

Online Learning Implementation and Challenges; Case in rural and urban schools in Sintang District

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Abstract

This research aimed to describe online learning implementation and challenges carried out by rural and urban schools during Covid-19 pandemic in Sintang District. A descriptive qualitative approach was adopted in order to collect deep data which was rich of contextual detail regarding how online learning had been implemented in each school and what challenges they faced in order to implement online learning optimally. Four schools representing rural and urban areas were involved in this research. In this regard, rural and urban areas were represented by two schools each. Within each school, five respondents were involved, a school leader, two teachers and two students. In total, this research involved 20 respondents. Data collection process were carried out using semi structured interview, assisted by an interview guidance. To analyse the data, this research adopted thematic analysis and cross-case analysis. The finding of this research suggested that there was variation in the way rural and urban schools implemented online learning during covid 19 pandemic. Furthermore, the data analysis also revealed a number of challenges faced by rural and urban school in implementing the online learning. Overall, rural schools mostly dealt with limited supporting online learning facilities, meanwhile, urban schools demanded further assistances on improving their readiness to embrace online learning in their schools.

Keywords: Online Learning, Schools Improvement, learning Challenges, urban school, rural school

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan implementasi pembelajaran online dan tantangan yang dilakukan sekolah pedesaan dan perkotaan pada masa pandemi Covid-19 di Kabupaten Sintang. Pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif digunakan untuk mengumpulkan data mendalam yang kaya akan detail kontekstual tentang bagaimana pembelajaran online telah dilaksanakan di masing-masing sekolah dan tantangan apa yang mereka hadapi untuk melaksanakan pembelajaran online secara optimal. Empat sekolah yang mewakili daerah pedesaan dan perkotaan dilibatkan dalam penelitian ini. Dalam hal ini, daerah pedesaan dan perkotaan masing-masing diwakili oleh dua sekolah. Dalam setiap sekolah, lima responden terlibat, seorang pemimpin sekolah, dua guru dan dua siswa. Secara total, penelitian ini melibatkan 20 responden. Proses pengumpulan data dilakukan dengan wawancara semi terstruktur, dibantu dengan pedoman wawancara. Untuk menganalisis data, penelitian ini menggunakan analisis tematik dan analisis lintas kasus. Temuan penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa ada variasi dalam cara sekolah pedesaan dan perkotaan menerapkan pembelajaran online selama pandemi covid 19. Selain itu, analisis data juga mengungkapkan sejumlah tantangan yang dihadapi sekolah pedesaan dan perkotaan dalam menerapkan pembelajaran online. Secara keseluruhan, sekolah pedesaan sebagian besar menghadapi keterbatasan fasilitas pendukung pembelajaran online, sementara sekolah perkotaan menuntut bantuan lebih lanjut untuk meningkatkan kesiapan mereka untuk merangkul pembelajaran online di sekolah mereka.

Kata kunci: Pembelajaran Online, Peningkatan Sekolah, Tantangan belajar, sekolah perkotaan, sekolah pedesaan

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INTRODUCTION

The world had been shaken by the outbreak of COVID-19 virus which has spread to all aspects of life (see: Thomson & Ip, 2020). In school, learning could no longer be carried out

face to face. Schools were closed and study from home (SFH) policy was adopted. Teaching and learning processes were required to be done in online modes. For urban schools carrying out online learning could be more realistic to be administered, considering that they were supported by adequate teaching and learning facilities, like internet connection and power sources. However, contradictory situations were potentially faced by rural schools, which had limited access to the facilities mentioned above. The implementation of online learning in rural areas were believed to be more challenging than in urban ones. The rural-urban differences in terms of the availability of online learning supporting facilities tended to make online learning be implemented in various ways by schools in those areas. Understanding how these schools were implementing online learning and revealing what challenges they faced could provide evaluative insight into the strategies and needs for improving future online learning implementation in the area. This study was designed to investigate contextual implementation of online learning in rural and urban schools qualitatively. In addition, this research also aimed to map challenges faced by each participating school in implementing online learning during covid19 pandemic outbreak.

There have been a number of researchers conducting research in this field. Agarwal & Dewan (2020) explored various online alternatives available in online learning practices, such as Zoom, Microsoft Team, Google Duo, YouTube, WhatsApp, Cisco WebEx, etc., to connect with their students. Further, Deepika (2020) and Sulisworo et al., (2020) investigated the impact of online learning during covid-19 pandemic from students' and teachers' perspectives. Another research was conducted by Adnan & Anwar (2020) researching the process of sudden move of school learning from full offline class to online ones. Then, Kebritchi et al., (2017) and (Dube, 2020) investigating the issues and challenges related to online teaching and learning implementation.

Compared to those previous studies above, this study had several differences. This study investigated not only urban schools, but also the rural ones. Such practice had not been done by those previous researchers. In addition, this research also compared how online learning was implemented by schools in these both geographic locations. Insights drawn from the comparison could be the foundation for improving online learning at these schools in the future. Furthermore, this research also collected data from more various sources, namely school leaders, teachers and students. The finding of this research could provide empirical data for stakeholders and decision makers in evaluating and improving online learning implementation in the future

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The research was a multiple cases study research, with qualitative descriptive approach. Such research method was adopted in order to describe typical implementation and challenges of online learning implementation in each case study schools, without losing its uniqueness and originality (see: Gustafsson, 2017 and Nassaji, 2015). By using this method, it was expected that the contextual implementation of online learning in each school, both in rural and urban areas, could be described. In addition, the challenges faced by each participating school in implementing online learning could also be identified.

Subject of Research

This research involved two school from urban areas and two from rural ones. In each school five respondents were involved, namely school leaders, teachers and students. Th school were selected using purposive selection technique, on two criteria; their geographic location (rural and urban) and their willingness to voluntarily involve in the research. Similar selection technique was adopted in selecting the respondents in each school. Three criteria were considered in selecting the respondents in each school, namely, their role in school (leaders, teachers or students), subject taught (only involved English teachers), and their willingness to participate in the research. In total 20 respondents were involved in this research, which consisted of four school leaders, eight English teachers and eight students. The subject of this research was selected to represent rural and urban school in Sintang district, both in rural and urban areas. However, the finding of this research was not intended to be generalised into wider population. The finding of this research was aimed for the participating schools only.

Technique of Data Analysis

To analyse the data, qualitative data analysis procedures were adopted in this research. In this regard, thematic analysis and cross-case analyses were adopted. Thematic analysis is an apt qualitative method used when working in research teams and analyzing sizeable qualitative data sets (Nowell et al., 2017). Thematic analysis was used to list information regarding the implementation patterns of online learning implementation in each school. In addition, it was also used to identify challenges faced by each school in implementing online learning, as reported by each respondent. Cross-case analysis was used to compare reports from each respondent, in order to develop conclusion on school and geographic location level (see: R. McWhorter et al., 2013). In this research, cross-case analysis allows the researcher to understand the differences and similarities about the practice of online compulsory English

learning starting from implementation, challenges, and potential for future improvements in the four schools in Sintang Regency.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Implementation of Online Learning

Class Preparation

The online learning preparation of rural and urban schools in Sintang regency, was quite similar. In this regard, online learning was started by teacher who sends a message through WhatsApp application to greet students, then teacher check students' attendance. Furthermore, teacher ignited discussion regarding teaching previous lesson. Teachers confirmed if there were question from students regarding the past lessons. When there was no more question, teachers proceeded to teaching material delivery stage.

Material Delivery

Learning materials were in the form of Microsoft word, PowerPoint documents or learning videos. Explanations related to each material were given through WhatsApp group, YouTube and Google classroom. After the teacher delivered and explained the material to students, teacher asked students about their difficulties in understanding materials. When all students could understand the material, teacher then gave quizzes and light assignments to students. Some teachers said that providing online learning materials was quite difficult because sometimes the materials did not reach students in rural areas who had limited networks. However, the giving of quizzes and assignments was still carried out by the teacher even though the success rate was not better than offline learning.

Class assignments

Assignments were generally given to determine the extent to which students understand a material that had been previously presented. In the urban and rural schools involved in this research, teacher gave individual or group assignments to students. For urban schools, assignments were given through WhatsApp group, google classroom or YouTube. Meanwhile for those in rural areas, the assignments were given to students in schools, in this regard, all students were asked to come to school alternately to collect and submit their assignments. Each teacher gave different deadlines for submitting assignments, some are only three days, a week, two weeks, even a month. It all depended on each teacher. In this regard, teachers said that the tasks given during online learning were more difficult to do than offline learning. They reported that doing so in online learning mode was more complicated since it should involve online platforms and could not ensure the originality of students' works.

The Challenges English Teachers face in designing online Learning

Lack of teachers' and students' readiness to embrace full online learning implementation

The unpreparedness of teachers in dealing with current online learning practices was illustrated by the low ability of teachers to master technology. Such fact was reported by teachers and school leaders involved in this research, both in urban and rural areas. In this case, teachers reported that they still felt awkward in teaching with the help of technology. In fact, there were still teachers who still had problems accessing the internet. This was especially experienced by teachers in rural areas, or to senior teachers. The inability of teachers to use technology was an obstacle for schools to update learning media and in carrying out online learning. One of the principals in rural areas reported that a special challenge for teachers in the schools he leaded was that teachers were required to master current technology so that online learning could be more effective, efficient, and fun for students, while that ability was still minimally mastered by the teachers in his school

Limited Facilities and Infrastructure

During the implementation of compulsory online education, almost all schools in rural areas experienced problems with facilities and infrastructure such as unstable internet networks, expensive internet quota fees, and limited facilities. Such problem was not reported by any urban schools. The principal at one of the rural schools involved in this study reported that not only teachers, but students also faced similar challenges. This challenge hindered learning, so the school recommends that students who did not have learning facilities to come to school to take advantage of the existing facilities at the school. The challenge was made worse because the school was quite far from the urban areas. In addition, interview conducted to students revealed that the distance between their home and school was also a challenge, especially when they were asked to collect and submit their assignments twice a week. In this regard, the students reported that they the road they should take to school was far from home and they did not have any vehicle. To do so, they needed their parents' help to take them to schools, however, their parents were mostly busy at work, so they did not have time to do so. They added that if they had to collect and submit their assignments to school twice a week, it would be a challenging process for them. Before the pandemic, students who lived far from this school stayed in school dormitories. They only return to their homes on holidays. With this pandemic condition, they were not allowed to live in dormitories. So, as they reported, if they were required to come to school, and then go straight back to their home, it would be very difficult to do so.

The high variety of students' abilities in comprehending teaching materials

In current online learning, both rural and urban schools reported that students had difficulty to understand their teaching material. Such understanding was in different level. There were some students who could understand the lesson quickly, but there were also some other who took longer. This was due to the application of online learning which caused many limitations for teachers in providing explanations and simulations about the teaching materials. Given these conditions, teachers reported that they had difficulty in accommodating students' various learning needs. In this case, simulation and drilling, which were usually done to ensure that every student understands the learning process, could not be carried out optimally. To overcome such situation, teacher facilitated face to face consultation in schools for students in need.

Difficulties in Collaborating with Parents

Learning could not be run optimally if there was no support and cooperation with parents and students. Parents should have played an important role in supporting students' learning, especially during this pandemic, where online learning was fully implemented. In this regard, parents were expected to play more of a role in supporting and motivating their children. However, teachers and students in urban and rural schools reported that not many parents did so. Most parents did not provide maximum support to their children, which made it difficult for children to develop in their learning.

Low Motivation of student

These challenges were reported by most schools involved in this research both in rural and urban areas. Teachers reported that during online learning, students tended to be reluctant in doing assignments, shied in asking questions, and tended to be less enthusiastic in following classes. In this regard, school leaders in some schools described that the challenge was sometimes students were lazy to ask, and also if they were given random questions during the zoom meeting, the students tended to be silent and could not give a response. Such problem also occurred in discussion took place on WhatsApp group. Students rarely replied of gave comments on teachers' posts.

DISCUSSION

Implementing of Online Learning

Interview data involving school leaders, teachers and students revealed that the implementation of online learning varied between rural and urban schools. Rural schools struggled harder in implementing online learning than the urban schools did. In this case, rural schools applied blended learning with a larger proportion of offline learning. In the context of

rural school with numerous disadvantageous in terms of facilities to support online learning implementation, the decision to implement blended learning was considered a good decision to make. Yam & Rossini (2011) described that rural school could take benefit from blended learning application since it combines the benefits of both individual face-to-face interactions and online situations. They believed that blended learning showed up to be more effective than other shapes of learning instruction.

In contrast to rural schools, urban schools seemed to be able to implement online learning better. The implementation of online learning was carried out using zoom and WhatsApp applications. Zoom was used to explain lesson materials, while WhatsApp was used to communicate with students and parents about the implementation of online learning, In addition, teachers also sent information about online learning instruction through WhatsApp. Online learning media as an alternative to electronic-based learning provides many benefits, especially to the educational process conducted remotely (Nuriansyah et al., 2020 and Anugrahana, 2020). Such stance was in line with what was reported by (Nurmaya et al., 2021) who describe that in implementing online learning, teachers took an approach in the form blended learning in order to keep students in their peak motivation in learning. The spirit of understanding learners remained high so that students remained active in the learning processes even though education was done online. The teaching strategy used by teachers tended to be vary so that students stayed motivated in following the teaching and learning process. Such advantage could also be seen on assessment process, as reported by Wibowo (2016). He described that in the process of assessing online learning methods used by teachers could be satisfying when blended learning was adopted properly. In this regard, he reported that the assessment tended to be in the form of assignments and projects.

Challenges of English Teachers Face in Designing Online Learning

In rural and urban schools in Sintang Regency, teachers and students had difficulty using and utilizing technology-based learning; this was because teachers had not been fully ready to embrace online learning in their teaching and learning routines in school. In addition, teachers and students also had limited skills and knowledge or illiterate to technology technology-based learning. The situation caused students tended to become passive and felt saturated during the learning process. Given such situation, a teacher should have had basic competence in using information technology (Tabi'in, 2017). Such competence should have been integrated in the school curriculum and strategic development plans. The fact in the field which showed teachers and schools were still struggling, some teachers had not been able to

operationalize information technology tools, such as difficulty in choosing learning media, and were less familiar with information technology-based media.

Facilities and infrastructure were also all procurement processes to support educational objectives in an appropriate and targeted manner. One of the critical components to sponsor and support the successful implementation of the learning process is the facilities and infrastructure (Rahayu & Haq, 2020). The finding of this research suggested that students in rural and urban schools had different characters and understandings about the materials or assignments given by teachers. They found it challenging to capture abstract material, especially in the current online learning process. Each individual tended to have different levels of intelligence; the long-running online learning process makes it more difficult for students in rural and urban schools to comprehend lessons from teachers. Such process should have been critical for improving students' achievement, which had been the schools' goal (see: Febriyanto et al., 2018). The fact that students were struggling to catch lesson from teachers should alarm all stakeholders regarding how such process had been carried out. This showed that implementing full online learning had been one of the tough challenges that teachers had to go through in the process of teaching and learning during covid19 pandemic.

Furthermore, the fact that schools had difficulties to cooperate with parents in supporting students' online learning during covid19 pandemic, signalling another evaluation point to stakeholders and decision makers. In this regard parents, should have been more proactive in assisting and facilitating students' learning, especially in the time when learning mostly done from home. Parents should have been able to support and motivate students to be active and get involve in online learning optimally. Doing so was considered important to do as suggested by Hafida (2020) who argued that ineffectiveness of learning causes students to experience a decrease in motivation and activeness in education.

CONCLUSION

To respond to covid 19 pandemic outbreak, schools in rural and urban areas in Sintang regency designed a number of learning strategies, in order to make teaching and learning keep running for their students. The strategies were adjusted to make it fit to typical challenges and strength which they have. In this regard, rural school adopted blended learning strategy, which combined online and offline learning procedures. Online learning portion was mostly carried out through WhatsApp group. Such group was used by teachers to provide instruction regarding what students needed to do during a week. The group had also been used as the main communication media between teachers and students. Meanwhile, the offline portion of the learning was done by letting students to come to school several times a week to collect learning

material and assignments, and to submit their completed assignments. In contrast, urban schools reported that they implemented full online learning. In this respect, all learning processes were done online. Instruction delivery and communication were carried out through WhatsApp group. Attendance check and assignments submission were done through google classroom application. Teaching materials were posted on YouTube and google classroom application. Students could access the materials anytime and then did any necessary tasks at home. During the online learning none of the students were required to come to school for any reason.

In carrying out learning, schools in both rural and urban areas faced a number of challenges. Rural schools reported that they had to deal with limited facilities to support full online learning implementation. The lack of power sources during the day and the low quality of the internet were two main examples of facilities that hindered the full implementation of online learning in rural areas. Furthermore, limited number of students possessing online learning devices, such as smart phone and laptop or computer, made the effort to implement full online learning became more challenging. Out of all, teachers, school leaders and students in rural areas tended to agree that they believed that they themselves had not fully been ready to embrace full implementation of online learning in their school. Further preparation which includes trainings on preparing online learning implementation and on how to integrate technology into daily learning in schools, were suggested to be initially administered. The lack of school readiness to adopt full online learning in school was also reported by schools in urban areas. Even though they have supporting online learning facilities, urban schools reported that they had not fully been ready to operate those technologies for the purpose of implementing online learning in school. In similar vein with rural school, urban school requested more trainings and assistances in integrating technologies into school teaching and learning process as the effort to implement online learning optimally.

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