LEARNING FROM HOME IN INDONESIAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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Abstract: Online learning has become the only alternative in many countries during the Covid-19 pandemic, including Indonesia. The study aimed to find about the online learning platform used by Indonesian elementary school teachers and what kind of problems they experienced during the outbreak in Semarang, Central Java. The research method used is the survey method. The survey was conducted online among 160 elementary school teachers, from 47 state and private schools to find fact what kind of online learning apps they used and the problem they have to experience while conducting online learning during the pandemic. According to the result of the study, we can conclude that there were 18 platforms used by teachers to conduct online learning during the pandemic. Therefore, teachers had to experience eight obstacles that most of the problems came from the internet connection, learning facilities, and the attitude of the students and parents toward online learning. From this result, teachers are expected to have a better understanding in carrying out the online learning, and find a better solution in order to solve the problems.

Keyword: Covid-19 pandemic, online learning, elementary school

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INTRODUCTION

The digital era has changed human’s direction of life to be more utilizing technology in every field, including in education. Online learning itself has been known since the mid-’90s and kept growing gradually to be a great way to level up the quality of education (Lockee & Gros, 2016). The challenges caused by distance experienced by teachers have not been disadvantages since online learning was introduced to the learning communities in the world. Even, in recent months, online learning has become the only alternative that can be conducted in many countries, including Indonesia, because of the Covid-19 outbreak. This pandemic results in new policies in all infected countries to lockdown their areas or at least to limit the social relationship among their people. Schools, markets, and other public areas are closed, to minimize the spread of the virus. In Indonesia, this has become a new challenge because, before the Covid-19 outbreak, online learning used to be conducted in higher education (Diki, 2013; Hudha et al., 2018; Palupi & Raharjo, 2020; Sari, 2012), so there were only findings of what platform used by lecturers, and what problems they have to face. However, these recent months, Indonesian elementary schools also do not have choices except to implement a full online learning system until the condition will be safer for young students to come to school. So, it is necessary to find about the platform and the challenge elementary school teachers will experience during the implementation of the online learning system.

In Central Java, online learning has been conducted since the Governor has instructed all schools from all levels of education to forbid students to gather in the school area and learn from home since March 2020 (Nashr, 2020). Teachers actually have options in choosing the category of online learning, whether using self-paced independent study (teachers upload the lesson material and evaluation and students decide by themselves when they want to learn), asynchronous interactive (students also participate in the learning process though not in the same time), or synchronous interactive (teachers and students interact to each other in the same time) (Kattoua et al., 2013). Video conferences, social media messaging, email messaging, and other information technology-based platforms can be used to convey the lesson material, whatever category is chosen by the teachers (Lim, 2017).

Those platforms have their plus and minus points, so teachers should consider the students’ characteristics, the availability of digital learning facilities owned by their students, and the content of the lesson material before choosing the most suitable one. Even in a class with relatively the same age group, teachers cannot treat the students in the same way because of their differences (Alfin, 2014). In Indonesia, for example, the learning facilities and the family background of the students are different in each area so the application of online learning cannot be equated. Moreover, in the elementary education level, Piaget categorizes students in operational concrete (Huitt & Hummel, 2003), hence elementary school teachers should create a way to teach and educate the students based on their needs and conditions.

Online learning basically have some advantages nonetheless, such as being able to be applied whenever and whereever; the students also can minimize the budget and time that usually used to travel to school; and teachers are able to upload and update the material and evaluation instantly, so their pupils can access it flexibly (Chang, 2016; Manhas, 2017). On the other hand, teachers and students will have chances to face difficulties, such as they have to own gadget and internet to operate the apps; slow connection and unskilled students and parents may affect the quality of learning; they have to be motivated or they will lose passion immediately; and they will be easy
to be bored because they feel isolated from direct interaction with their friends (Manhas, 2017). That is why, teachers hold an important role to prepare and conduct the learning process, especially those who teach in elementary school in which its students still need more accompaniment than those who are in middle and higher education levels.

Based on the arguments, this research aimed to identify the platform used by elementary school teachers in Semarang, and what kind of challenges they have been facing during this pandemic. This topic is important to discuss because by analyzing the platform and the challenges, we can find a solution and redesign the best way in conducting online learning in the future. This study will also fill the gap of knowledge about the implementation of a full online learning system in elementary school which is the first time in the history of Indonesian education.

METHOD

This study aimed to find the kind of online learning platform applied by elementary school teachers in Semarang, Central Java, and the challenges faced by them during this Covid-19 outbreak. The method used in this study was a descriptive survey method. These nine steps in conducting survey research: (1) determining the problem; (2) conducting a preliminary study; (3) determining the research purposes; (4) determining the variable, identifying the problems and the data collection technique; (5) determining the population and sample; (6) arranging data collection plan; (7) collecting the data; (8) analyzing the data; (9) arranging the research report by describing and evaluating prior research and comparing them to the findings (Pandey & Pandey, 2015).

The research instrument to find out what platforms usually used by the teachers was developed based on the categories of online learning: self-paced independent study, asynchronous interactive, and synchronous interactive (Kattoua et al., 2013) combined with the types of synchronous platforms: video conferencing, web conferencing, audio conferencing, live chat, white boarding, and application sharing; and asynchronous platforms: discussion forum, web logs, e-mail messaging, and social media messaging (Lim, 2017).

Next, the instrument of the problems in online learning process were adapted based on five indicators: slow internet connections; the need for students to quickly master the operation of computer softwares or applications; the time for students to complete online learning and collaboration that usually takes longer; the need for students to have more motivation, discipline, and responsibility to conduct assignment or learn the materials; as well as boredom and isolated feeling experienced by students due to lack of encouragement from teachers because they do not facilitate the learning process directly (Manhas, 2017).

The questionnaires combined close-ended and open-ended questions that were presented online to elementary school teachers. The close-ended questions were used to obtain quantitative data, and the open-ended questions were given to clarify the reason or the explanation of close-ended questions and to let the teachers gave more data if they experienced something that has not been included in the answer choices yet. Therefore, the instruments were declared valid after both of them were tested by three experts. Then, the questionnaires were given to 160 teachers from 47 private and state elementary schools in 14 districts in Semarang City. All the teachers have conducted online learning since the Covid-19 broke out.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This research was started by asking the teachers about how they usually teach, whether there was a definite schedule or not. The results show that 115 teachers conducted the online learning according to
the schedule that has been made, 7 teachers did not follow the schedule, and the rest stated that sometimes they followed the schedule and sometimes they did not.

Most teachers (67.6%) put effort into implementing online learning according to the schedule because they hope that the learning objectives could still be achieved and the learning carried out by students could run regularly. However, there were times when they could not conduct the lesson as usual because they had to be more flexible and understand their students’ condition to not be bored easily after staring at the screen for a long time. Therefore, some children learn through the TVRI broadcast entitled “Learning from Home” which has been started since the government issued Circular Letter number 4 of 2020.

Furthermore, there were some reasons stated by the teachers who did not conduct online learning according to the schedule. The first is because there were teachers who feel that in this pandemic, teachers should not burden their students with too many assignments. This reason was based on the second point of the principles of Learning from Home by following per under the Circular Letter of Minister of Education and Culture Number 4 of 2020 which is stated, “Learning from Home activity is conducted to give useful learning experiences for students, without being burdened with demands to complete all curriculum achievements”. Therefore, though the lesson was not implemented according to the schedule, the teachers still provided the materials by considering their students’ condition and gave qualitative and applicative feedback.

The second reason is that they could not deliver the materials at the same pace and period time as when they teach in the classroom. They also asked students to do some assignments or collaborative practical learning and send the video to the teachers. Besides, the Circular Letter stated that online learning should not only be focused on the cognitive aspect, but also on life skill education, such as knowledge about Covid-19 and how to protect themselves from the virus. Hence, teachers could not strictly deliver the materials, and the students need more time to finish their assignments compared to when they have to do it offline.

The Online Learning Platform Used by The Teachers

After understanding the implementation of the Learning from Home program conducted by the teachers, the survey was continued to find what kind of online learning platform used by them during the outbreak. The results showed that most of them (159 people) used Whatsapp as the main platform to conduct online learning, while Youtube and Google Classroom became the second and third most used platform. Table 1 will show the complete data.

| No | The Platforms          | The Number of Users |
|----|------------------------|---------------------|
| 1  | Whatsapp               | 159                 |
| 2  | Youtube                | 60                  |
| 3  | Google Classroom       | 52                  |
| 4  | Ruangguru              | 29                  |
| 5  | Email                  | 25                  |
| 6  | Zoom                   | 22                  |
| 7  | Quizizz                | 18                  |
| 8  | Webex                  | 16                  |
| 9  | Messenger              | 8                   |
| 10 | TV (Learning from Home Program) | 7          |
| 11 | Edmodo                 | 6                   |
| 12 | Sekolahmu              | 6                   |
| 13 | Facebook               | 5                   |
| 14 | Google Form            | 5                   |
| 15 | Kelas Pintar           | 5                   |
| 16 | Blog                   | 4                   |
| 17 | Telegram               | 2                   |
| 18 | Quipper                | 1                   |

Whatsapp was chosen by most of the teachers because of its convenience and practicality. The teachers and parents have installed Whatsapp as the main app to maintain their relationship with friends and relatives, so it was so convenient to be used as the online learning platform. Whatsapp
also allows students to interact classically or privately. Besides, Youtube has become the second popular and familiar platform for teachers, students, and parents to share videos or to search for other instructional videos related to the materials. They found that Youtube can be easily accessed because of its simple features.

On the other hand, Google Classroom placed the third most chosen online learning platform by the teachers. They argued that Google Classroom is easy to be learned, and provides features that help them to do many things with just one platform. When the teachers need to communicate virtually with the students and parents, they usually used Zoom and Cisco WebEx, and for learning evaluation, teachers used Quizizz and Google Form. The reason why they chose the platforms are the same because they were the easiest platforms to be operated.

Actually, the advantages of each platform show that teachers have opportunities to choose and combine some platforms that are most convenient and suitable for the materials, their students’ characteristics, and learning facilities. Figure 1 illustrates the recapitulation of the number of teachers classified by how many platforms are used by them during online learning.

The graph showed that 34.4% of teachers only used one platform, which is Whatsapp, to create a group for their students, and to chat privately with the students and parents. There is one person who explained that at that time she can only operate Whatsapp, so that is why she has not tried other apps yet. Some others described that Whatsapp was the most familiar platform for the students and parents, so they will not find any difficulties downloading and upload assignments. Moreover, 23% of teachers used two platforms, 17.5% used 3 platforms, 13.8% used 4 platforms, and the rest used 5 or more platforms. Teachers who utilized more than one platform assumed that variation in learning will make their students less bored and it can be a way to introduce them to various platforms that can be used for online learning.

The Problems Experienced by The Teachers

During online learning system implementation, teachers will always face certain difficulties because it is indeed not easy to manage everything in a new way. Students’ characteristics, family background, and living place will influence the success of online learning. Based on the survey, it is found that there were nine problems teachers had to experience (Table 2).

| No | The Problems                              | The Number of Teachers who Experience It |
|----|------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| 1  | Slow internet connection                 | 108                                    |
| 2  | Less-skilled students and parents        | 104                                    |
| 3  | Less-motivated students                  | 75                                     |
| 4  | Student boredom                          | 50                                     |
| 5  | Parents’ financial hardship              | 20                                     |
| 6  | The absence of study companion           | 4                                      |
| 7  | Parents’ ignorance                       | 2                                      |
| 8  | Students’ and parents’ slow response     | 2                                      |
| 9  | Students’ late task submission           | 2                                      |

From the data, it was shown that around two-third of teachers faced
problems involved internet access. Besides, students’ economic background also affected how many smartphones they owned and whether internet quotas could always be available during online learning. At least, there were one-eighth teachers stated that some of their students’ family had trouble buying quotas, did not own smartphones, or only owned one smartphone so they should wait for their parents to come home from work to be able to learn the lesson materials and to finish their homework. This made teachers unable to conduct synchronous interactive learning. To overcome those problems, the teachers explained that they visited the students who do not own online learning facilities. Furthermore, students were also asked to meet their teachers at school to take their assignments and submit assigned assignments.

However, in conducting online learning, students and parents also have to be able to adapt to the online platforms chosen by the teachers to share the materials, assignments, and evaluations. Less-skilled students and parents in operating new online platforms caused problems for teachers in implementing a full online learning system and in maximizing the use of up-to-date online learning platforms. As a result, the platform used by most of all teachers was only Whatsapp which was the most familiar platform for them.

Therefore, online learning that was conducted suddenly because of the outbreak surely caused isolated feelings, especially for students. Learning from home, looking at screens, and finishing their online task/exam made them less motivated and bored quickly. Both had become one of the problems faced by the teachers, with the percentage about 46% and 31% respectively. As stated by Artino and Jones II (2012), online learning could affect students’ emotions as a result of negative feelings, isolated feelings, and anxiety. Laziness would also arise and caused lateness in students’ task submission. Hence, the parent's role is very important in guiding students to feel that learning at home can be a joyful activity, so they will keep motivated to conduct online learning.

Apparently, not all parents could guide their children during the process of learning at home. As the facts found in the survey results, the absence of learning companions and parents’ lack of concern had also been a challenge in the process of online learning implementation.

Based on the research, it was found that there are 18 kinds of online learning platform that was used by the elementary school teachers in Semarang. However, Whatsapp has been being the most favorite platform among the teachers and students. The teachers said that Whatsapp is easy enough to be the main platform because they can share the lesson materials and evaluation, and their students and the parents can send the feedback only through chat features. Ministry of Religion of Pemalang Regency also described that Whatsapp has been used by elementary school teachers, especially for reading and counting activity. Teachers will instruct their students to finish the assignment in their textbook, take a picture of it, and send it to the teachers by uploading it in their Whatsapp Group (Ministry of Religion of Pemalang Regency, 2020).

Whatsapp Group is indeed popular among online learners, although sometimes it burdens them, takes their time a lot, and the conversation will be more formal and restrictive if the teachers join the group (Baishya & Maheshwari, 2020). This is because there are many advantages offered by Whatsapp as an online learning platform, such as it can be downloaded freely; allows its users to create groups, and send text, audio, video, and file easily; does not require a lot of quotas to operate it; allows teachers to understand their students through open-style discussion; creates positive atmosphere and ownership among the students; more comfortable for both teachers and students, compared to email
that students are less interested in and Facebook that is convenient to students but rarely accessed by teachers (Baishya & Maheshwari, 2020; Bouhnik & Deshen, 2014; Cetinkaya, 2017). Whatsapp is also widely used outside the lesson by teachers and students to be closer to each other, so the teachers can understand their students more than before (Hershkovitz et al., 2019).

However, there are some requirements needed to be fulfilled by teachers while using Youtube as the platform supposed to make their students more active: (1) the videos were given to the students must be short; (2) students were asked individually or in groups to make annotation based on the materials explained in the video; (3) there is a pause in the video, so the students can predict what will happen next; (4) the materials should be suitable with the learning objectives; (5) the video contains some interesting things, like new vocabularies, pictures, or questions; (6) the students are asked to finish an assignment based on the videos, such as asking them to search another video related to the materials, create a video to be uploaded in their Youtube channel, or giving comments on the video (Duffy, 2007). Hence, Youtube will be a useful platform that helps teachers in creating active online learning. It has become a management tool that can motivate students to learn more conveniently, and create an interesting learning atmosphere, so they will be interested to discover more and more (Lalabegyan et al., 2017). Additionally, Google Classroom has some big avails, such as user friendly; giving constant feedbacks for students; decreasing the use of paper in doing assignments; giving unlimited space in Google Drive to save the educational contents uploaded by teachers and students; the account can be used and integrated for other platforms provided by Google; teachers will be easier to identify which students that experience difficulties with their tasks by using recorded tracking system; providing more simple ranking system (Iftakhar, 2020; Lalabegyan et al., 2017).

Zoom is more preferred because of the complete features that support virtual communication, chat, and recording; is convenient to operate using a smartphone and laptop (Palupi & Raharjo, 2020), though it is only free for 40 minutes for non-subscribers. Therefore, WebEx which is one of the official partners of the Ministry of Education and Culture also becomes an alternative to conducting a virtual meeting. WebEx can help the users to present the materials; provides a digital whiteboard and group chat that allow students to interact with their teachers and peers (Prodjo, 2020). However, these two platforms cannot be used often because need a lot of quotas. These platforms are considered simple to be accessed by teachers and students. Quizizz and Google Form have advantages as online assessment platforms because both can scramble questions and answers choices given by the teachers, so the students’ chance to cheat is considerably low. They do not also have to wait for their friends to start working on the test (Chaiyo & Nokham, 2017). The difference, Quizizz can arrange the test at a certain time so it will challenge the students more, and the results will be given as soon as they finish the test in the form of a ranking based on all participants’ scores. Meanwhile, the other platforms like Messenger, Edmodo, Sekolahmu, Facebook, Kelas Pintar, Blog, Telegram, and Quipper were only used by less than 10% of teachers during the online learning process. Although Semarang is the capital city of Central Java, in fact, this obstacle has been experienced by the teachers and the students same as in other regions, because different internet providers affect the connection. Free Wi-Fi provided by the government has not reached all areas evenly (Semarang City Government, 2020). Semarang has various contours in different directions (north, central, and south). In the
northern part, the elevation above the sea level is 0.75 m; the downtown is around 2.45-3.50 m; the western and southern part some are about 136-270 m, and some are even over 300 m (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2020). The map showed that the free Wi-Fi distribution is mostly in the northern and central areas that the elevation is low relatively. Besides, the various geographic condition also becomes a challenge to deploy internet networks in rural areas (Haryanto, 2018), so that is why not all students in Semarang are well connected when conducting online learning from home.

Since last September 2020, the Ministry of Education has also distributed free internet quotas for all students and teachers in Indonesia, from early childhood to higher education level, for 4 whole months (Haryanto, 2018). At the elementary education level, every month, students and teachers get 35 GB and 42 GB free internet quotas respectively, which is divided into the general quota of 5 GB, and the rest is a learning quota. The general quota can be used for all apps and websites, but the learning quota is especially to access learning apps and websites, such as Kipin School 4.0., Microsoft Education, Quipper, Ruangguru, Rumah Belajar, Sekolah.mu, Udemy, Zenius, Google Classroom, and Edmodo. It is also able to access video conference platforms, like Cisco WebEx, Google Meet, Microsoft Teams, U Meet Me, and Zoom. This policy surely helps teachers and students to implement an online learning system, and the parents will not face any difficulties to allocate their budget to buy quotas. The government has also been providing TV programs named Learning from Home which started on April 13th, 2020, is indeed a collaboration between the Ministry of Education and Culture and TVRI to present useful TV programs for early childhood to high school students to facilitate those who do not have gadget or have difficulty in accessing the (Ministry of Education and Culture Web Manager, 2020).

In fact, the family is one of the components that influence students’ success during school days. However, parents’ involvement is also affected by the school environment that feels like one family (Mapp, 2003). Therefore, communication between teachers and parents is absolutely needed, so there will be cooperation in succeeding the learning process, particularly during online learning in this pandemic. Besides, elementary school students have not been able to learn by themselves without adults’ guidance. Actually many parents understand about this, but some of them confessed that it is difficult for them to accompany and guide their children during the learning from home period because their behaviors were so out of control (Novianti & Garzia, 2020). Their bustle and uncontrolled students during the process also caused them to give responses to teachers.

Moreover, regardless of the problems, teachers, students, and parents need to cooperate and help each other to achieve learning objectives. There are, in fact, several things that can be worked out to achieve success and satisfaction in online learning, such as flexibility in choosing time and learning platforms; focusing the lesson materials on matters relating to student life; proficiency in operating the device as an online learning tool for anyone involved (in this case, teachers, students, and parents); and parents’ role in guiding and facilitating their children during online learning period (Kim & Frick, 2011; Novianti & Garzia, 2020; Sun et al., 2008).

Based on that, teachers should not be too strict in implementing schedules during this period. This is because of students’ condition that is different from each other, especially involved in learning facilities and guidance. For example, if students are only able to use their parents’ smartphones at night, the teacher should not ask them to learn the material and finish the assignments during the day. It will be better if teachers and students (and also parents) agree to find the solution to the problem.
faced by them. Furthermore, while explaining the materials, teachers should find an interesting way and put some engaging facts related to their daily life, so their students will not be bored easily.

On the one hand, the adaptability of teachers, students, and parents also becomes a demand in this new era, including adaptability in operating gadgets as online learning tools. If the three parties have realized how dependent online learning with devices, then they will make some efforts to immediately master the use of online learning platforms. Lastly, the parent's role is the key to online learning success and satisfaction. It is not enough by facilitating their children with gadgets and internet access, because they should keep them accompany while learning the materials and finishing their tasks. Parents must understand what kind of activity their children like during the online learning process, so they will be able to find the best way to motivate them. Thus, although it is unavoidable, the obstacles experienced by teachers during online learning can be minimized immediately, of course by cooperating and building good communication with students and parents.

CONCLUSION

This research found that there were 18 online learning platforms used by teachers to convey the materials during this pandemic. The most popular platform was Whatsapp and followed by Youtube and Google Classroom in second and third place respectively. Whatsapp was considered as the easiest and familiar platform to be operated by teachers, students, and parents; while Youtube was the main platform to upload and find educational videos related to the materials; and teachers found Google Classroom is effective to conduct some things, such as share and save the materials, and also collect their students’ task, in just one platform. In conducting online learning, teachers had to experience several obstacles, more precisely eight problems: slow internet connection, less-skilled students and parents, less-motivated students, student boredom, parents’ financial hardship, the absence of study companion, parents’ ignorance, students and parents’ slow response, and students’ late task submission. This result showed that online learning in elementary school needed to be optimized by improving communication and collaboration among teachers, students, and parents to accomplish the success of the online learning process.

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