

Dynamics of Blended Learning in the Covid-19 Pandemic in Integrated Islamic Education Institutions

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ABSTRACT

Blended learning is an approach that integrates e-learning methods with traditional methods (face-to-face interactions) simultaneously at certain periods. This study elaborates on the dynamics of blended learning implementation during the Covid-19 pandemic at SD IT Fauziah Yarsi Mataram, an integrated Islamic education institution in West Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia. The research method used is a qualitative research method in which the researcher was a key instrument in conducting interviews, field observations and reviewing documentation related to implementing blended learning in schools. The results of this study show that during the Covid-19 pandemic, SD IT Fauziah Yarsi Mataram implemented blended learning limited to the subjects of Qur'an, Hadith, and Fiqh. At the same time, the instruction of general material subjects such as mathematics, languages, and social studies was carried out using e-learning methods. The applied blended learning involved the components of collaboration, online content, and assessment intended to increase students' motivation and learning outcomes and overcome the psychological problems faced by the students during the pandemic. The application of blended learning in Qur'an, Hadith, and Fiqh manifested the school's vision and mission and considering that these subjects are part of the school's prime programs.

Keywords: Blended learning, e-learning, traditional methods, and Integrated Islamic Education.

ABSTRAK

Blended learning merupakan pendekatan yang mengintegrasikan metode e-learning dengan metode tradisional (interaksi tatap muka) secara bersamaan pada periodisasi tertentu. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengelaborasi dinamika pelaksanaan blended learning dimasa pandemic Covid-19 di SDIT Fauziah Yarsi Mataram. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah metode penelitian kualitatif yang menjadikan peneliti sebagai instrument kunci dalam melakukan wawancara, observasi lapangan dan telaah dokumentasi terkait implementasi blended learning di sekolah. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa selama masa pandemi Covid-19, SDIT Fauziah Yarsi Mataram menerapkan blended learning terbatas pada mata pelajaran al-Qur'an, Hadits, fiqh ibadah, akhlak, dan Bahasa Arab. Pembelajaran pada mata pelajaran materi umum seperti Matematika, bahasa, ilmu sosial dilaksanakan menerapkan e-learning. Blended learning yang diterapkan melibatkan komponen collaboration, on-line content, dan assessment ditujukan untuk meningkatkan motivasi dan hasil belajar siswa disamping untuk mengatasi masalah psikologis yang dihadapi siswa selama masa pandemi. Penerapan blended learning yang difokuskan pada mata pelajaran agama tersebut merupakan perwujudan visi misi sekolah dan mengingat mata pelajaran tersebut merupakan bagian dari program unggulan sekolah.

Kata Kunci: Blended learning, e-learning, metode tradisional, dan Pendidikan Islam Terpadu

INTRODUCTION

Online learning (e-learning) in educational institutions in Indonesia, including in integrated Islamic education institutions, is a necessity when implementing social distancing (restrictions on social interaction) during a pandemic to prevent the spread of Coronavirus disease (Covid-19) (Batubara et al., 2022). Based on the circular of the Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemendikbud) Number:

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36962/MPK.A/HK/2020 concerning online learning and working from home in the framework of preventing the spread of Covid-19 (Sari, DK and Daliani, 2020). Due to this policy, all educational institutions in Indonesia, both primary and secondary education and higher education, must organize online learning.

Online learning (e-learning) is interpreted as learning activities utilizing and using Internet and web technology (Horton and Horton, 2003). In its application, teachers and students are required to be able to master various technological devices used in learning activities and take advantage of various available features and platforms such as video conferencing or web conferencing, Google Classroom and others. E-learning learning requires independence and the ability of students to use technology to explore knowledge, deepen the material being studied, and search for information through various media such as television, video, YouTube, TikTok, radio, podcasts or print media.

Using the Internet and web technology in learning activities requires educational institutions, teachers and students to adapt from face-to-face learning patterns to online system learning patterns, which are quite foreign to teachers and students who previously carried out face-to-face learning activities. This shift in learning patterns requires not only the adaptability of schools, teachers and students but also the competence of teachers in implementing Internet and web technology-based learning. Even so, few educational institutions can carry out e-learning well (Rigianti, 2020; Prawanti and Sumarni, 2020). However, others with a drastic shift from offline to online learning systems are very difficult to implement given the limited infrastructure and inadequate teacher competence (Zainuddin Atsani, 2020; Sudrajat, 2020), especially the pedagogical aspects of teachers to carry out quality learning (Patabang and Murniarti, 2021), the ability of students and their companions (parents) to study at home (Roshonah, Putri, and Yulianingsih, 2020), and the availability of supporting devices for organizing online learning (Azzahra, 2020). More complex problems are experienced by educational institutions in remote areas, which are constrained by the availability of internet access and information technology facilities which are the main tools of e-learning. The sudden implementation of e-learning-based learning policies without prior socialization activities and not accompanied by technical guidelines as a reference has created confusion at the school level. Schools try to find implementation formats according to their respective conditions and abilities. The unpreparedness of educational institutions to fully implement e-learning has led schools/madrasas to apply blended learning, namely learning that is carried out by integrating e-learning and face-to-face (offline) simultaneously.

Hrastinski (2019) defines blended learning as a teaching approach that combines (traditional) classroom learning activities through face-to-face (offline) with online learning activities (on-line/e-learning). Based on this definition, there are two main learning outcomes methods in the learning process: face-to-face and online. Carman (2002) identified five blended learning components, including (1) live events, for example, virtual classes where teachers and students carry out learning activities at the same time, (2) online content, such as internet-based learning which provides independent learning experiences to students, (3) collaboration is a collaborative learning environment that does not only involve face-to-face, but there are other forms of virtual interaction via email, chat and others, (4) assessment is an assessment of student before and after the learning process is carried out to measure the progress of student learning outcomes, and (5) reference materials or teaching materials that facilitate student learning.

In its application, the combination of blended learning components creates various format variants or models at the school or subject level. Some schools implement blended learning by collaborating between face-to-face, virtual classes and online content. Some schools do face-to-face learning without

virtual communication, but assessments and supporting materials are delivered online. Some schools apply blended learning only to certain subjects, while other subjects are only provided using online content. Generally, schools implement collaboration. Various blended learning models emerged and were implemented by considering various factors including school capabilities, teacher and student readiness, parental input, subject characteristics, recommendations on the results of evaluating the implementation of learning, and school vision/mission and programs.

Learning with a blended learning approach has attracted many researchers to conduct studies from various perspectives. Among them, research by Batubara et al. (2022) in the form of a meta-analytic study related to learning using a blended learning approach, as well as research by Cheung and Hew (2011), which also focuses on the implementation of learning which is carried out in educational institutions in Singapore. Meanwhile, Heinze and Procter (2004) examined the reflections on implementing blended learning regarding the code of ethics at Hradec Kralove University. The peculiarity of this research compared to previous research lies in the focus of the study, namely, the application of blended learning based on classifying teaching materials, especially in integrated Islamic education institutions in West Nusa Tenggara during the Covid-19 pandemic. General learning materials such as Mathematics, Indonesian, and Social Sciences are taught online. As for religious learning materials, such as learning the Koran, Hadith, and Fiqh are taught with an offline system. In contrast to previous research, Batubara et al. (2022), Heinze and Procter (2004), and Cheung and Hew (2011), research is not based on classifying the types of teaching materials.

In addition, this article is important because, on the one hand, there is a policy in the form of a Ministry of Education and Culture Circular regarding online learning (e-learning) during the Covid-19 pandemic. Still, on the other hand, educational institutions have various limitations, both human resources (HR) and the inadequate availability of devices or instruments to support online learning. This has led to implementation of blended learning-based learning as an alternative in the world of education.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach to describe the dynamics of blended learning during the Covid-19 pandemic at integrated Islamic educational institutions in West Nusa Tenggara. A qualitative approach is an approach that creates a systematic and fact-based design or pattern that is in line with the existing conditions and the phenomenon being studied (Mishra and Alok, 2017; Creswell 2012).). This qualitative study is more focused on detailed information and knowledge about the data source from the problem being studied so that researchers in the context of this study are key informants or key informants (Gilchrist, 1992). and the results of qualitative research put more emphasis on substantive meaning. In this study, data collection was obtained using interviews, observation and documentation. In addition, data analysis was carried out by reducing the data and then presenting the data and making conclusions from the research conducted.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Integrated Islamic Elementary School (SDIT) Fauziah Yarsi Mataram City is one of the integrated Islamic education institutions at the basic education level in Mataram City, West Nusa Tenggara Province. It is called an integrated Islamic educational institution because the curriculum adhered to at SDIT Fauziah Yarsi uses the national curriculum, namely the 2013 curriculum, as is common for state elementary schools. Still, the 2013 curriculum is combined with Islamic religious education content such as learning

the Qur'an and Hadith, fiqh of worship, morals, and Arabic to supplement learning in schools. This is relevant to the vision and mission that the school carries, namely "The Realization of a Superior and Characterized Islamic Generation". Excellent in Al-Qur'an, Hadith, Language, Academic and Life skills. Meanwhile, a character has indicators of strong monotheism, has Qur'anic character, worships diligently, is active in preaching and has a leadership spirit.

As an integrated Islamic educational institution in Indonesia, SDIT Fauziah Yarsi Mataram has a very fundamental mission of creating a superior and characterized Islamic generation, namely;

1. Organizing Integrated Basic Islamic education based on Al-Qur'an and Sunnah
2. Instil good morals and noble values of the nation both at school, at home and in the community
3. Creating a conducive educational environment
4. Organizing education that balances cognitive, affective and psychomotor aspects
5. Realizing Da'wah through Education
6. Equip life skills in everyday life

There are several curricular and extracurricular activities at school to create an Islamic generation that is superior and has character. In addition, the school implements several supporting activities including Fardu Zuhur and Asyar prayers, Dhuha Prayers, Fiqhurrifal and Fuqhunnisa studies, habituation of *akhlakul karimah*, smiles, greetings, courtesies and greetings, daily prayer activities, memorizing hadiths of aqidah, worship and morals, memorizing juz 28, 29 and 30, Islamic Holiday activities, Outbound, Outdoor Learning, Qur'anic Super Camp, Ramadhan Celebration, Clean and Healthy Friday, Doctor Visit, Counseling Guidance, Home Visit, Fun Day, Fun Cooking, and Family Gathering.

The adequate competence of teaching and educational staff supports the realization of the program. Every educator and education should meet the following criteria (Interview with the coordinator of the academic field Mrs Farizah Yulianti, S.Pd., on Wednesday, July 28 2021):

1. Competent teachers in the fields of Al-Qur'an, Academic and Language
2. Communicate actively in Arabic and English
3. The qualifications of educators range from S1-S2 levels
4. Educate with love and exemplary
5. High Work Ethic
6. Work well with a team
7. High integrity and commitment

Specifically regarding the learning process during the pandemic, in response to the Ministry of Education and Culture policy Number: 36962 /MPK.A/HK/2020 regarding online learning and working from home to prevent the spread of Covid-19, SDIT Fauziah Yarsi Mataram implemented online learning from the start the pandemic period took place in Indonesia, namely on March 16, 2020, for the 2019/2020 Academic Year until it continues in the 2020/2021 Academic Year.

Online learning is carried out without significant obstacles considering the teacher's mastery of adequate computer and internet-based media and technology. Teachers have no difficulty adapting to the online learning system. This is evidenced by the fact that most teachers use multiple platforms for online learning, including WhatsApp groups, Google Forms, and YouTube.

Interview with the vice principal for curriculum, Mrs Farizah Yulianti, S.Pd. (interview, Wednesday, July 28, 2021) explained that the school has a policy to reduce or eliminate Zoom meetings or Google classrooms as online learning platforms. The main consideration is that Zoom meetings or Google Classroom require direct assistance from students' parents when learning activities occur. Meanwhile, most of the parents of students at SDIT Fauziyah Yarsi, Mataram City, are busy at work while learning is

taking place, so parents can't accompany their children to take part in learning using Zoom meetings or Google Classrooms. This reason underlies the absence of virtual face-to-face during online learning at SD IT Fauziah Yarsi Mataram.

What's App Group is the school's top choice as an online learning platform. Through the Whats App Group, the teacher provides learning materials and technical instructions for assisting parents. It is not uncommon for teachers and parents to discuss material and assignments that students must complete. The use of WhatsApp groups gives parents the flexibility to adjust their time accompanying their children to study at home. Apart from the WhatsApp Group, Google is used for evaluation activities such as daily, midterm, and end-of-semester assessments.

After running for about a month, some parents believe that the use of WhatsApp groups needs to be evaluated, considering that the teacher's learning materials and task completion instructions are not always easy for parents to understand and can be taught back to children at home. Responding to the complaints of the student's parents, taking into account the advantages and disadvantages of the WhatsApp group, the teacher includes learning material with video material descriptions, assignment illustrations and examples of task completion. Learning videos are created by teachers and downloaded on YouTube or in the form of links relevant to the material being taught. Learning videos make it easier for students to learn material repeatedly according to their needs with or without internet access (Interview with Mr Fauzul Kabir Al-Hafidz, S.Ag., on Thursday, July 29 2021).

Thus, What's App groups as an online learning platform include providing material, assignment instructions, communication and coordination between parents and teachers, and supporting learning videos that encourage student learning independence.

Online learning at SD IT Fauziah Yarsi is gradually experiencing a "saturation point", becoming a separate problem. Online learning without direct face-to-face interaction has a psychological impact felt by all parties, teachers, parents, and especially students. Feelings of anxiety, worry and boredom in students make them depressed and lose motivation to learn. On the one hand, students, parents and teachers are worried about the quality of learning. On the other hand, students feel lonely because they have to do activities at home without interaction with peers at playing age. Few depend on gadgets to communicate with friends and play various online games.

The results of a school survey using the Google form which was distributed to parents revealed several important findings that were very much needed as material for evaluating online learning carried out;

1. Eighty-three per cent (83%) of parents want their children to study at school offline by implementing strict health protocols.
2. Parents think that offline learning is more effective than online learning.
3. Eighty-seven per cent (87%) of parents feel that online learning is constrained by the availability of an internet network and limited learning facilities at home.
4. Eighty-seven per cent (87%) of parents felt they could not accompany their students' learning at home.
5. Most children during the Covid 19 pandemic tended to use gadgets to play online rather than study. The use of such gadgets causes the child's learning concentration to decrease. Many children have lost the memorization of verses of the Koran and hadith.
6. The findings above strongly encourage parents to encourage face-to-face learning at school.

The survey findings became a consideration for the SDIT Fauziah Yarsi Mataram school to apply a blended learning policy which was carried out in a limited and gradual manner. At the start of the new

2020/2021 school year, on July 13 2020, to be precise, the offline learning system on a limited scale was put into effect. Limited in terms of the duration of study time, the number of students enrolled and the types of subjects taught, given the strict implementation of social distancing and health protocols. Effective study time before the Covid-19 pandemic started from 07:00 to 16:00. During the Covid-19 pandemic, students only studied from 08:00 to 12:00. Thus, there is a reduction in learning time of 4 hours and 30 minutes. The subjects taught with the blended learning system are limited to the Qur'an, Hadith, and Fiqh subjects. The general subject matter (national curriculum) such as Mathematics, Indonesian, natural sciences (IPA), social sciences (IPS), arts and sports education are taught online through the WhatsApp Group and Google form (Interview with Mr Fauzul Kabir Al-Hafidz, S.Ag., on Thursday, July 29 2021). Limiting the number of students is carried out with a shifting system where students take turns and periodically are scheduled to study face-to-face at school and online. With a shifting system, some students take online learning, and others study offline, and vice versa (Interview with Mr Fauzul Kabir Al-Hafidz, S.Ag., on Thursday, July 29 2021).

The selected subjects delivered using the Blended learning approach focused only on the Koran, Hadith, religious fiqh, morals, and Arabic. It is based on SD IT Fauziah Yarsi's vision: "Creating a superior and characterized Islamic generation". Besides that, these three subjects are part of the school's flagship program, where students are expected to be able to memorize at least three chapters of the Qur'an and at least one hadith a week.

CONCLUSION

Blended learning is applied at SD IT Fauziah Yarsi Mataram, limited to the subjects of the Koran, Hadith, religious fiqh, morals, and Arabic. The applied blended learning involves a collaboration component, namely face-to-face in class accompanied by online communication using WhatsApp Group, online content components, and assessment components. Blended learning focused on religious subjects is inseparable from the school's vision, mission and flagship programs. The findings of this study prove that the application of blended learning in a school does not involve all of the five blended learning components proposed by Carman. In other words, the combination of components in the application of blended learning creates a particular characteristic or model of blended learning itself. So that further studies are needed regarding the variant of the blended learning model in a school or between schools. It is also possible for a school to apply a blended learning model that differs from one subject to another, given the different characteristics of the subjects. Likewise, the blended learning model between one school and another can vary greatly due to differences in readiness and availability of supporting facilities between schools. Studies on the impact of blended learning also need to be carried out to see whether blended learning can increase the effectiveness of learning in the new normal era.

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