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STUDENTS' CHALLENGES ON FACING ONLINE LEARNING IN SMP NEGERI 2 DUSUN SELATAN, CENTRAL BORNEO

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Abstract

In 2020, Indonesian people were trying to get used to a new way to survive. People can not go anywhere because of the global pandemic caused by COVID-19. However, education must run in any circumstances. To maintain students' safety and health, many schools still implement the online learning mode. Some problems are faced by students in the implementation. Based on the background, the problem is "What are the challenges that students face when learning online?" This study applied a survey and observation method. Research participants were 60 students of SMP Negeri 2 Dusun Selatan who were taking their online learning process. In the data gathering process, the researcher used a questionnaire to answer the research questions in an open-ended question. The results showed that SMP Negeri 2 Dusun Selatan students faced four main challenges with online learning: unstable internet connection, lack of understanding, running out of internet data, and late assignments submission. However, the school still provided solutions to students.

Keywords: challenges, implementation, online learning, solutions, students

Introduction

At the beginning of 2020, precisely at the beginning of February, we were faced with a very extraordinary outbreak, and the outbreak was alarming to the community, especially students. These outbreaks are known as coronaviruses or, well known as COVID-19. This very dangerous epidemic has had a tremendous impact on the whole world, especially in Indonesia. The pandemic forced schools, colleges, and offices around the world to close their doors so they might experience the lockdown rules (Toquero, 2020). This extraordinary impact has also considerably worsened the condition of education in Indonesia. These situations highlight the critical need for outline planning for educational institutions (Rieley, 2020). Nevertheless, education must continue in any circumstances.

Indonesia's government has suggested another mode for students to learn in order to reduce the number of COVID-19 cases. Since the end of March 2020, all teaching and learning activities have been conducted online. In response to the outbreak, online learning suddenly grew rapidly (Favale et al., 2020). The usual

learning mode implemented by some teachers is slowly being replaced by various online learning applications that can provide a space for direct interaction between teachers and students without meeting in person. Online classrooms have transformed overnight from traditional classrooms, requiring teachers to modify their whole teaching approach to new conditions (Hafeez et., 2020).

Implementation of online learning involves mobile devices like smartphones, tablets, and laptops that can be used anywhere and at any time to access educational content (Gikas & Grant, 2013). Teachers and students, and even parents are forced to adapt quickly to this mode. During this situation, online learning is considered the most appropriate solution to do.

Teachers find it difficult to transition from offline to online, adapting their teaching methods and balancing their work and personal lives (Dhawan, 2020). Student and teacher aspects all play a role in online learning's difficulties. Among the most significant changes in the teaching and learning process, distance education has emerged as one of the most significant developments (Simonson et al., 2011). Many products from modern technological advances can be considered a medium for online learning, such as WhatsApp groups, e-mail, Google Classroom, or other media.

Orlando & Attard (2015) mentioned that using technology for teaching can't be handled in a "one size fits all" manner because each implementation will rely on the sorts of technology in use as well as the subject matter. Generally, the steps taken by the teacher start from preparing the content of the subject matter delivered at each meeting and then uploading it to online media. Furthermore, students study the material and do the assignments given by the teacher.

Students can learn and engage with teachers and fellow students from any location independently (Singh & Thurman, 2019). The teacher advises their students, including answering questions and providing feedback on the learning process. Having so many different viewpoints on e-learning might be confusing and even contradictory in some situations (Mason & Rennie, 2006). However, it does not mean that this learning process has no problems. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown that the education system is vulnerable (Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020).

The field of online education is still in its infancy (Liang & Chen, 2012). When implementing online learning, several potential problems may appear, whether from teachers or students. It could be a slow internet connection or no online learning media such as cell phones or laptops. This study aims to discover students' challenges toward online learning at SMP Negeri 2 Dusun Selatan in Buntok, Central Borneo.

Since this is their first time in online classes, several problems appear in the class. In order to implement online learning, the school uses Google Classroom as the primary learning media and Whatsapp as the secondary learning media to facilitate online learning. Whatsapp and Google Classroom were the two most popular online learning platforms during online learning (Zhafira et al., 2020).

Method

The researcher used a questionnaire to discover the challenges faced by students at SMP Negeri 2 Dusun Selatan. The questionnaire contained two questions, which focused on the challenges toward online learning and how the school solved those problems. It was distributed to seventh, eighth, and ninth-grade

students at SMP Negeri 2 Dusun Selatan during the 2020/2021 academic year. The researcher used open-ended questions. Content analysis was performed to examine the data gathered from various sources, and descriptive research was employed.

The study took place at SMP Negeri 2 Dusun Selatan. It was located on Pelita Raya st., No. 540 in Buntok. Buntok is a city in Central Borneo, Dusun Selatan subdistrict, South Barito district, and was the district's capital. The city was located on the Barito River's shore and served as a hub between Palangkaraya and Daerah Aliran Sungai (DAS) Barito. There were 27 faculty members, 125 female students, and 138 male students. There were 263 students, with 43 students opting for offline learning and 220 students participating in online learning.

Furthermore, the researcher also used an observation method to find the data to strengthen the questionnaire's results. It took place from July 20 to August 28, 2020. This observation occurred during a PLP PP (*Pengenalan Lapangan Persekolahan - Pengelolaan Pembelajaran*) session. The researcher needed to observe the school and the students while conducting the observation. Furthermore, observation provided information about the online classroom environments and the school's solutions to tackle online learning issues. The researcher categorized, grouped, and arranged identical responses to open-ended questions. Additionally, the researcher compared and summarized the observation outcomes in paragraphs to examine them. Finally, after compiling the data, the researcher examined and presented the response before drawing conclusions based on the data.

Findings and Discussion

Even if schools and universities have been closed due to this pandemic, online learning can be an effective solution for reactivating classrooms (Herliandry et al., 2020). A questionnaire was used to collect data to address the research question. The researcher presented several results from the open-ended questions and the observation to help the researcher find students' challenges. Many technical issues can arise, causing a delay in the teaching process for some users (Favale et al., 2020). Based on the findings, there were four challenges stated by students.

Lack of Understanding

The results of open-ended questions indicated that some students struggled to comprehend the materials. In this situation, it is difficult for teachers to create content that meets curriculum requirements while also engaging students (Kebritchi et al., 2017). Students expressed difficulties understanding the materials because they were not in a regular class where they learned face to face with their teachers. In this study, both students' numbers 13 and 15, had some difficulties comprehending their materials.

Inadequate comprehension of learning materials makes it difficult for me to complete assignments in certain subjects. (P#13)
Certain materials were incomprehensible to me. (P#15)

Online learning makes teachers unable to do the face-to-face learning process to explain the material. This condition causes students to be less able to understand the learning material. Anderson (2008) affirmed that a teacher must recognize a student's prior knowledge, as well as any misunderstandings that the

learner produces during the process of developing new knowledge. Additionally, teachers at SMP Negeri 2 Dusun Selatan should encourage students to comprehend the materials.

From the observation, in order to resolve the issues, the solution provided by the teachers was explained again if students still did not understand the material. Sims (2002) stated that interactivity in an online context is a critical success factor in education and learning. It meant that the interaction between teachers and students at SMP Negeri 2 Dusun Selatan was efficient and effective throughout assisting students who were having difficulty comprehending the materials in the classroom.

In addition, observation discovered that teachers used *Whatsapp* group chat if there was any material that students needed to explain again outside of the online learning hours. To create a setting favorable to learning for all participants, students' needs must be prioritized to provide courses that are approachable to all students (Oswald & Meloncon, 2014). Therefore, students must take the initiative to learn independently and look for other sources on the internet to increase understanding of the material being taught.

Low or Loss of Internet Connection

Most students mentioned that while they were learning online, their internet connection became too slow or even went down completely, according to the open-ended questions given. It was difficult for students to turn in their assignments on time.

There were times when there was a problem with the internet connection. (P#11)

An Internet connection that can be lost at any time without warning. (P#40)

According to the data presented above, the majority of students enrolled in online learning courses experienced the same problem: a lack of an internet connection. The researcher used the theory developed by Khan (2006), who stated that to create a meaningful online learning environment, the school must be aware of the geographical diversity of its students. Participating in online learning could be limited and cause students cannot focus on learning because of the connection disturbed due to sudden problems, such as bad weather and power failure.

Running Out of The Internet Data

Students confirmed in the open-ended questions that they faced additional difficulties because of the amount of data available on the internet. Students needed internet access in order to access their learning apps, especially *Google Classroom*. For junior high students who already have a smartphone, the internet data were the following source of problems, where if they did not use wifi at home, students needed to spend more money to buy internet data. However, students 26 and 56 mentioned that running out of data caused them to face such difficulties opening their *Google Classroom* or *Whatsapp*.

Ran out of my internet data. (P#26)

My internet data has been depleted, and the internet connections have become unreliable. (P#56)

According to the data provided above, some of the students were facing difficulties with their internet data. Students who did not have access to internet data on their cellphones or other online learning media could not complete their learning tasks effectively. Online learning is teacher-led education that is delivered through the internet (Gemin and Pape, 2017). This meant that internet access was required for all of the learning processes. As a result of this issue, students and teachers may have different access levels to technology (Ferri et al., 2020).

SMP Negeri 2 Dusun Selatan provided the solution to the problem, which offered students free internet data. The school offered free internet data for students who needed to access *Google Classroom* or any other information related to the learning support in their first online learning class, which took place in March 2020. Furthermore, due to the government's decision to provide free internet data to students, SMP Negeri 2 Dusun Selatan only assisted its students in collecting their phone numbers and managed the process until all students received their free internet data.

It meant that SMP Negeri 2 Dusun Selatan had assisted their students in implementing online learning by providing them with internet data so that they could follow the learning process from start to finish. More government support and investment are required to ensure that online and blended learning are extensively adopted throughout the pandemic (Heng et al., 2020).

Late of Assignments Submission

Self-regulation, motivation, and positive learning dispositions are highlighted in these online contexts (Chiu & Hew, 2018). Students stated that another challenge they faced was the occurrence of an unexpected challenge in which they were unable to submit their assignments due to a lack of an internet connection. The implementation of assessment into the learning environment is inhibited by challenges such as technical difficulties and complexity (Salmon, 2007).

A few days ago, the internet became unresponsive, causing many students to be late in submitting their assignments. (P#5)

It is difficult for me to collect my assignments because of frequent network outages. (P#17)

Of course, when it comes to submitting an assignment, I have some difficulties. A minor issue arises when I send it, such as a poor connection that prevents it from being delivered. (P#33)

When students were learned online, the internet was the most critical tool in the online learning environment. According to Anderson (2008), internet connection speeds have an impact on the amount and quality of information that can be transferred. Whenever students cannot submit their assignments due to a lack of an internet connection, the school should suggest alternative solutions to assist their students. It is necessary for teachers to establish explicit participation conditions about content requirements and timeliness (Pawan et al., 2003).

In order to solve the problem, teachers extended the deadline for submitting assignments to make all students were able to submit their assignments. Another solution was students were asked to come directly to the school to hand in their

work directly to the teacher. Since not all teachers and students have accessibility to all digital devices, the internet, and Wi-Fi, promoting digital equity is critical (Dhawan, 2020).

Conclusion

Students shared their thoughts on the difficulties they had encountered while learning online in the form of statements. Students' four most frequently mentioned issues were as follows: sudden internet connection problems, a failure to comprehend the teacher's explanation, running out of internet data, and late assignments submission. When it came to putting online learning into action, the internet was the most important tool to have. Furthermore, students believed that the most difficult aspect of online learning was a lack of adequate internet access.

For instance, one of the students mentioned that there was an internet connection problem occasionally while they were in the midst of online learning sessions. As a result, improving the overall quality of online teaching and learning is critical at this point. The use of online learning will put both the educator and the students through their paces. Students' analytical thinking and problem-solving abilities will be improved as a result of this mode. Contrary to what some claim, the current conditions are unusual; rather than typical digital learning situations, it is more genuinely crisis learning (Pace, Pettit, & Barker, 2020).

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