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Submission date: 05-Dec-2021 09:09PM (UTC+0700)

Submission ID: 1720976133

File name: Artikel_di_Jurnal_Psichology_and_Education_3.pdf (254.77K)

Word count: 3955

Character count: 21927

Challenges and Response to Distance Education During Covid-19: The Christian State Institute of Ambon Experience

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ABSTRACT

The Ambon Christian State Institute (Institut Agama Kristen Negeri Ambon) began distance learning in April 2020, after Indonesian government through Minister of Education and Culture release circular letter officially number 2,3 of 2020 concerning online learning and working from home as a measure to prevent spread corona virus disease (covid-19). This paper investigates the challenges and responses to the implementation decision of distance learning at the Ambon State Christian Institute (IAKN) campus. Just like other Universities in Various places, distance learning is the first experience at IAKN Ambon, therefore it contained number challenges starting from the infrastructure immediacy to lecturers and students themselves of readiness face to the policy. However strategic steps were taken in response to this decision. The result of adjustment to distance education process at IAKN Ambon show that learning in the even semester 2019-2020 can run properly, there are progress and success of distance learning that are very encouraging. In a short period of time, IAKN Ambon can improve it through the creation and use an E-Learning application that integrates learning and assessment process. In addition to the success as mentioned above, it turn out there are many challenges that should be considered and worked the utilization of the technology in order to make distance learning successful, besides the content and learning methods that must be kept updated. On this occasion, we will discuss what the experience at IAKN Ambon was like.

Keywords

Distance education, challenge, response, IAKN Ambon Figure

Article Received: 10 August 2020, Revised: 25 October 2020, Accepted: 18 November 2020

Introduction

The emergency due to the 2019 pandemic corona virus disease (Covid-19) which started in Wuhan China (Mahase, 2020; Shi.et.al., 2020) has changed the world order including the culture of education. Higher education in Indonesia is the same as tertiary institutions in other parts of the world that have not previously implemented education with an online system or in this paper it is called distance education, implemented to carry out distance education, if nothing is carried out independently and discarded. The same things were done by the Ambon State Christian Institute (IAKN). Until the beginning of the even semester 2019-2020, the learning system in the undergraduate program at IAKN Ambon still uses face-to-face in class, but in the middle of this semester, there was a change in policy by the State due to the 2019 global corona virus disease pandemic which has hit 215 countries in the world.

The Government of the Republic of Indonesia through the Ministry of Education and Culture issued Circular Fiber Number 4 of 2020, concerning the Implementation of the 2019 Corona Virus Disease Emergency Education and was followed by Circular Number 15 of 2020 concerning Guidelines for Learning from Home during the Covid-19 pandemic. This policy requires schools and universities in Indonesia to be able to conduct online or online learning as a substitute for learning systems outside of the network (offline) or offline. Indeed, long before the Covid-19 pandemic, several leading universities in Indonesia had implemented an online learning system or at least combined online and offline learning systems as needed, but not many

universities implemented distance learning as it is now. IAKN Ambon itself has a plan to build an online learning system and will be implemented in a balanced way with face-to-face learning in class in the academic year 2021/2022. Steps in that direction have also been taken by conducting online learning training at the State University of Malang which involved elements of higher education leaders, deans, postgraduate directors, as well as the chairperson and secretary of the college senate. The follow-up is that the IAKN Ambon postgraduate program in the even semester of the 2018/2019 academic year has carried out a combination of online and offline learning, while the undergraduate program is awaiting the construction of the structured system that has been proposed for 2021, but the covid-19 pandemic has accelerated its implementation.

The issues that are the focus of this study are the factors that affect distance learning, especially at IAKN Ambon during the mid-semester transition period of the 2019-2020 academic year, when the distance learning policy was implemented because Indonesia became one country in the world which became a distribution area. covid-19, and designated as a non-natural and social disaster. There are two assumptions in this study, first, the design of certain applications including distance learning solutions for human life in this era still needs to be developed while. still paying attention to the target user groups. Second, there are a number of factors that influence the use of technology and its application in the distance learning process. Whether the application is aware of it or not, it always has strengths and weaknesses in its implementation by users. Along with the use of a human resource application and the accessibility of

the community, it is also a determinant of the success of using an application that is built to help certain human needs.

This paper aims to analyze the factors that influence the distance learning process carried out at the IAKN Ambon campus, a campus that is currently developing as a balancing force in the education sector for human resource development in Eastern Indonesia. IAKN Ambon currently has a development focus on the social sciences and humanities, but in the future it is planned to open study programs in the field of Exata, especially concentrating on applied science. At present IAKN Ambon has 9 undergraduate study programs spread across 3 faculties respectively (1) the Faculty of Christian Education, (2) the Faculty of Religious Social Sciences, and (3) the Faculty of Religious Arts and 3 study programs in the postgraduate program, respectively: the Christian Religious Education master program, the ecclesiastical music master program and the Christian Religious Education doctoral program.

Materials and Methods

2.1 Literature Rivew

Studies on distance learning both before the Covid-19 pandemic and during the Covid-19 pandemic, including in tertiary institutions, have become the focus of many studies, so this study is a chain of similar studies. Several studies related to the problems under study were carried out, among others: first, Ali Sadikin & Afreni Hamidah, 2020 examined Online Learning in the Middle of the Covid-19 Outbreak and found that: (1) students already have the basic facilities needed to take part in learning online; (2) online learning has flexibility in its implementation and is able to encourage independent learning and motivation to be more active in learning; and (3) distance learning encourages the emergence of social distancing behavior and minimizes the appearance of student crowds so that it is considered to reduce the potential for the spread of Covid-19 in the campus environment. Second, Sri Gusty et al, Independent Learning: Online Learning in the Middle of the Covid-19 Pandemic: 2020 said that the positive and negative impacts of online learning during the Covid period greatly influenced various dimensions of learning with the 6C approach, namely Critical thinking, communication, collaboration, citizenship, creativity and connectivity. Third, Saifuddin, M. F., 2018. E-Learning in Student Perceptions shows the results of the analysis, among others, that 98.8% of students know e-learning, 86.3% support the implementation of e-learning, and 77% are satisfied with the implementation of e-learning with e-learning. In addition, generating student perceptions of e-learning is useful, can increase motivation, make it easier to understand material, help readiness in lectures. Fourth, Sadikin, A., & Hamidah, A; 2020 Online Learning Amid the Covid -19 Outbreak. The finding was that students felt more comfortable expressing ideas and questions in online learning. Taking lessons from home makes them less likely to feel the psychological pressure from the peers that they usually experience when taking face-to-face learning. Fifth, Sukardi, S., & Rozi, F.; 2019. The Effect of Online Learning Model

Equipped with Tutorials on Learning Outcomes The results showed: (1) the Moodle Online Tutorial that has been developed is valid, practical and effective, and (2) there are significant differences in student learning outcomes using the b-learning model with students who using the c-learning model. The learning outcomes of students who use the b-learning model are higher than students who use the c-learning method.

Such studies confirm that online learning is quite variation and has positive and negative impacts on each community group in various places. This paper pays attention to the factors that influence distance learning at the Ambon State Christian Institute which structurally began during the Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, this study specifically displays what the factors referred to are the constraints and what are the solutions. It is realized that the application of applications that have been built patents will be different from the use of newly built applications, which still require a trial period and continue to be improved. Application development will be better if it is supported by other factors

2.2 Method

The type and scope of this research is qualitative, utilizing available secondary data and fieldwork conducted at IAKN Ambon, a place where we, the authors, carry out activities as lecturers. The subjects of this study were Ambon IAKN lecturers and students who were selected to represent the categories created by the author by paying attention to their respective roles as lecturers and students. The method of collecting data is by interviewing, and maximizing the available data existing. Data analysis was carried out by making categories and interpreting phenomena or the results obtained.

Results And Discussion

Evaluation of distance learning at IAKN Ambon during the transition period for the Covid-19 pandemic shows that there are three important factors that greatly influence the process and dynamics of distance learning at IAKN Ambon. these factors are as follows: (1) application design, (2) availability of human resources; (3) accessibility to the internet network in each region. First, the application design aspect shows that actually better development is still needed for the application being built, but because of the urgent condition for use, there are still weaknesses that need to be fixed. Even so, the application design has helped overcome the problem of online learning needs on the IAKN Ambon campus during the transition period due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Second, the aspect of human resources shows that there is no readiness of human resources to support the learning process smoothly because not all lecturers and staff are accustomed to using applications at work. Third, the aspect of community accessibility, especially to the internet network, is still limited to urban and suburban areas, while remote islands have not yet got internet network access. Even if an internet network is available, there are still many community groups, especially students who cannot afford to pay for its use. This greatly affected the distance education process made by IAKN Ambon following up on state

policies regarding learning and working from home during the Covid-19 epidemic.

3.1 E-Learning applications: distance learning challenges and opportunities

This study can be positioned as part of an evaluation of the implementation of the learning process in universities in Indonesia during the emergency period due to the Covid-19 pandemic which is designated as a non-natural and social disaster in Indonesia, by looking at the case of distance learning implemented by the Ambon IAKN. As previously mentioned, different from other universities that have implemented a distance learning system, the undergraduate program at IAKN Ambon until the even semester 2019-2020 has not used an online learning system but the Covid-19 emergency condition forces them to immediately have an online learning application and implement it. Therefore, the IAKN Ambon online learning application was built to help the learning process during the pandemic, which will continue to be improved according to developments in the current digital era.

The following is an analysis of the research findings as stated before.



Picture 1: Display of the Ambon IAKN e-learning application.

It is known that campuses in Indonesia which before the Covid-19 pandemic did not yet have and implement online learning or e-learning applications themselves, are required to have them and take advantage of their use to educate children. In the context of IAKN Ambon, it is admitted that in the postgraduate program since 2018, one year before the Covid-19 pandemic occurred, the Edmodo application available for long-distance learning has been used, although not all lecturers can use it, but in a structured and formal manner the IAKN Ambon campus has not has its own e-learning application which enables distance learning to occur. When the government policy is about working or carrying out the teaching and learning process from home, a policy is immediately adopted to build its own e-learning application.

The IAKN Ambon e-learning application was launched on April 23, 2020, one month after Covid-19 was declared a non-natural and social disaster in Indonesia. Since 27 April 2020, the IAKN Ambon e-learning application has been implemented by all study programs to replace the fixed class advance for the even semester of the 2019-2020 academic year which has only been running for about two months since February 2020. Prior to this, there were indeed some

lecturers who love to teaching online has taken advantage of available online learning applications such as Google classroom, to build active learning dynamics, even though more lecturers teach face-to-face in conventional classes. The IAKN Ambon e-learning application is a policy pursued to support the learning process of the undergraduate program during the Covid -19 epidemic and has become a momentum for the transformation of learning on this campus.

The features that appear in the IAKN Ambon e-learning application are: study contracts, course materials, grade recap, broadcasts, discussion forums, announcements, independent assignments, quizzes, guidance (chat) and the Final Semester Examination (UAS). These features are held in accordance with the agreement established with the leadership of the institution to answer learning needs in the context of the Ambon IAKN. The availability of features like this is assumed to facilitate operation by users, lecturers and students.

From the aspect of application design, there is actually no serious problem because all the features provided are appropriate and can be operated, but as a newly developed application, of course there are various weaknesses that still need to be followed up with various innovations and developments to answer creative learning needs. by using various methods so that students with their respective learning styles can be fulfilled.

Applications for distance learning have now become a necessity in all educational institutions in the world, and this is an extraordinary leap in technological developments, but application design and application of technology also require adaptation to the context of the local community. IAKN which is domiciled in the Maluku archipelago and develops the social science field requires direct interaction and communication as well as an introduction to the real context of community life so that it helps build social sensitivity of students and development has its own challenges with the distance learning system

3.2 Readiness and unpreparedness for the use of e-learning

Although e-learning that supports distance learning is not something new in higher education or education, not everyone is ready to run this system. For example at IAKN Ambon, even though this campus is located in the city center of Maluku province and has adequate resources including access to the internet network, from the aspect of human resources, the ability to understand and use information technology with the use of applications for work is still lacking, both among students. as well as teaching staff and education staff. In fact, in this era, the ability to adapt quickly to technology, including using e-learning, is needed. Studies at IAKN Ambon show that there are still many lecturers and students who have not been able to use e-learning applications in the learning process during the early period of the COVID-19 epidemic. The following is a diagram showing the activeness and inactivity of lecturers and students using Ambon IAKN e-learning in the even semester 2019/2020.

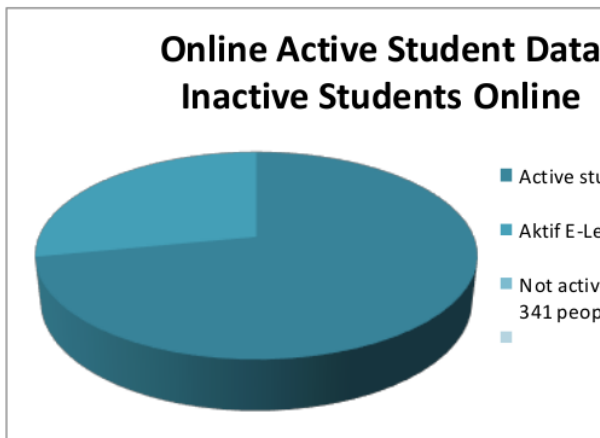


Figure 2:
Evaluation of the Use of E-Learning by Even Semester 2019-2020 Students

Data of Lecturers who teach in the Even Semester Academic Year 2019-2020

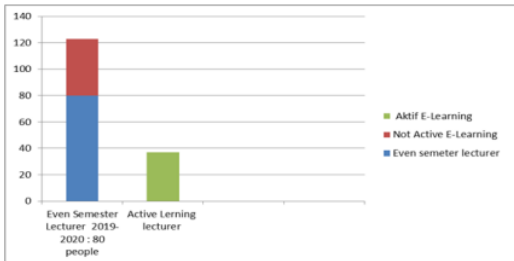


Figure 3:
Evaluation of the Use of E-Learning by Lecturers of Even Semester 2019-2020

The data as shown in Figure 2 shows that of the 868 Ambon IAKN students who were active in the even semester of 2019/2020, 527 people actively participated in using e-learning, while the remaining 341 people were inactive. After evaluating why students do not use e-learning, it turns out that the main problem is related to the ownership of the strings and the absence of an internet network in the area where they live. Even though mobile phones are assumed to be owned by everyone to facilitate communication and fulfill the necessities of life that are completely online today, there are still many students or people who do not have them. Moreover, the standard for accessing various applications. On the other hand, the availability of the internet network still does not reach all areas in Indonesia, including the islands in Maluku.

For lecturers, of the 80 lecturers teaching in the even semester 2019-2020, only 37 lecturers are actively using e-learning, and 43 people have not taught using the e-learning application built on the campus. Unlike students, lecturers have their own reasons why they haven't used the e-learning application built by the campus during the covid-19 transition. The evaluation of lecturers shows that most of the

lecturers have completed the learning process using free applications such as zoom meetings and Google class rooms. This option is one of the quick solutions for responding to the COVID-19 pandemic conditions by each lecturer. Even so, it is the students who find it difficult, Karen still needs an adequate internet quota.

The following is an identification of the reasons for lecturers and students not carrying out the teaching and learning process using the e-learning application built by IAKN Ambon.

Table 1: Reasons for lecturers and students not to use E-Learning

Lecturer	Students
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have used other applications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students do not have cellphones or notebooks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • he material is already on the way and just give it an independent assignment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not have a string that can access large applications
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not familiar with using applications for teaching 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no internet network available in the place
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internet network availability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confusing application

The problem raised in the table shows that most of the lecturers do not or have not used the e-learning application built by the campus for teaching because prior to the application itself, they had used the available social media for the lecture process and used the available free application. In addition, there are a small number of lecturers who are not used to using technology so that it requires adjustments. The main reason for students who do not participate in e-learning learning is that they do not have strings and or notebooks for lectures. The availability of internet network is not only experienced by students but also by lecturers, even though the average lecturer lives in Ambon City.

From the various reasons put forward, this study found that there were several obstacles in the initial phase of implementing distance learning at IAKN Ambon as follows:

- The ability to understand and use information technology is still lacking (both lecturers and students)
 - The adaptability of students in using e-learning makes some students fail to absorb material
 - There are still lecturers who consider e-learning and the features in it complicated so they choose not to use e-learning applications in the teaching and learning process
- Paying attention to obstacles or constraints as it is said that several steps have been taken, namely:
- Gradually socializing the use of the application to lecturers and students

- Provide an understanding of the importance of using e-learning in today's teaching and learning processes. With regard to accessibility to the internet network, this has been coordinated with local governments and related elements.

Conclusion

Distance learning does not always run without obstacles, and is seen as easy, as some people think that distance learning during the pandemic and post-pandemic will make it easier for the entire learning process to achieve the goals set in one educational institution, because it requires the support of adequate application tools, and the readiness of human resources that are supported by adequate facilities. In the context of distance learning at IAKN Ambon, the reason some lecturers do not teach using e-learning and students who do not take part in learning with e-learning applications after the distance learning policy in the even semester 2019-2020 varies, but the salient factor is the people's accessibility to internet network.

This study recommends the planning and development of remote learning systems in both universities and schools, it is appropriate to combine various learning approaches, as well as the importance of introducing the context of each technology user group that is introduced or implemented.

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