Pre-Service English Teachers' Challenges and Opportunities In Flex Model Blended Learning-Assisted: Narrative Inquiry

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Abstrak

Implementasi metode blended learning menjadi sebuah trend untuk murid dan guru di Indonesia yang bertujuan memfasilitasi pembelajaran yang efektif sejak 2019 hingga 2021 karena pemerintah Indonesia membatasi pembelajaran tatap muka. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian kualitatif yaitu *narrative inquiry* menggunakan wawancara. Tujuan dari penelitian ini untuk menginvestigasi tantangan dan kesempatan mahasiswa PLP saat mengimplementasikan pengajaran flex model blended learning. Penelitian ini dilakukan kepada 5 mahasiswa PLP Bahasa Inggris di universitas di Karawang yang melakukan pengajaran online di berbagai sekolah. Termuan dalam penelitian ini menunjukan adanya tantangan dan kesempatan yang muncul saat implementasi flex model blended learning. Tantangannya adalah kurangnya pemanfaatan media, konektivitas, interaksi siswa dan alokasi waktu yang berantakan. Selain itu, kesempatan pada penerapan flex model blended learning ialah sumber bacaan dan bisa diaplikasikan di situasi tertentu. Penelitian ini diharapkan bisa membantu mahasiswa PLP Bahasa Inggris, Guru Bahasa Inggris, murid, dan sekolah untuk menjadi lebih baik dalam mengimplementasikan flex model blended learning.

Kata Kunci: *Flex Model, Blended Learning. Online Learning, Mahasiswa PLP Bahasa Inggris, Pengajaran Menulis*

Abstract

Blended learning implementation has been a trend method for teachers and students in Indonesia in order to facilitate the effective teaching and learning since 2019 until 2021 because of Indonesia government issued a policy to limit face-to-face learning. This research is qualitative research with narrative inquiry using interview. This research aims to investigating the challenges and opportunities of pre-service English teacher in implementing flex model on blended learning teaching. The data was collected through semi-structured interview. This research was conducted to five Pre-service's English teachers at University in Karawang who conduct online teaching in various public schools. The findings revealed that there are some challenges and opportunities appeared while implementing flex model blended learning. The challenges were low media utilization, connectivity, disordered time allocation and student interaction. Furthermore, the opportunities of flex model blended learning were resources and applicable in certain condition. This research is expected to help pre-service's English teacher, English teachers, student and school to be better in implementing flex model blended learning.

Keywords: *Flex Model, Blended Learning, Online Learning, Pre-service English Teacher, Teaching Writing.*

INTRODUCTION

Blended learning implementation has been a trend method for teachers and students in Indonesia in order to facilitate the effective teaching and learning since 2019 untill 2021 because of Indonesia government issued a policy to limit face-to-face learning. This approach of learning forces the teachers to develop technology and material in the process of teaching and learning such as using some online platform. Rachman, Sudioyono and Phonix (2020) stated that Bandung as the urban area in West Java Province, almost 164 senior high school in Bandung have been forced to implement technology in the process of teaching and learning in order to achieve Bandung as the smart city. They also argued that regarding to the new normal during pandemic, almost

all the schools in Bandung have no choice to implement blended learning as the way to facilitate the teachers and students in conducting teaching and learning process. Meanwhile, since Bandung as one of big city in West Java.

Teachers are needed to be creative and innovative to keep excellent teaching. Here, teachers continue teaching by many innovative platforms to facilitate blended learning. Platform that used to be used are Zoom, Google Meet, Microsoft Team and so on. It is strengthen by Istiqomah (2021) that stated the conventional learning or the face-to-face offline meeting interaction that is usually done offline or meeting directly in the classroom is switching into the virtual meeting through video conferencing such as Zoom, Google Meet, and so on. So that, Pre-serivice teacher have to be creative in integrated technology as teaching media in classroom such as implemented in blended learning.

Blended learning implementation has been a trend method for teachers and students in Indonesia in order to facilitate the effective teaching and learning in COVID-19 pandemic. This approach of learning forces the teachers to develop technology and material in the process of teaching and learning such as using some online platform. Rachman, Sudioyono and Phonix (2020) stated that Bandung as the urban area in West Java Province, almost 164 senior high school in Bandung have been forced to implement technology in the process of teaching and learning in order to achieve Bandung as the smart city. They also argued that regarding to the new normal era of Covid-19 pandemic, almost all the schools in Bandung have no choice to implement blended learning as the way to facilitate the teachers and students in conducting teaching and learning process. Meanwhile, since Bandung as one of big city in West Java

In implementing blended learning, teachers encounter obstacles in the middle of their teaching. Aji, W.K. (2020) stated that teachers find the challenges when applied blended learning, they are poor internet connection, time consuming, and less of experiences. He revealed poor internet connection is being matter because not every students have a good signal.

Previous study that entitled THE BLENDED LEARNING IMPLEMENTATION OF ELT BASED ON TEACHERS' AND STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVE IN NEW NORMAL CONDITION OF COVID 19 from Rachman, Sudioyono and Phonix (2020) reveal that the perceptions of teachers and students towards the implementation of blended learning in English has a positive impact for teaching in learning. They stated implemented blended learning have the advantages of English teaching learning process. The subject of the research only focus on teachers' and students' perspective, thus the different subject were still need to be explored. The research about The Students' Perceptions on Using Blended Learning for English Learning during Covid-19 Pandemic from Istiqomah (2021) revealed the weakness of blended learning. This study have the same area in objective with the researcher, however this study participant are students in university. In this study, researcher participant are pre-service English teacher, which are candidate to become a teacher and lack of experiences. The study from Hidayat, D. N. (2021) entitled The Aftermath of COVID-19 Education Disruption: Readiness of Pre-Service English Teachers for Blended Learning revealed participants could be considered 'adequate' up to a 'high' level of readiness for blended learning. Unfortunately, the research only focus in general blended learning. From those previous research above, the researcher assume that the study about Implementing Flex Model on Blended Learning English Teaching in Senior Highschool by Pre-service Teacher's Perspective during Covid-19 Outbreak: Narrative Research is still less in Indonesia, because this research specified blended learning in flex model. So that, the aim of this study is investigating the challenges and opportunities of pre-service English teacher in implementing flex model on blended learning teaching. Then, the research question were 1. What challenges do Pre-service English teachers face/encounter in flex model on blended learning teaching? ; 2. What opportunities do Pre-service English teachers have in flex model blended learning teaching?. The outcome of this research is expected to contribute ideas in practicing teaching and learning process especially in implemented blended learning during Covid-19 Pandemic. Then, this study be able to enrich strategy in implemented flex model on blended learning to improve the quality of learning.

METHODS

This research uses a narrative research design which is a qualitative study that aims to explore the participants' experiences of how difficult implementing blended learning in their first-time teaching. Creswell (2013) says that narrative research is a strategy of inquiry in which the researcher studies the lives of individuals and asks one or more individuals to provide stories about their lives.

The participants of this research were five Pre-service's English teachers at University in Karawang who conduct online teaching in different public schools that were selected to be involved in this research based on several reason because of ease of access, flexibility in manage time and low transportation cost. This research used purposive sampling and snowball sampling that used in qualitative research. As Sugiyono (2015) stated that in qualitative study, sampling technique used purposive sampling and snowball sampling. He further explain purposive sampling is technique sampling that consider certain things. Then, snowball sampling is amount of participant can increase as much as needed.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Challenges in flex model blended learning

The findings was collected based on the result of interviews with pre-service teachers to find out the challenges and opportunities of implementing Flex Model Blended Learning. The researcher conducted this study to pre-service teacher from university in Karawang, West Java, Indonesia by 5 participants who have done their teaching program in various schools.

Flex model blended learning is, as described in the background, a program in which content and instruction are delivered primarily by the Internet, students move on an individually customized, fluid schedule among learning modalities, and the teacher-of-record is on-site. Flex model blended learning has many advantages, such as flexibility, that can be conducted online. However, there are some challenges occur when teacher applied flex model. According to Aji, W.K. (2020), He stated that teachers find the challenges when applied blended learning, they are poor internet connection, time consuming, and less of experiences. The instrument of this research is the interview, and the researcher found similar challenges as previous study and other challenges that was encountered by pre-service teacher while applied flex model blended learning.

The first challenges that was encountered by pre-service teacher when using flex model blended learning is low media utilization. There were lack of experiences in utilize the media such as operating 'Google Meet', 'Zoom' or 'Google Classroom' that impacted gap in flex model. In a few schools, implementing flex model blended learning was their first time. Teacher did not get any training in implementing flex model blended learning or using application such as Google Meet, Zoom, or etc that made them confuse in operating it. They just discussed in operating video conference application between teachers, did not come from the expert in implementing it. Because this was their first time, so they felt difficult in making interesting material. The impact of did not create interesting material was student give less attention to the teacher. This is in line with previous study from Aji, W., (2020) that stated other challenges in blended learning lack of motivation, which caused teachers to be less proficient in applying blended learning, and a lack of making interesting material which caused students to feel bored and inactive when they learning. Then, other participant revealed that certain media was took much mobile data. Student spent their mobile data just for studying, whereas they have necessities in using their mobile data inside of outside learning process. If their mobile data run out, they have to buy it first to rejoin the class, or even they can not join the class all day. It can be strengthen by Aji, W., (2020) that said Zoom applications requires many internet data that make asynchronous is difficult.

Then, second challenge was low connectivity. In a few of participant, connectivity always be the topic discussion in every meeting because it makes learning process difficult. The causes of low connectivity were the distance between tower and student home, or trouble with their internet provider. Internet provide gave a big part in implementing flex model blended learning. When student's internet provider get trouble, students can not do anything except waiting until the internet get better. The impact of this was student absence in class or did not absorb the material totally. According to Victorian Education (2012) research, Watterston, J. (2012) stated that the lack of broadband bandwidth and IT support were issues that hindered the rural schools' use of digital resources. This affected student learning and the outcomes. Istiqomah (2021) stated that blended learning will be difficult to be implemented if the facilities and infrastructures do not support such as internet access and networks needs are inadequate". Then, Ammirudin and Jannah (2021) also added the first problem that students faces was the unstable internet connection. Indriani, L (2021) supported that instead the advancement of technology that might lead to a successful learning, this causes difficulty for the participants who are from rural areas due to the old mobile phones, limited data plan, and instable internet

connection that hinder from the online learning. The previous studies were strengthen the finding if low connectivity was one of challenges in implementing flex model blended learning.

The third challenge was low student interaction. The student was not really interactive because of many students turn their camera and mic off, they did not pay attention to the teacher or student did not study before the class. Less interaction made teacher difficult in make sure students' understanding. Many reason why their turn camera and mic off, such as broken microphone or camera, did not have any mobile data, they have something to do, or they just felt sleepy because they felt studying online is enjoyable then offline. So that they did not take seriously about the class or material. According to Yuzulia, I. (2021), internet access required amount oh mobile data, that is why during teaching learning process, they prefer to turn their camera off to save their mobile data.

Another challenge in implementing flex model blended learning that appeared was disordered time allocation. It made delivering learning material was ineffective which only 50%-70%. The causes were low connectivity or unstable connection, and trouble in device. For instance, after we waiting for the connection get better, the time for delivering is wasted. So that the delivering material is unoptimal because the time was inadequate . For the device troubling, it is commonly unpredictable. The impact of the device was teacher can give the material and the worst was can not rejoin the class. Sari, A., J., (2020) support that in implementation of blended learning. ninety minutes of learning process was not enough for teacher. She add that student need more to exercise, and teacher need mote time to explain.

The opportunities in flex model blended learning

The second research question in this research is about opportunities in implementing flex model blended learning. From results of interviews between researcher and respondents, it can be concluded that the opportunities of implemented flex model blended learning was can explore more about resources and applicable in certain condition.

Exploring resources means student can find their topic in arranging text by themselves. They do not rely on teacher in choosing theme what they interest. Then, both teacher and student can use many additional resources that available on the internet that relevance. So that, it can widely increase their knowledge rather then only given book from school. According to Victorian Education research, Watterston, J. (2012) stated that student enable to vary their pace of learning, drawing on as few or as many resources as needed, choosing resources that most suited their learning styles and level of prior knowledge. Watterston, J. (2012) added blended learning approaches allowed students to all out in competencies other than the traditional literacies, as leaders, ICT experts, cultural experts, resource managers, and negotiators. As a result, student became more resourceful and constructed their own learning paths, ultimately producing better work outcome. This is inline with Istiqomah (2021), that stated student can found supplementary material or reading on the internet to enhance their understanding deeper about they topic they learnt..

Another opportunities from flex model blended learning was this model is applicable in certain condition. In Covid-19 pandemic era, flex model can fit the learning process that need avoiding face-to-face offline meeting. So that pandemic situation technology have important role in teaching learning process. Then, student also can have more time to do another thing instead of school activities while the classroom finished. In this case, student and teacher have more time because they did not have to go to school that takes time and go back home by traffic in the way. Aji. W., (2020) revealed that blended learning was more effective during pandemic corona virus. He add blended learning is helpful and useful to prevent spreading virus. Butler, L. (2021) stated with flex model, some students appreciate not having to fight traffic road, pay to park, lug their backpack to school because they can attend remotely.

CONCLUSION

Based on the result of finding and discussion, it can be concluded that flex model blended learning has an essential role in the learning process, and it has challenges and opportunities in the learning process. The researcher answers the first research question of challenges in implementing flex model blended learning. The challenges was related each other between low media utilization, low connectivity, time allocation and low student interaction. Lack of experiences in utilize the media such as operating 'Google Meet', 'Zoom' or 'Google Classroom' that impacted gap in flex model. Whether teacher and student had the same challenges in operating media. Instead of operating, the media also require much mobile data which was incriminating

student. Low connectivity such as poor internet connection makes learning process difficult. The impact of low of connectivity was disordered time allocation in learning schedule that made delivering learning material was ineffective. Another challenge that appears when applying flex model blended learning was low student interaction. Many students turn their camera and mic off that make the class not really interactive.

Then, the opportunities in flex model blended learning was can explore more learning resources and applicable in certain condition. Both teacher and student can use many additional resources that available on the internet that relevance. So that, it can widely increase their knowledge rather then only given book from school. So they can choosing resources that most suited their learning or teaching style and level of prior knowledge. The next opportunity in flex model blended learning was it is applicable in certain condition, especially in Covid-19 pandemic era. Student could enter the classroom without face-to-face offline meeting in order to avoid spreading virus, student and teacher also can have more time to do another thing instead of school activities while the classroom finished because they did not have to go to school that takes time and go back home by traffic in the way

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