

The Impact of Public Policies on Teaching Learning Activities Due to The Covid-19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

Covid-19 In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Indonesia, as declared a national disaster by President Joko Widodo through Presidential Decree No. 12 of 2020, has transitioned into an emergency response phase for non-natural disasters. The World Health Organization labeled COVID-19 a global pandemic on March 11, 2020. The pandemic has significantly disrupted various aspects of daily life, notably the education sector. To maintain educational continuity amidst this crisis, the Indonesian government implemented online learning policies. This shift from traditional face-to-face instruction to distance education poses unique challenges, especially for elementary and kindergarten students. This journal explores the impact of these public policies on teaching and learning during the pandemic, using a descriptive-analytical literature review. Findings reveal that while technology facilitates continued education, it also introduces challenges related to academic culture, values, attitudes, skills, and technological readiness. The study underscores the crucial role of technology in bridging the gap created by the pandemic and highlights the need for addressing associated obstacles to enhance the effectiveness of online education.

Keywords: Policy, Technology, Education, Learning Activities, COVID-19 Pandemic

1. INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic, caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus, represents a non-natural disaster that has profoundly impacted global society. While most individuals experience mild to moderate symptoms and recover without medical intervention, severe cases require specialized care. The virus primarily spreads through respiratory droplets and aerosols expelled when an infected person coughs, sneezes, talks, sings, or breathes. It can also spread via contaminated surfaces if one touches their face after contact. The virus is more transmissible indoors and in crowded settings. On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a global pandemic, prompting countries worldwide to implement lockdown measures to curb its spread. In Indonesia, the government responded with Large-Scale Social Restrictions (PSBB) to manage the pandemic's impact. Public policy, as articulated by Theodore J. Lowi, addresses pressing issues that impact both domestic and international concerns. This crisis has necessitated significant changes across various sectors, including education, health, and the economy.

To adapt, Indonesia's Ministry of Education and Culture introduced the Study From Home (SFH) initiative, transitioning to online learning to maintain educational continuity. The Ministry issued Circular Letter No. 4 of 2020 and other directives to support this shift, requiring educators to develop and utilize digital tools for teaching. This transition presents challenges for educators, students, and parents, particularly in adapting to new technologies and maintaining effective learning experiences. Digital platforms such as e-learning, Google Classroom, and video conferencing tools like Zoom and Google Meet have become essential in facilitating remote

education. This paper aims to examine the impact of public policies on teaching and learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, exploring how these policies have reshaped educational practices and the challenges faced in this new learning environment.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Public policy encompasses the strategies and regulations implemented by governments to manage societal functions and address various public issues. Such policies are essential for solving widespread problems and are mandated by governmental authority. They often stir debate within society, as they are intended to address urgent needs and ensure community welfare. The COVID-19 pandemic exemplifies such an emergency, prompting the government to implement policies, such as public health regulations and educational adjustments, to mitigate its impact.

In the context of education, public policies aim to sustain learning processes despite disruptions like the pandemic. Education is a fundamental right and a cornerstone for personal and societal development. Effective education fosters significant benefits and positive changes in individuals and communities. However, educational equity remains a challenge, particularly highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic, which exacerbated existing disparities. Since the onset of the pandemic in March 2020, the Indonesian government has adapted its educational approach by implementing Distance Learning (PJJ) as an alternative to traditional face-to-face instruction. This policy shift has involved the delivery of educational content through electronic media, including TVRI broadcasts, which cater to various educational levels from Kindergarten to Senior High School. This adaptation seeks to ensure continued educational engagement and accessibility during the pandemic.

Educational technology refers to the systematic identification, development, and use of learning resources to facilitate human learning. It encompasses managing these processes to enhance educational outcomes. The rapid advancement of science and technology significantly impacts every aspect of life, including education. Integrating technology into education helps make learning more engaging and less monotonous, thereby improving the overall student experience. Tahir (2016) describes educational technology as an integrated strategic process aimed at solving learning challenges. This view aligns with Muffoletto, as cited in Selwyn (2011), who argues that educational technology focuses on processes and systems rather than merely tools. Lestari (2018) further supports this by defining educational technology as a system that supports learning to achieve desired outcomes. Overall, educational technology plays a crucial role in addressing learning issues and enhancing educational effectiveness.

However, the implementation of Distance Learning (PJJ) or online education presents both advantages and challenges. On one hand, educators and students have innovated and embraced technology for learning, fostering new methods of interaction and knowledge dissemination. This shift has encouraged creativity in instructional design and facilitated broader access to educational resources beyond physical classrooms. Conversely, the transition to online learning has exacerbated existing disparities in access to technology and the internet. Many underprivileged students lack the necessary devices and stable internet connections, hindering their ability to fully participate in remote education. This digital divide underscores broader issues of educational equity, where socio-economic factors impact access to quality education.

Moreover, the geographical diversity of Indonesia poses additional challenges. Remote and rural areas often face infrastructural limitations, making it difficult to ensure reliable internet connectivity and technological support for online learning initiatives. These disparities highlight the need for targeted interventions and policy frameworks that address the digital divide and ensure inclusive educational access for all students, regardless of their socio-economic

background or geographic location. In navigating these complexities, the Indonesian government's efforts to leverage educational technology have played a pivotal role in mitigating disruptions to learning caused by the pandemic. Moving forward, sustainable solutions that promote digital inclusion and equitable access to education will be crucial in building a resilient education system capable of withstanding future challenges.

3. METHOD

This study employs a descriptive-analytical literature review method. As defined by Sugiono (2009), the descriptive-analytical approach involves depicting and describing an object of study through collected samples without performing detailed analysis or drawing generalized conclusions. Burhan Bungin (2008) further explains that the literature review method is used in social research to gather and analyze data from documented sources. For this study, literature sources include books, articles, and online journals relevant to the research topic. The literature review process involves defining the topic's scope, identifying pertinent sources, reviewing the literature, synthesizing the information, and applying it to the study.

4. DISCUSSION

Education is fundamental to achieving the goals of an independent nation, as it fosters numerous benefits and drives positive societal changes. However, the effectiveness of education depends on its proper implementation. In Indonesia, a major issue within the education system is educational equity. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated this problem, revealing gaps in access to quality education across different segments of society. Since the outbreak began in March 2020, the Indonesian government has introduced Distance Learning (PJJ) as an alternative to traditional face-to-face instruction. This policy aims to ensure the continuity of education by delivering instructional content via electronic media, such as television broadcasts on TVRI, catering to all educational levels from Kindergarten (TK) to Senior High School (SMA).

Despite its potential benefits, including fostering innovation and integrating technology into learning, Distance Learning (PJJ) has notable drawbacks. These include exacerbating social inequalities, as students from underprivileged backgrounds may lack access to necessary technological resources, further deepening educational disparities. Additionally, challenges related to internet connectivity and technological infrastructure, particularly in remote areas, hinder the effectiveness of online learning. Addressing these issues is crucial to achieving equitable education and minimizing the adverse effects of the pandemic on students.

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted various sectors, notably education. Over two years, Indonesia has faced severe educational disruptions. The pandemic has led to three major issues: increased school dropouts, diminished learning outcomes, and heightened risks of child abuse and exploitation.

i) Dropout Rates: The shift to Distance Learning (PJJ) has exposed economic disparities. Many families, affected by job losses, cannot afford necessary technological resources like smartphones, laptops, or data plans. This financial strain forces some students to drop out or forgo online education, contributing to higher dropout rates. Economic hardship often leads parents to prioritize immediate financial needs over long-term educational benefits, further exacerbating the problem.

ii) Decreased Learning Achievement: Distance learning has revealed significant educational inequalities. Socio-economic differences impact access to technology and internet quality, resulting in varied educational experiences. Many students struggle with limited parental

support and lack of engagement, which hampers their learning. The reliance on online platforms has also increased the risk of learning loss compared to traditional face-to-face instruction, as highlighted by recent studies.

iii) Child Abuse and External Risks: Increased time spent at home during the pandemic has heightened risks of domestic violence and exploitation. The absence of school oversight has left many children vulnerable to abuse and other external threats, including early marriage and child labour. The pandemic has inadvertently exposed these risks, as schools typically serve as critical monitoring points for student welfare.

iv) Educational Challenges During the Pandemic: The pandemic has underscored the limitations of technology in education. While technology has facilitated continued learning, it cannot replace the holistic educational experience provided by traditional classroom interactions. The shift to online learning has challenged both educators and students, highlighting gaps in technological literacy and infrastructure. The uneven distribution of internet access, particularly in rural areas, has further complicated efforts to provide equitable education.

v) The Impact of Educational Technology: Educational technology has played a crucial role during the pandemic, providing new platforms and resources for remote learning. Innovations such as educational apps, online platforms, and virtual classrooms have enhanced access to learning materials and offered flexible learning opportunities. However, the effectiveness of these technologies is contingent upon their proper use. While they support independent learning and facilitate educational engagement, issues such as digital divide and content credibility remain challenges. Moving forward, integrating educational technology effectively will be essential for building a resilient education system.

In short, the COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly impacted Indonesia's education system, revealing significant challenges and disparities. The transition to Distance Learning (PJJ) has highlighted critical issues such as increased dropout rates, varying learning achievements, and elevated risks of child abuse. The economic and technological barriers faced by many families have exacerbated these problems, underscoring the need for targeted interventions. Educational technology has offered valuable support, facilitating remote learning and providing new opportunities for educational engagement. However, the effectiveness of these technologies is hampered by issues such as uneven internet access and the digital divide. To address these challenges, it is essential to develop inclusive policies and infrastructure improvements that ensure equitable access to educational resources.

5. CONCLUSION

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed and exacerbated systemic weaknesses in Indonesia's education sector. As a national crisis, the pandemic necessitated a rapid shift to Distance Learning (PJJ) in compliance with government directives aimed at curbing the virus's spread. While this transition was essential for public health, it underscored the profound challenges faced by both students and educators. Educational technology emerged as a vital tool during this period, facilitating remote learning and pushing the boundaries of traditional education. However, its impact has been mixed. The effectiveness of these technological solutions is closely tied to the quality of human resources involved. Without adequate digital literacy and infrastructure, technology alone cannot bridge the educational divide or mitigate the pandemic's adverse effects. The shift to online learning has revealed significant disparities in access and quality, exacerbating existing educational inequities. Many students, particularly from underprivileged backgrounds, face barriers such as inadequate access to devices and unreliable internet connections. These disparities have led to increased dropout rates, decreased learning achievements, and heightened risks of socio-economic exploitation. Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted

approach. Educational technology should not merely be an add-on but integrated thoughtfully into a broader strategy that considers the socio-economic realities of students and educators. Additionally, there must be a concerted effort to enhance digital literacy and infrastructure to ensure equitable access to educational resources.

5.1. Suggestions and Recommendations

To address the challenges exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic and improve the effectiveness of Distance Learning (PJJ), several key actions are recommended. First, the curriculum should be streamlined across all educational levels. The complexity of the 2013 curriculum needs to be simplified and adapted to meet the emergency context of the pandemic. By focusing on core competencies and essential learning outcomes, the curriculum can better align with students' and educators' current capabilities and resources, thus preventing educational overload and ensuring that fundamental educational goals are achieved. Second, the government should consider implementing policies to provide free or subsidized internet access for students during the pandemic. Many families are struggling with the costs of internet data, which creates a significant barrier to participating in online learning. By alleviating these financial burdens, students from low-income families would have better access to educational resources and opportunities, thus promoting greater equity in education.

Addressing the learning difficulties faced by students is another critical step. A considerable number of students lack the necessary equipment and internet access for effective online learning. It is essential for the government and educational institutions to collaborate in providing these resources, including devices and reliable internet connections, to those in need. Additionally, the psychological impact of online learning—such as stress and fatigue—must be managed to ensure that students remain engaged and motivated throughout their educational experience. Furthermore, adopting hybrid learning models that combine online and face-to-face instruction can help address the limitations of fully remote learning. This approach is particularly important for vocational training, where hands-on experience is crucial. By offering flexible learning options, schools can accommodate students who face challenges with online learning and ensure that practical skills are not compromised.

Finally, support for vulnerable families must be a priority. The government needs to ensure that children from low-income backgrounds have access to not only education but also essential services such as health and protection. This support is vital to prevent further educational disengagement and to ensure that every child has the opportunity to succeed, regardless of their socio-economic status. In summary, while educational technology has the potential to enhance learning, these recommendations emphasize the need for a comprehensive strategy that addresses both the digital divide and the socio-economic challenges faced by students. By implementing these measures, Indonesia can work towards building a more resilient and equitable education system capable of adapting to future disruptions.

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