

Sustaining Academic Atmospheres During Covid-19 Pandemic: Lecturers' and Students' Controversial Voices

Ahmad Jamin^{1,*} Heri Mudra²

¹Department of Islamic Education, Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training, IAIN Kerinci, Indonesia

²Department of English, Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training, IAIN Kerinci, Indonesia

*Corresponding author Email: ahmadjamin81@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

As unwanted disturbance of Covid-19 towards many aspects of education emerges faster, teaching and learning in higher education becomes unstable. Several academic actions have been undertaken to survive from the disaster including implementation of blended and online learning. However, implementing both learning method, for many lecturers and students in higher education institution, remains controversial. The results of deep interview and observation reveal that lecturing quality with online methods has some problems. First, online learning disturbs academic interaction between lecturers and students. Second, academic freedom such as giving ideas and debating is simply limited. Third, physical attitudes such as facial expressions and speech mimics are not able to be freely expressed. Fourth, expenses for attending online courses are getting more burdened for some. Fortunately, the controversial voices are considered to be paramount for further improvement of teaching and learning quality during Covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia. Supporting educational policy is needed.

Keywords: *online learning, controversial voices, academic atmosphere, Covid-19 pandemic*

1. INTRODUCTION

As Covid-19 pandemic attacked most countries, various tangible effects are faced by people around the worlds, including in educational contexts [1]. Educational context such as higher institution has been suffering from massive impacts of the pandemic. For example, teaching and learning process is transformed from face-to-face method into online learning method. This sudden transformation enforces stakeholders, lecturers, students, and administrators to work more seriously to succeed on academic plans.

Academic plan in a higher institution level varies from its objectives. As Covid-19 pandemic attacked most countries, various tangible effects are faced by people around the worlds, including in educational contexts [2]. Educational context such as higher institution has been suffering from massive impacts of the pandemic. For example, teaching and learning process is transformed from face-to-face method into online learning method. This sudden transformation enforces stakeholders, lecturers, students, and administrators to work more seriously to succeed on academic plans.

Academic plan in a higher institution level varies from its objectives. Determining teaching and learning schedule is one of the plans that need to be taken into granted. The schedule informs lecturers, students, and administrators about what to do and when to do such academic process in an academic year. Administrators have to ensure all students are registered for the intake semester. Lecturers' duties consist of preparing learning plans, syllabus, learning materials, and tasks. As for students, they are expected to prepare themselves physically and mentally. Stakeholders ensure that both administrative and financial aids contribute to the success of the intake semester or academic year [3]

However, academic plans are not undertaken fluently as influenced by many factors such Covid-19 pandemic. In Indonesia, the pandemic began in March 2020 and has affected many aspects including teaching and learning process in higher institution. Classroom course has been administered via online learning media and applications such as social networks (e.g Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram), Zoom meeting, Google Meet, Mentimeter, Kahoot, interactive whiteboards and other online learning sources [4]. Such online application is designed to help lecturers and students to work on a lesson online. On the other hand, face-to-face learning which has been a daily

routine for both lecturers and students and has shared full contribution to learning for many years is replaced by online learning method. Academically, teaching and learning atmosphere through face-to-face learning and online learning shares different concepts [5]. In many cases, face-to-face learning is more preferable to online learning as because the classroom course enables both lecturers and students to interact more communicatively than via online method. Unlike classroom method, online learning contributes to effective and efficient method for lecturers and students to interact. Online learning does not interdict distances among lecturers and students and time allocated for a lesson as they are allowed to attend online course from home or other recommended places. In short, both face-to-face and online learning methods have strengths and weaknesses in shaping academic atmospheres.

Several previous studies on teaching and learning during Covid-19 pandemic have been done including process of teaching and learning [6], implementation of online learning [7][8][9][10], impacts on learning [11] and problems and challenges [12] [13]. The previous studies mainly discuss how online learning is implemented under its obstacles and strengths and what kind of impacts that Covid-19 pandemic make for learning. However, little discussion has not been addressed towards controversial voices from university teachers and students toward online learning during Covid-19 pandemic. This paper tends to describe how university teachers and students perceive the process of online learning during Covid-19 pandemic.

2. METHOD

2.1. Participants

This research involved 2 lecturers and five students in a state-owned college in Kerinci, Jambi. The lecturer consists of educational technology specialist and Islamic Study lecturer with less knowledge on online learning. As for the students, two students are compatible in operating technology for learning, while three students are lack of technological knowledge.

2.2. Instruments

This case study employed semi-structured interview and observation to complete the qualitative data. The interview is about how the college teachers adapt with online learning during Covid-19 and how the students go through online learning without any considerable effects. Observation sheet is used to check the process of learning online and challenges of learning during Covid-19 pandemic.

2.3. Data Collection

To collect the data, observation was undertaken by attending several classes which were done via online learning. The researchers employed a participant observation since online learning needs to be monitored directly via online application such as Zoom and Google Meet. Semi-structured interview was administered by asking the teachers and students to attend the interviews. Interviews with the teachers were done for two days and it took five days for collecting data from the students by using the interviews.

2.4. Data Analysis

To get the data analyzed, several steps were undertaken. First, the researchers gathered and collected data into some categories including process of learning and challenges of learning online. Then, the data were coded in order to select main data to be analyzed. The coded data were enlisted into some criteria which enabled the researchers to have them discussed. The data were, then, described with related references and summarized based on the analysis [14].

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, the description is based on the results of interviews and observation. Chunks of interviews are described with pseudonyms. This means that the informants did not give any permission to use sure names within the article. To solve, codes such as T (Teacher) and S (Student) are used for replacing their names. The findings are combined with discussion which refers to several references or relevant studies.

3.1 Process of Online Learning

S1 said:

I was a bit shocked that our classroom has been changed suddenly into online learning. I cannot bring myself to such learning, because in classroom learning, I found many problems in me. What do you think will happen to me via online learning? I do not know and I do not want to know. I think the process is not simple. Of course, it is so hard, yeah, so hard for me to follow the process of this online learning. I think I do not know anything about the procedures.

The process of online learning is not as simple as its theory [15]. Online learning may result in psychological problems for students who are encouraged to attend an online course. Classroom learning and online learning have different theories, concepts and implementation.

S2 believed that:

My expectation about learning via online application is simple. I want it simple and simple, but the truth does not follow me. I am sure many other friends believe in me. Online learning is really complicated and problematic. At first, I attended a class with no knowledge about learning

online. Until now, my interest to online learning is still lower. I cannot accept online learning, because it prohibits me to communicate with my classmates. I know that the application is affordable, but I have many problems in attending classes online.

Complicated procedures of online learning do not enable students to succeed on learning. It is difficult for students to adapt with online learning since some problems occur such as lack of communicate method and problems with classes [16].

S3 configured:

I have many friends, classmates and teachers that I can be with during each semester. My mind is now empty since I have to study alone at home without any assistance, help or even motivation from classmates and teachers directly. What I can see during online learning is that online learning is not a serious method for learning. I am now becoming bored and bored. I do not want online learning. Please, let us enter our classroom and please let us study in our classroom. It is more fun than online learning which does not have clear procedures if compared with our classroom learning.

Similar results towards the process of online learning happen. Learning seems to be enjoyable and appropriate when students interact and communicate easily and directly one and others [17]. Online learning discourages students to have a free, easy discussion and talk to their classmates and teachers.

3.2 Challenges of Online Learning

There are many problems emerge when online learning is implemented in higher educational contexts. The problems consist of lack of communication and interaction, lack of knowledge towards technology, financial problems and time allocation [18].

S4 said:

I am perhaps the one who faces a lot of problems during online learning. I can say that I am lack of money to buy pulse to provide internet for the online learning. I am lack of knowledge in operating internet applications. I am lack of motivation in learning online because I cannot meet other classmates. If we meet, we always feel enjoyable, motivated and strong enough to beat every course. The problem is now I feel that I am a problem for me myself.

Financial problem is common in a rural college like in Kerinci, Jambi. This problem decreases students' motivation to learn since they are not able to afford for facility such as laptop or android. The students are able to reach a final objective of a course when they attend traditional classroom method.

S5 described:

Many friends and classmates told me that we were not ready for online learning. Why? Because our facility cannot accommodate our interests to learn. Look, I even do not have any laptop. My friend does not have an android for

learning online. Look, my handphone type is out-of-date. It is so sad.

T1 explained:

We can learn online application easily, but the problem is that we cannot force students to buy an android, a laptop or to buy pulse every time.

T2 said:

If I am able to choose, I like classroom learning than online learning. The reason is simple. I am a talkative teachers and I love direct teaching. Body language and mimics really help me for improving my students' understanding.

As for the challenges, online learning needs to be recognized as a new and complicated program for some groups of students [19]. This type of learning method does not encourage the students to increase their knowledge and accomplish their course. Supports from stakeholders are really needed to overcome the students' problems which are related to facility availability, motivation and financial matters.

4. CONCLUSION

Online learning has been a trend for learning during Covid-19 pandemic. However, several important problems need to be taken into granted. The problems discourage students or teachers to develop teaching and learning process which are expected by stakeholders, family or even governments.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

The title of this research is based on the research undertaken in 2020/2021 academic year.

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