

The Preparations of Transition from Online Learning to Face-to-Face Learning During and After the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

The pandemic will end soon, yet health protocols are still important today. Education is all done online to comply with regulations and to stop spreading the virus. In new normal era, schools have begun to allow their students to enter by limiting the presence and dividing the schedule. Then, is face-to-face learning really safe? What are the regulations of limited face-to-face learning? How do students, teachers, and parents overcome transition from online learning to face-to-face learning? This paper will answer that question by examining the provisions of face-to-face Learning, risks of implementation of face-to-face learning, and the regulations of limited face-to-face learning. Analysis through holistic perspectives by combining education, health, social, and individual factors is also asserted to show importance of substantive policy. Meanwhile, the policy seems to be in trial and error condition as any new cluster case of COVID-19 in a new normal school will affect the whole process. In conclusion, the transition is well prepared seen from health and other factors. Moreover, that condition gives more opportunities to always care to every element of education regarding this pandemic. The policymakers should never wait for new positive cases to arise, as prevention of the disease is better to improve post-pandemic education situations.

Keywords: COVID-19 pandemic; face-to-face learning; online learning; substantive and holistic policy; transitional situations

A. Introduction

At the beginning of the pandemic, the government applied the principle of prioritizing health and safety in the provision of education by considering children's growth and development and children's rights during the pandemic. The Limited Face-to-face Learning Policy is gradually being implemented to again improve the quality of learning so that the results are maximized and more

measurable. Through the Circular Letter of the Minister of Education and Culture Number 4 of 2020 there was a shift in the teaching and learning process (Kulsum, 2021), namely the implementation of learning from home, the abolition of the National Examination, the implementation of Online New Student Admission (PPDB Daring), and the prohibition of crowding in the school environment. After more than

a year of online schooling, it turned out to have a negative and unfavourable impact on students (UNESCO, 2020). Children lose their enthusiasm for learning, discipline and even responsibility for school assignments are carried out by parents, until finally it is difficult to measure learning outcomes. Therefore, the government decided to conduct face-to-face learning (PTM) (Kulsum, 2021).

From the results of the Ministry of Education and Culture's study on study habits in a pandemic, it is known that children only study 1-2 hours, some materials are less than 2 hours a day. Students apply study from home (BDR) by working on questions from the teacher, but the intensity of teacher and student meetings is decreasing. Elementary school students who study every day about 60% but at the junior high and high school/vocational level only around 31-36%. In addition, the interaction between teachers and students decreased, at the elementary school (SD) 1-2 hours per week, junior high school (SMP) 8-9 hours a week and senior high school

(SMA/SMK) 9-10 hours per week (Herlina, 2021).

Therefore, direct or face-to-face learning process is needed to be realized once the condition is getting better. New normal condition today has opened the schools again alongside with rigid implementations of health protocols and compulsory requirements of vaccinations. However, many people would doubt this policy as it will risk whole elements of educations once they are opened (Herlina, 2021). Massive spreading of virus is still going on even though the positive case decreases every day. Besides, students also need to follow subjects in face-to-face class to minimize boredom of online classes and to maximize understandings of materials. Then, is face-to-face learning safe? What are the regulations of limited face-to-face learning? How do teachers and parents overcome the transition from online learning to face-to-face learning towards the learning of students and their children? Those questions will be answered through explanations of regulations alongside

with any risk assessments of the transition of learning and explorations of substantive and holistic perspectives of policy.

B. Research Method

Through qualitative method, certain concepts and written data are analyzed to answer the questions in this paper. Online and offline scripts are derived to follow ideas of transition from online to face-to-face learning conditions. Aspects from holistic and substantive policy are listed either. Online and offline scripts are taken from books, journals, and online resources to understand shown matters. The data analysis include attaining sources, reading them carefully, comparing with other issues, quoting into paper, and writing down in reference lists.

C. Results and Discussions

Provisions and Risks of Implementation of Face-to-Face Learning

The government made a Joint Decree of the Four Ministers which allowed students to return to school with limited face-to-face meetings. Of

course, with the new habit of implementing health protocols, all students and teachers, including other employees, must follow the health protocols strictly and with discipline. There are five provisions in the Decree of Four Ministers regarding the implementation of health protocols (Tempo.co, 2021):

1. Conditions for Senior High School (SMA), Vocational School (SMK), Islamic Senior High School (MA), Islamic Vocational School (MAK), Junior High School (SMP), Islamic Junior High School (MTs), Elementary School (SD), Islamic Elementary School (MI) classes must pay attention to a distance of 1.5 meters and a maximum of 18 students per class, or a maximum of 50% of students. As for Special School, SDLB, MILB, SMPLB, MTsLB and SMLB, MALB must pay attention to a distance of 1.5 meters and a maximum of five students per class, while Early Childhood Education (PAUD) is a maximum of five students and a distance of 1.5 meters per student.

2. Days, number and hours of face-to-face lessons are limited by dividing study groups.
3. Use a three-layer mask or surgical mask to cover nose and mouth, washing hands with soap or hand sanitizer, and not making physical contact such as shaking or kissing hands.
4. Students and other residents of the school unit must be in good health.
5. It is forbidden to carry out activities that have the potential to become a crowd, such as canteens, sports and extra-curricular activities. There are no parent meetings at school.

The government has made extra efforts to pursue the target of mass vaccination so that people have better immunity against the virus (Tempo.co, 2021). All students and school residents are expected to get vaccinated immediately in order to support the face-to-face learning process. In addition, the safety, security and health of school residents, starting from incoming, staying, before leaving, and on the

way home are crucially considered as focuses (TheJakartaPost.com, 2021). If a positive case is found, the face-to-face learning must be stopped immediately, and the school must coordinate with the local COVID-19 Handling Task Force to carry out inspections and procedures for testing, tracking, and treating sick school residents (Kulsum, 2021).

Besides, face-to-face learning does not mean without risk, it is realized by groups of people who reject that even though they have carried out mass vaccinations. The argument for refusal is that students under the age of twelve have not been vaccinated (UNESCO, 2020 and TheJakartaPost.com, 2021). It is proposed that the learning be postponed and replaced by empowering local level groups in collaboration with teachers and schools. Indeed that risk accompanies prone conditions of formation of new school positive clusters (Kulsum.com, 2021). This concern was proven by the emergence of positive cases of COVID-19 in schools that did face-to-face learning before. One of the cases occurred, in

the midst of the implementation on September 4th, 2021, it was found out that the results of swab tests of Padang Panjang High School students as many as 54 students tested positive for COVID-19, while 269 students were declared negative (Kulsum, 2021). This case began when there was one positive person at the boarding school and then Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) tests were carried out to all students at the school. This positive result is quite surprising since before the implementation of face-to-face learning all students have to do a swab test and those with negative results may be allowed to enter school. Face-to-face learning was finally discontinued and postponed indefinitely (Kulsum, 2021).

Conditions of Limited Face-to-Face Learning in Higher Education

Based on Circular Letter Number 4 of 2021 concerning the Implementation of Face-to-face Learning for the Academic Year of 2021/2022 and a Joint Decree of Four Ministers: Minister of Education and Culture, Minister of Religion,

Minister of Health, and Minister of Home Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia Number 03/KB/2021, Number 384 In 2021, Number HK.01.08/MENKES/4242/2021, and Number 440-717 in 2021 concerning Guidelines for the Implementation of Learning in the 2019 Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Pandemic Period, the implementation of learning in universities will begin in the odd semester of the 2021 academic year (Tempo.co, 2021 and Kemdikbud.go.id, 2021a). The year 2022 is regulated as follows:

a. *Preparation*

- Higher education institutions in the Enforcement of Restrictions on Community Activities (PPKM) level 1, level 2, and level 3 areas must report to the local regional task force. Meanwhile, private universities report to the regional task force and the Higher Education Service Institute.
- Universities are only allowed to carry out curricular activities through learning, research, and community service. Must comply with the rules of the

Joint Decree above and the Decree of the Minister of Health Number

HK.01.07/MENKES/413/2020 concerning Guidelines for the Prevention and Control of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19).

- Universities form a task force for handling COVID-19 in universities to develop and to implement standard operating procedures for health protocols.
- Higher education leaders publish learning guidelines, graduations, and other activities for the academic community and education staff in the higher education environment.
- There are no objections from parents/guardians for students who take part in face-to-face learning.

b. *Implementation*

- Reporting implementation of learning to COVID-19 handling task force on regular basis.
- Conducting testing and tracing on a regular basis.

- The academic communities and education staffs who carry out activities on campus must be in good health and have received vaccinations. For those who have not been vaccinated, they have to make statement containing that the person concerned has not received a vaccination or could not be vaccinated for certain reasons (has comorbidities) and to obtain parental consent.
- For students who are not willing to do face-to-face learning, they can choose online learning. Students from outside the region or abroad are required to make sure they are in good health, been self-quarantined for 14 days or do a swab test.
- Taking measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 by disinfecting infrastructure facilities in the university environment before and after learning focused on the facilities used during face-to-face learning.
- Checking body temperature for everyone who enters college.

- Avoiding the use of closed learning facilities, generating crowds, and the occurrence of close contact, providing hand washing places/hand sanitizers in strategic places.
 - Using a 3 ply cloth, disposable mask, or a surgical mask that covers the nose and mouth.
 - Maintaining a minimum distance of 1.5 meters.
 - Limiting the use of space to a maximum of 50% of the occupancy capacity of the room/class/laboratory and a maximum of 25 people.
 - Implementing efforts to care for each other, looking after and protecting each other, applying proper cough/sneeze etiquette.
 - Providing temporary isolation rooms for academics and education staff who have symptoms for COVID-19.
 - Preparing a mechanism for handling COVID-19 case findings in the university.
 - Preparing support for emergency measures for handling COVID-19, reporting to the local area COVID-19 handling task force if any case were found.
 - Campus residents are expected as ambassadors for behaviour change in the environments.
 - If a positive case was found in a university, the leader of the university will temporarily suspend face-to-face learning in the area until conditions are safe.
 - If there was an increased risk of COVID-19 in a city, the university leader coordinates with the local COVID-19 handling task force to continue or to stop face-to-face learning.
- c. **Monitoring**
- Universities enforce standard operating procedures for health protocols and carry out regular monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of standard operating procedures for health protocol enforcement.
 - Universities are expected to be able to share experiences and good practices in implementing mixed learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- The Higher Education Service Institute conducts regular monitoring of face-to-face learning activities in higher education and the results of the monitoring can be used as recommendations for follow-up on those activities.

The above complete lists of preparation, implementation, and monitoring really could fill in the gaps in how to handle the condition during face-to-face learning (Tempo.co, 2021 and Kemdikbud.go.id, 2021b). The face-to-face learning is not a selfish policy that has been done only from educational side, but also involving other matters of aspects. It can be learned that health aspects are followed with social and individual issues in the levels of society, universities, and even government officials. The commands are so detail from top-bottom and also involve how the coordination should be done bottom-up through synergy of various actors (TheJakartaPost.com, 2021). There are also many requirements that should be perfectly fulfilled in order

to realize that direct learning. If one of them is missed, it will affect another and could result to worse condition. From those list, it can be derived that internal (all university residents) and external (society and government) sides must cope together to reinforce realization of following face-to-face learning (Tempo.co, 2021 and Kemdikbud.go.id, 2021a).

In the implementation part, point number 16, regarding how campus residents are expected to become ambassadors for behavior change in their respective environments, is an important point. We live in a place where we are all fighting together to stop the spread of the virus and creating a comfortable and safe learning environment. With first easy steps, by providing exemplary behavior that reflects health and personal hygiene, it could invite people around us to continue to comply with health protocols. It is needed so that the teaching and learning process on campus and the environment around us becomes a place for the growth of knowledge that could fight viruses including pandemic situations.

Holistic and Substantive Perspectives of Policy of Face-to-Face Learning

Face-to-face learning is such crucial issue to be realized in Indonesian education. This policy is needed to form such direct learning where students and teachers could meet each other lively. Online learning may be good, but still the best choice is in direct learning. In this case, direct learning could bring in such condition of inter-subjectivity as stated by Martin Buber with *I* and *Thou* (Zank and Braiterman, 2020). Both sides respect each other interactively and will create such equal condition between them. Online learning today is used to be coloured with protests from teachers that the students do not pay much attention to them. Meanwhile, the students also complain about assignments that keep coming from the teachers. That condition shapes aspect of *I* and *It* as subject and object that is not good for education (Scott, 2021). Parents and other school residents also raise their opinions about how schools should be done offline so that each side could

start and finish the job of descriptions well. Therefore, face-to-face learning is needed to make the education livelier by including every aspect of education in one way to improve minds. By doing that, every aspect is considered as subject with his or her own tasks that should be done specifically. Subjects could not say others as objects since everyone has own portions of tasks to be fulfilled (Zank and Braiterman, 2020). The way Buber says about his idea is in line with this learning; equal dialogue should be happened between the subjects by realizing reciprocal and interactive conditions among them (Scott, 2021).

Those points above that state provisions of face-to-face learning indicate how the policy is related to holistic conditions. Being holistic means coping with many kinds of perspectives that touch each other in a policy (Dewi, 2019). Here, this learning needs various kinds of stakeholders to show their importance of this education. Considerations should be done by dialogues among those who matter due to crucial points of the containment of the virus. Once

the virus is indicated, it should be announced to other stakeholders so that common policy could be realized soon before it is getting worse. In the higher education level, for example, it is true that the main focus is the institution of education that play biggest role. However, that side has to consult with other aspects so that holistic policy could be realized (Hogan and Howlett (eds.), 2015). University could not arbitrarily holds face-to-face learning by ignoring others' consents. It could not abandon vaccination and health protocols. It could not also ignore indications if there is positive case in that area. It must move together with other aspects (Hogan and Howlett (eds.), 2015). In this case, university should always realize its own medical preparations alongside with consultation from regional COVID-19 task force. This policy is good in its essence, and by paying attention to those points above, it is getting better since its preparedness is visible and realizable as well (LANRI, 2015).

In addition, face-to-face learning is indicated through substantive policy that speaks what

kind of policy taken to solve such problems (Dewi, 2019). Here, the main issue is about education, the problem is outbreak of COVID-19 virus, and the solution is face-to-face learning. Being substantive here means how to realize such direct learning without abandoning realities that the virus is still out there shadowing us. So, health aspects should walk together with educations. If the participants are healthy and the circumstances could cope with health standards, then it could be realized. In reverse, if any kind of deviant from health aspect is seen, then the whole process must be stopped and evaluated afterwards. This is like red and green lights of traffic lanes. Substantive means as a whole too that brings in such holistic aspect either (Dewi, 2019). The direct learning process could not be realized partly, but must be as a whole. If all is good, then all could go. If there is only one flaw, all must not go. Being substantive is taking care of the main essence of the policy (Hogan and Howlett (eds.), 2015) that is to realize face-to-face learning while to keep everyone in safe conditions.

Both holistic and substantive points above assert compulsory aspects as a whole to be obeyed by all actors. Those are good since it makes all aspects walk together in instant (Dewi, 2019). However, the policy is so tentative and unstable. It is full of trial and error. On a hand, the preparedness of health situations is still questionable. Many schools and higher educations have not prepared the direct learning well. On the other hand, that policy could not cope with dynamicity (LANRI, 2015) of the outbreak of the virus. Today everyone may be healthy, but tomorrow when Antigen tests are hold then many persons are stated as positive. Direct learning then should be cancelled at all points, leaving nothing but online solutions again. Until now, there is no policy that could cope with the uncertainty of the outbreak. Even vaccines could not totally ensure someone's health out of being infected. Therefore, total policy is needed but the realization should be done per parts (LANRI, 2015). Those are stated as healthy could come directly to schools and higher educations while others should follow

online at the same time. The policy should cover all matters by not doing turn on and off decisions that could confuse many people (Hogan and Howlett (eds.), 2015).

D. Conclusion

Face-to-face learning, which is in transition from previous online learning, requires realignment from students, teachers, all elements of education, and the government. Although there are risks in face-to-face learning, appliance of health protocols and its important standard operating procedures can create security and comfort in the teaching and learning process in the future. With the provisions of face-to-face learning in universities that have been regulated in a Joint Decree of Four Ministers, there are important points that have been regulated, such as 5 preparation points, 18 implementation points, and 3 monitoring points. All efforts and movements that have been regulated and determined by the government and ministers can be perfectly realized if all citizens comply with the recommendations, orders and

prohibitions. It is crucial to create a place for teaching and learning; an environment and a country that is safe and comfortable. Moreover, the increase in cases of the COVID-19 virus must be stopped so that all of the people, all families and communities, can be protected from the virus. Healthy, safe, comfortable, peaceful, and happy could be realized for all. People will also come together in synergy to build education in Indonesia, for a definite improvement of this country.

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