, problems faced in doing observation and data gathering, and sharing to all participants in a panel discussion as well as in participants' small groups. The group final project was presented synchronously so that each group got feedback from other group members and supervisors as well. A live cooking lesson on Indonesian culinary was conducted interactively using **blended learning technique** in which participants present on the spot were able to interact actively with the chef, while remote participants posed their questions synchronously through ICT-mediated tool.

3.2.2. Supervision

The aim of providing supervision to participants is to guide participants in acquiring knowledge and skill in VE as well as to provide assistance for participants in achieving the learning outcomes. To maximize the supervision process, 51 participants coming from 6 different countries were assigned in 11 groups whereas each group comprised 4-5 students with different fields of study and nationalities. Each group was assigned one supervisor. However, 3 groups each got one co-supervisor who dealt with the daily discussions and examining participant tasks. In order to raise participant deep engagement on VE, the groups were named using ethnography terminologies such as emic, immerse, kaya, holistic, etc.

Besides giving assistance and supervision, one of supervisor tasks is to assess participants' assignments taking form as follows:

1. **Lecture recap** aims to measure participants' understanding on the lectures delivered asynchronously. Besides, it is also a way to make sure that each participant watches all provided lectures. In doing written lecture recaps, participants were

given a chance to collaborate with their colleagues in the same groups by having discussion and making a turn who wrote which lecture recap.

2. **Final project** aims as a means of applying Visual Ethnography methods in a collaborative environment. Participants in one group were encouraged to choose one out of 6 subtopics which cover street food, festivities, traditional market, superstitious beliefs, traditional costumes and religious rituals. Each participant in a group was assigned to do observation and visual data gathering on their own countries. Collaboratively, they created video on the chosen subtopic based on their observation results and findings. The supervisor task is to give feedback and guidance on the whole process of this final project.

3. **Project presentation** aims as a means of practicing presentation technique which stresses on visual rather than verbal.

4. **Final report** should be written as one of the requirement in completing the program. It contains report on each step of realizing their final project, analysis and reflection on what they have done and achieved in doing VE.

3.2.3. Communication and collaboration

Being aware of running virtual mobility for the first time was very challenging, we provided all information on how the program should run in booklets. The student book program contains information on program schedule and links for each designed activity, small group members and information on their supervisors, subtopics, participant tasks and assignments, and information about the speakers and all participants. The student program book functions as a means of communication between us as organizers and the participants. We also composed a supervisor booklet containing almost all information on the student program book plus supervisor tasks and assessment sheet. In addition to supervisor booklet, we created a WhatsApp group for supervisors as a means of our communication. We did also zoom meeting with supervisors to discuss technical things. Figure 2 presents the cover and an example of content of the student program book. The collaboration among participants in a group was under the task of supervisors using the agreed tools and technology.
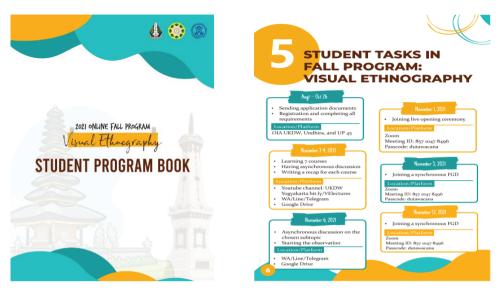
Figure 2: A screenshot of a student book cover (left) and a page on chapter 5 (right).

3.3. Tools and technology

Tools and technology used to support our virtual mobility can be classified into two large categories as follows:

1. **Synchronous tools.** Zoom meeting were used mainly for Focus Group Discussion (FGD), opening and closing ceremonies, the opening lecture, and a live cooking session. Google Meet and WhatsApp video call were used also for synchronous supervision by some supervisors when they needed to have intense discussion outside the scheduled FGDs..

2. **Asynchronous tools**. YouTube was chosen as a platform for uploading the lectures, and most groups agreed on using WhatsApp chat for having group discussion and collaboration. Some groups made use of Google Classroom or drive as a collaborative repository of their works in progress.

The success of using different tools for communication and collaboration showed that both participants and supervisors are technologically literate.

3.4. Participant recruitment and assessment

To recruit the participants, we distributed flyers to our university partners overseas and invited Universitas Proklamasi 45 (UP 45) and Universitasa Dyana Pura (Undhira) Bali to collaborate in this program by sending the program announcement and flyers to their university partners too. As a pilot project, we decided to accept only 50 participants in

total. However, there were 132 students registered in this program so we decided that any participant candidates who registered at Undhira and UP45, so they needed to conduct a selection process. For students registered at UKDW, we based our selection on their GPA, English proficiency, motivation letters and the interview results. Figure 3 shows the number of registration in comparison to each university quota and the percentage of the accepted participants.

As this program was assigned 3 credits, the participants' performance in completing the tasks and project were assessed through 10 components, i.e., attendance, communication, initiative, motivation, collaboration, creativity, empathy, lecture recap, project presentation, and final report. Each component has 10% points. The aforementioned assessment components evaluate not only participants' performance but also their engagement on each phase of the program including the asynchronous discussion and supervision. The assessment was done by supervisors who knew students involvement and performance throughout the program. We also evaluated participants' involvement based on their attendance on each program and the drop out case which is quite high. Figure 4 displays the statistical data on this matter.

4. Program Evaluation

The evaluation on the virtual mobility program took form of questionnaires which were administered twice for participants and once for the supervisors. The first evaluation taking form of questionnaire was administered to participants in the middle of the running program. The questions on this mid-program evaluation were focused on self-evaluation, i.e., participants' perspective on their personal engagement and on gathering their feedback on how to enhance the rest of the program from the Gen Z perspective. We combined 5 Likert scale range and open questions in our mid-program evaluation questionnaire. Only 61% of the participants filled in the questionnaire form.

Due to limited space, we reported the results that gave us insight and constructive feedback. Being asked whether they watched all video lectures, 20% participants answered 'no'. The reason is that they watched collaboratively in a group, i.e., each participant in a group was assigned to watch 1-2 videos and made a recap then they have discussion on it. They thought this way is more effective rather than each participant watched all video lectures. Figure 5 (a) shows participants' self-evaluation on the asynchronous discussion and collaboration within the group, while Figure 5 (b) presents participations' opinion on information sufficiency in the student program book. As a feedback on having a livelier atmosphere during a panel FGD, some participants
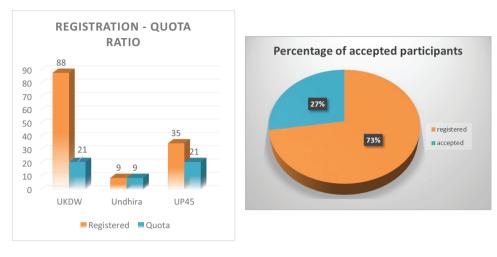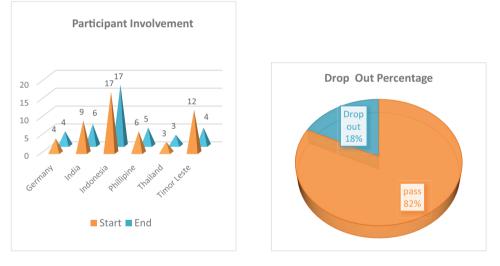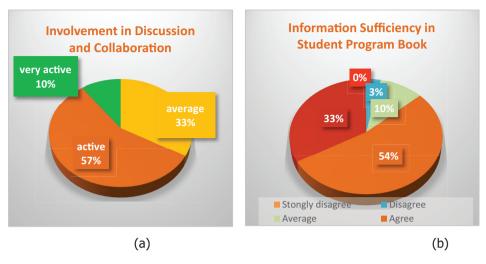
Figure 3: Data on the registered participants in comparison to its quota (left) and its acceptance rate (right).

Figure 4: The statistical data on student involvement on the beginning vs at the end of the program (left) and the drop-out ratio (right).

proposed to have icebreaker activities. Though it was a challenging task to do online ice-breaking, on the succeeding FGD we performed an ice breaking entitled 'How beautiful name it is'.

The questionnaire administered at the end of the program measured participants' satisfaction, intercultural communication skill, networking, and program usefulness. The questionnaire provides 10 questions whereas each measured item were formulated in a positive and negative statements to validate the participant consistency in responding the questions. The result shows that 44.8% participants strongly agree and 31 % agree that the virtual course on VE is very useful, however 25% of participants think that the assignments are too many for them. Despite of that, 79% feel that they learn a lot and 54% gain new insight from joining our fall program. In the field of intercultural

(a)   (b)

Figure 5: Participants' involvement on the discussion and collaboration (a) and Information sufficiency rate on the student program book (b).

communication skill, only 20.6% participants feel that they hardly make new friends. The rest enjoy having new friends from different nationalities, and 85% participants like to keep in contact to their international friends. Table 2 displays 10 statements as the evaluation of the program.

TABLE 2: Statements of the questionnaire administered to student at the end of the program.

No.	Statements
1	I think that the Fall Program: Visual Ethnography is very useful for me.
2	I think that I found this Fall Program is very complex and has many assignments to complete
3	I think I have learnt a lot from this Fall Program: Visual Ethnography.
4	I think I have gained no new insight from this Fall Program
5	I would imagine that many students from different areas of study would like to learn Visual Ethnography since it enriches us on how to make a qualified video or photo collage.
6	I think Visual Ethnography is a topic properly learnt by students from humanities or social sciences only.
7	I think I would be able to keep in contact with my new international friends from this program.
8	I think I have barely made new friends from this Fall Program
9	I think that there would be more interesting if there were joint activities for the whole groups.
10	I felt very confident communicating and working together in the small group as it has been designed in this Fall Program

Using the same method and number of questions, the questionnaire administered to supervisors measures their opinion on VE as topic, supervision process, the sufficiency of tools and technology used, and their interest on the similar program. Open questions for gathering feedback for the future program were also provided. 100% supervisors

responded to the questionnaire, in which 91.6% feel that VE is a new thing for them. Though it is challenging to supervise a crash program on VE, 83.3% of them enjoy it very much and acknowledge that they learnt a lot from the supervision process. All supervisors agree that this program has unveiled their view that cross-cultural learning is quite possible to perform virtually. In other words, they totally agree that virtual mobility insightfully enrich both students and supervisors, though 66.7% belief that physical mobility would be more effective in shaping participants' intercultural competence. As for communication tool, 93.4% agree that WhatsApp web is very effective tool for asynchronous communication. The different time zones become insignificant constraint anymore.

5. Conclusion

The Covid-19 pandemic and the MBKM program have inspired us to remodel our annual non-credit cultural student exchange program into an academic virtual mobility offering a course on Virtual Ethnography (VE). VE was chosen on the basis of Gen Z preference on spending much time on reading, watching and producing visual information on the social media. The strategy that we applied in remodeling this program comprise three phases, namely planning and preparation, implementation, and program assessment. In planning phase, the program designed was acquired through literary study, meetings with university stakeholders and partner universities, setting the goals, and developing a comprehensive syllabus or lesson plan.

In the implementation phase, we combined distant learning method and virtual learning method for delivering the course material and FGDs. In order to monitor participants' learning process, they are grouped in small group of students and assigned a supervisor for each group. To make remote communication and collaboration possible, we made use of ICT-mediated tools which enable participants, supervisors and organizer to communicate both synchronously and asynchronously. Besides, we composed a student program book and a supervisor booklet containing all information needed to join the program. The program was assigned 3 credits so all lectures, FGD and assignments have been calculated to meet the requirement of its time allocation. Participants' assessment and grade are based on their engagement on all designed activities, attendance rate, the completion and quality of the given assignments. At the end of the program, 18% participants dropped out themselves due to the internet connection which caused them unable to attend most activities and inability to complete the required tasks or assignment.

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