

## **Students independent learning implementation during learning from home period (a study at Unika Santu Paulus Ruteng, Flores)**

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**Abstract** - This study explored students' independent learning during the Learning from Home Period within this covid-19 outbreak. This study was conducted at the Faculty of Health Science and Agriculture Unika Santu Paulus Ruteng, Flores covering four study majors. In order to obtain the objective of the research, it's used qualitative studies with a phenomenological approach. Data were obtained through interviews. For the purpose of individual interviews, it's chosen 12 respondents consisting of 8 students and 4 teachers taken purposively. The research results showed that 1) Students use books, modules, portable computers, and mobile phones as the media to apply independent learning. Certain teachers use online applications such as Goggle Classroom, Email, Whatsapp, and websites to engage students with internet learning instruments. Dealing with learning sources, students use files in the form of PPT, PDF, a word containing the materials, learning videos, notes, google, youtube, assignments distributed by teachers, and some other materials gained by the students themselves from the internet. 2) Students haven't possessed time management skills. They don't provide a specific time to learn the materials they obtain from teachers. They only used the learning schedule provided by the campus. 3) Teachers play most of their roles as instructors and facilitators. As instructors, teachers provided some instructions through materials or subject matters to be learned by the students. Moreover, students are asked or instructed to complete certain assignments within the time limit set up through the learning application used. Meanwhile, as facilitators, teachers provided opportunities for the students to discuss and ask questions through an online application provided. Even, certain questions asked through WhatsApp answered directly by the teachers. 4) There are some advantages and obstacles that could be the policymakers and school authority concerns in order to promote optimal self-learning during this covid-19 outbreak.

**Keywords:** independent learning, learning from home, online learning

## 1. Introduction

The covid-19 outbreak led to the emergence of various new policies in various sectors including in the education sector. Referring to the decision of the Indonesian education and culture ministry 2020, all tertiary institutions in Indonesia implement a home learning policy by utilizing various supporting instruments to achieve student learning objectives. These instruments are various features of online learning applications that both functioned as learning media and learning sources. This policy then has the implications for strengthening the student-centered learning paradigm. Students as learners are encouraged to implement independence in achieving their own learning goals.

Meyer et al (2008, in Field et al, 2015) mentioned that the terms ‘self-directed learning’ and ‘learning how to learn’ are sometimes used interchangeably with independent learning. Zimmerman (1986, in Field et al, 2015) stated that there are three key characteristics that should be owned by self-regulating learners: 1) learners understand their own approach of learning and how best to efficiently maximize their learning; 2) Learners have the motivation to take responsibility for their own learning; 3) Learners possess the ability to work with others to increase their learning depth and breadth. Moreover, Chan, (2010, in Žydžiūnaitė et al, 2014) stated that independent learning in higher education refers to students’ ability to take charge of their own learning. It refers to the responsibility for all the decisions concerning all aspects of this learning.

Independent learning is part of cognitive learning theory which states that the behaviour, motivation, and aspects of the learning environment affect a student's achievement. In applying independent learning students were given the opportunity to take a control of themselves during the teaching-learning activity. The ability of students to implement independent learning will be reflected in their ability to actively participate in learning both in terms of metacognitive, motivational, and seriousness of behaviour in achieving learning goals (Mayer et al, 2008 in Naibaho, 2019).

Autonomous–Learning is a modern learning theory of constructivism. In this context, students need to take charge of their own learning. It can be undertaken by carving out their own learning plans according to their own needs. It is also a student-focused learning model that emphasizes the learning environment and cooperative learning (Islam, 2011). Moreover, Zutchi et al (2011 in Nalatambi et al, 2015) stated that learners who possess the ability to apply independent learning have the skills of 1) Self-management skills. It’s, in particular, the ability to manage time; 2) Critical thinking. It includes being aware of the underlying suppositions of one’s thoughts and beliefs; 3) Creative thinking. It includes the ability to identify worthwhile goals and methods of achieving them.

Stoten (2014) researched the impact of independent learning by focusing on students’ attitudes and behaviours for A-level students. The findings revealed that there is still a lot to be done to realize fully the idea of independent learning. Even though a lot of effort has been put in for setting and reviewing targets which were supposed to provide them with a benchmark for judging their own performance and also to motivate them (Nalatambi, et al, 2015). Moreover, Naibaho (2019) through his

study stated that independent learning is a very good method to be implemented in teaching speaking and it improves the students' English ability. The previous study indicated that it's important for the students to promote and implement independent learning in achieving students learning objectives. However, students still have tasks to be taken into account. They should pay great attention to how they apply it, what instrument should be owned to support it, and what behaviour needed to perform. Moreover, critical thinking is a significant variable for independent learning readiness. In applying independent learning, students are expected to construct information in line with their own cognitive strategies and skills. It means it is important for the students to display critical thinking attitudes and question information, evaluate ideas rationally, pass what they learn through a mental filter and assess the whole process (Turan & Koç, 2018).

In the emergency condition of the covid-19 outbreak, University students are allowed to learn from home, consequently "forced" to apply more independent learning in the effort to achieve learning objectives. Teachers' role is minimized along with the increase in students learning sources that can be easily accessed. Learning platforms and applications can become media and learning sources if they are used in the right way to improve skills and competency.

In reference to the above concept, this study explored how students at Faculty of Health Science and Agriculture Unika Santu Paulus Ruteng apply independent learning during learning from home period, what are the benefits of employing independent learning and what are the obstacles found based on students and teachers perspectives.

## **2. Method**

This research was conducted at the Faculty of Health Science and Agriculture Unika Santu Paulus Ruteng, Flores covering four study majors. In order to obtain the objective of the research, it's used qualitative studies with a phenomenological approach. Data were obtained through interviews. For the purpose of individual interview, it's chosen 12 respondents consisting of 8 students and 4 teachers or lecturers, taken purposively based on the following criteria:

- A). Respondents have more knowledge and understanding of independent learning.
- B). Respondents are actively implementing independent learning during the learning from the home period.
- C). Respondents have a will to participate in the interview.

The technique of data analysis was undertaken using a qualitative description. And to describe the systematic, factual, and accurate data, an inductive description is applied by implementing the model of analysis proposed by Miles and Habermas consisting of data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion (Sugiyono, 2013).

## **3. Results and Discussion**

### **The Implementation of Independent Learning**

In elaborating, how university students employ independent learning during learning from home period, the researcher uses some aspects dealing with independent

learning activity studied namely learning sources and learning media, time management, and teacher's role.

### 3.1 Learning Media and Learning Sources

Based on the interview result, it's found that students use books, modules, portable computers, and mobile phones as the media to apply independent learning. Certain teachers use online applications such as Goggle Classroom, Email, Whatsapp, and websites to engage students with internet learning instruments. Dealing with learning sources, students use files in the form of PPT, PDF, a word containing the materials, learning videos, notes, google, youtube, assignments distributed by teachers, and some other materials gained by the students themselves from the internet. The finding showed that students mostly used learning media and sources that deal with internet circumstance. Islam (2014) stated that nowadays, with the use of the Internet and computers around the world, it's obvious that electronic means have shown its role to provide the learning environment. It appears in the form of instant messaging that has been quite popular. More people in developing countries have instant access and are able to get online. Discussion boards, interactive blogs, and online forums are some other forms of communication on the Internet that have been popular and widely used by people around the world.

Through learning from home, students are actually introduced to online learning applications and platforms where knowledge has been stored unlimitedly. By knowing how to use them, students learn how to obtain knowledge and competency without the teacher's observation and participation. The role of the teacher as facilitator and the role of students as the center of learning seem to maximize. The finding is in line with what Norman (2016 in Malison & Thammakoranonta, 2018) stated that in this era, online learning has come to be a popular way for working people. Online learning has become popular among those who want to learn independently due to several problems of traditional learning. One problem with traditional learning is the cost. Learners have to pay a lot of money to attend the course if online learning has not grown in our society. It becomes more problems for the learners when they have problems with tuition fees. Yet, through online learning, learners can save the budget. Moreover, they are able to choose their preferable time by themselves. It can be said that online learning seems to be the greatest revolution in contemporary education.

### 3.2 Time Management

One of the skills that are supposed to be owned by students in implementing independent learning is the ability to manage time and activity that support the success of learning objectives. The question that is proposed to explore students' implementation of independent learning is "Do the students provide a schedule for their own learning?". It's proposed to investigate whether the students have their own learning schedule to be used during the learning from the home period. Based on the interview, it's found that students haven't yet provided their own learning schedule. They use the learning schedule provided by the campus. Even though they admitted that they study during this period, however, the implementation of independent learning is hardly ever done. Chan (2010 in Žydzūnaitė et al, 2014) stated that in applying independent learning, students take greater control over the content and methods of learning presupposing an individual's positive attitude towards the

purpose and process of learning. The students are considered as decision-makers. They have the capacity to choose the available media or instruments and resources that are oriented to fulfill the task needs. Moreover, Zutchi et al (2011, in Nalatambi et al, 2015) stated that students who are able to apply independent learning possess self-management skills especially dealing with time management skills. If it refers to the above concept, in this study, students haven't possessed time management skills. Consequently, they don't provide a specific time to learn the materials they obtain from teachers. The finding is in line with the study conducted by Meity et al (2017) on self-directed learning implementation through Problem Based Learning. In the learning and teaching activity, students mostly depend on the teachers. They are more passive in obtaining skills and competency.

### 3.3 Teachers' role

Learning strategy instructor is one of the main roles of the teacher in order to develop greater independence in learners (Oxford, 1990; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Thornton, 2010). By introducing strategy instruction, teachers can help to develop their learners' capacity to be independent learners. Reinders (2010, cf. Nalatambi et al, 2015) proposed a framework of skills that could be used by educators to increase learner autonomy. Reinders (2010) stated that there two approaches that can be used to foster autonomy namely specialist and general approaches. The specialist approaches were the program and support structures that were designed deliberately. It includes learner training, strategy instruction, self-access, advising or counselling, and specific tools. The general approach is the learner's action which can be stimulated, demonstrated, and observed by the educator. This includes identifying needs, setting goals, planning to learn, selecting resources, selective learning strategies, practice, monitoring progress, and assessment and revision. The study found that during Learning From Home Period teachers play most of their role as instructor and facilitator. As instructors, teachers provided some instructions through materials or subject matters to be learned by the students. Moreover, students are asked or instructed to complete certain assignments within the time limit set up through the learning application used. In this activity, students are fostered to learn to have a responsibility and be able to accomplish certain tasks in accordance with the time given. Meanwhile, as facilitators, teachers provided opportunities for the students to discuss and ask questions through an online application provided. Even, certain questions asked through WhatsApp answered directly by the teachers. Usuki (2001 in Chanphirun et al, 2012) also agree that students need to be trained and motivated to become independent learners. She emphasizes teachers' role as facilitators. In this context, teachers help students to obtain independent learning skills and competencies.

The last part of teachers' role in learning and teaching in promoting students' independence of learning is monitoring and evaluating students learning progress. Based on the interview, it's found that teachers monitor students' activity through learning applications used based on students' and teachers' agreements such as Google classroom, Email, WhatsApp, Moodle, and other learning applications. Feedback was given directly through those applications to let the students know their own learning progress and ability. Meanwhile, an evaluation was given through quizzes, assignments, mid-test, and final test. Ebata (2010) stated that generating

successful learners is developed by promoting learners' autonomy. Ebata further stated that there are three elements that he considers the most important - effective content and teachers, a student-centred cooperative learning environment, and meaningful skills teaching. He urged that autonomous learners automatically have a higher motivation to learn. If it refers to what Ebata (2010) proposed, there are two of the three elements of promoting independent learners that are not conducted maximally in this study; a student-centred cooperative learning environment and meaningful skills teaching. Students can't be involved in cooperative learning activity since they are allowed only to complete the subject matter individually due to covid-19 outbreak. Meanwhile, meaningful teaching cannot be performed optimally due to internet connection, and sometimes internet data are troubled. To this extent, the implementation of teachers' role in promoting students' independent learning during the Learning From Home Period is mostly related to the presence of instruments that support the success of learning from home policy.

### 3.4 Advantages and Obstacles of Employing Independent Learning During Learning From Home Period

Balcikanh (2010) said that it needs for the students to have the idea of self-assessment. Students need to assess their learning progress if they want to become independent learners. By doing so, students will be able to promote learning success. Moreover, Arndt (2017) stated that it's important for students to check up on all their experiences during the learning process. It's undertaken to know many aspects that work well and need to be improved further. It can be identifying academic weaknesses and strengths. In this study, students were asked to reflect on their own implementation of independent learning, the advantages of applying it in particular.

And based on the interview, it's found the following advantages from the perspectives of students and teachers. 1) Students can promote their learning autonomy through looking for new information on the internet or other learning sources, 2) Students perceive it more enjoyable in managing time and other activities, 3) Students have wide opportunity to interact or discuss the subject matter with others or teacher though it's conducted through online, 4) In the conventional method, the use of online learning is hardly ever done. In this Learning from the Home period, students are introduced even forced to use a new method of learning is that online learning. It makes them engage with learning technology which provides unlimited knowledge to be accessed. Moreover, students learn more new things.

Other reflections deal with obstacles found in applying independent learning during the Learning from the Home period. Based on the interview, it's identified the following obstacles. 1) Some students are left the subject matter behind since they don't get comprehensive information given by the teacher. It's caused by the technical problem is that internet connection not working well, running out internet data or some online application suddenly is troubled. Moreover, some students who live in the countryside aren't gaining information about certain topics or assignments given by the teacher, 2) Students find difficulties dealing with the subject matter learned. Based on the students' view, it can be solved when the teacher explains the material directly to them. Students lose the opportunity to involve in the directive and participative discussion where they share information with one another, 3) students have no chance to do the field practice which is oriented to deepen their

understanding of the materials. They don't get the opportunity to obtain directive skills that will be used in the workplace.

To the advantages and obstacles found, students gave responses or comments that should be the policymaker and school authority concerns. The students considered that the conventional teaching and learning method (face-to-face lecture) is better than the online learning method that is the most method applied during learning from the home period. Students encounter a lot of difficulties in dealing with materials learned. Some students claimed that it's not just learning from home, but it's more doing the assignments from home. They get more assignments than the subject matters to be learned and comprehended. Teachers provide less opportunity to explain the materials than to give assignments. Other students even feel more tired and bored with the activities done. They don't have the opportunity to involve indirect interaction with teachers and classmates, and other students become more stressed.

#### 4. Conclusion

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that 1) Students use books, modules, portable computers, and mobile phones as the media to apply independent learning. Certain teachers use online applications such as Goggle Classroom, Email, Whatsapp, and websites to engage students with internet learning instruments. Dealing with learning sources, students use files in the form of PPT, PDF, a word containing the materials, learning videos, notes, google, youtube, assignments distributed by teachers, and some other materials gained by the students themselves from the internet. 2) Students haven't possessed time management skills. They don't provide a specific time to learn the materials they obtain from teachers. They only used the learning schedule provided by the campus. 3) Teachers play most of their roles as instructors and facilitators. As instructors, teachers provided some instructions through materials or subject matters to be learned by the students. Moreover, students are asked or instructed to complete certain assignments within the time limit set up through the learning application used. Meanwhile, as facilitators, teachers provided opportunities for the students to discuss and ask questions through an online application provided. Even, certain questions asked through Whatsapp answered directly by the teachers, 4) There are some advantages and obstacles that could be the policymakers and school authority concerns in order to promote optimal self-learning during this covid-19 outbreak.

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