

The Covid-19 Pandemic and the New-Fashioned Arts of Classroom Management

Akh. Muzakki
Head of East Java's Board of Education
akh.muzakki@uinsby.ac.id

The heartwarming story of a father in Garut, West Java, who forcibly stole a cell phone so that his daughter could follow online learning must lead to a strong commitment among schoolteachers in carrying out distance learning. It suggested that in early August 2020, a father with the initials Aj (40) recklessly thieved a mobile phone following his anxiety that his daughter had not followed online learning at all since the covid-19 pandemic came to the surface in Indonesia in March 2020. The practice of stealing also got him caught. But the public then turned to be compassionate to see the mourning conditions he experienced and the reasons for the practice of stealing he carried out.

The story of sorrow above increasingly gives evidence that since the so-called covid-19 plague, distance learning has increasingly appeared to be a fundamental need of the school. Its significance has recently started to be wholeheartedly felt and is predicted to continue considerably in the future.

Adaptation is, therefore, an important keyword that should be considered and done by school stakeholders, both internal and external. Teachers then particularly become the most important internal stakeholders who are required to be highly skilled in organizing the distance learning in question.

Indeed, online teaching is not the only medium for the implementation of distance learning. But, still, the trend ahead would suggest that learning with such an online model will become a major new flow in the implementation of school education, now and in the future. Therefore, virtual class management must be done with all due respect.

First of all, teachers should develop a new mindset of learning. Teaching in a virtual class should not be likened to teaching in a physical class (in-person instruction). Why is it that? There are two key components that make an important distinction between physical classes and virtual classes. The first is presence, and the second is proximity. In

physical classes with in-person instruction model, teachers can attend and be present up close to, or in the middle of, students. Such a close physical presence makes it easy for teachers to manage a class.

The ease of classroom management in the above physical classes includes the enabling conditions in which teachers can maximize what in conventional learning management scheme is popularly known as "eye contacts". Following the fact that eye contacts allow the classroom management work effectively, the teacher can maintain the overall classroom atmosphere to remain conducive and supportive for effective learning.

An important indicator for the effective learning of in-person instruction is the guaranteed participatory participation of all students into learning activities that are being managed by teachers. The word "participatory" here points to two important meanings. First, the mental, emotional, and physical involvement of each student in the learning activities organized by the teacher in the physical class-based in-person instruction. Second, the emergence of an active response of students to each stage of the teacher-managed learning processes.

Included in the scope of eye contacts is the continuous versatility of teachers to see and observe closely the

level of development and obedience of students to remain academically engaged in a high degree of enthusiasm with each process that takes place in physical classroom-based learning. Also, with that scheme of classroom management, teachers are very likely to evaluate the psychological development and academic progress of individual learners. Furthermore, teachers can continuously maintain all activities of the so-called physical class-based in-person instruction to remain under their management and control.

The same conditions will not happen to virtual classes as they are difficult to find in this new-fashioned learning scheme. The presence of teachers cannot be done in a way physically close to students as in in-person instruction. Two principles of presence and proximity conventionally applied in physical class-based in-person instruction cannot work properly for distance learning as virtual screens particularly do not allow teachers to perform similarly to physical-conventional classes. There are limitations faced by teachers in maximizing the role of eye contacts to see, observe, and evaluate closely psychological development and academic progress of every single student.

Even more fundamentally, in virtual classes, the academic development

and at the same time the mental and emotional changes of students cannot be identified by or through the existence of physical images on the screen. Therefore, the concept of "participatory" learning process that conventionally-ideally requires involvement in the mental, emotional, and physical concurrent times of each student cannot be practiced exactly in a virtual class. The active response of students should not be measured in large groups, but rather must be individualized. Otherwise, what appears is not a measured active response, but rather a rowdy one in that virtual space.

Above all, in terms of the arts of organizing learning activities in virtual classrooms, teachers should not do conventional things like those which are common in physical classes. Teachers should not be satisfied with the appearance of sound rumble as a sign of students' activeness in virtual classroom learning. The existence of teachers in virtual classes is not as a virtual event organizer. Nor is it as a cheer leader.

The measures that teachers should apply to the effectiveness of learning in virtual classrooms, thereby, should not stop at the appearance of the active voice of the learners. That is because, if not taken carefully, the active voice of the learners will only become a rumble in the virtual class. If that happens, what appears

is not the voice of participation in learning, but rather just noise-based rumblings that thus tend to be a distraction for meaningful learning for the input of students' lives.

It should be then realized from the beginning that the most difficult problem facing teachers in the management of virtual classes is ensuring the simultaneous mental and emotional development of students with their physical presence on screen. Well, in the arts of virtual classroom management, to help students experience mental, emotional, and physical development well during virtual classes, teachers must be highly skilled at generalizing their functions and roles as a source of information and source of manner at the same time.

Perhaps as a source of knowledge or information, the teachers' position could have been replaced by a product of advancement of information and communication technology. Information search engines such as *Google* and *Youtube*, and even diverse social media platforms, including *Line*, *Whatsapp*, and *Instagram* can indeed give students today's excess access to various kinds of information and knowledge. However, teachers should not lose their position as exemplary sources. Otherwise, students will look for examples and role models in

their own way. The development of digital platforms as well as information and communication technology advancement products are very likely to allow students to look for examples according to their own desires. Well, the presence of teachers in virtual classes should be able to be an inspiration and at the same time a good example source for students.