Teachers Challenges and Strategies of Using Microsoft Office 365 in Teaching Online Classroom during Pandemic

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Abstract

This study aims to explain (1) the teachers challenges in using Microsoft Office 365 in online teaching classroom during the pandemic, and (2) the strategies used by teachers to solve their problems in teaching online classes during the pandemic. The participants of this research were the teachers of SD Mustajabah. A qualitative method was employed in this research and using interviews via WhatsApp as a data collection technique. The findings showed that teachers had the challenges such as (1) operating the Microsoft Office 365 during online learning, and (2) discovering the suitable materials to gain students' attention during the online class. The strategies used by teachers to solve their problems in teaching online classes such as (1) maintaining the communication with parents of students, (2) developing thoughtful and creative materials, (3) making new agreements regarding online class.

Keywords: Challenges, Microsoft Office 365, Online Teaching, Strategies

Introduction

In mid-March 2020, the condition of education in Indonesia changed because of the current COVID-19 pandemic. It is strengthened by the Circular Letter of the Indonesian Minister of Education and Culture Number 4 of 2020 regarding the Implementation of Education Policies in an Emergency for the Spread of COVID-19. As a result, precisely on March 16, 2020, all schools were simultaneously forced to conduct distance learning. This condition is due to the COVID-19 pandemic that attacked Indonesia. Rapid transmission of COVID-19 must be stopped as soon as possible by maintaining a safe distance and avoiding the crowd. Consequently, school as a place of activity that is quite intense for physical contact is affected.

Learning activities that were initially carried out face-to-face have turned into learning from home. These changes in the learning system force the school system to implement distance education, also known as online learning. Usually, the teacher transmits knowledge to students, then students learn from the teacher's instructions face-to-face. Teachers are responsible for completing assignments for each subject, and students must complete learning assignments based on the teacher's instructions (Cheng 2020).

Due to being affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers must know how to ensure the quality of their students' learning activities during online classes, and at the same time, teachers must also know how to properly develop students' physical and mental learning during the pandemic (Zhao, Zhou, and Liu 2020). When teachers find it challenging to get to know the students individually during online classes, it can affect their lack of confidence in their ability to teach in online classes (Haverback, 2020). However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, teaching activities in schools must be changed from offline to online. Therefore, teachers inevitably must adapt to unusual classroom situations involving the internet and technology to conduct online learning with their students.

In this pandemic situation, each teacher must have alternative strategies to implement online classes. Since Teachers cannot meet students face-to-face, teachers must immediately adopt new teaching methods, making the best use of technology. At present, technology has developed so widely all over the world. Various technologies have been developed to help students find information, learn more insight, and others. Therefore, the use of applications can indeed be integrated into educational purposes. Besides that, the use of applications can also encourage innovation in the teaching and learning process. Even though this is quite challenging for the teachers and students, they may progressively find ways to use the application effectively.

As an educator, teachers should adapt and improve their teaching skills in various situations. Technology is also the focus, especially in this COVID-19 pandemic situation (Ali 2020). Technology has evolved rapidly and offers a wide range of tools that can be useful in helping teachers teach in online classes. In addition to teaching using technology, teachers should also consider the role of the internet and other social media platforms in educating students in learning (Topacio 2018). However, simply using the app is not enough to support educational purposes.

All teachers certainly try to do their best to find ways to teach students effectively on their own. They have an essential role in designing the class. Nevertheless, on the other hand, some teachers may experience various problems in teaching students when using the application in online classes during the pandemic situation. The ability of teachers to teach using technology encourages teachers to do more than delivering the material as usual. The poor connection also sometimes interferes with class communication, so that the teacher cannot give clear instructions or explain the material to students well. Some teachers may also experience difficulties in operating the application due to a lack of technical knowledge.

The government had suggested several applications that could be used as alternative applications in implementing online teaching and learning activities, one of which was Microsoft Office 365. This Microsoft Office 365 application is software empowered by Microsoft for users' needs in offices, businesses, and online education. Especially in education, Microsoft gives Office 365 users access for free and advantageous features for online classes (Suprianto, 2018). This application provides a variety of features that can facilitate teachers and students in the online learning process. Another advantage of Microsoft Office 365 is that it is simple to use with an easy-to-understand user interface. In addition, the benefits of using Microsoft Office 365 are that it provides work efficiency and increases productivity at work which is undoubtedly very helpful for teaching and learning activities.

At SD Mustajabah, several teachers have tried to use Microsoft Office 365 in teaching online classrooms. Nevertheless, sometimes some teachers still experience problems operating the existing application because they are not familiar with it. Teaching using applications during learning from home encourages teachers to think more about designing materials and finding suitable methods in the classroom. High-performance expectations, learning techniques, and time management are needed to support student engagement in the classroom (Tanis, 2020). In developing teaching methods, teachers must ensure that the series of activities can support the virtual environment itself so that the teaching and learning process can run effectively. Online learning will be more effective if teachers apply appropriate learning strategies and methods to teach their students.

From the explanation described above, the purpose of this study was to develop previous research on teaching online classroom during COVID-19, to investigate what are the challenges experienced by teachers in using Microsoft Office 365 in teaching online classes during the pandemic and the strategies used by teachers to solve their problems in

teaching online classes during the pandemic. Furthermore, this research may be helpful as a reference for teachers in choosing applications that can support online learning activities during the pandemic, which can also be one of the foundations for teachers to design more effective and meaningful learning activities during the pandemic.

Theory and Method

The researcher used a case study to investigate the challenges and strategies of using Microsoft Office 365 to teach online classrooms during the pandemic. The purpose of a case study is for researchers to obtain and examine data in a context or phenomenon. The selected cases can be students, teachers, or any part of the school. Case study data are used to comprehensively describe a case in real life (Yin, 2012). In this study, teachers' challenges and strategies in teaching online classrooms were explored in-depth during the pandemic in Indonesia.

The researcher carried out the data through interviews via WhatsApp. The interview is a face-to-face conversation or dialogue between the investigator or interviewer and the interviewee (Goode & Hatt, 1952). Several questions were prepared by the researcher to be then given to the teacher via WhatsApp. This study aims to find out the challenge teachers face in using Microsoft Office 365 in teaching online classrooms during the pandemic and their strategies to cope with the challenges they encountered in using the application. The researcher concluded the results after the data was collected.

The subjects of this study were teachers from SD Mustajabah. Of the five teachers, the researcher found their challenges in using Microsoft Office 365 in teaching online classrooms during the pandemic and their strategies to cope with the challenges they encountered in using the application. The researcher used the interview as a data collection technique. The researcher gave several questions, and the researcher interviewed the teachers via WhatsApp. The researcher asked several questions and then got answers from the teacher. The researcher uses several questions to interview teachers, which can be seen as follows:

Table 1. List of interview questions

No.	Questions
1.	Has the teacher used Microsoft Office 365 for teaching online classroom before pandemic?
2.	What features do the teacher use frequently from Microsoft Office 365?
3.	Are there difficult things in teaching the students through Microsoft Office 365?
4.	What are the challenges in using Microsoft Office 365 in teaching online classroom?
5.	What are the strategies used to solve the problems in using Microsoft Office 365 in teaching online classroom?

After the data analysis was done manually, the researcher explained the results of the interviews via WhatsApp. First, the data is sorted and explained related to the challenges in using Microsoft Office 365 in teaching online classrooms and strategies used by teachers to cope with the challenges they encounter in using the application, and then the researcher concluded the research results.

Findings and Discussion

Microsoft Office 365 is an online software created by Microsoft for users' needs in offices, business, and education. Especially in Microsoft education, with some of its features, it can be used as a medium for online classes. Thus, Microsoft Office 365 as an online

learning medium can be used by anyone, anywhere, at any time and, of course, by educators who are capable and clever in using Microsoft Office 365. Microsoft Office 365 is more than just Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, and Excel. Microsoft Office 365 is a cloud computing application designed to support communication and collaboration needs.

Distance learning groups can be created using Outlook, which is a feature of the Microsoft Office 365 package. In this group, all distance learning activities are carried out starting from collaborative activities, communication using chat, audio and video, online attendance, online exams, distance learning distance, course materials, and online worksheets. Communication via video conference can be done through the Teams application. Users can take advantage of the form feature for online attendance, where the attendance file link will be shared first, and then students fill in the attendance ID. Online exams can also use the form application in the Microsoft Office 365 package. In addition, online exams can be carried out in various settings, including online exam times, setting questions and grades, and other configurations that make it easier for students and teachers to carry out exams.

Then, on the online test results, online test scores can be seen directly through the computers of each student and teacher. With Teams, online learning can be done by bringing conversations, content, and apps together in one place. It also enables teachers to create more creative learning by building collaborative classrooms, connecting in professional learning communities, and connecting with fellow educators all on one page.

Behind the many benefits obtained, of course it has various obstacles that are felt by teachers and students. From the explanation above, this study investigated the challenges teachers face in using Microsoft Office 365 in teaching online classrooms during the pandemic and their strategies to cope with the challenges they encountered in using the application. The results found by the researcher are as follows:

Table 2. Challenges using Microsoft Office 365 in teaching online classroom

Teacher Opinion	Frequency
Sometimes it is not easy to get students to take online classes because they did not have a cell phone	1
Sometimes teachers/students do not get enough access to internet	1
I do not have the proper device so the application did not work smoothly	1
I sometimes find it challenging to create the materials	1
Students' tend to have short attention span during online classroom	1
It is pretty tricky to do online classes because the students are lazy and challenging to communicate with	1
The process of teaching and learning activities is sometimes not conducive	1

Table 3. Strategies used in using Microsoft Office 365 in teaching online classroom

Teacher Opinion	Frequency
Discuss more with the parents	1
Made a WhatsApp group chat as a backup, also to communicate more with the parents and students	1
Using video from YouTube as one of the sources of material	1
Developing a fun and thoughtful materials, quiz, and games as learning activities	1
Avoid giving student many tasks at one time	1
Give the student more time to finish their homework	1

1. **The Challenges using Microsoft Office 365 in teaching online classroom during the Pandemic**

Some of the challenges using Microsoft Office 365 in teaching online classroom are the operation of the application itself and discovering the suitable materials to gain students' attention during the online class.

a. **The Operation of Microsoft Office 365**

It is very particular that some teachers still have some problems while teaching students to use Microsoft Office 365. Some teachers are familiar with the existing features and can operate them correctly, but some others still have difficulty performing these features.

This problem does not only happen to teachers. Some students have difficulty operating the application, so inevitably, teachers must guide their students before starting their online learning to run well. In addition, teachers often find it difficult to manage students who do not come to class on schedule because many do not have a personal cell phone.

"Problems that often occur in my class is that the students do not understand well how to use the application, so I have to take time guiding them"

"Some of the students don't even have cell phones, they usually use their parents' cell phones and they cannot attend classes according to the schedule because they have to wait for their parents"

Not only that, as we know, a good network and an adequate device are also essential factors in conducting online classes. Unfortunately, it is not uncommon for teachers and students to experience problems when taking online classes because of the network and inadequate devices.

"The application doesn't run well on my device because my device is quite outdated, so the app often stops suddenly, also takes a long time to load"

"Some of my students do not have sufficient internet access, not all of them can afford it"

"I also quite often run out of quota when teaching, so I have to postpone the classes"

Some teachers still have difficulty conducting online classes due to external factors such as students who do not have personal devices, inadequate teacher equipment to access Microsoft Office 365, and network limitations that are still often experienced.

b. **Discovering the Suitable Materials to Gain Students' Attention during the Online Class.**

The teachers also admitted that they experienced some problems related to students' understanding during online learning. In addition, students testified that they were not enthusiastic about taking online classes.

"Students' tend to have short attention span during online classroom. Sometimes they ignore my instruction and said that they are lazy and others"

"It is pretty tricky to do online classes because the students are lazy and challenging to communicate with"

"The process of teaching and learning activities is sometimes not conducive, students often not interactive, they get bored easily"

Although Microsoft Office 365 has many advantageous features, teachers should keep discovering what materials will be suitable and compatible combined with Microsoft Office 365 itself. In addition, teachers should know what method and technique can support the class and make the students more excited while joining the online learning. In teaching the

students virtually, the teachers are challenged to motivate the students to learn and make the parents understand that the current situation is not easy.

All teachers realize that the current situation does not support face-to-face classes. In an online classroom, sometimes it makes the students get bored quickly when learning with the application. Therefore, the teachers should motivate their students to learn from home and always convince their parents to support their children in online learning during the pandemic. Teachers and parents have an essential role in controlling the students' learning and assessment.

2. The Strategies used in using Microsoft Office 365 in teaching online classroom during the Pandemic

The strategies used by the teachers consist of maintaining the communication with parents of students, developing thoughtful and creative materials, making new agreements regarding online class.

a. Maintaining the communication with parents of students

In conducting online classes, the role of students' parents is very much needed because not all students can operate Microsoft Office 365 alone by themselves.

"I chose to discuss more often with the parents so that they will regularly pay more attention about the online class and guide the students in using the application"

"I also made a group chat using WhatsApp as a backup platform so the parents and I can communicate better about the online classes"

To run a practical and conducive online class is not only a matter of equipment needed. In order for the class to run well, good communication between teachers and parents is also essential.

b. Developing thoughtful and creative materials

Teaching using virtual applications forces the teachers to inevitably be more creative in designing materials based on the current situation. So that students do not get bored with online classes, teachers must make activities more fun and thoughtful so that classroom learning can run effectively with a better interaction.

"I often ran out of time while making materials, so sometimes I chose to use video from YouTube as one of the sources of materials"

"I designed a fun and thoughtful materials so that my students would not get bored easily. I also made a more interactive quiz, and games as my main learning activities, not only theories"

In addition to developing creativity in designing materials by utilizing YouTube, the teacher also tries to design games for their students and gives some quizzes, and this is intended so that students do not become bored quickly when studying.

c. Making new agreements regarding online class

Generally, schools have a schedule that must be done on time. However, since the pandemic, schools have become more flexible in carrying out online classes. Teachers try to solve their problems while teaching in online classes by providing relief in time and the workload given.

"I do not want to burden my students with many homework, I also give them the simplest material"

"I give them the assignments as simple as possible and giving them time to submit assignments with a fairly long deadline especially for the students who used parents phone so that we all can pass this online learning in this pandemic situation more comfortably"

In a pandemic situation like this, students can get bored quickly if they have much homework. So instead, the teacher can apply some new class agreements about the schedule. Also, the teacher can provide simple materials and assignments that students can understand. Therefore, teachers are expected to provide their best way of teaching online classes through Microsoft Office 365 in a way that is no less effective.

The findings indicate that teachers still have some problems while operating Microsoft Office 365 in their classrooms. Some teachers are familiar with the current application in teaching, but some are still having difficulty operating it correctly. However, teachers must ensure that all students are ready to join the class or not. Before starting online classes, teachers should guide their students to join classes through the application. A good internet connection and internet data also have an impact on the learning process. It can be a big problem for teachers when they have a terrible connection or phone data runs out while the class is running. The success of the online learning process depends on the teacher and how the teacher can adapt to the classroom situation itself and control students during the learning process.

Teachers need to be more creative in developing their teaching methods in their online classes. As we know, regular classes are very different from online classes. Teachers cannot see their students and control them directly. Therefore, teachers must provide other methods that can support their teaching in online classes. When students get bored during class, it is difficult for the teacher to control the class well. Most of the teachers realize that teaching through the app sometimes makes them feel very tired and bored.

Although teaching using Microsoft Office 365 is one of the best options, teachers have to adapt new schedules and new learning methods to teach their students in online classes. Not all teachers can cover their online teaching through the application. Teachers should think about how to prepare themselves to teach their students in online classes effectively. Because teachers cannot control students directly, it is difficult to ascertain how far they understand the material. Some students are easy to learn when their teacher mentors them during online learning, but others require more attention. The strategies and materials designed by the teacher have an impact on the online learning process.

We know some of the challenges above that teachers are encouraged to find their best strategies to implement their online classes during the pandemic. Some strategies, such as maintaining the communication with parents of students, can help teachers track their students' enhancement during online learning. Teachers also have to make new agreements regarding online class schedules. The schedule aims to help teachers control students while studying from home. In addition, teachers can work with parents to help students manage their time to study from home.

With the impact of online learning, teachers cannot control their students directly. Therefore, teachers must design simple materials and assignments. This means that students can more easily understand the material themselves. There are several strategies that teachers choose when having problems in online teaching. Every teacher has different problems in implementing online learning, so it depends on the teacher. Designing simple materials and assignments are expected to help students learn individually at home.

Conclusion

Utilizing Microsoft Office 365 as a medium in teaching online classes is probably the most suitable alternative in this pandemic situation, as conducting face-to-face learning is not possible. It has various features which can be helpful for both teachers and students. Nevertheless, behind the many benefits obtained, it has various obstacles that teachers experience. Every teacher should redesign their strategies and methods for teaching their

students in online classes. The results showed that not all teachers were familiar with the application. They still need guidance to learn how to use Microsoft Office 365 and develop thoughtful and creative material. The strategies used by teachers to solve their problems in using applications for online teaching classes consist of maintaining communication with students' parents, developing thoughtful and creative materials, making new agreements about online classes. As a result of this situation, teachers have to learn more about technology and find their teaching solutions. The teachers have to rearrange the new schedule so that it can help them to teach effectively. Teaching and learning in this situation have challenges for teachers, but they can develop themselves and make their online classes well because teachers have a significant role in their classes. The innovative strategy is hoped to help teachers carry out their duties as teachers during the pandemic.

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