



STUDENTS' PROBLEMS ON BLENDED LEARNING PRACTICE: A CASE STUDY AT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IN A NEW NORMAL OF COVID-19

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ABSTRACT

Up to now, no one can predict when the COVID-19 outbreak will end. Education as one of the affected sectors is necessary to adjust to existing conditions in what we call a new normal. The learning process in the new normal is much different from previous learning because it should follow any stipulation including school should obey health protocols, the number of students is not more than half the capacity of the classroom, the face-to-face learning in class is reduced to half of the available time. Blended learning is chosen as a learning strategy to be applied in elementary school. The sudden application of blended learning strategy in elementary schools raises many problems, including those faced by students. Hence, this study investigates the problems faced by students at elementary school. This study used a qualitative approach with a case study design. To collect data, this study used data collection techniques in the form of interviews, observations, and documentation. Data are analyzed using the concept of Miles and Huberman, started by reductions, data display, and verifications or conclusions. The result of this study shows some aspects of the problem faced by students consist of 1) Infrastructure and connectivity, 2) technological competency, 3) self-regulation and isolation, and 4) learning environment problems.

Keywords: *student's problems, blended learning, elementary school*

PERMASALAHAN SISWA PADA PENERAPAN BLENDED LEARNING: STUDI KASUS DI SEKOLAH DASAR DALAM FASE NEW NORMAL COVID-19

ABSTRAK

Hingga saat ini, belum ada yang bisa memprediksi kapan wabah COVID-19 akan berakhir. Pendidikan merupakan salah satu sektor yang terkena dampak harus melakukan penyesuaian dengan kondisi yang ada atau yang disebut dengan fase normal baru. Proses pembelajaran di fase new normal jauh berbeda dengan pembelajaran sebelumnya karena mengikuti ketentuan apapun termasuk sekolah harus mematuhi protokol kesehatan, jumlah siswa tidak lebih dari setengah kapasitas ruang kelas, waktu pembelajaran tatap muka di kelas dikurangi menjadi setengah dari waktu yang tersedia. Blended learning dipilih sebagai strategi pembelajaran untuk diterapkan di sekolah dasar. Penerapan strategi blended learning secara tiba-tiba di sekolah dasar menimbulkan banyak masalah, termasuk yang dihadapi oleh siswa. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini menyelidiki permasalahan yang dihadapi siswa di sekolah dasar. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus. Untuk mengumpulkan data, penelitian ini menggunakan teknik pengumpulan data berupa wawancara, observasi, dan dokumentasi. Analisis data menggunakan konsep Miles dan Huberman, dimulai dengan reduksi, penyajian data, dan verifikasi atau kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan beberapa aspek masalah yang dihadapi siswa terdiri dari 1) masalah Infrastruktur dan jaringan internet, 2) kemampuan teknologi, 3) pengontrolan dan pengisolasian, dan 4) lingkungan belajar.

Kata Kunci: *permasalahan siswa, blended learning, sekolah dasar*

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INTRODUCTION

At the end of 2019, the world was shocked by one of the deadliest viruses, namely the coronavirus or known as COVID-19. This virus has attacked humans in almost all countries in the world. COVID-19 can cause mild disorders of the respiratory system, severe lung infections, and even death. In the early of transmission, the COVID-19 has made the world at a standstill, almost whole countries have been lockdown, and society has been forced to do activity from home in order to stop or slow the spreading of this disease (Murtaza et al., 2021). Education is one of the sectors affected by the COVID-19, so learning is disrupting. Face-to-face learning activities in the classroom are temporarily closed. Whereas, education is vital sector that should keep going. As stated by Zulpadli et al., (2021) education is too important for the development of human resources because it is a determinant in carrying out life and at the same time improving the standard of living and civilization.

Given the significance function of education for human resources, it is impossible to permanently eliminate the learning process at schools. Indonesian government campaigns for adopting a new normal phase of COVID-19 in the education field. The new normal is a new order of environmental equilibrium in which COVID-19 has become an accepted element of existence that school society can endure. This decision is legalized by a joint decision with the minister of education and culture, the minister of health, the minister of religion, and the minister of home affairs on guidelines for the implementation of face-to-face learning in schools for 2020/2021 school year during the COVID-19 pandemic. Learning application in the new normal period is hugely different from learning before COVID-19. Learning in the normal phase must comply with very strict health protocols (Yuningsih, 2020), students' capacity in the classroom should not be filled more than a half of the classroom capacity. The situation is made worse by the reduction of learning time at school only half of the time before COVID-19.

Considering the lack of learning time in schools in the new normal phase of COVID-19,

teachers are forced to find a new way to teach so that all learning materials can be given to students. Teachers should employ the advantages of technology to the process of learning. Learning strategy that combines the previous learning pattern, namely face-to-face and the technology-integrated learning pattern, namely online, is blended learning. According to Graham (2019) blended learning is strategic combination of face-to-face and online. Indeed, as explained by Barbara Allan (2007) blended learning is a traditional learning strategy supported by the use of various internet-based tools including chat rooms, discussion groups, podcasts, and self-assessment tools. Blended learning is considered to be the most popular mode of teaching adopted by high school and higher education because of the impact in the learning process is more effective (Nagaraj et al., 2021), enhancing students learning outcome (Arifin, 2021; Tasman et al., 2021), learning independence (Karma et al., 2021), improving students critical thinking skills (Wardani et al., 2018), increasing student interest in learning (Rosa et al., 2021), prospects for efficient future learning (Buran & Evseeva, 2015; Rasheed et al., 2020).

Although blended learning strategy has many advantages for students in high school and higher education, in reality, for elementary school students, blended learning used is not run as well specially in online component. Online is still relatively new so that students at elementary school cannot fix pass the qualification for learning. As explained by Josh Bersin (2004) educational institutions should consider eight criteria before implementing blended learning strategy which includes program types, cultural goals, audiences, budget, resources, time, learning content, and technology. Similarly, Asmuni (2020) stated that Online used must meet several things, namely infrastructure, internet connection, and the ability of human resources to operate kinds of learning platform. The unexpected change in learning strategy in the normal phase of COVID-19 from face-to-face learning to blended learning which integrates face-to-face and online learning causes problems.

Several studies have reported some problems of online learning. According to Asmuni (2020) some students do not have laptop or smartphone as learning device. Usually, they borrow from their parents and are used interchangeably, usually getting their turn after their parents come home from work in the afternoon or evening, while online learning is done by the teacher from morning to noon. Likewise, Wahyuningsih et al., (2021) states that the internet network to support online is not evenly distributed between one region and another. Some of the students reside in places where there is no access to the internet, such as the countryside or areas where the geographic location prevents a reliable internet network. Furthermore, Aji et al., (2020) holds the view that culture in countryside are not allowed children to use technology device to avoid accessing negative content. Consequently, students are not familiar with technology earliest. So that, students cannot operate the computer and others learning platforms as well.

Based on the explanation above, although blended learning is recognized as a contemporary learning strategy, the sudden application of blended learning at elementary school causes many problems. The most obvious problem lies in the online component of blended learning which is relatively new. This study aims to investigate students' problems in the Online Component of Blended Learning Practice at elementary school in the new normal phase of COVID-19. It significant to present data, provide information and show findings in the field. Therefore, teachers and policymakers in primary schools can provide appropriate solutions to improve the quality of education (Magdalena et al., 2020).

REASERCH METHOD

This study used qualitative approach with case study design. A case study is an empirical method for investigating a current phenomenon in depth and within its real-world environment, particularly when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are unclear (Robert K. Yin, 2018). According to Nursapia Harahap (2020), case study design is carried out if someone wants to understand the background of a problem, or the interaction of individuals within a social unit

or about a group of individuals in a deep, whole, holistic, intensive, and naturalistic manner. The results of this study will be explained with an in-depth and detailed description of the situation or object. This research was conducted at a class V Elementary School at Madayin, Lombok.

To collect data, this study used data collection techniques in the form of interviews, observations, and documentation. Interviews were conducted with one teacher four students' parents and six students as respondents to reveal information, responses, and perceptions regarding students' problems in online component of blended learning. While in the observation process, researchers obtain data in the form of information about places, actors, activities, times, events or events related to the object of research. Moreover, documentation aimed to strengthen the data that had been obtained by the researcher. All data would be analyzed using the concept of Miles and Huberman, who argue that activities in qualitative data analysis are carried out interactively and take place continuously until completed (Sugiyono, 2020). Components or activities carried out in data analysis, namely; data reductions, data display, and verifications or conclusions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The COVID-19 pandemic has created the largest disruption of education systems as long as human history. At the beginning of the spread of COVID-19, as an impact of the very fast spread of COVID-19 to attack human health and effect in death, schools stopped for a moment. Closures of schools have impacted more in the teaching and learning process. Social distancing and restrictive movement policies have significantly disturbed traditional educational practices. Face-to-face learning at school carried out by teacher to students at schools cannot be implemented. It caused no one dares to interact directly with each other to avoid the transmission of COVID-19 at school.

As a result of the spread of COVID-19, which has shown no signs of ending, the government has announced a new normal phase so that people can continue to carry out essential activities in their lives, including the education sector. In education, to control the learning process, the government has instructed that face-

to-face learning be carried out in the new normal for all levels of educational institutions. The application of face-to-face learning in this school is legalized on November 20, 2020, the Indonesian government issued a joint decision with the minister of education and culture, the minister of health, the minister of religion, and the minister of home affairs on guidelines for the implementation of face-to-face learning in schools for 2020/2021 school year. Reopening schools after relaxation of restriction is another challenge with many new standard operating procedures put in place.

Elementary school 1 Madayin is one of the elementary educational levels that must adapt to learning policies in the new normal period. Face-to-face learning procedures in the new normal in elementary school implementing strict protocols according to guidelines for the implementation of learning in the 2020/2021 academic year and the 2020/2021 academic year during the pandemic covid-19: 1) learning is only done in the green zone 2) students who can participate in the learning process do not have symptoms, 3) maintain a distance of 1.5 meters and do not make physical contact such as shaking hands, 4) the maximum student capacity is 18 students per class or half of the number of students, 5) come to school wearing a mask to school, 6) check body temperature with a maximum temperature of 37 degrees, 7) washing hands with soap, 8) check the temperature before entering the school environment, 9) bring personal equipment, including worship learning tools, sports equipment, and other tools so there is no need to borrow and borrow, and 10) it is not allowed to carry out extracurricular activities that involve physical contact.

A strict policy and limitation implementation face-to-face learning at school in the new normal phase should adjust with the learning strategy. It is impossible to maintain conventional learning with face-to-face learning because of the limitation of time. At elementary school 1 Madayin, students are only allowed to be in the school environment for half the normal time before COVID-19. The number of students who enter the class is also half the capacity of the class so that the time for entering students is done alternately. So, each class is shifted into 2 study sessions, session 1 starts from 7 to 10 am and

session 2 starts from 10 to 13 noon. Consequently, blended learning chosen as learning strategy that combines face-to-face and online learning.

The application of blended learning at elementary school 1 Madayin is carried out face-to-face at school and then continued online at home. This blended learning model is known as station rotation. According to Graham et al., (2019) this model has station that can rotate on a set schedule. In the face-to-face learning process, it carries out normally but in the online learning process at home, this learning causes many problems, especially for students. Students' problems in online component of blended learning can be listed as follow: infrastructure and connectivity, technological competency, self-regulation and isolation, and learning environment

Infrastructure and Connectivity

The availability of technology is the main requirement to be able to carry out online learning. This technology is in the form of smartphones or Android phones, laptops, computers, tablets, and iPhones. It can be used to access information anytime and anywhere. While in practice at elementary school 1 Madayin, not all students have the facility of technology to support online learning. Family background of students are in middle to lower economic. So, they are unable to support and facilitate kinds of technology for their children to carry out online learning. To keep participating in online learning, students usually use their parents' smartphones. As expressed by parents of students that "*I lend my children for the phones I have to do online learning at home*".

The use of technological devices that are specifically provided for students to learn still does not provide the right solution. Borrowing parents' smartphones by students have not given children more flexibility used because parents' smartphones can only be used at certain times. while the students' online learning time has been determined by the teacher with a set schedule. Inexactness in the availability of smartphones lent by parents with online learning times that have been set by the teacher makes disturbing online learning process. This situation is complained about by the teacher in the teaching and learning process. In the interview, the teacher stated "*My challenge for*

doing learning at home is that there are some students who do not have own smartphones so they have to borrow their parents' or colleague's smartphone. Whereas, when online learning starts, their parents go to work, so that its smartphones are taken because it is also needed".

Indeed, to be able to connect with online learning, the available technology requires an adequate internet connection. Elementary school 1 Madayin is the farthest elementary school from the city center of east Lombok, so the internet connection is low. the position of the region greatly affects the quality of internet network services. As stated by Fikri (2021) Indonesia's geographical conditions are very wide and developments in each area are uneven, making internet connections each area very unequal. As confirmed by a teacher that *"Internet connection quality affects learning using an application that requires an internet connection such as zoom. when the connection is bad the teacher and students cannot communicate well"*.

Technological competency

The key to the successful implementation of online component in blended learning strategy is technological competency. The expertise of technology will greatly affect the quality of online media provided by the teacher so as to create a pleasant learning atmosphere and increase the sense of enthusiasm for learning to students. The ability of qualified technicians will also greatly affect the smoothness of the learning process that is applied. As explained by (Huda, 2020) the ability of technology will make it easier for students to obtain information and materials. There are so many learning platforms that students can access operate during the implementation of online. (Onyema, 2020) recommended several online platforms can be used to support online component of blended learning strategy including: *GoToMeeting, skype, google classroom/open online education, YouTube, blackboard, Udemy, Coursera, memory, Alison, Edx, easy class, Veda Mo, khan academy, ted-ed, code academy, Stanford online, future learn, rcampus, learnopia.com, peer 2 peer university, Teachers Pay Teachers, thinkific, mooc, openculture, academic earth, itunesu free courses, lesson path, Memrise, Funbrain, whyville, Edmodo, Schoology*

ClassDojo, google hangouts, zoom, and WhatsApp.

As stated by Fikri, (2021) In online, students are required to be able to use various learning platforms that applied by teacher. While based on the findings in the field, the most frequently used platform is WhatsApp and sometimes use Zoom and Google Classroom. This is in accordance with the student's statement which stated that *"I like to use WhatsApp while others are complicated to use, I still need parental help to teach me how to use it"*. The use of applications is not the only option to use in learning. This is also emphasized by the teacher's statement which states that *"Teachers are forced to use WhatsApp more to do online learning in an effort to adapt the learning platform according to the one that can be operated by students even though it has many limitations"*. WhatsApp is used because it is the only platform that is very familiar and easy to use online. As a consequence, the limitations of existing tools make learning unable to run smoothly. According to Amelia (2021) tools in WhatsApp are limited to sending text, voice, and video. Meanwhile, online learning should be attractive and interesting learning. As result, learning make student cannot understand the materials that deliver by teacher.

Self-regulation and isolation

Online process creates an uncontrol learning, in contrast to the implementation of face-to-face learning at the school in which students can be supervised by the teacher directly. As the teacher's statement that *"Students in online learning cannot be guided and monitored intensely because when the learning process uses zoom, many students turn off the camera so teacher does not know whether the students are listening to the teacher's explanation or not"*. In the field, it is found that many students interpreted online learning from home which did not require students to go to school as a day off so that students used that time to play.

At first, online learning was very interested by students, but because of this online learning took a very long time, over time students felt bored. It caused by online component of blended learning requires students to study

monotonously in front of the screen without any direct interaction. Whereas, teaching and learning process should be delivered with various learning models. As a result, students feel a feeling of laziness and loss of motivation. Al Adawiyah & Dewi (2020) argues that motivation contains desires, hopes, goals, and incentives. Motivation is considered as inspiration that comes from oneself to move students to always be enthusiastic in learning (Zulpadli et al., 2022).

Additionally, students become tired, bored and stress towards online. As stated by student parent that *"The assignments given by the teacher require students to finish it full time at home so there is no time for children to take a rest, in contrast to the learning process before COVID-19 using fully face to face students learn from 7 to 12 am after that student can go home and take rest"*. Indeed, online decreases students' interaction. based on survey result conducted by National Commission for Child Protection (KPAI), it was found that only 20.1 percent stated that there was an interaction among teachers and students and 79.9 percent of children said the online learning process on distance learning without interaction. Whereas, interaction is very important to educate moral values. It is the main goal of national education that is to make students human beings who believe and fear God Almighty, and have noble character cannot be covered because that value must be directly practiced (Nurohmah & Dewi, 2021).

Learning environment

The learning environment plays an important role to create enthusiasm for student learning. The learning environment can determine the level of activeness and effectiveness of student learning. So that, the learning environment is designed as a proper place to support teaching and learning activities. Generally, school is used as the only learning environment which is designed to provide a comfortable atmosphere to support learning activities. The school has been being as a proper learning environment for students that is equipped with learning facilities to support learning activities. At the schools, students can interact directly with teachers as educators and facilitators to encourage students to learn. The

interaction between students that gives the impression of a school as a formal place makes students realize that their position is currently studying and must be proactive in participating in learning.

But the condition is different in online in the new normal phase of COVID-19, learning must be done at home. Automatically, the learning environment will change from the school to the home environment. Meanwhile, Home is not specifically designed as a place to study. Consequently, students lose concentration. As explained by the teacher that *"When carrying out online learning at home, many children look to the right, to the left and in other directions besides the monitor because the focus of student to learn is disturbed by parent's call, the voices of their younger siblings playing and the noise around them"*. Eventually, Lack of concentration can cause the low quality of activities, less attention in the learning process, and affect the ability to understand the materials (Winata, 2021).

According to Damanik (2019) In the teaching and learning process, the environment is an influential learning resource in the success of the learning process and improvement of student development as a place where learning activities take place and get external influences on the sustainability of the activity. The learning environment is not only directly affecting the high and low learning outcomes, the learning environment but also touches the affective and psychomotor domains. So, it can be concluded that a supportive learning environment will make students enthusiastic in participating in the learning process.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

The spread of the COVID-19 has given challenges for elementary school educational institutions. Students are subjects who feel a big change because before COVID-19, schools did not apply a blended learning strategy by combining face-to-face and online because all learning processes were carried out in full face-to-face. The application of blended learning for elementary schools is a new thing, so many adjustments have to be made. Online is a component of blended learning that must be given special attention. To

do online in blended learning, it must utilize communication and information technology. There are several things that must be fulfilled including 1) procurement of technological devices such as laptops, smartphones, computers as learning media, 2) internet network for supporting technological devices can be connected, 3) the ability to operate qualified technological devices so that the learning process can run smoothly, 4) familiarizing in using blended learning to avoid shock learning. The sudden changes in the learning process make students as part of the school community unable to fix some qualifications and conditions for supporting online, causing several problems for students, including 1) limited Infrastructure and connectivity, 2) lack of technological competency, 3) self-regulation, and isolation problems, and 4) non-conducive learning environment. The evidence from this study suggests that to implement blended learning at elementary school, students should be facilitated with technology device, and teacher should give intensive guidance for student so that they can access learning platform as well.

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