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MA DIPLOMA PAPER

"Student's Grit when Performing Critical Thinking Tasks introduced through Blended Learning Strategies"

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Abstract

A lot of scholarly work has been dedicated to the impacts of blended learning approaches, but little attention has been drawn on students' level of grit and their critical thinking skills. Therefore, this diploma paper is focused on investigating the motives that stimulate students to continue their studies in a critical way regardless how challenging a task might appear at first glance. The issue was deemed worth to examine since it comprises a universal educational phenomenon. Additionally, students' wrong learning attitude can hinder to become proficient in a particular field. Likewise, once students reach a certain level of expertise, it means that they are also experiencing a personal growth. Aligned with professional and personal growth, the outcome of this conducted research suggests that students feel more relaxed when they are given the autonomy to decide on their own as when to study. Students' autonomy can be reached through the approach of blended learning since it merges in-class and online learning. On the other hand, critical thinking skills are correlated with students' studying styles which turn to become habits during the overall learning process. In our case, the students did not report that their studying time is more efficiently planned through blended learning. Again, it has been affirmed that students already possess an integrated habit how they plan their studying time (Wolters & Hussain, 2015). Good time management does not affect the enjoyment of students' studies. Even today, students with a lower level of grit still prefer more lectures compared to online learning. Namely, with the lecturing part are being identified students who lack a certain degree of persistence during the overall studying process. In principle, it is crucial to analyze the level of students' grit and their handling of critical thinking tasks. This is an indication of whether students will have a positive or negative study experience. Students need to establish a positive studying experience in order to enhance critical thinking skills as early as possible. Additionally, learning issues can be easier handled with the aid of this positive studying attitude. In a nutshell, the approach of blended learning sums up students' academic objectives as well their fulfillment on the personal ground. Hence, the outcome of this thesis shall facilitate the implementation of blended learning while promoting students' grit and their critical thinking skills.

Keywords: Blended learning, grit, critical thinking, studying styles, experience

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1. Introduction

For a long time, the professor-centered approach has been the most prominent representation in higher education. Even though the aforementioned approach has been beneficial for decades, it also has some drawbacks when it comes to the promotion of students' critical thinking or their emotional stability known as emotional intelligence. In addition, the educational system of Kosovo is facing the challenge of how to implement appropriately different learning approaches. It seems that the system of higher education neglects the fact that studying approaches must be constantly modified as the needs of the students are constantly changing. Generally, one objective of higher education is to demand and maintain a certain level of students' professionalism (Savoia, 2015; Gerbic, 2010). Over time the unique relationship between students and professors throughout the education system need to experience an improvement. This gives rise to the debate whether online learning or classroom activities are more helpful for the students. It is worth examining the approach of blended learning since it merges face-to-face and online studying methods. Nowadays students can easily access information through the Internet, newspapers, magazines, television or radio but the question is how the acquired academic skills are integrated into students' later life.

In order to promise students a successful professional future, the educational system must further promote the properties of the non-cognitive traits as it is the case of grit (Duckworth & Duckworth, 2016). The term grit describes long-term goals that students should pursue with perseverance and passion (Datu, 2017). Striving means working hard on challenges and maintaining both effort and interest for years and years - despite failures, adversity and even standstill. This state of constant striving of the students makes it possible to overcome obstacles in achieving certain academic goals. However, many factors need to be taken into account so that students provide this driving force for academic achievements and later on for. Some scholars have suggested that students' grit can be strengthened through blended learning (Cheung & Hew, 2011). Professors must be a model of perseverance, confidence and optimism, while bringing together online learning and classroom activities (Cassidy, 2015). Therefore, students must perceive these features several times during their studies. It is appropriate to say that characteristics which include features such as grit, flexibility and transparency can be trained, strengthened and developed over time. Since conscientiousness is closely related to the

means of grit, it can explain the phenomenon of why people overcome obstacles associated with achieving a goal. Students' level of grit is recognized as very important because it takes into account the consistency of their interests and efforts. In fact, the type of teaching that most requires characteristics of student determination and self-confidence is supposedly old-fashioned, teacher-centered learning. However, challenging and feasible online assignments can promote the level of the students' grit and critical thinking. Precisely, the learners' distinct type of needs can be appropriately comprised through blended learning. Professors use the approach of blended learning without being sure when students are ready to participate in such a learning atmosphere (Bonk & Graham, 2006). For this purpose various researches have been conducted to examine the benefits of blended learning. According to Hoernke (2016), students' readiness to participate in the blended learning is directly correlated to individual attribution, life factors, learning styles as well as having some basic technical knowledge. Four features will be listed in order to integrate blended learning in a meaningful way. First of all, the appealing content of an online material leads to a greater participation of students in blended learning approaches. Online learning, as being quite dynamic, requires a change in the roles and responsibilities of professors and students (Christensen et al., 2013). So, the students become active learners and try to analyze phenomena on their own. Such features of active learning can be fostered further when professors communicate to students the importance of being consistent during their studies. Consistency means that students set a clear goal and do not stop working for it until it becomes reality. This characteristic of not giving up leads to an in-depth analysis of different issues in education. As individual students have different learning preferences and at the same time they have their own needs, abilities, knowledge and experience, it is safe to say that one course does not suit all students' needs. Therefore, the blended learning approach tends to take this diversity into account while at the same time involving students with different talents in the educational environment. This is why educational researchers are carrying out various studies in the hope of obtaining more information on how students can get the most of their potential. A fundamental outcome is to prepare students for their coming future. In addition to studentcentered learning, online learning promotes the importance of social interaction, particularly through synchronous learning where immediate feedback is provided.

For some students the willingness to participate in online learning requires considerable effort. These efforts must be recognized by the professors. This readiness is based on the evaluation of seven noncognitive indicators that are integrated on the blended learning environment as: individual attributes, life factors, learning styles, technical competency, on-screen recall and overall accuracy (Ho et al., 2016). These factors mentioned above play an important role in the context of online learning in order to gain an insight into the strengths and weaknesses of students. Several facets of different types of learners can be achieved through blended learning. In fact, a link has been established between students' level of grit and their critical thinking skills (Christensen & Knezek, 2014). When students deal with a phenomenon in depth, this leads to an enrichment of the students' perseverance and motivation for a particular subject. This insight can be gained through the urge for critical thinking. According to Paul & Elder (2009) critical thinking skills are defined as an intellectual process that includes in an active and skillful manner the capacity to conceptualize, apply, analyze and evaluate information out of readings, observations or through communications. Generally, students struggle to link the newly acquired material with their previously gained knowledge (Hofmann, 2011). Students need to work on how to present their arguments in order to develop their critical thinking skills. Bar-On & Parker (2000) argue that trainings for emotional intelligence will give students a stability that will help them react appropriately in different circumstances. Also students need to be emotionally stable since it is equivalent to the qualities of resilience. Both the above terms include the ability to withstand challengeable study programs. When students are emotionally stable, they can develop their critical thinking skills and also show more stamina. This perseverance is needed for students to handle their challenging study programs. In addition, a balance between personal, social and emotional skills is being required to enable students to cope with demanding academic tasks. On this point it is worth stating that first year students shall learn to state arguments with a sense of grit (Kuh et al., 2008). When the students' grits turns to become a habit, it helps them to achieve their academic goals (Wolters & Hussain, 2015). However, the level of students' persistence is being divided into different levels. In the study conducted by Farkas et al., (2000) enthusiastic students, who make also proactive efforts, are more predisposed to reach academic success. On the other hand, strict grading criteria/deadlines or final exams are demotivating for the students. In addition, a low grade can also increase students' inefficiency and have a negative impact on the desire to continue studying (Boretz, 2004). However, it does not mean that the grading system should be avoided altogether. Instead, the professors should concentrate on developing students' critical thinking skills and their level of grit.

Let us consider the multidimensional manifestation of grit. As mentioned before, a high level of student's grit aids to cope with academic stress that may occur throughout the study process. In fact, students' grit is not determined by the degree of their aptitude. It is more a sign of students' consistent persistence and endeavor to finish a previous started work (Christensen & Knezek, 2014). Blended learning must therefore be adapted to the students' self-control and to the balance of responsibility for their studies over the years. Initially, students need to stay determined and to put an effort in fulfilling

their academic responsibility through blended learning. Hereby, studying strategies need to be turned into learning habits. Correspondingly, students' effort is being positively evaluated through online sessions (Datu, 2017). It has been suggested that the above mentioned components will enhance further students' interest to study more and develop their critical thinking skills through the approach of blended learning. Despite the fact that technology has impacted our life, it does not mean that the used technology for educational purposes undermines the effectiveness of in-class activities. So, the approach of blended learning will be tested as it incorporates in-class and online activities. The overall focus of this conducted research is to determine students' level of grit on critical tasks that are introduced through blended learning.

2. Literature Review

The approach of blended learning has been chosen as it covers a wide range of teaching strategies that intertwine face-to-face and online studying. This fusion takes into account the different needs of students, such as how and when they want to study. Before analyzing in depth blended learning, let us have an insight how this term has been defined over the years. Initially, it was Driscoll (2002) who introduced blended learning with the intention of increasing meaningful and lasting educational aims. Garrison and Kanuka (2004) highly praise blended courses that combine online and in-class activities to enhance critical thinking skills. Students' critical thinking depends very much on the studying material and how it is presented during the lectures. Today's students declare that online learning must be integrated in the educational system because we are surrounded by it every day (De la Varre et al., 2014). We cannot simply ignore the lifestyle of students. The learning material must also correspond to the current state of affairs. It is said that blended learning introduces up-to-date materials in the most favorable way (Westermann, 2014). Furthermore, up-to-date materials enhance students' interest for a longer period of time. In fact, blended learning also offers more opportunities for negotiation through group assignments. Additionally, these kind of negotiations promote students' autonomy over their studying progress (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004; Okaz, 2015). It involves students taking control of their own learning, either independently or in collaboration with other students. Group discussions can address current global phenomena more critically through online resources (Kim & Bonk, 2006). It is preferable that students will be prepared on how to search reliable sources on the Internet at high school. It will contribute to widen students' general knowledge on a field study, which they can deepen during their academic years. The studies carried out in this aforementioned manner clearly show which subject area the students would like to choose for further research.

Beside the positive sides of implementing online-learning in the educational system, a disadvantage of online-learning is the lack of real social interaction. Virtual interactions harm students' mechanism system to control emotions which can be developed within a community (Muilenburg & Berge, 2005). But for some students the process of studying on their own enriches the experience of personal growth (Van Dinther et al., 2011). So the student value more to be left on their own. It needs to be emphasized that blended learning does not merely mean to transform in-class activities electronically. So, the professor's effectiveness cannot be neglected during the studying process. Thus, a raised question is whether a higher level of students' persistence can be obtained through online tasks

that require critical thinking skills. Critical thinking skills and students' grit is believed to be easier maintained when face-to-face classes are combined with online activities. This conclusion can be drawn because students have different needs. Generally, students are driven to find solutions of learning issues when they are interwoven with up-to-date phenomena. For instance, students can become better critical thinkers while analyzing online headlines that are correlated with current state of affairs. As a result, the e-learning proposal advocates that students remember the material learned longer and can take a more critical view (Karami et al., 2012). Precisely, the cognitive representation of students' comprehension can be promoted visually, audio or kinesthetic. All this depends on the needs of a particular student. Even though it takes a lot of efforts to design blended learning classes, students' critical thinking skills will benefit the most out of it (Arkorful & Abaidoo, 2015). On the contrary, if teacher-centered approaches are overemphasized, students' entire expertise may experience barriers. Students cannot use their entire intellectual capacity in such a strict studying environment. To achieve students' full intellectual capacity, meaningful studying outcomes need to be presented to them. Beside the fact that technology is everywhere available, it influences also our cognitive representation. It is important that students combine their newly acquired materials in a meaningful way. Some studies have argued that the existence of Internet has hugely impacted students' communication style but their attention span has been decreased in rate (Ho et al., 2016; Kaur, 2013). So, the effectiveness of using technology in class needs to be defined properly as the Internet can be distracted if it is used inappropriately. This kind of distraction comprises the case when students lose their focus while analyzing a certain phenomenon. In some other cases, students cannot distinguish reliable online resources out of unreliable ones and believe whatever is read on the web (Sanchez et al., 2006). An investigation on this issue seems to be significant because the students may have later on difficulties to comprehend a phenomena correctly. But we need not to forget that the rapid increase of technological development has impacted our lifestyle quite a lot.

However, students' academic achievements cannot be effectively reached through the sole use of online learning. Said differently, face-to-face instructions cannot be neglected as students are somehow used to this approach (Arkorful & Abaidoo, 2015). Indeed, various methodologies need to be intertwined within the higher educational system (Seaman, 2005). According to Taylor & Medina (2011), academic achievements mean that a certain students continue studying until a solution is found of the raised issue. Another crucial point is that the students strongly believe that they can handle the given academic assignment. So, a personal belief of achievement must exist by the students. This awareness is not directly linked with the grading framework that students receive from their professors. Students' positive studying experience rises when professors ask students to solve academic assignments with the note of individual criticisms (Arabasz & Baker, 2003; Vaughan & Garrison 2006). But to attain this level of individualized studying experience, blended learning needs to be distinguished from activities that can be practiced also in class. Students need to become more resilient and to be able to cope with unexpected circumstances during the studying years. In other words, students need to be motivated to reach academic objectives even though at a certain period of time everything might seem too hard to cope with. An overall educational objective is to maintain students' interactivity and their preoccupied studying experiences. Students need to work on their personal traits, in order to become critical thinkers. The personal growth of the students cannot be promoted to a higher level if the professors only concentrate on achieving the goals written on the curricula. This attitude has to do with students' resilience side which generally means to bounce back even when at certain points things are not going as they should (Van Dinther et al., 2011). Again a readjustment of the educational system is being required from students as well as from the professors' perspective. Moreover, students are more proactively engaged when their well-being and academic progresses are balanced within a more positive studying experience (Gerbic, 2010). So, it leaves the impression that students' effort was worthy and they perceive the sense of belonging. When students constantly have negative study experiences, they begin to doubt their self-esteem. This experienced feeling confirms to the students in a way that they are not ready for the academic world. Students' incompetence can lead that students dropping out of their studies. Hereby, the combination of in-class and online learning leads to establishing an overall positive learning experience. Students' behavior needs to be examined when a large number of tasks are aimed at students' weaknesses (Guimaraes, 2006). According to the aforementioned study, a key indicator is that the weaknesses of the students in class may appear to be more inefficient in comparison with real life circumstances. Overall, students build on their academic skills to manage, monitor and adapt behaviors to improve their vulnerabilities. The personal qualities of students can be most effectively promoted within the academic framework (Komarraju et al., 2009). The educational environment can be adequately taken into account, as the characteristics of grit and intellectual incentives can be merged within the academic framework. According to Wilks (2008), the fundamental characteristic of students continuing their learning responsibilities, after the experience of a failure, is how students perceive the entire study process for their own benefit in everyday life. In order to offer students a healthy study experience, firm personality traits must be developed early on and maintained during their studies. This positive attitude can be achieved through a supportive studying environment. In this respect, the characteristic of the students' resilience is equated with the support of the educational environment. (Cassidy, 2015). It makes it possible for the students not to give up so quickly. This supportive

environment, which is in fact a protective mechanism, determines how students may react while coping with challenging tasks (Wilks, 2008). However, these protective factors are not rigid, and as such may vary among students. The different types of students perceive the academic pressure in different ways. So, some students tend to hide the academic pressure that they are experiencing whereas some others identify their personal worth with the gained success. This self-identification with a failure can damage the students' self-confidence (Arkorful & Abaidoo, 2015). But our focus is to investigate whether there are strategies for students to deal with academic responsibility without compromising their own wellbeing. On the other hand, if students only accumulate academic stress without exposing themselves to it, academic tasks can hardly be solved critically (Bonk & Graham, 2006). Indeed, withstanding academic pressure can lead students to experience personal growth. All of the above-mentioned components once again confirmed the importance that study strategies must be developed by students at an early age through online learning and in-class activities. Once this positive attitude towards studies has been established by the students, it will manifest itself in many different contexts (Hartley, 2011). This multidimensional role can be explained by the merging of face-to-face and online learning. Some other features of critical thinking skills are students' stability, self-efficacy and their studying control (Van Dinther et al., 2011). In this way the students are also prepared for other struggles that may occur in real life. Also social interactions play a decisive role in the life instances. Therefore, students need to participate in online blogs with other students in order to become more socially engaged. By the same token, blended learning represents also traditional classes to embed the sense of real engagement.

In fact, online learning does not completely eliminate students' stress, but somehow a positive stress is created that allows progress in students' personal development (Kohler Giancola et al., 2009). As mentioned before, professors need to be aware of student's distinctive marks while designing study feasibilities. In the meantime, the main task is to examine how much the students are occupied with their chosen subject area. Blended learning must be implemented in such a way that e-learning better reflects the students' perspective on their goals. It is therefore important to highlight the students' strengths in terms of their critical reasoning skills (Savoia, 2015). A positive learning experience that confirms the students' enthusiasm for their subject is best combined from in-class teaching and online learning. According to Westermann (2014), the higher educational system goes through some basic classification of teaching approaches. These classifications have been made because students' study experience changes based on their current performance in a particular academic year. In the meantime, students' study experience study adaptations that students go through, they either achieve a balanced studying process or

discontinue their studies out of the feeling of being overwhelmed with their academic responsibilities (Case, 2007). It all depends how a certain studying phase is being perceived and handled by a particular student. Based on Sadlo & Richardson (2003), this positive study environment can be achieved by combining the latest technology with the old pedagogy. The education system has to change constantly to adapt to the new social developments. Mainly the social development is based on the technological aspect. Technology has both positive as well as negative aspects. In addition to having an effect on the students' studying experiences, blended learning can ensure a dose of calmness among the students (Okaz, 2015; Ho et al., 2016). Another positive aspect of blended learning is that it stretches out students' full potential (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004). The technology can also have disadvantages because one can lose focus very quickly when searching for some information on the Internet (Hofmann, 2011).

As far as the educational system is concerned, new studying approach are constantly examined. According to the Constructivist Learning Theory, the fundamental part of the educational system is to consider students on their individual basis (Hein, 1991). However, the individualized monitoring of students does not mean that they should be analyzed in an exclusively closed educational context. In fact, students' cooperation within a group is being perceived as a significant component for critical thinking skills (Bonk & Graham, 2006). Furthermore, the cooperative sense of the student community has an effect on a better understanding system. In addition, the students have the opportunity to share their points of view and argue them critically. A clear line of blended learning is that e-learning courses do not need to be implemented in the same way as they could be taught in class. One clear line of blended learning is that e-learning does not mean to cover online classes that can be delivered also in-class. More important is that a presented session gives the students a deep and thoughtful insight. According to Ryan & Deci (2000) students' intrinsic factors are outdoing extrinsic factors that will foster students' positive studying experiences. All these components increase students' motivational level. As there exist two forms of motivation, with extrinsic motivation is being acknowledged that students perform adequately just in order to receive a desired grade or to prevent other forms of punishments. When students are driven from intrinsic motivation, it means that they pursue a certain goal impelled from their inner desire to study a certain field. Hence, students' inner desire considers the studying part to be long lasting and never ending (Yeager & Dweck, 2012). The aim of higher education comprises that students shall put constant effort to solve academic assignments through critical suggestions. Based on the situational theory, there exist four kinds of students which are labelled as latent, conscientious, active and nonpublic (Kruger-Ross & Waters, 2013). This kind of diversities need to be detected by the professors. So, a group of students fail to realize that they provide certain learning issues. So in the end, the students do not even start an online assignment

with the excuse that it was too demanding. A related issue is that deadlines are being neglected by the students. The awareness of a learning issue shall lead to work on weak points. Students need to cope actively with the recognized learning issue. One outcome of this will be that students bring to an end a started assignment. Good time management is essential for students in the higher education. All these components are important because the majority of students lack self-confidence and are convinced that they are not academically prepared (Westermann, 2014). These positive studying experiences can be enhanced through blended learning while in-class and online learning are being merged in syllabi.

Based on Van Dinther et al., (2011), the importance of a stable educational experience is based on time management, the usage of technology and the integration of real world instances. Again, it is not mentioned that the lecture part is undervalued in higher education. However, critical thinking is not being promoted only through lectures. The aspect of students' critical thinking determines the constant maintenance of the students' study experience (Mangels et al., 2006). Professors must therefore be aware that the education system is facing permanent change. Initially, the evaluation system in higher education shall consider students' pace and the allowance of control over the studying process (Kim & Bonk, 2006). Above all, the intention of study programs is to facilitate students' desired level of expertise. Professional expertise can be accomplished on multidimensional levels. Hence, one attempt to reach students' diversity can be obtained through online learnings. Insofar, the significance of blended learning relies on the manifold functionality that enable students to form positive studying experience. In line with students' different learning styles, Christensen et al., (2013) acclaim the components of control over studying time, pace, capability and students' interest. Students' capabilities need to be highlighted rather than professors to stick on their written norms. Additionally, students shall not be evaluated within an equivalent manner (Sparkman et al., 2012). Students' free critical thinking skills and grit is less promoted through rigid procedures. In more details, characteristics as students' level of motivation, self-image, worth, literacy and studying skills need to be evaluated and differentiated by the professors (Fewster-Thuente, 2014). Hereby, students will have the chance to demonstrate their capabilities and then to become academically superior. This established confidence enhances students' level of grit in line with their academic needs. Initially students overcome the encountered learning issues and then they become critical thinkers (Patrick & Sturgis, 2011).

2.1. Students' Framework

Professors need to be reminded that each student has its own learning experiences and strategies. Some students may prefer a helping hand, while others prefer to know how they are progressing through the feedback they receive. Therefore, different types of people have different needs. In line with these various needs, universities are now customizing what they can do for each student to get the best from them. One method is to examine students' learning experience. Although it is difficult to categorize students' learning experiences, some studies have identified different learning experiences according to students' needs. The framework that is presented covers four main categories of students' learning experiences. These categories include the mindset, qualities, adjustment and students' technical skills (Boretz, 2004). Students' perception for the whole education system are directly related to how they behave in a situation where they might have difficulties. Difficulties may arise from a lack of language mastery or the hidden meaning that can be captured by the students' background knowledge (Warnock et al., 2011). Students' core beliefs about the educational system are based on the organization of the syllabus of a particular course. In this context, the existing approaches will be examined. One of the existing approaches that also promise effective learning is called blended learning. This approach presupposes that both the academic achievements and the personal qualities of the students are fostered under constant supervision. It needs to be emphasized that the features as students' grit, adaptability and the quality to be resilient require constant training by the students (Wolters & Hussain, 2015). The perception of students' academic performance is a crucial factor for higher education. Students' perceptions is not only shaped through the received grades, but also how students evaluate themselves during their academic performance. This unique perception of students can be explained, for example, at their different levels of confidence, fear, easily giving up, or being highly dependent on other peers. On the other hand, some other students begin to prioritize their academic responsibilities and are more disciplined. These distinct perceptions of the students may either facilitate or hinder academic achievements. The mistake most students make is that they believe that adaptive skills cannot be relearned and as such are fixed features. Meanwhile, students' adaptive skills rely on learning habits (Seaman, 2005). It has been suggested that once these learning habits are integrated into a student, they will guide students' behavior for quite some time. In our interest, students need to be made aware of their learning issues in order to establish effective adaptive skills. A clarification

should be made on students' critical thinking skills and what their strengths are. It should be taken into consideration that thinking critically is a complex aspect. Most likely, students tend to activate this complex aspect when an up-to-date material is being presented to them. Furthermore, it is required that these updated assignments to be interpreted from students' different perspectives (Cheung & Hew, 2011). Critical thinking skills do not mean that all students provide the same opinion, but the focus is on which arguments the students are based on. Later on, it need to be investigated how the students correlate their arguments with each other.

In a way, students' different study strategies lead to finish tasks through unique coping mechanisms. In fact, every human being provide its own coping mechanism. However, students easily feel overloaded when they neglect the existence of their coping mechanism. In case students felt overloaded with academic assignments, their current issue need to be communicated without putting pressure on him/her (De la Varre et al., 2014). Ultimately, it is the students who decide what they want to do for themselves and in what time frame they want to face difficulties. Indeed, the role of the professor is to guide students which steps to follow. Added to this, professors need to promote further students' personality traits and students' readiness to work on their personal progress. In fact, personal reasons, the academic pressures or certain criteria of an assignment are just some of the indicators why students decide to cease online courses (Willging & Johnson, 2009). Regarding students' rate of dropping outs, at a higher risk are students that experience a low proficiency at the beginning of their studying years (Rakovski & Levy, 2007). Generally speaking, students' expectations of the simplicity of an online class go unrealized and time management tends to be neglected in online courses. Therefore, professors shall spread a lot of enthusiasm at the start of a semester.

2.2. High expectations and commitment for students' academic outcomes

It is assumed that professors should bring out the best in their students. To get the best out of their students, professors and students are expected to work together closely. Different methods are integrated to establish this cooperation effectively. One method of encouraging this type of collaboration is that professors tend to set high criteria for their students (Willging & Johnson, 2009). But for some students, these academic challenges are at first sight too difficult to overcome. On the other hand, academic

challenge emphasizes that students have an academic responsibility for their academic duties. If students are aware of their academic responsibility, any task may sound very plausible and feasible (Tang & Chaw). Consistent with the aforementioned academic responsibility, teaching methodologies need to go beyond the traditional strategies. Such a traditional strategy involves explaining the same material to all students, and those who do not understand the material fall the course. An educational alternative would be to allow students to succeed at their own pace. It is not expected that a methodology to be suitable for every student. Somehow the professors must support their students through different approaches. It was confirmed that a supportive study atmosphere leads to students achieving their academic goals in a more effective way (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004). Beside the supportive educational atmosphere, students' readiness to pursue certain educational goals can vary among them. There are students who are very motivated in the beginning and there are those who show more interest when their work has fulfilled certain criteria. The common idea is that professors shall not spread an identical grading system among students when they know that they have different characteristics. Added to that, students' diversity does not allow professors to expect the same results from each students. Therefore, professors should avoid comparing students with each other since it can impact negatively academic achievements. All the aforementioned characteristics can also affect students' personality traits and their critical thinking skills.

Based on the upper paragraphs, the approach of blended learning can address the students' specific needs on individual basis. Along with unique studying approaches of the students, a strong desire moves towards the tendency of competency-based learning (Duffy, 2003). Competence-based learning depends on the pace of the students without exerting additional pressure, such as comparing students with each other. Added to that, students' proficiency is a matter of their studying strategies and how resilient students are during their studies (Garza et al., 2014). Consequent to the point of students' resilience, the focus shall be on students' constant improvement. In addition, students must be aware that they are making progress and feel more satisfied. Therefore, the effectiveness of the students must be constantly taken into account and also monitored by the professors through individualized differentiation. When students receive individual differentiation from professors, they are more inclined to acknowledge the positive effects of their resilience. In this way, students with different needs shall be appropriately integrated into the educational environment. This integration must manifest itself in such a way that the students believe that they are making a contribution in their own way. Based on Duffy (2003), mostly students' incompetence overtake their competence within the higher educational system. This is another indicator for students to drop out easily the overall studying process. It seems that students are more harmed emotionally out of a

failure compared to the satisfaction gained from a good mark. The satisfaction part is being taken by the students for granted based on the many studying hours and basically on the effort their put to study (Guimaraes, 2006). Withal, the feeling of a good work cannot be compared to the negative feeling that students experience out of a failure. Since such failures can easily be linked to students' worth. Additionally, professors shall not be more focused on improving the students' weaknesses and neglect to praise good work.

2.2.1 Mindset

The biological aspects of students also play a fundamental role when it comes to academic achievements. In particular, students' cognitive skills need to be integrated when professors adapt the curriculum of a particular semester. A common goal is to ensure that the learned material is remembered by students for as long as possible. In addition, the blended learning approach involves a studentcenteredness that not only expands students' knowledge, but also encourages their participation and grit (Lou et al., 2003). To encourage students' participation and grit, students must perceive that their academic effort is being valued. One strategy is for professors to list the current progress of their students, which can later be compared between academic years. According to Walker et al (2006), the epithet of a resilient student is more likely to be achieved by an inwardly directed person than by following the set guidelines. One characteristic of an inner-directed person is that their autonomy likewise individuality will be preliminary in order to set priorities. It is assumed that these priorities are crucial, as they promise students to behave on the basis of effective behavior. Effective behavior increases the creativity and enthusiasm of the students. In this scenario, students must have successfully visualized themselves at least once in their chosen career. This self-presentation of the students within their respective professions builds their selfconfidence and enables them to think more critically (Cassidy, 2015). Likewise, the students tend to put more effort into their tasks in order to fulfill their dream. With other words, students' grit need to be maintained all the way within the academic years. This maintenance can not only be achieved by the grades the students receive through their assignments. In line with the aforementioned academic maintenance, professors need to be transparent and to address educational adjustments through a proactive manner. Professors must pay attention to the ongoing needs of students in order to further encourage students' grit. Students need to face failures or ambiguities, which might be encountered during the studying process, as an integrative part of the higher education. So, a crucial factor is that professor shall promote students' independence to rely on their self-directed progress (Hofmann, 2011). Beside the professional guidelines, students need to rely on their own capabilities and their academic responsibilities. For our interest, it has been assumed that students' grit can be highlighted through the approaches of online learning and constant cooperation.

2.2.2. Students' Quality

In the higher education students need to be evaluated on their academic as well as personal qualities. A significant aspect is to promote students' persistence in terms of a constant effort. This effort must not be diminished if a task seems too difficult. Conversely, the continuous effort of the students should enrich their self-confidence. It has been assumed that students' grit facilitates to handle academic assignments more effectively (Hartley, 2011). Precisely, grit treats learning issues as an opportunity to find solutions on a critical ground. Students must therefore take challenging tasks as an opportunity to become critical thinkers. In short, grit maintains academic as well as personal growth. A focal aspect is that students need to share openly with their professor be it successes or other forms of learning issues during the whole study process. In order to reach this level of transparent communication, students need to believe that they are part of a certain educational setting through their contribution. Indeed, the features of grit aid students to plan, organize, evaluate and set priorities properly (Wolters & Hussain, 2015). Thus, it is students' grit that enables students to experience continuous progress. All the above mentioned characteristics are crucial requirements for students' professional growth. Hereby, students need to identify their strong/weak points, aims and orientations for their future careers. As indicated before, these components will personalize the overall studying experience in the higher education. Basically, individualized studies lead to master a field of study while enjoying the whole process. Literally, all of the above points of view meet the students' study experiences in terms of academic performance and personal growth.

3. Aims of the Research

The main focus of this research is on the prevalence of teacher-centered time in higher education and the ways to reduce it. One aim is to examine the attitude of students when critical thinking tasks are introduced through blended learning. In this context, students' workload, personal pace, time management and online policies are examined. In our case, the blended learning approach is being examined, as it incorporates methods into a curriculum that allow students a meaningful understanding. One characteristic of a meaningful study experience can be achieved if students start to work online. Somehow it is necessary to integrate the technology into a curriculum because students are surrounded by it most of the time. The question arises whether online tasks develop more critical skills in students than the traditional strategies mentioned above. Another argument is based on the fact that students are more willing to take a course through online assignments (Cheung & Hew, 2011). In terms of students' participation, even reluctant students are more likely to participate in online assignments than in classroom activities. Basically, blended learning comprises several ways to meet the needs of students. To provide a specific perspective, this thesis argues whether the approach of blended learning meets the current educational needs within individualized session. Among all these characteristics, it is important to take into account students' emotional needs. Additionally, emotional needs shall be directed along with students' pace. Especially the approaches of blended learning and the emotional state of the students make it possible to effectively manage academic struggles. A self-regulation system would facilitate students' academic responsibility. Students are asked to be persistent, especially if there might be learning issues (Boykin, 2000). In some cases, students' emotional needs may suffer because professors imply high expectations or too much academic perfectionism (Van Dinther et al., 2011). In some other cases, the students set for themselves a high criteria that are in fact unrealistic.

It is believed that the level of the students' grit is a great predictor to determine the academic criteria that a particular student could achieve. Overall, it tends to increase the students' eagerness to find their way around in their chosen subject area (Grub, 2011). Students' grit can be negatively affected through activities that minimize students' endeavors to show up their distinct talents and needs (Darling-Hammond, 2017). The merging of the two components mentioned above leads to the students becoming better critical thinkers and thus deep learning is built in. Indeed, the balance of professional as well as

emotional needs prepare the students for the real trade market. The students cannot function properly, in a given context, if these two components do not communicate with each other. Students are more willing to participate in a course when meaningful materials are being presented in a creative manner (Kaur, 2013). With the sense of creativity is being understood students' ability to reproduce phenomenon which demands a cross-examination out of various point of views (Stanko-Kaczmarek, 2012). Hereby, students' critical thinking skills are being pushed forward. The blended learning approach fuses e-learning with traditional teaching methods to take advantage of both. Hereby, the focus need to be drawn on the manner of lecturing and not just evaluating how well students memorize certain phenomena. Again, students' coping mechanism in line with learning issues, critical thinking skills need to be involved in a task. In fact, the implementation of the technology in the context of blended learning must be actively pursued so that the students can summon up their grit. It means that online assignments to be differentiated from in-class activities and not merely rely on grades and standardized tests.

4. Hypotheses

Generally speaking, it has been indicated that online assignments increase the level of students' critical thinking skills (Coates, 2005). Creative online assignments can better address the students' needs. Furthermore, online activities, presented through a supportive environment, enhance students' argumentative viewpoints (Cheung & Hew 2011). It must be stressed that students using English as a second language tend to have less positive experiences to foster their critical thinking skills in face-toface conversations (Ho et al., 2016). Students find it quite threatening to give a quick answer in front of others. On the other hand, extroverted students, who feel confident enough as part of a larger group, do not seem to be so enthusiastic about using the Internet for educational purposes (Birch & Volkov, 2007). This type of discrepancy confirms the inclusion of face-to-face and online learning in higher education. Based on Tang & Chaw's (2013) study, students tend to give the impression that they have successfully completed a course if autonomy over the study process is given exclusively to them. In this respect, the characteristics of student autonomy are more favored by online learning compared to the limited activities in class. Moreover, through online learning students decide when and how to do an assignment. The main belief ascribes that students' perceptions of academic usefulness, learning autonomy, technology and online collaboration with peers promote the critical adaptation of blended learning in a course. Therefore, the following hypothesis will be tested through this research.

- 1. Research Question (RQ): How do students perceive the effectiveness of the blended learning method on their personal grit?
- **2.** RQ: What is the effectiveness of the approach of blended learning in developing critical skills among the students?

After presenting the two research questions, it is the part to propose our suppositions regarding students' perception of blended learning.

H1: Blended learning enables students to work on their own pace.

H2: Grit can be increased if critical thinking tasks are assigned through blended learning.

5. Research Methodology

This research examines the degree of students' adaptability when they find themselves in the position to cope with learning problems. This examination is conducted using the blended learning approach. The focus is in fact on demonstrating the advantages of blended learning in order to combine face-to-face and online learning. Light will be shed over the technology and its facilitation for academic usefulness. The result is that the students understand everything more easily and are able to create things anew. Therefore, different aspects of the blended learning approach will be tested in order to observe which is more suitable for students in our context. In this research the primary source of information is mainly collected by the students of the College AAB. Therefore, this implemented study will use the quantitative approach to examine students' level of grit and their critical thinking skills. Moreover, the statistics of the questionnaire will be coded in the statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS). Lastly, the given results will be analyzed in the discussion part. All the significant correlations of blended learning will be summed up with its particular outcomes. In the following section the organization of this research is described in more detail.

5.1. The Sample

The sample for this research will be covered from the students' who are studying in the English Department. Respectively within the program of English Language and Literature (BA) at the "College AAB" which is located in Fushë Kosovë, Kosovo. The students are in the academic year 2018/19. In total, one-hundred students took place in this project. The chosen participants were selected randomly. This sample is considered representative, as the total number of students enrolled in this department is three hundred students. The reason for selecting third year students is that they provide previous experience of what blended learning should be, as they have already worked with this approach. This information has been obtained as the Dean of the Department allows us to read the syllabi of the previous academic years. It was assumed that students who had experience the blended learning approach themselves could provide the real insight into this approach. By real insight is meant which

characteristics of blended learning can be considered effective and which ones still need to be worked on. The following section will describe the components of the questionnaire and how it has been designed for the purpose of this research.

5.2 The Instrument

The main purpose of this questionnaire is to get answers of the raised hypotheses and research questions. So, a questionnaire was designed with forty-eight questions for the students. The questionnaire was designed after the literature review was consulted concerning the approach of blended learning, the characteristics of students' grit and their critical thinking skills. The questions that these above-mentioned factors are intended to examine are divided into different sections. Initially, the first section summaries student's knowledge regarding the term "blended learning" and its outcome. The preceding sections track students' level of grit and their critical thinking skills. Finally, the last section examines how the technology impacts student's academic achievements. The questions are ranked from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree", which is known also the Likert Scale (see appendix 1). In fact when a study investigates two or more variables, the exploratory factor analysis (EFA) is suitable of larger set of variables. Herewith, the dimension of each chosen factor will be individually detected.

6. Descriptive Statistics

As stated above the results of the quantitative approach will be described in this session. These descriptive statistics derive from the output of SPSS. First the results are described in order to leave room for the discussion part later on. Let us first look at the percentage of the respondent's personal data as well as their age and gender. Indeed, the majority of the respondents are females between the ages of 21-25. The remaining part of the students are among the ages of 18-20. The age group 26 and above is slightly more represented by females. At first glance, a discrepancy between the age groups of the two genders can be seen. These and other information can be seen in Figure 1.



Figure 1 Students' gender identity and their ages.

Furthermore, let us describe one by one the major factors of this research that are linked to students' grit and to think more critically. Initially, one common interest was to testify how the students cope with learning issues. One raised dilemma was whether students continue working on a task despite that it has not be understood in the first place. The standard deviation (Std. Deviation) of these variables need to be considered. In fact, the existing norm for a standard deviation is the value 1.0. In our case, as the standard deviation is 1.1 and higher than the standardized value 1.0. Therefore, the tendency of the students to continue a task is strongly correlated with the difficulty of a task. Significantly, it depends on the perception of the students how difficult an academic task might be (Arkorful & Abaidoo, 2015). The golden middle comprises that most of the students "agree" and have a "neutral" standpoint concerning their learning issues. In terms of raw data, the majority of students admit that they try to find solutions to their learning problems. Exactly 20 of all respondents strongly agree with this position, followed by another 20 students who also agree. However, this is not the case if the aim is for students to continue working independently until a solution is found. For example, 25 students claim that they do not agree to continue working, on an academic assignment, until an answer is found. This representation is reinforced by the fact that another 11 students firmly reject the above statement. All this and more can be seen in the table below.

Table 1 Descriptive and correlational statistics of students' learning issues.

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Ν
I try to find solutions for learning issues.	2.0200	1.18649	50
When I do not understand an issue, I keep working on my own until I find a response.	3.6600	1.11776	50

		I try to find solutions for learning issues.	When I do not understand an issue, I keep working on my own until I find response.
I try to find solutions for learning	Pearson Correlation	1	-0.056
issues.	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.698
	Ν	50	50
When I do not understand an issue, I	Pearson Correlation	-0.056	1
keep working on my own until I find	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.698	
response.	Ν	50	50

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	l strongly agree	20	23.8	40.0	40.0
	l agree	20	23.8	40.0	80.0
	neutral	2	2.4	4.0	84.0
	l do not agree	5	6.0	10.0	94.0
	l strongly do not agree	3	3.6	6.0	100.0
	Total	50	59.5	100.0	
Missing	System	34	40.5		
Total		84	100.0		

I try to find solutions for academic issues.

When I do not understand an issue, I keep working on my own until I find response.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	l agree	14	16.7	28.0	28.0
	l do not agree	25	29.8	50.0	78.0
	l strongly do not agree	11	13.1	22.0	100.0
	Total	50	59.5	100.0	
Missing	System	34	40.5		
Total		84	100.0		

The following correlation refers to the effort students make to complete a task they consider to be difficult. A negative correlation has been detected in terms of how students cope with these learning issues. Respectively, the Pearson correlation comprises the negative value of -0.056. It shows that the perception of a tasks' difficulty is not related whether the students continue working on an academic assignment. The approval that these two variables are not correlated to another is given out of the statistical significance (0.698). Thus, the value 0.698 is way higher than the standardized validity 0.001. So far, students' level of confidence is negatively correlated to their academic objectives (see Table 2.) This negative value denotes that the students get the feeling of being confident when they reach their academic objectives. In a more detail, the percentages of the students' responds are given in Table 2. On the basis of the raw data, 45% of respondents declare that they agree to continue working independently until they have found solutions to learning problems. On the other hand, the same percentage is described as disagreeing, followed by 10% of students who are strongly opposed to an independent characteristic for finding a solution. In addition, the percentage of each answer given by the students is shown below.

			When I do not understand an issue, I keep working on my own until I find response.			
			I agree	I do not agree	I strongly do not agree	Total
I try to find solutions for	I strongly agree	Count	9	9	2	20
learning issues.		% within I try to find solutions for learning issues.	45.0%	45.0%	10.0%	100.0%
	I agree	Count	0	12	8	20
		% within I try to find solutions for learning issues.	0.0%	60.0%	40.0%	100.0%
	Neutral	Count	0	2	0	2
		% within I try to find solutions for learning issues.	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
	I do not agree	Count	4	0	1	5
		% within I try to find solutions for learning issues.	80.0%	0.0%	20.0%	100.0%
	I strongly do not	Count	1	2	0	3
	agree	% within I try to find solutions for learning issues.	33.3%	66.7%	0.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	14	25	11	50
		% within I try to find solutions for learning issues.	28.0%	50.0%	22.0%	100.0%

Table 2 The Cross-tabulation of students' attempt to find solutions for their academic tasks.

An eye-striking features are the results given above in line with students' attempt to solve learning issues. Half of the respondents, or 45% of them, agree that they are constantly trying to finish their assignments. While the rest of the students do not agree to put too much effort into their academic duties. Thus, there does not exist a clear cut how students withstand their learning issues. Particularly, 60% of the

students have difficulties to face learning issues as an opportunity of personal as well professional development. Whereas, 40% of the respondents face unbearable academic tension. The outcome of this academic tension is that is does not allow students to think in a rational manner (Boykin, 2000). While the advantages of blended learning are being questioned, a negative correlation with students' time management was shown. It seems that students tend to neglect deadlines that are dedicated for online assignments (Demir Kaymak & Horzum, 2013). While testifying students' time management among blended learning, the given rate of 0.576 is higher than the standard form of 0.05. The responds of the other students are listed in Table 3.

Table 3 The correlation of students' time management and to finish online assignments.

		The time management	
		is more efficiently	I try to bring to an
		planned during the	end whatever task
		process of e-learning.	that I have started
The time management is more efficiently	Pearson Correlation	1	-0.081
planned during the process of e-learning.	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.576
	Ν	50	50
I try to bring to an end whatever task that I	Pearson Correlation	-0.081	1
have started	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.576	
	Ν	50	50

The majority of the students, exactly 62% of the participants, admit that they have completed a previously started task. This positive attitude is based on the level of students' grit. On the other hand, 38% of students do not agree to finish a work they have started. Interestingly, none of the students had a neutral standpoint when it comes to evaluate their efforts. In a sense, it seems that students are aware of how much effort they put into a task. All of this proclamation and more can be found in Figure 2.



Figure 2. The graph of students' effort to end a started task.

The results of the graph below indicate that the majority of the students (48.00%) confirm that they prefer to work at their personal pace. On the other hand, 18% of respondents do not agree that students' personal pace could be so important in completing an academic task.



Figure 3. The percentage of students' preference to work at their personal pace.

The pace of the students, which plays a decisive role in the blended learning approach, does not provide statistically significant rates in this conducted research. Certainly, a high standard deviation is shown for the students' study responsibilities. So, the students have to be aware of what tasks they have to do and when they need additional guidelines. The value of the aforementioned variable comprises 0.207. However, it does not mean that a positive value appears every time. As the following value from Pearson shows (-0.182). This negative value means that when of the variables raises, the other variable inclines to decrease. In other words, 32 of the 50 students agree that the study process is more constant in online learning. This conviction is also shared by 13 students who are very much in agreement about the consistency of online learning. On the other hand, the remaining 5% of the students' answers divide whether they take a neutral position, disagree with the consistency of online learning or only agree with it to a very limited extent. In our study, online learnings have an impact on students' responsibility during their studies. These academic responsibilities of the students are being interrelated to students' personal pace (see Table 4.).

Table 4. The correlation of students' personal tempo within online learning.

		I want to study on my personal tempo.	An online learning environment provides a more consistent study procedure.
I want to study on my personal	Pearson Correlation	1	-0.182
tempo.	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.207
	Ν	50	50
An online learning environment	Pearson Correlation	-0.182	1
provides a more consistent study	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.207	
procedure.	Ν	50	50





In an online learning environment, the study procedure is more consistent

In line with students' critical thinking skills, the professors reveal that the majority of the students prefer to integrate critical thinking skills. Based on the students' viewpoint, 68% of them prefer to provide critical arguments as a criterion for their assignments. Nonetheless, 18% of the participants do not prefer tasks

that involve critical thinking. It was assumed that students who prefer to maintain the same study styles over the academic years prefer tasks that can only be solved through critical thinking (Elder & Paul, 2009). As can be seen on the table below, the high significance rate of 0.12 let assume that students' same studying habits lead to promote students' critical thinking skills. Regarding students' critical thinking skills, the majority of students (42%) agree that they have critical thinking skills. Moreover, 26% of students strongly agree that they have critical thinking skills. However, many students feel insecure about their critical thinking skills. For example, 14% of students do not at all agree that they have critical thinking skills, while 18% do not believe they have critical thinking skills. See the table below for more information.

Table 5. The correlation between students' same study style and their critical thinking skills.

		My studying style has remained the same for ages.	I prefer critical thinking tasks.
My studying style has remained the	Pearson Correlation	1	0.353*
same for ages.	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.012
	Ν	50	50
I prefer critical thinking tasks.	Pearson Correlation	0.353*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.012	
	Ν	50	50

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).



The majority of the students prefer to decide on their own when to study. This kind of freedom enables students to build on their autonomy, which is a crucial prerequisite for their academic responsibility. Interestingly as can be seen on figure 4, the students do not provide a common perception regarding the detailed online guidelines given by the professors. A common desire of the students is that they prefer to be given detailed guidelines. Students feel more encouraged when they know what is expected of them (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004). An unexpected result is that students who disagree and strongly agree with the idea that detailed guidelines can encourage students have about the same rates. For example, online guidelines and autonomy over the period of study are still an unclear aspect, be it in literature research or research among students.


Figure 3. The Likert scale whether students prefer to define themselves when to study.

Furthermore, the majority of the students or 23 of them do not agree that time management in online learning is planned more efficiently. In line with time management, 6 students do not agree that online learning could effectively influence their time management. In contrast, 11 students agree on the positive effect of online learning on time management. Furthermore, 3 students agree that online learning influences the way students organise their study time. Surprisingly, only the minority of the students strongly belief that online learning lead to more effective time management. Good time management helps you to be more productive and achieve academic goals more easily. All the responds of the students can be observed from the figure that is placed lower down.



Figure 4. Students' time management during the process of online learning.

It has been supposed that received grades can influence the encouragement of the students to work on a task. However, in our case there is not established a correlation in between the students' grade and to leave a task unfinished. As the table 6 indicates, the significant proportion is way higher than 0.05 precisely it reaches 0.842. Again a negative value (-0.029) is being given. The meaning behind this negative value is that an unfinished task is being interrelated with the receiving grade. All the remaining value which have not been mentioned can be seen in the Table 6 below.

Table 6 The correlation of students' grades and to leave a task unfinished.

		A grade determines	When I do not understand a task, I
		students' knowledge.	leave it unfinished.
A grade determines students'	Pearson Correlation	1	-0.029
knowledge.	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.842
	Ν	50	50
When I do not understand a task, I	Pearson Correlation	-0.029	1
leave it unfinished.	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.842	
	Ν	50	50

As can be seen on the histogram below, the distribution of students' opinions as to whether an uncomprehend task remains unfinished is not linear. In other words, 13 pupils agree to leave tasks unfinished, while 9 pupils disagree with the attitude of leaving tasks unfinished.



When I do not understand a task, I leave it unfinished.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	l agree	13	15.5	26.0	26.0
	neutral	5	6.0	10.0	36.0
	l do not agree	23	27.4	46.0	82.0
	l strongly do not agree	9	10.7	18.0	100.0
	Total	50	59.5	100.0	
Missing	System	34	40.5		
Total		84	100.0		

Students tend not to pursue only one studying strategy in order to finish an assignment. Indeed, the variance of 0.571 implies that there does not exist any relation with studying strategies and assignments. A crucial impact is being attributed to the pleasure that students receive from challengeable tasks. Again, students intrinsic motivation, as for instance to investigate their interests, is being highlighted. Better said, 32 students agree to follow a certain learning strategy to solve a learning problem. To reinforce the statement that students are willing to follow a certain learning style, 14 students strongly agree with this strategy to overcome learning difficulties. As none of the students disagrees on the question of same learning styles, 4 students have a neutral opinion. Furthermore, the detailed description of the given values can be seen on the table underneath.

Table 7. The correlation of students' strategy and to enjoy working on challengeable tasks.

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Ν
Mostly, I pursue one strategy to solve an issue.	1.8000	0.57143	50
I do not enjoy to work on challengeable tasks.	3.7800	0.88733	50

		Mostly, I purse one strategy to solve an issue.	I do not enjoy to work on challengeable tasks.
Mostly, I purse one strategy to solve an issue.	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	1	-0.048 0.739 50
I do not enjoy to work on challengeable tasks.	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	-0.048 0.739 50	1 50

Mostly, I purse one strategy to solve an issue.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	l strongly agree	14	16.7	28.0	28.0
	lagree	32	38.1	64.0	92.0
	neutral	4	4.8	8.0	100.0
	Total	50	59.5	100.0	
Missing	System	34	40.5		
Total		84	100.0		

Since this research focuses on the blended learning approach, an examination must be related to both online learnings and the lectures held in higher education. Therefore, the results of the critical engagement of the students in the lectures of higher education need to be investigated. It is supposed that students' studying styles remain consistent among lectures. This established consistency can be slightly affirmed by the given variance 1.14. However, the other remaining indications of consistent studying styles will be analysed in the discussion part. In general, the majority of students agree that they engage more critically if the activities are designed in such a way that the lecturer is the focus of attention. More precisely, 34 students agree on being more critically engaged when the lecturer is the central point. Out of them, 15

students do not agree to be more critically engaged when the lecturer is the central point. For now, the outcomes of the correlations among the critical engagement during lectures are being presented on Table 8.

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Ν
I personally am more critically engaged when			
the activities are designed in that manner when	2.5200	1.14713	50
the lecturer is the central point.			
My studying style has remained the same for	2 0200	0.95810	50
ages.	2.0200	0.75010	50

Table 8. The correlation of students' critical engagement within the lecturing part.

		I personally am more critically engaged when the activities are designed in that manner when the	
		lecturer is the central	My studying style has
	_	point.	remained the same.
I personally am more critically	Pearson Correlation	1	0.455**
engaged when the activities are	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.001
designed in that manner when the lecturer is the central point.	Ν	50	50
My studying style has remained the	Pearson Correlation	0.455**	1
same.	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.001	
	Ν	50	50

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	l strongly agree	7	8.3	14.0	14.0
	l agree	27	32.1	54.0	68.0
	neutral	1	1.2	2.0	70.0
	l do not agree	13	15.5	26.0	96.0
	l strongly do not agree	2	2.4	4.0	100.0
	Total	50	59.5	100.0	
Missing	System	34	40.5		
Total		84	100.0		

I personally am more critically engaged when the activities are designed in that manner when the lecturer is the central point.

It is generally known that students are more inclined to do a task that contributes a higher percentage to the final grade (Lou et al., 2003). However, the following figure shows a low statistical significance between these group means of the grading system and the completion of an assignment. Precisely the value 0.096 is higher than the standard form of 0.05. This higher value than the standardized form of 0.05 reassures that the two variables mentioned above are not significant on the basis of the students' declaration.

Table 9. The ANOVA test of the grades and to finish academic assignments.

			Adjusted R	
Model	R	R Square	Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.238 ^a	0.056	0.037	0.67062

a. Predictors: (Constant), I try to bring to an end whatever task that I have started

b. Dependent Variable: A grade determines students' knowledge.

ANUVA"							
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
1	Regression	1.293	1	1.293	2.874	0.096 ^b	
	Residual	21.587	48	0.450			
	Total	22.880	49				

ANOVA^a

a. Dependent Variable: A grade determines students' knowledge.

b. Predictors: (Constant), I try to bring to an end whatever task that I have started

Within the analysis of regression, the curve of students' grades is not being equally spread. This inconsistence means that the grading system has a tendency to spread a negative connotation among the students and their comprehension level. Students are not encouraged so much out of extrinsic motivation, such as the grading system (Stanko-Kaczmarek, 2012). To develop students' critical thinking skills, they need to reproduce things creatively and to express it in an argumentative way.

Histogram





Figure 5. The illustration of students' determination of grades.

A statistical significance has been noticed among students' personal studying tempo and the detailed online guidelines. So, when the professors prepare a detailed guideline for a particular task, students manage their time more appropriately. Therefore, a plan is being created as when to finish a specific part of the assignment. When it comes to the raw data on whether students prefer to study at their personal pace, the majority of students or 24 respondents agree to rely on their personal pace. In addition, 9 students even strongly agree on the positive effects of the students' personal pace. On the other hand, 5 students disagree on the effects that the personal pace of the students can have. In addition, 3 students disagree about the positive effects of their own personal pace. Accordingly, 9 students have no clear opinion as to whether or not they agree with the influence of the students' personal pace.

The statistical significance appears as the value 0.13 is slightly higher than the standard form of 0.05. In brief, students' personal study tempo and the given instructions by the professors shall be analysed in higher education. In some ways, students seem to find it difficult to manage their study time on their own.

		I am encouraged when online guidelines are	I want to study on my
		manner.	personal tempo.
Pearson Correlation	I am encouraged when online guidelines are given in a detailed manner.	1.000	-0.313
	I want to study on my personal tempo.	-0.313	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	I am encouraged when online guidelines are given in a detailed manner.	0.013	0.013
N	I am encouraged when online guidelines are given in a detailed manner.	50	50
l wa	I want to study on my personal tempo.	50	50

Table 10. The correlation between students' encouragement when online guidelines are given in a detailed manner.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	l strongly agree	9	10.7	18.0	18.0
	lagree	24	28.6	48.0	66.0
	neutral	9	10.7	18.0	84.0
	l do not agree	3	3.6	6.0	90.0
	l strongly do not agree	5	6.0	10.0	100.0
	Total	50	59.5	100.0	
Missing	System	34	40.5		
Total		84	100.0		

A crucial point of this research is to examine students' current level of encouragement. Moreover, the focus is to investigate whether this encouragement reaches its peak when online guidelines are given in a detailed manner. It is observable that the curve of students' encouragement is not being equally distributed in the histogram. It is preferable that the data in the histogram to be symmetric. It means that the data to be equally spread on the right and left side. Students' encouragement experienced a drastic decrease within the histogram. This inconsistency is observable when the highest peak of the histogram, the value 1, experienced an enormous increase on the positive as well as on the negative side. If there had been symmetry, this would mean that the mean and the meridian had equal values. In terms of numbers, 26 out

of 50 students agree that they are more encouraged when online guidelines are detailed. In addition, 7 students strongly confirm that they are more encouraged when it comes to providing students with detailed online guidelines. According to the detailed online guidelines, 13 students do not benefit from greater learning encouragement. Interestingly, only one student disagrees at all with the fact that students' encouragement is increasing. While 13 students simply do not believe that detailed online guidelines could influence the level of students' encouragement. Thus, the level of students' encouragement is not static and varies among different students. This depiction of students' encouragement can be seen on Figure 7.



Figure 6. The histogram of students' encouragement when online guidelines are given in a detailed manner.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	l strongly agree	7	8.3	14.0	14.0
	lagree	26	31.0	52.0	66.0
	neutral	3	3.6	6.0	72.0
	l do not agree	13	15.5	26.0	98.0
	l strongly do not agree	1	1.2	2.0	100.0
	Total	50	59.5	100.0	
Missing	System	34	40.5		
Total		84	100.0		

I am encouraged when online guidelines are given in a detailed manner.

In this case, the effects of making a task available online and the students' desire to learn at their personal pace are described. It has been assumed that students respect online deadlines of assignments more readily

when their personal pace is being considered. Expressed in numbers, 24 students agree that deadlines tend to be neglected in online learning. Another 4 students strongly agree on the neglectful attitude perceived especially in online learning. It is worth noting that 12 students do not think that deadlines are neglected just because they are put online. Again, 8 students do not give a clear opinion on whether there is a difference between online and in-class activities. Again a low statistical significance remains as the final value (0.06) is only a bit higher than the standard form (0.05). The negative value of -0.353 confirms that the task which has been publicised online increases the students' desire to respect their own learning pace. More details on the above-named variables can be seen on the table below.

		I tend not to respect deadlines when assignments are posted online.	I want to study on my personal tempo.
Pearson Correlation	I tend not to respect deadlines when assignments are posted online.	1.000	-0.353
	I want to study on my personal tempo.	-0.353	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	I tend not to respect deadlines when assignments are posted online.		0.006
	I want to study on my personal tempo.	0.006	
Ν	I tend not to respect deadlines when assignments are posted online.	50	50
	I want to study on my personal tempo.	50	50

Table 11 The correlation in between students' own pace and respecting online deadlines.

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	6.843	1	6.843	6.837	0.012 ^b
	Residual	48.037	48	1.001		
	Total	54.880	49			

a. Dependent Variable: I tend not to respect deadlines when assignments are posted online.

b. Predictors: (Constant), I want to study on my personal tempo.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	l strongly agree	4	4.8	8.0	8.0
	l agree	24	28.6	48.0	56.0
	neutral	8	9.5	16.0	72.0
	l do not agree	12	14.3	24.0	96.0
	l strongly do not agree	2	2.4	4.0	100.0
	Total	50	59.5	100.0	
Missing	System	34	40.5		
Total		84	100.0		

I tend not to respect deadlines when assignments are posted online.

The curve that determines students' frequency to respect the deadlines of online assignments loses its smoothness. The curve tends to be positioned on the negative side alluding that the deadlines are not being respected by the students. When it comes to describe the histogram, it is positively skewed to the right side.

Histogram

Dependent Variable: I tend not to respect deadlines when assignments are posted online.



Figure 7. The histogram whether deadlines of online assignments are being respected by students.

One indication is that students' grit can be enriched when students are allowed to study on their personal tempo. Therefore, the professor's main issue is not to decide whether students are more involved in classroom activities or online courses, but that students need to be aware of when and how to be more proactive (Nicol, 2012). If this academic awareness is respected, students can reveal the full potential of their abilities. Again, the value of significance 0.007, on the ground of 1-tailed, is slightly higher than the standard form of 0.005. So, it can be concluded that students are more encouraged to participate in online courses based on their personal study tempo. For further information can be seen the table 12.

Table 12. The correlations of students' online participation based on their personal tempo.

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Ν
I tend to feel less encouraged while participating in online courses.	3.8600	0.85738	50
I want to study on my personal tempo.	2.4200	1.16216	50

		I tend to feel less encouraged while participating in online courses.	I want to study on my personal tempo.
Pearson Correlation	I tend to feel less encouraged while participating in online courses.	1.000	0.347
	I want to study on my personal tempo.	0.347	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	I tend to feel less encouraged while participating in online courses.		0.007
	I want to study on my personal tempo.	0.007	
N	I tend to feel less encouraged while participating in online courses.	50	50
	I want to study on my personal tempo.	50	50

Again, the output of this histogram shapes a non-symmetric curve. Averagely, the highest peak is being supported by the students' neutral standpoints whereas the overall data set tends to be skewed-to-the-left. In other words, it conveys that thirteen out of the total participants have a neutral viewpoint in regard to online courses. Aligned with the negative values on the left side, it can be said that students do not feel less encouraged while taking part in online courses. As for the shape of the curve, it is unimodal as only one curve is displayed. The data set does not provide outliers, but rather a gap between the rates. In our

case, there are no extreme values that do not reflect the position of the majority. In other words, there are no atypical data values that are classified as unreliable sources.



Histogram Dependent Variable: I tend to feel less encouraged while participating in online courses.

Figure 8. The histogram of students' encouragement in online courses.

-1

Regression Standardized Residual

2

0

-3

Correspondingly, table 13 examines the variables that are predisposed to solve students' learning issues. Through here, the significance value of 0.000 meets the assumption of homogeneity out of the analysis by one-way ANOVA. The analysis of variance named as the one-way ANOVA compares the means of two or more samples of unrelated groups. In our case, the two unrelated groups correspond to the gender of the students and the way they solve learning issues. In line with the result section, a squared deviation is being created how students solve their learning issues. In accordance to the descriptive box, the overall mean from the male participants is 1.66. On the other hand, the mean value of the female participants is a bit higher (1.76). Whilst comparing these means, the significance value 0.000 presupposes that there is no difference between the genders of students in the way students solve learning problems. All these indications can be found on the table below.

					95% Confidence Interval for Mean			
	Ν	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Minimum	Maximum
male	15	1.6667	0.81650	0.21082	1.2145	2.1188	1.00	4.00
female	25	1.7600	0.77889	0.15578	1.4385	2.0815	1.00	4.00
other	5	3.8000	1.09545	0.48990	2.4398	5.1602	2.00	5.00
4.00	4	3.0000	2.30940	1.15470	-0.6748	6.6748	1.00	5.00
5.00	1	1.0000					1.00	1.00
Total	50	2.0200	1.18649	0.16779	1.6828	2.3572	1.00	5.00

Table 13. One-way ANOVA regarding students' gender differences and trying to solve learning issues.

Test of Homogeneity of Variances

I try to find solutions for learning issues.

Levene			
Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
9.494 ^a	3	45	0.000

a. Groups with only one case are ignored in computing the test of homogeneity of variance for I try to find solutions for learning issues.

As the gender differences of the pupils are not decisive in this research, other features are going to be tested. As it seems, both genders use similar studying styles to cope with learning issues. More importantly, students prefer to follow the study style that has been used over the years. It is supposed that students' comfort zone is being reinforced by a firm study style. Another characteristic of line graphs is that they can show the dependency of the variables regarding the mean score. In our case, there is a dependency between students' studying style and to find a solution for learning issues. The overall view of the graph is shown in Figure 10.



Figure 9. The graph of students' firm studying styles.

The majority of students, respectively 23 students, do not believe that when they fail a course in the higher education, it means that they are a failure. On the other hand, the second most frequently circled alternative summarises that 13 students agree that a low grade somehow indicates their overall failure. The raised question is whether students know that their failure is only pronounced in certain characteristics. In the near future, the student in question will be asked to work on their weaknesses. Since the grading system exists in higher education, it cannot be completely neglected. All of these statements and more can be seen in Table 14.

Table 14. The descriptive statistics whether failures highlight students' weaknesses.

					95% Confidence Interval for			
			a .1	G 1	IVIC			
			Std.	Std.	Lower		Minimu	Maximu
	Ν	Mean	Deviation	Error	Bound	Upper Bound	m	m
I agree	13	1.6154	0.50637	0.14044	1.3094	1.9214	1.00	2.00
Neutral	5	2.2000	0.44721	0.20000	1.6447	2.7553	2.00	3.00
I do not agree	23	1.6957	0.63495	0.13240	1.4211	1.9702	1.00	3.00
I strongly do not	0	1 4444	0 52705	0 17568	1 0303	1 8/06	1.00	2.00
agree	7	1.4444	0.52705	0.17508	1.0393	1.0490	1.00	2.00
Total	50	1.6800	0.58693	0.08300	1.5132	1.8468	1.00	3.00

A failure highlights my weakness.

Further on, the test of variance's homogeneity is presented below. The degree of freedom (df) bunches together the individual rate of every given alternative whether a failure highlight students' weakness. So, the freedom within groups is more advanced regarding the number 46 out of the total value 49. This aforementioned test can be seen on the table 15.

Table 15. The one-way ANOVA comparing the means of the categories between and within the groups.

Test of Homogeneity of Variances

A failure highlights my weakness.

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
1.304	3	46	.284

ANOVA

A failure highlights my weakness.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1.911	3	0.637	1.958	0.134
Within Groups	14.969	46	0.325		
Total	16.880	49			

The line graph below emphasises that students tend to leave a task unfinished when it is not understood. We need to emphasize that students are also confronted with the pressure that grades might determine their failures as a human being. It is ambiguous that the majority of students take a neutral position on whether tasks were not completed because of their difficulty. On the other hand, the minority of students do not believe that tasks that are not understood tend to remain unfinished. Perhaps the students' indication that failure is characterized as their general incompetence leads to this ambiguous interpretation.



Figure 10. The graph whether failures highlight students' weaknesses.

The following test performed by SPSS is called the t-test. In general it compares the difference in the means from the two groups of students' feelings and to possess a studying plan. The result of the t-test shows that 16 respondents feel really relaxed in the student-centred environment. Furthermore, 21 students feel calmer under these created study conditions. As can be seen, the mean value of the students' point of view "I strongly agree" is slightly less encircled than the other alternative "I agree". Supplementary, the standard deviation is higher regarding students' agreement compared to the level of disagreeing study plans. Commensurately, this feeling of calmness can be outstretched when students think about a studying plan. For additional information on the students' study plan and their attitude towards a student-centred environment, Table 16 can be reviewed again.

Table 16. The group statistics of students' feelings and to think about a studying plan.

	The implementation of online assignments motivates me to think about				
	a studying plan	Ν	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
I feel more relaxed when the	I strongly agree	16	2.3750	0.80623	0.20156
learning is directed at oneself.	I agree	21	2.5714	1.16496	0.25422

It can be noted that the variances of the two aforementioned groups are approximately equally distributed. It means that the distribution of students' feelings is similarly shaped among the students. Accordingly, 37 students agree that they feel more relaxed when learning is focused on themselves. Of this total number, 16 pupils are even very much in agreement about this feeling of relaxation. The groups are statistically significant regarding the independent variable how students feel in a study environment that it merely focused on students. This statistical significance can be explained because the value (0.064) is slightly above the standard form (0.05).

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
						Sig. (2-	Mean	Std. Error	95% Con Interval Differ	fidence of the ence
		F	Sig.	t	df	tailed)	Difference	Difference	Lower	Upper
I feel more relaxed when the studying is	Equal variances assumed	3.665	0.064	-0.577	35	0.568	-0.19643	0.34070	-0.88808	0.49522
directed at oneself.	Equal variances not assumed			-0.605	34.743	0.549	-0.19643	0.32442	-0.85522	0.46236

Table 17. T-test for the Independent Samples Test in accordance to students' feelings.

As the given value of (0.568) is way higher than the standardized form of 0.005, the null hypothesis can be accepted for this conducted study. It refers that the students are being more relaxed when the focus is centred through them in the studying environment. However, it also refers to the feeling of students' secureness to interchange arguments online. The mean difference has been given out of the subtraction of the two groups' mean value. Lastly, the overall validity can be accounted on the rate 95% Confidence Interval. So, its significance can be verified as the values have a great difference among each other (-0.84276; 0.16584). Therefore, there is not a chance that the variables can be used vice versa. Precisely, other details of the variables are stated on Table 18.

I feel s			secure an	nong We	ebs					
in order to interc			rchange							
argumentations			s with ot	her						
		students.				Ν	Mean	Std. Deviati	on Std. I	Error Mean
I feel more relaxed when the		I strongly agree				10	2.2000	0.42164	0	.13333
learning is directed a	learning is directed at oneself.		I agree			26	2.5385	1.06699	0	.20925
		Leven	e's Test		=					
		for Eq	uality of							
		Vari	ances			t-test for Equality of Means				
									95% Co	onfidence
									Interv	al of the
						Sig. (2-	Mean	Std. Error	Diffe	erence
		F	Sig.	t	df	tailed)	Difference	Difference	Lower	Upper
I feel more relaxed	Equal			_					-	
when the studying	variances	9.246	0.005	-	34	0.340	-0.33846	0.34989	-1.04952	0.37260
is directed at	assumed			0.907						
oneself.	Equal									
	variances			-	33.89	0.192	0 22946	0.24912	0.94276	0 1 6 5 9 4
	not			1.364	9	0.182	-0.55840	0.24812	-0.84270	0.10384
	assumed									

Table 18. The T-test of students' relaxation when the studying process is directed at them.

7. Discussion

Before starting the discussion part, teaching methods need to be adapted, as students are constantly surrounded by the Internet. If the technological part is neglected, it means that educators do not understand the needs of today's students. On the other hand, the technological aspect, if used profitably, can have an irreplaceable effect on the student. Professors must therefore consider how to integrate the technology into the curriculum of higher education (Kuh et al., 2008). For the sake of our research interest, students' critical skills and their level of grit will be discussed in accordance to the descriptive statistics. A general investigation is to determine the eagerness of students to continue their studies, no matter how challengeable the program may appear at first glance. Despite the fact that consistent learning enables students the same study styles throughout their academic years, this conducted research proved it differently. In this study, it was not observed that students' efforts to solve learning issues are at a uniform level. Thus, it seems that this nonconsistency of learning strategies hinders students to form learning habits. The outcome of this nonconsistency is that the habit of students' grit cannot be promoted on such circumstances. As mentioned above, the characteristics of the students' grit can only become habits if they are constantly performed by them. In our case, the majority of the students agree to finish a started assignment. However, students must rely on their learning habits to withstand any academic challenge. Once this stage is reached, a generalisation of the students' attitudes can be made. All these examinations were carried out to help students achieve their long-term goals. In fact, the students' skills in terms of guts and critical thinking can be developed in different ways. For that reason, the other half of the participants disagree to bring to an end a task which has not been understood. Students' personal pace also influences students' grit and their critical thinking skills (Coates, 2005). If the personal pace of the students is taken into account, they are even more willing to critically express their full potential. It is worth mentioning that students' personal tempo is not being highlighted through the approach of blended learning. The priority of blended learning comprises students' autonomy interwoven with the received study guidelines. Added to that, the deadlines of online assignments tend to be more respected when students pay consciously attention on their personal pace. This concentration on themselves hinders students from comparing themselves with other students. We need to be aware that the majority of the respondents declare that they possess critical thinking skills. The majority of the students agreed that they are academically more encouraged when they have the freedom to study when they want to. This positive feeling stimulates students' resilient part and that is the reason why they do not give up on tasks that seem to be too challenging (Savoia, 2015). In regard to students' pace, time management was not crucial to completing an online task. Significantly, students' critical thinking skills are being based on firm studying styles over the years. These learning styles must become habits among students. Hereby, students need to be aware of their own studying strategies in order to be more effective. Added to students' efficacy, their time management is not being more efficiently planned during online learning. In fact, time management is considered to have laid foundation on students' early childhood (Duckworth et al., 2007). So, the habit of planning things roots on students' childhood. However, students' steady studying style does not enrich the overall level of academic enjoyment. The enjoyment level cannot be raised as students become used to their studying style. Also in this conducted research, the chosen representatives affirm to have steady studying styles. Studying attitudes are being considered crucial as they are involved in whatever academic task.

Another strong correlation of students' firm studying styles is when the professor is actively involved in the teaching process (Hofmann, 2011). Indeed students, with a low level of grit, prefer in-class activities. In this way students find an excuse in case they have experienced a failure. This positive impact of the professors in higher education certifies why the approach of blended learning intertwines in-class and online assignments (Driscoll, 2002). Students are more relaxed when their study programme is directed wholeheartedly to them in the real context. Out of the result section can be inferred that merely a grading system does not fulfil students' academic achievements and autonomy. Veritably, there does not exist any evidence that a task has been understood based on the received grade. In general, students have to deal with assignments that go beyond their level of intelligence (Cassidy, 2015). Thus, students need to rely on their coping mechanism. One of this mechanism highlights students' self-efficacy in order to deal with academic pressures. Mostly, psychological factors push students forward to reach academic objectives (Datu, 2017). Incontestably, students' opinions were spread in half as how to approach learning issues. It was Cassidy (2015) who claimed that students' grit can be activated mainly on individual basis. In point of fact, students become more perseverance pursuing long-term goals that appear more challenging. But beside the received study guidelines students need to work on their learning habits. For the academic success, students' autonomy needs to be merged with up-to-date topics (Taylor & Medina, 2011). It requires also a dose of critical thinking which can be implemented in class or through online learning. Regarding students' firm studying style, it does not mean that professors shall apply only one approach within one learning context. Similarly, the lack of studying variability does not enrich students'

encouragement to handle challengeable academic tasks. Students' emotional state needs to be inspected in details in order to reach academic fulfilment. Herewith students' firm studying styles are not the only significant component to reach academic objectives (Tang & Chaw, 2013). One objective to foster students' grit is that academic purposes need to be acknowledged by the students. As the students are not emotionally linked with their tasks their level of grit does not experience any increase (Elder & Paul, 2009). To such a degree, the time management does not determine students' level of motivation to bring to an end an assignment. The majority of the respondents reaffirm that they finish their assignments. But more importantly, students' motivation for this behaviour need to be tested. Ergo, students' grit might predict academic achievements and the overall level of persistence. Henceforward, online learning is more consistent process that integrates also students' unique learning needs (Bonk & Graham, 2006). A fundamental outcome of this conducted research is that students' critical thinking skills can be promoted when students' studying styles are being praised through online learning. Out of this students' comfort zone is being highlighted which facilitates learning issues (Gerbic, 2010).

Thus, a grading system does not teach students how to grow on a personal level. Grades evaluate only the level of students' comprehension. The aforementioned personal level is being praised by the students since it does not provide any limits compared. One the other hand, grades are being classified. This nonrestrictive feature of students' grit ensures a long-lasting studying habit. The declaration of Hochanadel & Finamore (2015), that students who deal with academic struggles will receive better grades, is not being affirmed. An explanation of this outcome is that the students' academic struggle is not being correlated with their level of grit. In fact, it was Darwin (1887) who put the emphasis on students' resilient side rather than on personal intelligence. Accordingly, students need to become persistent and passionate about their studies and their personal growth. A constant maintenance of students' grit need to be established so that it can become an internal habit of the student. Lastly, it has been approved that merely students' talent is not sufficient to reach academic achievements (Warnock et al., 2011). To shed light on academic achievements, gritty people are more preoccupied to present constantly a better version of themselves. This kind of self-presentation indicates that gritty students explore various phenomena constantly. On the other hand, it has been rejected that deadlines, which are given on online assignments, are not being respected by the students. Moreover, students' personal tempo is more praised within online courses. Added to that, students tend to feel less encouraged to partake on online assignments. In a way there does not exist a difference concerning the solution of students' learning issues. In a nutshell, students' resilience and their hardworking part reflect the overall fruitfulness of a future career. In general, students' grit leads to withstand struggles in real life through a more reasonable way.

8. Conclusion

As mentioned above, education remains one of the most fundamental aspects for the prosperity of a community. For the general well-being of students, both their professional and emotional needs must be met. Students' various professional and emotional needs can be covered through the approach of blended learning. One focus of blended learning is that it combines classroom activities and online learning processes. The way students work at their level of grit determines their stamina and motivation to pursue long-term goals. Namely, students' grit is being acknowledged as a predicator to students' success. This success is measured by whether the students continue to work on their tasks, even if at first glance it may seem challenging. It has been testified that the trait of grit either stays within students or ceases away. All of this depends on how much effort students make to promote this quality of grit, which may seem crucial to achieving academic goals. To a certain extent, these two alternatives mentioned above depend on the students' choice. There is a widespread assumption that students' critical thinking skills and their grits are stable characteristics once they have become a habit of the students. In this respect, the students' perception of academic performance, their learning autonomy and the technological aspects in blended learning approaches are tailored to the students' needs. It is crucial that the study experience of students must be taken into account if the educational aspects wants to make progress. It has been claimed that students' studying experiences is being directly related how students' perceive themselves during their studies. This perception of the students does not end with their academic performance, but also with how the students perceive themselves as human beings. Significantly, a higher influence on the level of the students' zeal and on their diligent self is calculated than the innate qualities of the students' intellectual stimulation. Students can also develop their grits over time with the appropriate exercise. But online tasks must be designed in accordance with the current level of students' critical thinking skills and their grit. Likewise, the progress of the students must be constantly monitored. Blended learning does not mean replacing online activities that could also take place in class. Therefore, students are expected to have good time management and more self-efficacy in order to achieve a positive study experience. In this way, the technological aspect should facilitate the entire study process for students and establish the habit of a continuous study mode. It allows students to represent the best version of themselves within their educational environment. In fact, the impact of lectures is not being belittled but it does not fit with the circumstances of nowadays. It needs to be mentioned that critical thinking skills can be developed while students are coping with other colleagues. In regard to students' time management, blended learning has

not been considered as a crucial indicator that students bring to an end a started assignment. As well, time management has neither been more efficiently planned by the students in online setting because it is perceived as a gained habit by the students. This gained habit is being acquired by students' natural context. It is assumed that this learning habit was established many years before by the students. In addition, students must be encouraged to monitor their personal effectiveness. This self-efficacy will then be useful for the students' academic performance. After the students have completed a task that required critical thinking skills, the last one seems more relaxed. In order to promote the critical thinking skills of students and their level of grit, students must have a stable style of study. Students are therefore expected to be aware of when they are more productive. It needs to be mentioned that students' studying style does not enrich their level of enjoyment to analyze in depth a certain phenomenon. The majority of the students prefer the comfort zone created by firm studying styles. However, these students miss the part to analyze in deep the particular phenomenon. Students who lack a high level of grit prefer lecturing parts than online learning. Generally speaking, the students are feeling more relaxed when the overall studying process is directed to them. Lastly, a students' higher level of grit means that a challengeable task is not being left immediately unfinished. Despite the various advantages of grit, a lot of educational components need to be interwoven in order to activate students' grit. Students' need to be encouraged for deep insights of their study field. In short, the rapid change of the technological world and the demand of critical thinkers can be better covered within the approach of blended learning and to merge lectures with online learning.

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10. Appendixes

The used Questionnaire

The purpose of this questionnaire is exclusively for the Master dissertation at the South East European University. Therefore, the data will be collected anonymously. Meanwhile, you are allowed to stop participating at any time. The estimated time to continue this questionnaire is 15 minutes. Otherwise your collaboration will be appreciated!

Demographic questions:

Gender: Female Male Other Age: _____

Learning aspects Perceptions concerning learning facilitation	Number of questions 4	Sections I prefer restricted instructions of the learning materials.
		I like to decide where to study. I want to study on my personal tempo. I prefer to define when to start studying.
Perceptions regarding the overall e-learning	8	I support the idea that in class activities are more effective than e-learning activities. I feel more relaxed when the learning is directed at oneself. It is not necessary to provide the session online. I am encouraged when online guidelines are given in a detailed manner. I insist on lecturing the sessions. If I had the chance to choose I would select online sessions compared to the one held in class.

		I tend to feel less encouraged while participating in online courses. It seems harder to form critical argumentations online.
Controlled study	6	I tend not to respect deadlines when assignments are posted online.
		The time management is more efficiently planned during the process of e-learning.

In an online learning environment, the study procedure is more consistent.
With online learning platforms I feel not to be motivated for upcoming studies.
The implementation of online assignments motivates me to think about a studying plan.
E-learning environments decreases responsibility of one's study.

Perceptions regarding	4	Online resources shall be compared with each other.
to alwala av		oninie resources shan de compared what each outer.
technology		One can easily lose the overview through the Internet.
		I am aware how to detect reliable resources.
		I personally think that technology can be easily handed.
		I agree that technology should be incorporated while studying a session
Perceptions towards	5	I perceive the sense of belongingness while being around
receptions towards	5	others in the closeroom
higher educational		others in the classroom.
sessions		
		I react more critically when I get direct feedback from my
		lecturer.
		I prefer the interaction with other students in person.
		I personally am more critically engaged when the activities are designed in that manner when the lecturer is the central
		point.
		In my case, I understand theories better when a lecturer guides me online.

Perceptions towards	5	
online reciprocity		I feel to be secluded when it comes to e-learning.
		I feel secure among Webs in order to interchange argumentations with other students.
		It would be great to communicate with the lecturer in an online environment.
		I agree to collaborate with other students outside the University halls.
		It is harder to switch/understand information online.
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Willingness to adjust to blended learning	5	I value the immediate access with the lectures of the sessions.
		I can successfully manage to work virtually with a group for a project.
		If there is a chance, I choose a course that provide blended learning approaches and in-class activities.
		I would participate more readily in a class with a blended learning approach.
		In class I feel face threatening.
Perseverance	11	I have reached an objective that took many years of my life.
		I try to bring to an end whatever task that I have started.
		I am more diligent through blended learning.
		Partly, I switch the manner of studying.
		I do not enjoy to work on challengeable tasks.
		Mostly, I purse one strategy to solve an issue.
		I prefer to solve issues that are up-to-date in various strategies.
		If I fail, I do not I think about its causes.
		When I am working on an online task, I tend to finish it efficiently while cooperating with others.
		When I do not understand an issue, I keep working on my own until I find response.
		I tend to leave the task undone, if I cannot find a solution easily.

I think in a critical manner.
When I do not understand a task, I leave it unfinished.
I prefer critical thinking tasks.
I try to find solutions for academic issues.
Online learnings intertwine more critical thinking tasks.
A failure highlights my weakness.
A grade determines students' knowledge.
My studying style has remained the same for ages
ivity studying style has remained the same for ages.