

## Conference

# The Online Learning Policies in UIN Suska Riau During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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**Abstract.** This research was carried out after the implementation of online learning policies during the COVID-19 pandemic, which was associated with various obstacles in the learning process. The research was conducted at the Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences, Universitas Islam Negeri Sultan Syarif Kasim (UIN Suska) in Riau. The objectives of this research were: 1) to determine how online learning policies were implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic; and 2) to examine the barriers to implementing these policies. This study used qualitative descriptive methods and Van Meter and Van Horn's policy implementation models. The findings indicated that the online learning policies were successfully implemented, even though they were not optimally carried out. The barriers to implementation were inadequate connectivity speeds, lack of enthusiasm and response from students during the learning process, the increasing burden of internet quota, and unfavorable environmental conditions.

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## 1. Introduction

Education is one of the crucial elements for future generations. The COVID-19 pandemic, which has been transmitted in Indonesia since March 2020, has impacted various sectors, including the education sector. The World Health Organization (WHO) has officially declared the outbreak of COVID-19 to be a public health emergency of international concern. In this case, the Indonesian government took several steps to prevent and break the chain of the virus transmission by limiting activities outside the home and implementing work, study, and worship activities from home. Meanwhile, education and learning activities for students in the pandemic are still going even though it is carried out online.

The online learning process at the Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences of Universitas Islam Negeri Sultan Syarif Kasim (UIN Suska Riau) utilizes various application platforms to facilitate virtual learning, i.e., *Zoom*, *Google Meet*, *Messenger*, *Google Classroom*, *Whatsapp*, and others. Through those applications, lecturers can conduct

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discussions, provide lecture material, and present them to the students while giving assignments and monitoring them. This distance learning system requires lecturers and students to be proficient in implementing today's technology.

The online learning process offers convenience and comfort because it can be done anywhere and anytime as long as there is internet coverage. In addition, the flexible implementation of online learning benefits students in saving time and transportation costs. However, on the other hand, there are several complaints against the implementation of online learning policies, which can be concluded as follows:

1. Internet broadband access availability is still limited and less stable in some areas;
2. The increasing burden of internet quota due to the use of several applications;
3. Impact on eye health and psychological condition of students;
4. Noise disturbance in the surrounding environment interferes with students' concentration on the learning process.

The implementation of online learning in the time of the COVID-19 pandemic impacts the decline of education quality in Indonesia. There is a gap in the quality between regions as not all of them can carry out education optimally. Based on research on online learning by (1), the measurement of respondents has a relatively low perception of the benefits of online learning.

Based on the description above, the research problems in this study are: (1) How is the implementation of online learning policies during the COVID-19 pandemic at the Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences at Universitas Islam Negeri Sultan Syarif Kasim (UIN Suska Riau)? (2) What are the hindering factors in implementing online learning policies during the COVID-19 pandemic at the Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences of Universitas Islam Negeri Sultan Syarif Kasim?

## 2. Theoretical Framework

### 1. Public Policy

Thomas R. Dye, in Solichin (2014:14), defined public policy as "whatever government chooses to do or not to do." Public policy is everything the government does and does not do. Another definition of public policy is from Carl Friedrich (2). He stated that public policy is a proposed course of action of a person, group, or government within a given environment providing opportunities and obstacles that the policy was proposed to utilize and overcome to reach a goal or realize an objective or purpose.

In essence, a policy is carried out by government officials who usually aim to improve public welfare. The study of public policy is extensive, covering various sectors including social, political, legal, economic, defense and security, education, health, welfare, and others. A public policy will not achieve its purposes without realizing or implementing the policies that have been set. In general, the term *implementasi* (implementation) in the Great Indonesian Dictionary (*Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia*) means execution or establishment.

## 2. Education Policy

Education policy (3) embodies the vision and mission of education based on human and political philosophy in the context of the community's political, social, economic, and cultural situations. Education policy in its implementation is based on the national education system as stated in Law No. 20 of 2003 (4).

In providing quality education services, national education standards are used as a reference which contain minimum criteria regarding all levels of education in Indonesia. The following are the national education standards based on the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture (*Permendikbud*) Number 3 of 2020 article 4, namely Competency Standard, Content Standards, Process Standards, Assessment Standards, Educators and Education Personnel Standards, Facilities and Infrastructure Standards, Management Standards, and Financing Standards (5).

## 3. Implementation of Online Learning Policy

Online learning began to be implemented through the Circular Letter of Minister of Education and Culture Number 36962/MPK.A/HK/2020 on March 13, 2020. Then on March 26, 2020, the Circular Letter of the Minister of Education and Culture Number 4/2020 regarding the implementation of education policy during the COVID-19 pandemic regulates several essential points in carrying out educational activities. For Islamic Universities, the implementation of online lectures is also strengthened through the Circular Letter of Minister of Religion Number 657/03/2020 regarding efforts to prevent COVID-19 in Islamic Universities.

Online learning or also known as e-learning according to Setyosari (2007), refers to how lesson or course material is presented in digital form so that it can be stored in electronic form. Based on the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture (*Permendikbud*) No. 109/2013 (6), online learning or distance learning has the following objectives: (a) providing higher education services for community groups who cannot attend face-to-face education (b) expanding access and facilitating higher education services in education and learning.

#### 4. Indicators and Successful Policies Implementation

There are several models of policy implementation, one of which, according to (7), is the Donald S. Van Meter and Carl E. Van Horn models, which explain that there are six variables that affect implementation performance, namely:

##### a. Policy standards and objectives

Policy standards and objectives must be clear and measurable so they will not cause misinterpretations that can lead to conflict among implementing agents.

##### b. Resources

Policies need to be supported by resources, both human and non-human.

##### c. Communication between organizations and strengthening activities

In various cases, the implementation of a program sometimes needs to be supported and coordinated with other agencies to achieve the desired success.

##### d. Characteristics of implementing agents

The extent to which interest groups provide support for policy implementation. It includes the characteristics of the participants, i.e., supporting or rejecting, as well as the nature of public opinion in the environment and whether the political elite supports the policy implementation.

##### e. Social, economic, and political conditions

Social, economic, and political conditions include environmental, economic resources that can support the successful implementation of policies.

##### f. Implementer's disposition

The disposition of the implementer includes three essential things: (1) The response of the implementer to the policy, which will affect his willingness to implement it. (2) Cognition, i.e., his understanding of the policy. (3) The intensity of the implementer's disposition, i.e., the value preference owned by the implementer.

## 2.1. Research Methods

This study uses a descriptive qualitative research method. According to Creswell (8), qualitative descriptive research is research conducted by using an approach to explore and understand a central phenomenon. Data collection techniques used are observation, interviews, and documentation. The sources of data that researchers need are as follows:

### 1. Primary data

Primary data is data obtained directly from respondents in the field through observations and interviews with related parties regarding the implementation of online learning policies at the Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences of UIN Suska Riau.

## 2. Secondary Data

Secondary data is data obtained through intermediary media or indirectly in literature or academic manuscripts, newspapers, magazines, pamphlets, or archives, both published and unpublished.

## 3. Results and Discussion

Practically, policy implementation is a process that is so complex that it is often politically charged with the intervention of various interests. The complexity of implementation is not only shown by the number of actors or organizational units involved but also because the implementation process is influenced by various complex variables, both individual and organizational variables. Each of these influence variables also interacts with each other. Six variables influence the success of policy implementation according to Donald Van Meter and Carl Van Horn, namely as follows:

### 1. Policy standards and objectives

The implementation of online learning policies at the faculty of economics and social sciences in UIN Suska Riau is based on the national university standards listed in Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture (*Permendikbud*) Number 3 of 2020 article 4, and its implementation is strengthened through a Circular Letter of Minister of Religion and the Rector's Decree (5). Based on those, the rectorate and Deputy Dean I formulated the SOP for online learning appropriate for the academic activities.

The implementation of a policy can be categorized as successful or unsuccessful. A benchmark that can be used for reference or guide is also needed to determine the level of success. The results of interviews show that the success of online learning can be seen in terms of students' understanding of the material presented by the lecturers and supported by students' enthusiasm.

### 2. Resources

The online learning process is closely related to the use of information and communications technology. As time goes by, students can adapt to today's developing technology. For lecturers, during the implementation of this policy, training was also

conducted in UIN Suska Riau. However, not all lecturers took part in this training, which means that lecturers can do self-taught in operating technology and applications during online learning until they can operate them.

In addition to the quality of human resources, funding support and adequate facilities are also needed. Some students are assumed to have a smartphone, laptop, or computer. However, the problem lies in the quality of the internet network. In general, the speed of internet access in Indonesia is still below the average; internet broadband access is still limited and less stable in some areas.

### 3. Communication between organizations and strengthening activities

Communication aims to facilitate coordination, integration, and synchronization so that policies run effectively and efficiently. To facilitate the coordination process, at the Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences, UIN Suska Riau, there is a system using the *Google Classroom* (GCR) application. The GCR account of each lecturer is used as a report on lecture activities that have been carried out, including time, application, and links used. The account is also linked to the GCR account belonging to the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC). That way, the QAC can monitor how each lecturer carries out the lecture process. From the results of monitoring and supervision, it can be assessed whether the lecturer has carried out lectures according to the SOP or not; later, there will be an evaluation carried out by the Dean through Deputy Dean I.

The communication process during lectures carried out by students and lecturers must be following the SOPs that have been set. Based on the SOP, there are 16 meetings in one semester where four meetings are required to be held face-to-face through the Google Meet or Zoom application. For other meetings, lecturers are given the freedom to use various applications. That way, lecturers are given opportunities to teach with their respective learning styles to avoid the boredom during the lessons.

However, a problem occurs when students do not turn on their cameras during lectures when the lecturers ask them. This problem can be caused by poor internet connection; it can also come from the students who are reluctant to attend lectures. It is also possible that many students do not want to turn on the camera by making excuses for poor network quality when in reality, it is not like that. This situation is a challenge for lecturers to be wiser in assessing students during the online learnings.

### 4. Characteristics of implementing agents

The characteristics of implementing agents in the study can be seen from their commitment and consistency in carrying out policies under the applicable mechanism.

Whether in online or offline lectures, UIN Suska Riau is committed to maintaining, guaranteeing, and sustainably improving the quality of education. For this reason, there is supervision and monitoring at the faculty level, namely the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) as an extension of the Quality Assurance Institute (QAI) of UIN Suska Riau. The monitoring process is carried out through GCR as described above.

The consistency of implementing agents is also essential to achieve the desired goals. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected many sectors so that some parents of students have difficulty paying Single Tuition Fee (UKT). For this, in each semester, UIN Suska Riau tries to provide help to ease the Single Tuition Fee payments for students. The help is in the form of reducing the UKT payment by a few percent.

There has been no significant effort during this online learning in administrative services at the Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences. At the beginning of the pandemic, online correspondence was enforced, but only for a short time; now, correspondence is done offline, so students still have to go to campus.

#### 5. Social, economic, and political conditions

The reality that occurs in society today is that the economic condition in Indonesia has decreased. This decrease is in line with the spike in COVID-19 cases, so the government issued a policy of Large-Scale Social Restrictions (PSBB) or Restrictions on Micro-Community Activities (PPKM). The implementation of this policy has a negative impact on several sectors that can cause business losses, a decrease in income, and layoffs. Based on the study results, most students complained about the increased internet quota burden compared to offline lectures. Students expect internet quota subsidies from both the campus and the government. During the implementation of this policy, students most likely received internet quota assistance twice only from the Ministry of Religion, but it was not evenly distributed to all students.

Meanwhile, the environmental conditions where students live during the implementation of online learning are different; there are students whose living areas are conducive, and some are not. Students who live in dense and crowded housing are often disturbed by noise during the lesson. This disturbance certainly interferes with their concentrations so that the material presented cannot be adequately understood.

#### 6. Implementer's disposition

Disposition is defined as the tendency, desire, or agreement of the implementers to implement the policy. Implementing online learning policies is one of the government's steps in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. All parties, both lecturers and students,

inevitably have to carry out lectures online. Based on the results of research conducted on several lecturers, it can be concluded that the online learning policies are a reasonably appropriate step in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. With the massive spread of the virus, lectures cannot be carried out through the face-to-face method.

Furthermore, implementer understanding regarding their respective duties and roles is also crucial. In implementing these policies, staff, employees, and lecturers have received direction from the faculty, and there are even regular evaluations carried out so that the policies run according to the desired goals. Therefore, both staff and lecturers must have fully understood their respective duties.

Based on the results of the study, several factors hinder the implementation of online learning policies at the Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences, UIN Suska Riau, including the following:

1. Inadequate internet network in some areas where students live. The quality of the internet network in each region is different, so that not all students can take part in learning activities properly. Often, the internet network is disconnected due to bad weather and power outages.
2. Lack of enthusiasm and response from students during the learning and discussion process in online lectures. The lack of direct communication and interaction can make students feel bored, less enthusiastic about attending lectures. In addition, the monotonous teaching style of lecturers can also reduce the enthusiasm for learning from students.
3. The increasing burden of internet quotas for students. The use of applications with video conference services can significantly increase internet quota usage.
4. Unfavorable living conditions. Students' concentration during the learning process can be disrupted due to noise around the home environment. This disturbance often happens so that students cannot listen and fully understand the explanation given by the lecturer.



## 4. Conclusion and Suggestions

### 4.1. Conclusion

Based on the results of research that has been carried out, it can be seen that the implementation of online learning policies in a time of the COVID-19 pandemic at the Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences at UIN Suska Riau has been successfully implemented, even though it has yet to be optimally done. The hindering factors in the implementation of online learning policies during the COVID-19 pandemic at the Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences Universitas Islam Negeri Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau include inadequate connectivity speeds, lack of enthusiasm and response from students during the learning process, increasing burden of internet quota, and unfavorable environmental conditions.

### 4.2. Suggestion

Suggestions that can be given based on this research are:

1. For the government, more efforts are needed in realizing internet access justice, considering that there are still many regions that do not experience adequate internet access in various regions, especially 3T areas.
2. Lecturers are expected to be more innovative and creative in formulating the lesson plan for online learning so the lectures can be more interactive and practical to optimize the lessons.
3. For the faculty, especially the service and administration department, it is hoped that online-based correspondence management can be accessed through the official website portal of the Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences Universitas Islam Negeri Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau.
4. Students are expected to adopt and follow the learning process well so that learning objectives can be achieved. In addition, by utilizing technology and communication media, students are also expected to innovate and increase creativity during online lectures.
5. For the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) of Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences of Universitas Islam Negeri Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau, it is hoped that there will be socialization and efforts to provide a complaint service forum that

students can access to submit complaints if there are lecturers who do not carry out lectures according to the SOP.

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