OPTIMIZATION OF ONLINE PLATFORM DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC ADOPTED BY LECTURERS AT STIT AL AZIZIYAH

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Abstract

This research is motivated by the situation covid-19 pandemics. The existence of various limitations of human resources, study space, and time to face-to face to experience various obstacles to achieve optimal result. Online platform is one of several alternative effort to improve the quality of teaching and learning during covid-19 pandemic. Through online platform, students and lecturers can interact in learning across distance, time and space. The objectives of this study were to obtain an overview of the online platform during covid-19 pandemic at STIT Al Aziziyah Kapek Gunung Sari. The data were obtained from students STIT Al Aziziyah Kapek Gunung Sari by observation, interview and questionnaire. The result of this study showed that the students’ digital literacy, independence, critical thinking, and retaining information using online platform at STIT Al Aziziyah Kapek Gunung Sari was improved through significantly during covid-19 pandemics.

Keywords: Optimization, Online Platform, Covid-19 Pandemic, Lecturers

1. INTRODUCTION

In industry era 4.0 the development of science and technology is a great wall for every campus to increase the contribution of knowledge and technology of every individual. This statement deals with Hediansyah & Surjono 1 the development of technology has a significant impact on the process of information exchange, including education. Also Surahman 2 believes that neither students nor teachers have to sit in campus. Therefore, it is greatly important for institution in education in pandemic era to hold online activities of teaching and learning.

This situation today should give extra thinking to perform the sustainability of online learning. Gupta 3 stated that new ideas, technologies, and services are innovation product. In education, skills and abilities of students are transformed into a means of developing their cognitive and personal qualities, competence to ensure their ability to be the subject of innovative professional activities. 4

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Haizar, Kee, Chong, and Chong explained four components of innovation strategy namely strategy, resources, capabilities, and processes. This is important so that national strategic issues in the administration of higher education are dealt with effectively and efficiently. The learning model is a design and a stage used by the lecturers and learning. The model serves to bridge the delivery of learning messages in the form of information (cognitive, affective, and psychomotor) from various sources to students.

Learning models have an important role to influence students to be actively involved in learning. To strengthened the opinions Bruce, Well, and Calhoun stated that learning models are designed for teachers to create an enforceable learning environment. With this model, it is very useful to make learning planning both of material and strategy. As stated by Rahman, educators’ lesson plan must push new ideas keeping in mind the end goal to promote the learning of every last one of the students.

As stated by Ayu, online learning in several universities in Indonesia may provide accessible and latest education information to all levels. Online learning alters students’ characteristics into technology-addict learners that show their skill of computer literacy to compete with technology development. They may also explore real-life online learning experiences to encourage students’ autonomous learning.

According to Kwofie and Henten, online learning provides flexibility for students to learn and access interactive materials. With the technology-enhanced in the education sector, it may optimize the use of the internet as a supporting tool to help students find communicative learning sources since the internet provides students authentic materials that might help them to study online.

Higher Education, in this case

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lecturers, always make efforts to emphasize and improve the quality and quantity of the elements that function in an educational process. Higher Education tries to solve the problem in innovative ways. One of the efforts is that universities are trying to innovate face-to-face learning processes. The innovation was carried out by integrating communication and information technology in the learning process, known as online platform.

Herdiansyah and Surjono\textsuperscript{13} defined online platform as “a learning method that combines two or more methods and approaches in learning to achieve the objectives of the learning process.” Ni Luh and et al\textsuperscript{14} stated the flexibility of online learning is one of the advantages of this mode, where students can schedule their time to complete the course. Combine face to face learning with technology raises a mixture of learning and flipped classroom; the type of learning environment can enhance the student's learning potential. Students can learn anytime and anywhere, thus evolving new skills in the process that leads to a lifetime of learning. The government also distinguishes the increasing importance of online learning in

Integrating online platform in the learning process has several advantages. Online platform can overcome the limitations and differences in distance, time, and space between learners and instructors. As stated by Zainuddin & Keumala\textsuperscript{15}, the use of technology and internet access are potentials for each college to develop hybrid-based learning media by integrating technology. Through online platform, the learning process cannot only be done through a meeting between learners and instructors in a room but can be done wherever the learners and instructors are. Simply, the learning process cannot only be done based on a specific schedule allocation but can be done anytime and anywhere.

Based on the explanation of the implementation of online platform described above, the researcher considers it is necessary to conduct special research related to the innovation of the learning process through the implementation of online platform in an effort to improve digital literacy capabilities and provide a hybrid-learning based learning model, to prepare the educational institution and also the students in industrial era 4.0 as well as to prepare for the possibility of having

\textsuperscript{13}Herdiansyah and Surjono (2020) “Online Platform Development to Improve Teacher Learning Management”. \textit{Jurnal Kajian Teknologi Pendidikan}, 3 (1) 1-9


\textsuperscript{15}Zainuddin and Keumal (2018) “Method Within Indonesian Higher Education Institutions”. \textit{Jurnal Pendidikan Humaniora}, 6(2), 69
limited condition to hold online learning process during COVID-19 pandemic.

The implementation of online platform provides flexibility when issues of time and place are taken into consideration. In this model, every student has the luxury of choosing the place and time that suits him/her. The benefits of online platform were also stated by Smedley\textsuperscript{16}, that the adoption of online learning provides the institutions as well as their students or learners the flexibility of time and place of delivery or receipt of learning information.

2. METHOD

The data resulted from research problems are in the form of observation, interview, and questionnaire. Next, descriptive research is chosen because based on the research problem, the objective of this research is to describe the development of online platform used by the lecturers in teaching during covid-19 pandemics.

The data source of this research was the permanent lecturers of STIT Al Aziziyah Kapek Gunungsari experienced teaching through online platform in their teaching process. The informants determined were informants who fit the research category so that the type used in this study was purposive sampling. The informants in this study were lecturers STIT Al Aziziyah Kapek Gunungsari who were given an online learning course using online platform in the Academic Year 2020-2021.

To know the real context, the data used in this research is the kind of primary data because the data is in the form of questionnaire that recorded based on lecturers’ perception through online platform. And to support in analysing the data, the researcher also uses the supporting data in the form of transcript of lecturers’ interview using online platform after teaching using online platform.

To collect the data, the researcher uses documentation method that is based on the transcript. According to Ary et.al\textsuperscript{17}, Qualitative researchers may use written documents or other artifacts to gain an understanding of the phenomenon under study. Additionally, he also explains that documents may be such kind of personal.

The triangulation of data source can be done by using some data resources with different situations and circumstances such as the data that taken from the different people, time or different places. The methodological triangulation can be done by using the finding from the research that

\textsuperscript{16} Smedley, J.K. (2010) “Modelling the impact of knowledge management using technology: ORinsight”.

\textsuperscript{17} Ary et.al (2010) Introduction to research in Education. USA: Wadsworth, Cengage learning.
using the different methods. Research or investigator triangulation can be done by engaging some different researchers to analysis the data. And the last is theoretical triangulation that can be done by using some theories related to the research in analysing the data. In this case, the researcher uses more than one theory framework in interpreting the data. The theory selected by the researcher are the theories proposed by Stephen C. Levinson, George Yule, Peter Grundy, and also Singo Imai.

Data analysis is the important step of every research. According to Lodico et al.\textsuperscript{18}, in all qualitative research, data analysis and interpretation are continuous throughout the study, so that insights gained in initial data analysis can guide future data collection. In addition, Ary et al.\textsuperscript{19}, a qualitative researcher must organize and categorize or code the large mass of data so that they can be described and interpreted.

He also explains that the data analysis in qualitative research is a time-consuming and difficult process because typically the researcher faces massive amounts of field notes, interview transcripts, audio recordings, reflections, or information from documents, all of which must be examined and interpreted.

To provide further support, 3 lecturers who taught using online learning course were randomly selected for interviews of 4 questions at the end of the course. The lecturers were asked for their opinions on using online platform to supplement the course, and their innovative development strategy to overcome the disadvantages and obstacles of using online platform models in teaching and learning processes during covid-19 pandemic.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research findings revealed that in the online platform/online learning courses are mostly combined live face-to-face instruction/sessions, asynchronous virtual collaboration, and self-paced asynchronous activities. Methods used was lecture, group presentation, and discussion. They were more focused on deepening students' understanding on the subject or certain topics. Methods used in asynchronous virtual collaboration were zoom meeting and google classroom. Methods used in self-paced asynchronous activities were online searching, online reading, and online assignment.

Research findings also showed that online learning tools used in online platform/online learning strategy for the

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\textsuperscript{18} Lodico et.al. (2010) \textit{Methods In Education Research: From Theory to Practice (Second Edition)}, San Francisco: John Wiley and Sons, Inc.
\textsuperscript{19} Ary et.al (2010) \textit{Introduction ..}, p. 32.
courses were non-proprietary learning management system. Almost all facilities offered in the learning management system were used. Facilities used were course description, assignment, announcement, discussion forum, and authentic document as a repository of all kinds of learning materials.

One of the alternatives to develop an online platform strategy in teaching and learning process can be done with the following steps.

a. Planning stage

This stage is the stage of designing courses. This stage includes course outline by formulating course descriptions, learning outcomes of the course, selecting study material to be presented, and making exercises based on study material. The lecturers distributed the course outline from the chairman of the class.

b. Development stage

After designing stages of the online learning course are carried out, the next stage is the development stage. The stages of this development include the process of preparing course in online platform. The lecturers made a WhatsApp group to simplify the dialogue between lecturers and students. So, the students can get information throughout the course. The lecturers can manage and give feedback with students’ submission.

c. Implementation

The implementation of online learning using online platform with the following steps.

1) The Lecturers explain the material and examples contained in the RPS (lesson plan) in accordance with the curriculum in live-face-to-face meeting.

2) Material must be available and accessible to students regardless of place and time.

d. Evaluation

The lecturers evaluate students’ retaining information, independence, critical thinking skill, materials during teaching through online platform.

The strategies they did mostly were introducing online learning to the participants and including the schedule of each topic and this was done in the first meeting of the course. The lecturers also kept monitoring the progress to make the students keep on the track. The lecturers integrated online assignments slowly and gradually. The aspect that was most effective about online learning according to the lecturers was time management since the participants learned how to manage their time to finish all administrative tasks and may lead them to discipline themselves and also the online
discussion where students get a chance to express their ideas and opinions on a given topic. While the least effective aspect was when the system was down since it usually made the students lose motivation to finish the tasks. The other aspect that was least effective was the relationship between the lecturers and the students because it took more time when they had online sessions.

This study provides insights into the online learning platform preference of using online platform during education in the COVID-19 era at STIT Al Aziziyah. The findings showed that Zoom Meeting was the most widely used platform in the online learning process in STIT Al-Aziziyah during covid-19 pandemic period. The lecturers preferred using zoom meeting rather than other online platforms.

On the other hand, the students also were eager to use online platform through chatting or discussion forum such WhatsApp group to discuss their online learning activities with their peers and lecturers since they are comfortable composing texts on their laptops or smartphones due to their great keyboarding skills for doing all online works. It is in line with Sun’s study.\(^\text{20}\) She asserted that online learners altered their use of learning strategies and approaches to learning in the online environment. Thus, online learners have numerous attitudes, perceptions, and preferences on certain learning settings, design, and method, but they are contented and delightful in their online learning.

The questions were asked to three lecturers who taught using online learning. They said that the preparations were necessary since to have online learning courses, they need to have prerequisite skills such as time management, technology integrations, and learner centred pedagogy. By having the preparation, the lecturers would have more options and sources before conducting the courses.

Significantly, most lecturers revealed that their learning strategies were beneficial, interactive, motivating, and challenging to their online learning experiences. They received some easiness while using the chosen online learning platforms by the lecturers. The learning management such as their effective study time, self-disciplined, and learning motivation seems easy to set aside finishing all online activities through the online learning platform. Then, they easily accessed, obtained, read, and reviewed all learning materials for their studies through this platform. This finding is supported by Okmawati\(^\text{21}\) who stated that online learning platform leads students to be independent, engaged, and motivated learners to adapt to new technology and global challenges. Besides, it challenges them to do interaction through online communication.

According to the study’s findings, the most significant challenge faced by lecturers during online learning is an internet network problem related to the network’s level of stability and restrictions. This finding reflected previous studies by Xie et al.\(^\text{22}\), Aduba and Mayowa-Adebara, and Adnan and Anwar\(^\text{23}\). They reported that internet network is a critical component and must get prioritized for online learning success.

A good internet network is essential in online learning since a faulty internet network can prevent access and impede learning. Dhawan\(^\text{24}\) added that if the internet network does not support well, it will most likely result in additional issues such as difficulties in downloading materials, installing learning software, logging into online learning platforms, audio and video instability, etc. Having a good internet network is need to be considered so that education gaps do not


occur, as reported by Verma et al.\textsuperscript{25} in Australia, where the educational gap is widening due to students' homes in remote areas.

The next obstacle encountered during online learning is the internet quota. This obstacle is a common obstacle in developing countries, as not everyone has a significant income; hence, internet quotas are no always available. According to Muthuprasad et al.\textsuperscript{26}, as a developing country, India faces the most significant challenge in the form of limited quotas in the implementation of online learning. Aduba and Mayowa-Adebara's\textsuperscript{27} study also believe that the most significant barrier to online learning was the high cost of purchasing internet data, which impacted internet quotas to complete all required lectures. Several crucial aspects of lectures are affected by the limited quota constraint, such as updating content, posting assignments, downloading materials, collaborating in sharing document, and so on.\textsuperscript{28}

Another challenge in online learning was the difficulty in transferring learning materials. The difficulties in transferring learning materials were classified as follows: (1) difficulties in explaining certain materials because they were not face-to-face with students; (2) difficulty doing practical activities; and (3) preparation takes more time and effort than offline classes. Those challenges is in accordance to Humphrey and Wiles\textsuperscript{29} who reported that almost all students prefer face-to-face learning over online learning because it is easier to engage and learn material content. It is easier to conduct discussions and ask questions directly and quickly.

The last issue is the lecturer's inability to control students in online learning. This condition leads to several consequences, one of which is a decrease in students' motivation to apply what they have learned Adnan and Anwar\textsuperscript{30} argued that students’ learning motivation decreases in online lectures since they are unable to actively participate and engage directly with lecturers. Participants were

\textsuperscript{26} Muthuprasad et. Al (2021) Students perception and preference for online education in India during covid-19 pandemic. Social science and humanities open, 3 (1)
\textsuperscript{27} Aduba and Mayowa (2021) Online platforms used for teaching and learning during the covid-19 era: the case of LIS students in Delta State University, ABraka. International information and library review, 1-36.
\textsuperscript{28} Octoberlina and Muslimin. (2020) EFL students perspective toward online learning and
\textsuperscript{29} Humphrey and Wiles (2021) Lessons learned through listening to biology students during transition to online in the wake of covid-19 pandemic. Ecology and evolution, 11 (8)
asked to give suggestion on how to improve the using of e-learning platforms and online learning in the future.

Furthermore, the other finding also finds out that there are some advantages of using online learning platforms. This finding is supported by a study from Oliver who found out that the benefits of online learning for students’ side are to help them share information and access the learning materials on any occasion and repeatedly. It is suggested by Saha that teachers as a course facilitator may interact with their learners to help them with learning feedback or evaluation for bridging the gaps between learners’ understanding and the course content in online higher education. As stated by Gentry et al., there are four basic elements for learners’ perceptions of learning activities. These cover interest, challenge, choice, and joy. Therefore, students’ perceptions of the use of online learning platforms are strongly interrelated with the available supportive and beneficial environment that can enrich their motivation for learning.

The suggestion that the lecturers can provide online learning was the orientation before conducting online learning both for the students and the lecturers. About the instructional method, the difference lies down on the learning process and the sources. The participants are becoming more independent and it is possible for them to explore their

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31 Oliver (2014) "Online Learning Helps Prepare Pupil for University”. *Education Journal*, 218, p. 12-15
capability. Online learning approaches may stimulate their critical thinking skills that may not be done effectively in traditional classrooms. For the first taker, they should not be anxious or worried of not being able to accomplish the tasks because online learning does not mean there is no collaborative work between the participants and the instructor. The lecturers should also familiarize the students with the instruction and tell them how to access each section during online learning.

The last part was about doing the evaluation. Almost all the lecturers used varied evaluation forms such as assignments, quizzes, and their log participations. However, the lecturers still determined that the most effective evaluations were asking questions and checking their participations during online learning.

4. CONCLUSION

Online platform is the learning strategy that is very important to facilitate learning more effectively, efficiently and appealing for students since it is related to technology. The first type of online learning still has weaknesses; however, it can be overcome by the strength of combination digital literacy, and self-pedagogy. Thus, in the implementation of online platform, the appropriateness method and delivery strategies are the important key.

In this research case, it described how the lecturers applied the online platform started from the preparations until the evaluation and also the students’ perception about the application of online platform that was perceived positively by the students. Research findings showed that the application of online platform benefited the lecturers and also the students in some aspects; one of them is the students' need to improve their digital literacy.

On the preparation stage, it is important for the lecturers and also the students to have an orientation toward the implementation of online platform since there would be prerequisite skills for them before having online platform courses. The development of lesson planning was also crucial for the lecturers so that they could prepare the material and the activities they would post in online learning.

On the main activity phase, students also are trained to be autonomous in doing task and assignments provided in online platform. Students' discussion through the forum discussion board also maintained the relationship between the lecturers-students and students-students. However, the suggestions about the implementation of online platform were about the orientation to both the students and the
lecturers. They need to be familiarized with the system and all the activities included in the online platform. Immediate and intensity of feedback from lecturers is also a success key to the activity of online platform.

Supporting factors for the succeed of online platform are among others; 1) the availability of internet access both at campus or home, 2) the high of students and lecturers’ familiarity or literacy on computer and internet, 3) the availability of online learning resources that can be found and downloaded through internet, 4) lecturers and most of students has own computer facilities such as PCs, laptop, notebook, etc. However, the addition of online learning using online platform to classroom teaching provides students with opportunities for autonomous learning and a decentralized transfer of knowledge.

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