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Access to Online Education for Indonesian Incarcerated Students

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Abstract

The covid-19 pandemic forced numerous educational institutions to deliver online learning to students. However, nonformal school at prison face a difficult choice as greater access to advanced technologies in prison is security breaches. The majority of incarcerated students in formal and nonformal school in the prison are cut off from the internet and the options for distance learning are limited. On the other hand, many volunteer teachers at prison schools are not allowed to teach by face-to-face methods during the pandemic. This study uncovered the possibility of nonformal school at Serang prison to offer online learning by collaborating with university. However, the online learning program and curriculum is modified to meet the current needs of students and condition. Therefore, the online education programs provide various materials of personal and social skills to the incarcerated students. These programs are important for mental and personal well-being of incarcerated students during 'lockdown' or limited access situation in prison. The accessibility to online learning education for incarcerated students in prison-based schools will transform the Indonesian corrections system in the future. For educational purpose, though, prisons that offer educational services such as Equivalency Programs, need to provide the IT facilities for the incarcerated students to access their education. By offering access to education, it will give young inmates the opportunity to build a better life after release.

Keywords

incarcerated students, information technology, online education, equivalency program

1 Introduction

The covid-19 pandemic is the world's first health and education crisis. Furthermore, UNESCO released that there were 290.5 million students who had disrupted from their learning activities due to this pandemic (2020). This situation forced many countries in the world to create educational policies to tackle the pandemic situation. The Indonesian Minister of Education and Culture issued Circular Number 4 of 2020 concerning the implementation of education policy in the dissemination of Covid-19 for all formal and non-formal education sector to carry out online or distance education as a substitute for face-to-face (conventional) education in the classroom. All students in all education level are asked to study from home (Dewi, 2020). This requires all educational institutions to adapt and familiar with the concept of distance learning using technology. In fact, the information technology play an important role as a medium and learning resource for students in Indonesia and around the world. Online learning is usually done deliberately using network information and communication technology in teaching and learning. Online learning is a kind of learning that uses internet networks to access, and connect to learning material and resources and it gives the ability to generate various types of learning interaction between students and teachers (Firman & Rahayu, 2020).

However, the use of ICT for learning is not common in prison-based school. The primary reason is related to security breaches. Most correctional facilities have not provided ICT and internet for incarcerated students. Prison administrator also concerned about high cost of providing advance technology for learning, such as software, licensing and cost for internet networking. The majority of incarcerated students do not have direct access to the internet and rely on the prison officers for using technology for specific purposes (Situmorang, 2019). Access to the technology-based learning and resources such as tablets, internet, computers is difficult due to high security units and restriction of using high technology (De Giorgi, 2006). In Australia, most of incarcerated also do not have an access to

internet and information-based technology (Farley & Hopkins, 2017). Furthermore, Reiman and Leighton (2010) also mentioned that incarcerated will difficult to access information system and technology, include for education purposes as prison historically, is an isolated place and has limited activities. Mobile phones, internet-enable computer and tablet are typically banned. These limitations put incarcerated students of being left behind in a society network.

In Indonesia, many adult and children prisons provide educational program such as library services, vocational education, equivalency education, religious education, cultural activities, as well as mainstream education for young inmates which are included the academic subject (Torlone & Vryonides, 2016). These 'special educational services' for adult and youth who are in prison is part of commitment of Indonesian government to implement the national policy in lifelong learning as state in national law number 20 year 2003 article (5) point (5) 'every citizen has the right to improve his/her education quality along his/her life.' Prison education has been considered as a means to bring benefits to prisoners, not only in term of resettlement, but more so to improve the employability among prisoners when they back into society. In Serang prison, there are some educational programs include equivalency education (lower and upper-secondary level), vocational education, training and courses, religious and art education. These educational programs are mainly served young incarcerated, male and female, who are still school age category. During normal situation, the learning programs are offered in traditional way. Teachers from prison administrator, adult prisoners who has academic qualification, volunteer teachers from community and university students are teach regularly in the prison class. However, during Covid-19 situation, this face-to-face learning are stopped due to avoid the spread of the covid-19 virus. When the mainstream school outside prison are move to online learning due to this pandemic, the use of advanced technologies in prison-based education program are less commonly found. The primary reason for Serang prison does not provide their equivalency education to access advanced technology is security and limited ICT facilities. However, the Serang prison has a computer lab and mostly used for computer-based national exams and for prison management purpose. Incarcerated students are not allowed to access this facility for daily-educational activities. But, in this Covid-19 pandemic situation, online learning is necessity to keep incarcerated students learn and study. Therefore, since April 2020, the Serang prison started to conduct a virtual learning for all equivalency education students.

Information and communication technology (ICT) for education play an important role in the current situation. It is can be an effective tool in prison education in which incarcerated students are able to connect with teachers from outside prison. As volunteer teachers are restricted to visit school prison during Covid-19 pandemic, learning process can be implemented via virtual learning. Whatever the situation, according to international conventions and national education policy, incarcerated students have the same right to education as other formal education institutions. For all children and young people, education process helps to develop individual character and personality. For prisoners, it is the opportunities to obtain knowledge and skill that can assist them in their successful society reintegration upon release. They also can obtain secondary school certificate or diploma during imprisonment. Prisoners are among a group who are not allow the full inclusion with disabilities and immigrant, resulting them in social exclusion (Barreiro-Gen, Novo-Corti, & Varela-Candamio, 2013).

This paper explores an Indonesian trial of virtual learning on prison-based secondary school, which attempted to improve access to nonformal secondary school for incarcerated students during Covid-19 pandemic. Although the availability of ICT tools in Indonesian prison is mainly for supporting the prison management and administrators, during difficult times it can also be utilize for education for prisoners with modification of learning methods. One of the benefits of using ICT in the learning process for incarcerated students is to prevent isolation of the 'communication society' in which the world is becoming more informed and globalized.

2 Methods

This study utilizes qualitative research approach with case study method. The case study method is suitable for understanding the phenomenon within local context. Meriam (1998) outlined that the case study design is employed to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved. The case study research is conducted in Rutan Serang, Banten Province. The aim of case study research is to examine and document youth prisoner learning experience using technology while learning. A total 20 incarcerated students from lower and upper secondary-based school in Serang adult prison participated in online interview and observations. Ethical considerations were carefully attended

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to, 'informed consent, confidentiality, obtaining the necessary permission, privacy, anonymity and encouraging participants to speak freely without fear' (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2009). Researcher also participated in online learning activities and did some online teaching. During online interview and observation, all young incarcerated students shared their stories and their viewpoints regarding the experience of using technology for their learning. Although the findings cannot be generalized to the larger population, the young incarcerated students' role within the environment under they carry out their sentences excludes the wider society, while the shared experiences may be similar for incarcerated community.

This study used an inducted approach. The method of qualitative analysis used within this research is thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a method used to 'identify, analyze and report themes with data' (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Key themes across questions were developed and responses to individual online interviews were categorized and presented according to relevant themes. This procedure allows for rich interpretation of the data in which every theme was developed from the data, categories, insights and understandings. This inductive process enabled sense making and ensured that researchers do not overlay their own interpretations on the findings. In developing categories and themes, the researcher began with raw data from the online interview followed by several codes and then onto the general categories and themes. The themes connect each other to display a chronological structure based on the research questions. After the procedures are completed on research sites, we approached the final step, which is representing and reporting the findings.

3 Results and Discussion

Education for incarcerated youth is core aspect of rehabilitation for delinquents and incarcerated young people. In Indonesia, all young prisoners had access to education if they wished and a wide range of learning opportunities was available, with especially basic and secondary education. When incarcerated youth in Serang prison entered the prison for the first time, they will be interrogated about their previous educational journey, and suggested to access the prison school that suit them. Incarcerated students in Serang prison were appreciating the opportunity to catch up with education. However, during Covid-19 pandemic situation, there were limited learning activities due to limited access for teachers to come to learning place. In this case, the need of online learning in prison-based school unavoidable.

3.1 ICT tools in prison school

ICT tools in Serang prison are provided mostly to support the prison management and administrators. There is limited access for incarcerated students to use the ICT facilities. The ICT room only provided for students who take a national final examination, because the examination is computer based. The security of ICT is a main concern in prison, such restrictions around internet access is applied for all incarcerated students. Therefore, when online resources is needed for learning, the students is rely heavily on teachers. Regarding this, the use of ICT tools in prison education need to be informed to the educational policy and public that the ICT should not be a 'leisure tools' for incarcerated students. But, it is a tool to provide an up-to-date information and qualification for all incarcerated students which improve social reintegration changes. Previous studies have looked that the use of computers and the internet (Reisdorf & Jewkes, 2016) in prison education. In Serang prison case, if all incarcerated students are permitted to access ICT for educational purposes, the digital literacy skills of all students is needed. Furthermore, during Covid-19 pandemic situation, the need of ICT and digital systems in prison-based school is unavoidable to support more access to learning. The teachers from outside prison can allow incarcerated students to participate in distance learning. Flexible access to learning in secondary prison-based school may also enable effective performance management on learning. Without it, incarcerated students will not be at good situation for learning.

The development of education in prison become a growing attention for many countries in the world, including Indonesia. In fact, most countries acknowledged the important of having the rules and regulation to support education and training in prison as well as its purposes and goals. Some countries, including Indonesia have a legal right on conducting education and training in prison. It is because education and training activities have the potential to reduce recidivism for incarcerated students and it will improve their well-being. The consequences of the development of education and training in prison is the demand for ICT and internet facilities to introduce E-learning in a way of ensuring learners to receive

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learning while traditional method of learning cannot be conducted. However, research finding in Serang prison have shown that incarcerated students tend to have limited access to ICT and the internet, which often related to concerns about the associated security risk.

The use of new technologies to introduce e-learning is a way of ensuring learners are able to undertake a more tailored learning pathway and to gain access to personalized learning support, amongst other benefits. In most international correctional facilities, such as Australia (Farley et al., 2015), Spain (Barreiro-Gen & Novo-Corti, 2015), the United Kingdom (Reisdorf & Jewkes, 2016) and most states in the United States (Gorgol & Sponsler, 2011), prisoners are permitted to access computer for education and training purpose. Some of them also allow prisoners to use computer and internal for legal purposes. The use of ICT also important to ensure prison administrator can remain relevant and provide a continuity of those prisoners who are moved to another institution or who are serving short-term sentences. Research findings have shown that incarcerated students in Serang prison tend to have limited access to ICT and the Internet, which related to the availability of number of ICT tools for all incarcerated students. However, during Covid-19 pandemic, incarcerated students in Serang prison need access to distance learning.

3.2 E-learning during Covid-19

Since March 2020, when the Covid-19 pandemic spread throughout Indonesia, most students in mainstream schools are sent home and teacher have to teach online from home. This situation also happen in secondary school at Serang Prison. As most of the teachers are from outside prison, the decision to stop sending teacher volunteers to give classes during covid-19 pandemic in Serang prisons was a difficult. Classes was stopping for two months, from March to April 2020, and this mean that the incarcerated students were in lack of positive activities in prison. Secondary education in Serang prison, which typically often involving outside volunteers are in transition during covid-19 pandemic. It has been complex situation where visitors and volunteer teachers are not allowed to enter the prison. To solve the problem, online learning is offered in various lengths. The learning programs are designed only two days per week and was conducted in hall area so all students can be involved with one teacher using video conference. E-learning in Serang prison secondary school is more in simple definition than other understanding of e-learning. For example, Hammerschick (2010) took the understanding of e-learning include 'education via the internet, via networks or standalone computer, web-based application (WBT), computer-based (CBT) applications and virtual classroom.' In Serang prison, e-learning was held use a videoconferencing system that give access to all students in the same learning situation.

Online Learning at prison environment has many benefits. It includes that online learning accommodates more incarcerated population compare to classroom-based learning. Online learning also supports individual incarcerated student on specific needs such as the topic requested by the student to be included in the lecture. Online learning also can be designed and offered in various lengths of program and learning time. Sankey and St. Hill (2009) highlight that the term of online learning means the 'massification' of education which more include larger population. Simpson (2009) further explained that in the case of students studying in prison-based school, access to the internet for learning is highly contentious. The strategy of online learning in Serang prison secondary school is implemented by adapting to the security requirements. Incarcerated students in Serang prison use online classroom learning in the hall for all students to be able to communicate with tutors trough video conferencing system. This allow the student to maintain their learning in limited resources and difficult situation. In order to provide meaningful online learning to incarcerated students, secondary school in Serang prison offer broad curriculum in the context of restricted resources and capacity. Online classroom learning based on the level of education cannot be held as the ICT facility is limited. Secondary school in Serang prison, offers general learning for all incarcerated students in all level. Curriculum was combined and designed to meet the needs of all learners.

3.3 Online public lectures

Online learning during covid-19 in Serang prison secondary school was held by offering public lectures for all incarcerated students in all level of education. Educators from outside prison, including university students and lecturers volunteered to create online educational resources for these students. The online lectures are delivered via prison television system and big screen that is attached to the computer with internet access. Videoconferencing is another media and way that can be used easily with same tool for everyone to share learning material from the teachers or speakers. Regular videoconferencing and

interaction with teachers and other speakers can help to substitute face-to-face learning in regular class to virtual. During covid-19 pandemic, learning with videoconferencing technology is one of an innovative tool for prison school with limited ICT facilities. Videoconferencing in Serang prison secondary school was held with related programs such as Zoom and Google Meet to enhance communication between teachers and students. The prison administrators in Serang prison manage the students to come to the prison hall as the ICT facility for separate class is limited. Prison administrators act as teaching assistants. They help facilitate programs from the inside, have taken on responsibilities in sharing information and facilitating peer-to-peer learning.

Online public lectures with teachers, university students and lecturers emphasize the legal and moral education rather than learning subject in upper secondary school. These were chosen to help prisoners to know and to improve their moral standards and life-related skills (Hawley, Murphy, & Souto-Otero, 2013). Moral and character education in prison-based school will support individual growth of incarcerated students. However, the strategy of online teaching of moral education in prison-based education is not only to transmit the moral values from teachers to students in which the teacher act as role model for incarcerate students. But also, the online learning strategies is associated with progressive approach in which the objective of moral and character of education is to develop cognition in incarcerated students in an educational environment. Teachers, university students and lecturers as volunteers provide stories, shorts movies and motivational words to encourage incarcerated students to understand and adopts the morality message for themselves. Thus, the moral and character education delivered on public lectures are closely related to the immediate interest of incarcerated students, to develop their personality and prosperity. In the future, these students will understand the proper social morality and can distinguish civilized behavior from uncivilized. Education in prison plays an important role to develop individual character of incarcerated student in the process of reintegration into society (Ganbadrakh, 2017).

3.4 Virtual learning transforms prisoners' lives

It might be too early to identify whether the online learning during Covid-19 pandemic run effectively and give benefit to incarcerated students' life. However, in other countries, many educators and prison administrators have recognized the link between education in prison and prisoner's ability to successfully reintegrated into society (Etherington, 2017a). Despite this benefit, delivering online learning in prison-based secondary school can be challenging. Furthermore, qualified educator in prison education program are rare to nonexistent. The situation of prison often creates anxious feeling for traditional teachers, but they understand the situation. Prison culture and academia are diametrically opposed. Also, prison is closed institution in which control is primary concern. Online learning endures this teacher's feeling. It is easier for volunteer teachers to develop good relationship with the incarcerated student via virtual meeting. Also, virtual classroom is easy to control, and most students show good behave in learning use video conference.

In the US, online learning in prison education system has purpose to ensure that prisoners have access to a wider range of courses, and when the prisoners have to transfer to another prison, it is easy for them to continue learning in a new place (Etherington, 2017b). Learning using online system benefits incarcerated students in which they may able to create networks with other people outside or even after release. It also enables students to receive up to date learning material that is reflect the current needs on the labor market. Communication during online learning also help incarcerated students to develop their self-esteem. Self-esteem is vital in developing competence that lead to developing individual resilience. The incarcerated students in Serang prison show positive attitude and their endurance while online learning process. In the long term, it will help ex-offenders move into employment in which help them in the preparation for work given within prison. Andrew and Bonta (2003) stated that education in prison improve in-prison behavior and enhance cognitive abilities. Cognitive abilities include 'social cognition (understanding social interactions and behavior of others), cognitive functioning (the ability to plan and implement goal-directed behavior, and problem-solving ability. Other scholars also mentioned that education in prison can also increase 'pro-social attitudes and develop a pro-social identity' (Fine et al., 2001). Secondary school attainment in prison can combat 'the negative signaling effect of incarceration' (Western, 2007).

3.5 Obstacles to virtual learning

Although there is an evident that online learning in Serang prison secondary school run effectively, but prison administrators and teachers continue to experience online education barriers. It has been growing debate about internet access for prisoners. Covid-19 situation forced the prison regime to give a right, if it is not a privilege, for incarcerated students to access learning virtually. However, ICT tools and internet facility is not cheap, in which every prison-based school will face the financial obstacle. For example, in order to provide online learning during covid-19 situation, Serang prison spent extra money and personal resources. Digard, Yaroni, DiZerega and Rinaldi (2016) commented that the use of ICT in prison institution raises significant logistical and operational challenges. Moreover, training and education in prison also have the risk to be especially affected by financial cuts. The prison administrators also have to set up the network of hardware and software system, but there is lack of ICT specialist person available in Serang prison. Moreover, Ganbadrakh (2017) highlighted that setting up the advanced technology demand a huge amount of investment.

Incarcerated students in Serang prison also get restriction to enter building and room and they have limited access to prison facilities freely, including access to ICT room. Even they can access to the ICT room with security guide, but they are in general are not allowed to use the ICT and internet facility freely. There is also limited conversation happen among incarcerated students and with teachers or the outside world without permission. Prison rules and security requirement determine life and access to learning in prison school. However, as long as the incarcerated students follow the prison rules, such condition may not hinder them to get benefit on learning using ICT and internet facilities. By allowing prisoners to access the information technology for learning, it enables them to reach the information outside prison.

4 Conclusions

Participating in education in prison is a fundamental human right for young inmates in Indonesia. Young inmate should not suffer from further deprivation of their right in education. The right of young prisoners who are one of society's excluded group to access education and training in prison are recognized at both national and international levels. Considering current situation of the covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia and in other countries, the incarcerated students should have the chance to use ICT for education purposes as the Indonesian government has closed classroom-based learning. E-learning can give incarcerated students maintain their learning to gain academic qualification during incarceration. In the future, e-learning that practice in Serang prison secondary school also will provide the opportunity to incarcerated students to build up digital literacy skills. In the modern world, the digital literacy skills become necessary in the daily life as well as at the workplace.

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