

Exploring the Experiences in Developing Character Education through E-Learning During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

The limited implementation of direct learning has forced lecturers and students to seek alternative learning solutions. E-learning has proven to be a suitable solution for optimal learning in this new era of education. Therefore, this qualitative phenomenology study aimed to explore the experiences of e-learning during the COVID-19 pandemic by analyzing two lecturers and 190 PK course students. Appropriate techniques and instruments were used to obtain data, and triangulation was performed to ensure its reliability. Furthermore, data analysis involved reduction, presentation, and conclusion. The results showed that (1) e-learning was implemented through various platforms such as WhatsApp Group for communication, Google Classroom for assignments and exams, and Zoom Meeting for virtual classes, (2) good learning outcomes were achieved through the use of various platforms and students' involvement, and (3) the biggest challenge faced was the availability of electricity and internet access. The novelty of e-learning lies in its integration of different platforms with student-centered and self-directed activities.

KEYWORDS

e-Learning; learning motivation; learning outcomes; character education

INTRODUCTION

Currently, lecturers and students are in an era of flexible learning, adapting to the changing needs and developments (Herianto, 2013). Each learning activity is designed to meet current needs, incorporating the latest models and trends (Bahasoan et al., 2020; Fatmawati & Yusrizal, 2020; Garcı & Verde, 2020). Meanwhile, boundaries are no longer a limiting factor in learning as classrooms are replaced with open and dynamic environments. The focus is on implementing efficient and effective teaching and learning processes, utilizing the latest strategies, models, and media. This development aims to effectively plan, implement, and evaluate the learning process.

The current approach in education places a significant emphasis on the need for lecturers to cultivate creativity in order to design engaging and effective learning experiences (Giatman et al., 2020; Mseleku, 2020). Therefore, learning has expanded beyond direct offline methods to include online, specifically in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. In instances where the implementation is impossible, innovative ways should be developed to impart knowledge through various forms of indirect learning. This shift calls for lecturers and students to maximize their use of online platforms for regular, effective learning sessions (Orlov et al., 2021; Riyan Rizaldi et al., 2021).

The limited scope of direct learning methods has led to a need for alternative approaches. Corona pandemic affected all aspects of life and there was a lockdown that

prevented large gatherings (Farrah et al, 2022). The COVID-19 pandemic also has emphasized the importance of e-learning to optimize education and maintain the continuity of learning. Furthermore, e-learning offers flexibility in terms of time and place, enabling lecturers and students to design and conduct their activities more easily. According to Rizaldi and Fatimah (2020) and Soeryanto et al. (2020), e-learning provides a more adaptive and mutually convenient environment for learning. This is facilitated by the availability of various platforms. However, the extent to which the concept is utilized to its full potential remains an open question, as evidenced by the results of an observational analysis conducted at the Civic Department of Universitas Mataram.

E-learning presents no significant challenges and is often preferred in learning activities. Individuals who are less familiar with technology may encounter difficulties with the application of e-learning, as it requires adjustments to established learning routines (Subaih et al., 2021; Suprianto et al., 2020; Zainul et al., 2020). Distance learning is much different from the face-to-face modality because the teachers can't monitor the learning competency of the pupils, especially at the prior-year level (Arranz et al, 2022).

Lecturers and students in e-learning activities should make innovative efforts to give meaning to improving performance and outcomes, as shown by Garcı & Verde (2020) and Mseleku (2020). The aim is to indicate the potential of all students during the learning process and to assess the accumulation of performance in the form of learning outcomes. Therefore, this study explores the practice of e-learning and its impact, identifies challenges in implementing e-learning, and provides recommendations to enhance the quality in the future. It focuses on the practice of e-learning in the PK course and the innovative aspect of using various platforms and increasing students' involvement. Furthermore, it examines the implementation of e-learning and its impact on learning outcomes, challenges faced in managing e-learning, and ways to achieve quality e-learning in the future within the Civic Department.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study adopted a qualitative phenomenology approach (Barnawi & Darajat, 2018) to delve deeply into e-learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. The main phenomenon that will be explored in this study is the implementation of e-learning, the impact of e-learning, dan obstacles in e-learning implementation. The implementation section focuses on the content of course development; the Implementation of e-learning using WhatsApp Group (AG), Google Classroom (GC), and Zoom Meeting (ZM) platforms; dan Evaluation using a direct open-book emphasis. The use of these various platforms is an effort to prevent transmission of the Covid 19 virus through direct contact between students and lecturers in class. Another section, impact of e-learning terhadap pada lecturers' motivation, lecturers are busy correcting assignments and exams, lecturers' enthusiasm in organizing e-learning, and lecturers' expectations on the implementation of e-learning. Besides that, it is also related to students' activity, students' participation, students completing assignments and exams, the contribution of students in the lecturing process, students' expectations of e-learning, dan students' learning outcomes.

The final part on obstacles in e-learning implementation focused on technology availability, students' engagement, material completion, character development, and student's financial ability to access technology, students' engagement, dan material completion.

The study subjects were 190 PK course students and lecturers spread over six classes, with two-semester credits. This research was conducted at the Pancasila and Citizenship Education Study Program, Social Studies Education Department, Faculty of Teacher

Training and Education, University of Mataram, Indonesia. Data collection involved using questionnaires, observation, tests, and other relevant instruments to ensure validity and reliability through triangulation of sources, techniques, and time. The data collected were analyzed through reduction, presentation, and conclusion (Miles & Huberman, 1994), (Miles et al., 2020) in several stages to obtain the findings and recommendations for improving the quality of e-learning in the future.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The presentation of the results and discussion are integral, with a combination of data and discussion sequentially and inseparable.

Implementation of E-Learning

For one semester, the implementation of the PK course has 16 meetings, and all activities are conducted online from Monday to Friday. This course has two-semester credits (SKS) managed by two lecturers with 190 students divided into six classes. Each class consists of 1A, 1B, 1C, 1D, 1E, and 1F, with 32, 30, 32, 33, 31, and 32 students, respectively. There are three learning activities stages: planning, implementing and evaluating. The description of each stage is as follows.

E-Learning on the PK course

The PK course lectures follow the plans contained in the course syllabus. The course syllabus contains course descriptions, learning achievements, details of lecture material, strategies, types and content of assignments, and exams. To organize this lecture, lecturers use the help of WAG, GC, and ZM learning platforms.

Implementation of e-learning using WAG, GK, and ZM platforms

Lecturers and students use WAG to communicate about topics, regular updates, and current lecture concerns. Meanwhile, GC houses the course syllabus, assignments, and exams. ZM serves as a platform for virtual lectures and student meetings, with 16 virtual meetings taking place during a single semester. E-learning activities consist of two parts, namely theoretical lectures and practical discussions. Furthermore, discussions on the final project cover contextual material and independent activities related to the midterm and end-of-semester exams. The learning process involves interactive discussions on contextual theory and practice. Assignments and exams are designed to develop higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) in line with the demands of globalization (Herianto, 2021). Analyzing, evaluating, and creating are the primary skills emphasized in task completion and exams. There are 11 regular assignments, one final assignment, one midterm exam, and one final exam, all using a HOTS-based portfolio approach. Meanwhile, lecturers aim to cultivate the habit of using HOTS in all assignments and exams to prepare students for real-life challenges (Aboagye et al., 2020; Aini et al., 2020; Almaiah et al., 2020).

Evaluation using a direct open-book emphasis

Lecturers allow students to complete the mid-semester and end-semester exams in an open-book manner. Therefore, students have the flexibility to develop their HOTS skills in solving the exam questions (Baber, 2021), (Gamage et al., 2020), (Hernawati et al., 2021), and (Hutahayan, 2021). On the overall performance, lecturers use the following provisions in determining the learning outcomes. Learning evaluation using U1 provisions comes from the first to sixth lectures, assignments, and activities, and this section has 20% of the overall evaluation. At U2, it is the seventh to twelfth lecture activity in assignments and mid-semester exams with 20% of the overall evaluation. Meanwhile, the U3 has thirteenth

to sixteenth lectures in the form of final semester exams and assignments. This section has 50% of the overall evaluation activities.

Impact of E-Learning

Lecturers' Motivation

Lecturers utilize multiple platforms, including WAG, GC, ZM, and SIAUNRAM, to deliver lectures, store course materials, give virtual learning experiences, and track attendance. These tools help overcome the challenge of relying solely on verbal communication in the learning process, particularly for students who may not be used to face-to-face interaction with lecturers. Virtual meetings further support this effort.

Lecturers are busy correcting assignments and exams

Lecturers experience a shift in the way learning activities are approached. In offline lectures, students submit assignments and exams in printed form on paper. However, in the current e-learning environment, all documents are submitted electronically. The lecturers noticed a difference in the correction process for assignments and exams (Ida & Maksum, 2021), (Daniel Hermawan, 2021), and (Favale et al., 2020). While correcting documents in print is more manageable, they also realized that transitioning to virtual document collection aligns with the "go-green" initiative and helps reduce the use of limited paper resources.

Lecturers' Enthusiasm in Organizing E-learning

Lecturers also encounter challenges with e-learning. It is a new way of teaching and requires a different approach (García-Alberti et al., 2021), (Hindun et al., 2021). In e-learning, challenges are faced in selecting appropriate lecture materials, assignments, and exams that cater to students' needs (Irfan et al., 2020), (Mahyoob, 2020). Furthermore, virtual face-to-face interactions can create an inclusive learning environment where all students actively participate. This continuous effort for innovation in learning activities reflects the commitment to improving teaching methods.

Lecturers' Expectations on the Implementation of E-learning

Lecturers share the same excitement as students for e-learning. They strive to design, implement, and evaluate courses effectively. After a semester of experience, e-learning is maintained as an option for future activities. They recognize the importance of the current technology-driven era while offering traditional offline methods. The goal is to ensure that learning meets students' evolving needs and demands. A blended approach combining the two methods is adopted to accommodate those who prefer offline learning.

Students' Activity

E-learning has become a new norm in educational activities. It is conducted entirely through a learning platform without any in-person interaction, unlike traditional offline learning, where lecturers and students physically meet in a classroom (Subedi et al., 2020), (Sufyan et al., 2020). Communication is performed virtually through video conferencing, instant messaging, and group chat (Irfan et al., 2020), (Sunasee, 2020). Meanwhile, there is no physical meeting between lecturers and students during an entire semester of e-learning.

Students' Participation

The data suggests that students have good attendance and discipline in e-learning. Out of 190 students, 188 attended all 16 lectures, and the remaining two could not attend due to illness but attended 14 of the 16 lectures. These results indicate that students can follow e-learning effectively and are disciplined in their participation.

Students in Completing Assignments and Exams

The data suggests that students can complete their assignments and exams promptly. In addition, with 11 regular assignments, one final assignment, and two lecture exams, 185 students completed their tasks. Only 3 students did not complete assignments on time, and two others did not receive their exam results promptly. This demonstrates good student motivation in terms of accuracy in completing e-learning tasks, indicating a successful implementation.

Contribution of Students in the Lecturing Process

Students exhibit a diverse range of participation in class activities. Furthermore, not all students are equally involved in the activity. Some dominate, while others are passive. However, data showed that 47.74% of the 85 students consistently participate by asking questions. Only 34.21% of the contributed by answering questions. Furthermore, 40.53% of 77 students provided innovative ideas during lectures. Students are engaged in various forms of participation, such as asking questions, answering questions, and proposing ideas. Despite this, 9.47% of 18 students are still inactive. Lecturers should address this and promote greater participation from all students in class activities.

Students' Expectations of E-learning

Lecturers aim to give students opportunities to share their expectations for e-learning activities. The survey results indicated that 92.11% of 175 students believe e-learning to be the best option when the activities are impossible. Conversely, 7.89% of 15 students prefer direct learning due to limitations in understanding the material through e-learning. To address these concerns, 94.74% of 180 students requested a blended approach combining e-learning with offline activities to enhance the practical aspects of lecture material. Only 5.26% of 10 students preferred traditional learning, finding it difficult to adapt to the e-learning format.

Students' Learning Outcomes

The assessments determine students' learning outcomes in the course in Units 1, 2, and 3 (Ida & Maksum, 2021; Kanca et al., 2020; Kim & Park, 2021), accounting for 20%, 30%, and 50%, respectively. The average learning outcome is calculated by averaging the scores from each unit. The final assessment results showed that the majority of students achieved good grades, with 92.11% falling in categories A, B+, and B at 10.00%, 47.37%, and 34.74%. Only 14.05% received satisfactory scores, falling into the categories of C+ and C at 6.84% and 1.05%, respectively. These results indicated a positive impact of e-learning on students' learning outcomes and are considered highly encouraging for the course. Students can focus on assignments and exams, leading to successful results through this concept.

E-learning has been implemented and has impacted lecturers' and students' problems (Sutarto et al., 2020), (Tsang et al., 2021), and (Wargadinata et al., 2020). The novelty factor of learning lies in combining platforms with the basis of students' activities in a disciplined and independent way. To keep e-learning from having a negative impact, the critical parts that could be recommendations for the Civic Department as the parent of the PK course is formulated. Some of the recommendations include the following:

E-learning Orientation

E-learning is a new phenomenon in learning. Although accustomed to developing e-learning, the Civic Department is relatively new. Furthermore, continuous efforts should be made to convey the orientation of e-learning implementation. This aims to strengthen the

paradigm that the concept requires creative and innovative efforts to achieve optimal outcomes.

E-learning Targets

Lecturers and students who organize e-learning need the right target at the beginning of the semester. The setting refers to the nature of the course implementation and its development strategy for the results to be in line with expectations.

E-learning Supporting Technology

The availability of internet and electricity networks is essential in implementing e-learning. Therefore, for the implementation to run optimally, the institution should be able to provide guarantees for the availability of the main supporting facilities for use.

Evaluation of the Implementation of E-learning

To maintain the quality of e-learning implementation, the Civic Department needs to conduct end-of-semester evaluations continuously. The institution can obtain the root of learning problems through this evaluation.

Obstacles in E-Learning Implementation

The implementation of e-learning in the PK course has a positive impact and does not negatively affect students' motivation. Meanwhile, most students demonstrated active engagement during their e-learning activities (Maatuk et al., 2021; Nugroho et al., 2021; Pham et al., 2021), resulting in high-quality learning outcomes. To sustain this success, lecturers and students are promoted to document any challenges experienced during e-learning. The results are as follows.

Technology Availability

One of the biggest challenges is the technology available, as it does not always meet expectations. For instance, virtual learning sessions can be disrupted by heavy rain or power outages (Pulungan, 2021), which can negatively impact the learning process. Lecturers hope for improved infrastructure to minimize such disruptions and ensure seamless implementation of e-learning activities.

Students' Engagement

Despite advances in virtual learning, some students struggle to participate in class activities actively. This may be because they are uncomfortable with the format or have difficulty learning independently (Putra et al., 2021; Yu, 2021). It can lead to a limited understanding of the material and a disinterest in class discussions. To address this, lecturers should seek to incorporate different teaching methods to help students overcome these challenges.

Material Completion

Some students struggled to grasp the concepts in certain classes, which impacted their overall understanding of the material (Baber, 2020; Barton, 2020; Kadek & Sugianingrat, 2021). This caused disruptions and slowdowns, as other students had to wait for their peers to understand the concept, resulting in the material not being discussed fully and thoroughly.

Character Development

E-learning effects strengthen students' character. Some essential characters may not be easy to develop. However, several characteristics, such as discipline and independence, can develop according to the learning context (Mohamed Abd El-Hamed Diab & Fouad Elgahsh, 2020), (Nikou & Maslov, 2021), and (Herianto et al., 2021). Furthermore, portfolios of assignments and exams are used to develop disciplined and independent

character. Punctuality in collecting assignments and exams as well as the necessity to complete them are a medium for character development.

Students' Financial Ability to Access Technology

The pandemic has impacted the financial capabilities of students' parents. They lost their job, hence, there is limited money to buy internet quota (Nikou & Maslov, 2021), (Pustika, 2020). Even though the government, through the Ministry of Education and Culture, has helped students obtain internet quota, assistance is often insufficient to meet their needs.

Students' Engagement

E-learning is a system that does not provide a concrete understanding of the material. Learning meetings' limitations have impacted the emergence of verbalism in understanding the material. This student's complaint requires serious attention from the course supervisor (Putri et al., 2021) (Restuati et al., 2021).

Material Completion

The existence of students' verbalism in understanding the concept of lectures can hinder their understanding of the material (Sakkir et al., 2021), (Saripudin et al., 2020). Some still experience a limited understanding of lecture material, which can hinder mastering the material. It impacts the thoroughness of the discussion of lecture material.

Character Development

Students feel that not all characters can develop in e-learning. However, discipline in completing assignments and exams is a suitable medium for developing a character (Sutarto et al., 2020), (Herianto et al., 2021). By completing assignments and exams, students show their character independently and honestly. Lecturers need to develop characteristics of religion, cooperation, and others, and it is necessary to have more varied and concrete efforts.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results and discussion, it is important to conclude that e-learning is crucial for the current learning era. In a technology-driven world, it leverages technology to enhance learning. Lecturers and students need to share a common vision for utilizing technology to reach its full potential. The current learning paradigm prioritizes efforts to successfully implement e-learning rather than relying solely on direct offline methods. In addition, e-learning should receive careful attention as it becomes a new norm to adopt innovative learning methods.

The commitment to e-learning implementation is a crucial factor in its success. Course supervisors should be creative in selecting the right platform that aligns with lecture material and students' needs. Lecturers should possess innovative skills and creativity in selecting the most suitable platform, as this can promote students' engagement. Meanwhile, creative and innovative activities challenge students to participate and actively engage in learning, leading to improved outcomes.

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