

The Challenges of Online Learning for Teachers during Pandemic

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Abstract

Until now, we are still haunted by what is called the Corona Virus or COVID-19. Due to the pandemic, the way of education has changed to online education since 2020. Education is an important component of the quality of a nation's improvement; however, recent research has shown that education system has to face challenges in online learning which is still inefficient. But, there are problems in teaching and students' learning habits through online learning. This study is aimed to investigate the online learning challenges experienced by teachers during this pandemic. Teacher's feedback and statements were collected using semistructured interviews. Overall, teachers concurred that the online learning is not as effective as conventional learning activities (face to face), because the unexpected educational transformation still cannot adapt to the teaching and learning habit. Moreover, some courses must be explained directly and more fully, so that all students can understand and recall the lesson later.

Keywords

Online learning, Teaching style, Students' motivation, COVID-19

1. Introduction

The world is still facing the ongoing crisis caused by the Corona Virus (COVID-19) pandemic outbreak, and education will remain online for the foreseeable future. Each higher educational institution has different readiness and facilities for online learning, which is a challenging task for both students and teachers. At the same time, a current trend in higher education is increasing the use of online education. Clevenger et al. (2019) reported that online learning had advantages such as widespread availability and asynchronous delivery. These speedy changes have forced everyone, peoples or institutions to make immediate changes (Alvarez-Trujillo, 2008). A study conducted by Donnelly (2006) stated that online learning is a medium where face-to-face learning interactions are used to create a virtual discussion area. Otherwise, this study primarily explores the issue of online learning for teachers.

Each higher educational institution has different readiness and facilities for online learning. Through online learning, the teachers are not required to meet with the students in order to be able to create a learning space. Also, because the conditions of each school/campus are different, the online learning procedures are also different. Of course, the schemes promise the respective advantages and disadvantages, so it needs to be adjusted according to necessity. If effective teaching and learning practices can be performed automatically, this can support the process of improving the learning practices (Agostinho et al., 2011).

Online learning offers teachers an efficient way to deliver lessons to students by extending the lesson plan beyond traditional textbooks to include online resources. Learning spaces can now be replaced by online learning. However,

every student learns in their own style. Many university students are hesitant to study online as their typical learning strategies may be challenged (NU Online, 2020). Besides, students and teachers must prepare sufficient internet quota, an application or learning platform, and laptop or computer in good condition. The main obstacle that hinders during online learning progress is poor internet connection and lack of digital device accessibility. Also, while short term closure of academic institutions as a consequence of emergencies is not recent, the global scope and pace of present-day educational instability are sadly unparalleled and, if sustained, may inflict psychological distress and misery at various levels (McCarthy, 2020). Moreover, online learning in several places is not necessarily considered able to replace face-to-face learning (Febrianto et al., 2020). In addition, the use of online learning has penetrated smartphones that have eventually become a form of flexible learning media because they are integrated with the internet and all relevant applications (Martono & Nurhayati, 2014; Arista & Kuswanto, 2018; Irwansyah et al., 2017).

This research chose to extend previous related research (Febrianto et al., 2020; Ja'ashan, 2020), which focused on the online learning media to determine the online learning process and the associated obstacles experienced by students. Typically, teachers in developed countries optimise their use of the current digital platforms in order to keep up with the platforms used by the students and to create comfortable learning spaces. By using various platforms including social media, teachers can provide case studies within the learning material (Febrianto et al., 2020). However, the findings reveal that some factors such as academic, administrative, and technical challenges were the main challenges of online learning (Ja'ashan, 2020). Even so, teachers, academics and lecturers still try to use digital platforms as a learning tool.

Although online learning is predicted to be a very effective learning system, it still has lacks. Based on those studies, this study takes the challenges of online learning from teachers' point of view for finding solutions in overcoming various matters in online education. Furthermore, due to the rapid changes in educational progress and the trend of globalization in higher education, new methods have been formed for educational practice. Accordingly, the complication of online learning should be handled immediately to improve the education quality.

2. Literature Review

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) has spread very fast and to almost all countries, so the World Health Organization (WHO) declared this outbreak a global pandemic in March 2020 (BBC 2020). Anyone can get sick with COVID-19 and become seriously ill or die at any age (WHO, 2022). The virus can spread from an infected person's mouth or nose in small liquid particles when they cough, sneeze, speak, sing or breathe. Self-protect and others by staying at least 1 metre apart from others, wearing a properly fitted mask, and washing hands or using an alcohol-based rub frequently are the ways to prevent the infection (WHO, 2022). Globally, during the first week of January 2022, the new weekly COVID-19 cases increased markedly by 55%, over 304 million confirmed cases and over 5.4 million deaths have been reported (WHO, 2022).

The global spread of this pandemic causes class suspensions resulting in the need for online education. Online learning is perceived as the application of the internet in accessing materials, having interaction with contents, teachers and other students, and gaining assistance in learning process to make meaning, gain knowledge and progress through learning experience (Ally, 2008). In general, online learning is considered an enabler and driving force toward student centered competency-based education. The teachers are expected to deliver interesting method and techniques in teaching online to develop students' motivation and performance in this pandemic era (Yuzulia, 2021). Changing the learning method from the conventional method to the online method is certainly not an easy and simple job, moreover students do not believe that they learn better through online learning and they do not prefer it to traditional courses (O'Malley & McCraw, 1999). Thus, this study aimed to explore teachers' perspectives of online learning during this pandemic situation.

The implementation of online learning is supported by several theories (Clevenger et al., 2019). Constructivism theory is a view of constructivism in which the students have a goal, can be involved in their learning and are able to carry out or construct knowledge more individually (Susan & Tony, 1995). Sagala (2008) also explains constructivism theory that the students must discover and transform the information from the teacher independently. The teacher acts as a designer and creates an environment that makes learning possible as well as facilitates the students in obtaining and providing the information that will become relevant knowledge (Sagala, 2008).

Furthermore, in the behaviourist learning theory, it is said that online learning also gives a stimulus for the students to be actively involved in the learning process even though it is through virtual media (Farooq & Javid, 2012). In the learning theory of connectivism, it supports the existence of a new perspective on how learning can take place in a virtual space through various applications such as the use of video or audio and message-based programs. Donnelly & McAvinia (2012) argued that there were many academics had no training and little experience in the use of communica-

tions and information technology as an educational tool.

Rusman (2011) declared in his theory that the characteristics of online learning include interactivity, accessibility, and enrichment. Nevertheless, considerable uncertainties exist with regard to the relationship between higher education and emerging online learning. The use of instructional media is an important aspect in the running of education. Students often feel bored in conventional learning because there is nothing new proposed in face-to-face meetings. Some factors like the insufficient access, the availability of the internet, the lack of technology and students' capacity to participate in digital learning and lack of proper interaction between students and teachers became the major effects in the implementation of online learning. According to Al-Ghaith et al. (2010), the quality of internet access is a significant factor influencing the adoption and usage of online learning. Another aspect missing in online learning is conventional classroom socialization.

A study conducted by Nambiar (2020) showed that students perceived the online classes to lack quality. Yang and Cornelius (2004) in their study, found that students showed disappointment with their courses when teachers were unavailable to provide technical support. Another finding from the present survey which is found to be according to previous research (O'Malley & McCraw, 1999), was that students feel that they cannot learn as much in online courses as they used to in face-to-face courses. Consequently, it becomes the teachers' challenges to manage the online learning properly. The teachers really have to understand what media is right for the students because not all digital media can be accepted and run smoothly to go on to become a learning medium (Heinich et al., 1982).

3. Methods

This study was conducted both qualitative descriptive research method and collected information from a varied number of university teacher (lecturer) respondents by interview. The study took on the social setting of the COVID-19 pandemic because the learning system has been directed towards online learning, even though this type of learning process is considered by some parties to be not ready in several places.

The data obtained through interview responses from teaching staff (lecturers), selected random, which were conducted face-to-face while adhering to the health protocols by implementing social distancing and wearing masks. The respondents were asked some questions related to the issues of online lectures during the pandemic, and then presented descriptively to be interpreted for final result and conclusions.

4. Results and Discussion

The internet has become one of the vital ways to make available resources for research and learning for both teachers and students to share and acquire information (Richard & Haya, 2009). However, this learning system faces many obstacles to the goal of being adopted by many students living in rural or remote areas (Febrianto et al., 2020). The students are forced to find locations that allow them to be able to access an adequate network for online learning, especially if the teachers carry out lectures with virtual meetings, for example by using the application of Zoom Cloud Meetings or Google Meet (Hamid et al., 2020). The main problem here is the internet speed.

In addition, there are some teachers who only use supporting media such as email or WhatsApp in accordance with the level of information technology capabilities they have, and of course it will complicate and make the online learning process inefficient. They disagree that they have not any obstacles when they implement online learning. Newhouse (2002) states that teachers need to not only be computer literate but they also need to develop skills in integrating computer use into their teaching/learning programmes.

The online learning is problematic to implement because it cannot be separated from the availability of supporting learning infrastructure such as: the stability of the internet access, devices used for internet access, as well as the presence of students who live in areas where there is no electricity network. This means that until now online learning has not been able to replace face-to-face lectures entirely, whether due to inadequate infrastructure support or the capability of teachers and students to fit the online learning system itself is not optimal.

This fact is proved by the data that only 29.2% of students access the internet at their homes to study and complete assignments online from lecturers, while 30.4% of students look for areas with strong signals to access the internet, in fact there are still 18.4% of students (generally those in cities) who access the internet by searching for free hotspots or Wi-Fi (Hamid et al., 2020). Based on previous research, it was found that the majority of the students (80%) felt uncomfortable with online learning and prefer to learn in conventional method (Yuzulia, 2021). However, the students stated that they tried their best to always participate in online learning regardless bad signals or other domestic hindrances (Gustiani, 2020). On the other hand, Balanskat et al. (2006) found that limitations in teachers' information and communication technology (ICT) knowledge makes them feel anxious about using ICT in the classroom and thus not

confident to use it in their teaching, therefore it needs to provide training courses for teachers to gain experience in dealing with the new devices/media and new pedagogical approaches. The learning process will be easier by face to face encounter with students.

The result of interview with a teacher related to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic: “*The students come from various regions and some of them are in rural area where the use of internet facilities is still difficult, hence the material delivery does not run smoothly and sometimes the students are late to attend the online class. And, I [as a teacher] must develop our skill in using online teaching media. For instance, most of students cannot study the material that has been given properly through the media/platform because it has to be explain through some practices.*”

Moreover, in the context of face-to-face learning, interaction between teachers and students is an important key. Based on the interview results, it can be stated that online learning in this pandemic situation is ineffective. There is just a minor interaction since the limited space for interaction between students and teachers in online learning that decreases the interest of students in participating in learning process, and some students stating that they lack understanding of lecture material that is not explained directly by the teacher face to face. It should be noted that not all students enjoy this learning system, thus, to facilitate the online learning, it needs the ability of teachers to design learning material in an attractive media form (Primamukti & Farozin, 2018; Sharma, 2013). It observed the challenges faced by teachers are a time to prepare the course content & online exams and the method of interaction between teachers & students.

Participation in an online environment is considered as students’ interaction with peers and teachers by writing (Vonderwell & Zachariah, 2005). Basically, online learning will persuade students to be involved in, if it is well prepared, especially the content of lecture material. But, no more than half of the whole students in the classroom participated actively in answering the questions or responding the discussion. Besides, the time limit given by the government where one subject should be taught just about in 2 hours, so it is not enough to explain the subject. Another difficulty to teachers was the lack of training to use ICT (Beggs, 2000). From various overviews of online learning, teachers should organize the online learning better in the future, of course with improvements from many aspects that are still lacking because this is the early stage of an offline learning revolution. It is important to provide pedagogical training for the teachers rather than simply training them to use ICT tools. This will give an impact to the effectiveness of online learning progress.

5. Conclusion

This study attempts to discover the challenges in online learning during pandemic. The change from face-to-face learning to online learning is complicated for several parties, including teachers. Based on the results and discussion above, it can be concluded that the issues faced by teachers in the online learning process are fundamental obstacles that must be faced, including the internet networks matter, limited features of online learning applications, and obstacles in terms of students’ motivation to join the online learning. In response to these challenges, the teacher should organize the online learning situation appropriately to increase the students’ interaction by providing a multitude of engaging activities, so then the learning process can be optimally realized. Future research should explore how to improve the effectiveness of online learning activities.

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