Educators' professional ability to manage online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic

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ABSTRACT: The learning process during the COVID-19 pandemic requires effective and efficient communication. This research was conducted to find out the interpersonal communication provided by teachers through the level of mastery of information technology in the online learning process during the COVID-19 pandemic. The respondents of the study were teachers who were scattered in West Java. The research approach is using a quantitative approach with an explanative method. The results showed that teachers in West Java can recognize information technology tools and are able to use communication tools and applications for online learning. Mastery of teacher technology relates to interpersonal communication which is seen based on aspects of friendliness, attentiveness, openness, argumentation, and responsiveness. Teacher's ability to manage communication technology during online learning relates to optimal online learning. Thus, the teacher's communication skills are related to the ease of implementing the online learning process through available communication tools.

Keywords: online learning, COVID-19 pandemic, interpersonal communication

1 INTRODUCTION

Online learning is a policy issued by the government as a solution to continue to provide educational services to students during the COVID-19 pandemic. Technology plays a big role in organizing synchronous and asynchronous learning activities because the knowledge that has previously been prepared by teachers is transferred through the internet (Nuncio et al. 2020). The implementation of online learning conducted by teachers using various digital platforms shows that the teaching and learning process must continue during disasters (Kapasias et al. 2020). The digital transformation does cause the parties involved in education responsible for education and trying to adapt to the situation (Iivari et al. 2020). The importance of online learning implementation requires supporting facilities and infrastructure as well as the teacher's ability to operate and manage classroom technology tools to the optimum.

However, classroom management through technology requires the ability of teachers to communicate learning instructions clearly and efficiently. Teachers who cannot operate information technology and good communication skills with students will hinder the achievement of learning objectives. Besides, ineffective communication can lead to misunderstandings between teachers and students. Teachers need to carry out their functions properly. The paradigm of evolutionary change proposed by Parson states that society is composed of a set of differentiated sub-systems based on their structure and based on their functional meaning for the wider community (Ritzer & Goodman 2010). So, the teacher has a major role in online learning as a provider of knowledge, giver of direction, and a motivator when the learning process takes place.

The learning process according to Vygotsky suggested that students be involved in active learning and the teacher played an active role in accompanying every activity carried out by students. This situation is intended so that students can work in the zone of proximal development while the teacher can still provide scaffolding for students (Anwar 2017). Therefore, teachers need to have good management of the learning environment during online learning. The teacher also needs to clearly instruct the activities that students must do during online learning.

Online learning needs to pay attention to the successful integration of humans, namely students and teachers, with non-human entities, namely learning management (Al-Fraihat et al 2020). Classroom management is also related to how teachers communicate learning material through media intermediaries. Therefore, it is necessary to further investigate how the relationship between mastery of information technology by teachers and interpersonal communication skills during online learning is implemented. This article will explain about the mastery of information technology by teachers with interpersonal communication skills.

2 RESEARCH METHOD

The research approach used is a quantitative approach with an explanative method. The research hypothesis is that there is a relationship between the mastery of information technology by teachers with the dimensions of interpersonal communication. The objective of this research is to accurately explain the relationship between one variable and another (Azwar 2019). Respondents in this study were teachers from various disciplines who tutored students at the high school level who were drawn based on random sampling techniques. The research location is in West Java Province, Indonesia. Taking into account the epidemic of COVID-19, data collection was carried out through questionnaires distributed via a Google form. To obtain basic data from the teacher, questions were formulated about the age and level of education. The analysis was carried out using a Likert Scale with the results of the questionnaire that the respondents had filled in and were analyzed, the validity and reliability of the research instruments were determined, until the testing stage of the research hypothesis. The purpose of this study was to see the relationship between teacher mastery of information technology and interpersonal communication skills during online learning.

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 *Mastery of various information technologies*

Limitation of school activities due to lockdown cause students to carry out the learning process through applications available on devices (Iwata et al. 2020). Students behavior also changes rapidly, especially to restrictions on interaction in society and the learning process undertaken (Cohen et al. 2020). Viewed from the teacher's point of view, it is necessary to prepare for digital transformation, especially involving teachers, students, and parents to have the skills, competencies, and resources that support educational change. One way that teachers can do this is by mastering communication media to convey and direct the student learning process (Figure 1).

Communication tools are used for the process of delivering teaching materials, learning resources, and evaluating student learning outcomes. During online learning, the teacher can communicate face-to-face using the Google Classroom application, Zoom, and WhatsApp video call (Suni Astini 2020). Based on the research conducted email is the most widely used application during online learning. Besides, there are applications on Google and other applications that teachers use to manage their learning classes.

During online learning, teachers need to be given access to digital learning that is open source and an effective and efficient online learning management system (Kapasia et al. 2020). Learning content is created creatively. The availability of the internet also needs to be considered to support online learning (Nuncio et al. 2020). The communication system via the internet has a

Figure 1. Use of information communication tools.

positive impact based on cost efficiency, extensive learning resources, easy management, and data integration (Puspitorini 2020). When the teacher can master the technological tools and various applications in them, their mastery has implications for the communication carried out with students during the learning process.

3.2 *The teacher ability to create interpersonal communication*

Teacher skills in communicating are social competencies that are used to achieved goals in the learning process (Siahaan 2018). Teacher competence in communicating can be considered as the capacity needed to develop student learning outcomes (Poedjiastutie 2013). The research conducted show that the teacher's interpersonal communication is based on the aspects of friendliness, attentiveness, openness, argumentation, and responsiveness.

Communication through intermediaries in the form of communication tools affects the way teachers perform during online learning. To attract students' attention or create closer relationships, it is necessary to pay attention to student characteristics and the communication tools used. Communication style can be defined as a set of characteristics of a person's speech in communicating which is an indicator of how a person arranges his social relationships (Pânișoară et al. 2015). Communication dimensions that show concern are integrative behaviors to other to facilitate the achievement of group assignments through the suggestions given (Leung & Bond 2001). In the context of learning, the interaction between communication dimensions and previously acquired knowledge affects teaching effectiveness (Liu et al. 2019). The communication that is carried out when online learning is not much different from learning in class, the teacher needs to adjust several things to support online learning.

4 CONCLUSION

The condition of COVID-19 pandemic forces teachers to use information technology as the main medium of learning. Therefore, the more proficient teachers are in using information technology, the more it will affect the effectiveness of communication. The aspects used to show the teachers interpersonal communication with students are friendliness, attentiveness, openness, argumentation, and responsiveness. Judging from the research conducted, the teacher already can operate information technology tools that support online learning. Teachers have also been able to upload subject matter, carry out the teaching process, and evaluate learning through applications during online learning. There is no significant difference when the teacher conducts classroom learning with online learning, it's just that in some cases the teacher still needs to carry out its functions optimally and adapt to the updates that occur.

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