The COVID-19 Pandemic and the Challenges of State Capacity in Education Policy

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ABSTRACT

Coronavirous Disease (COVID-19) outbreak has struck the globe including Indonesia. With the COVID-19 pandemic rapidly crawling, Government implements a Large-Scale Social Limitation (PSBB) in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministry of Education and Culture (MOEC) has boosted the transformation of educational institutions through the Learning From Home (LFH) policy. LFH is policy that concerns with serving students to conduct learning activities through the distance learning either via online or offline. The goal of this policy aims to mitigate the immediate impact of COVID-19 which rapidly spread across regions while at the same time Government can maintain the quality of learning process. Using the model of policy evaluation, this study assesses the LFH policy which is focused on the rooted causes contributed the ineffectiveness of the policy. As the COVID-19 pandemic becomes a critical challenge for Government, this study finds that the ineffectiveness of LFH is relied on some factors which obviously exacerbate the proper teaching and learning programs. These are including the incompetence of state (apparatus) resource which can be traced from the state perplexed to face the COVID-19 outbreak with no providing a comprehensive policy; the weak of a coordination between MOEC and other stakeholders both local government and private sectors, the infrastructure gap among regions particularly in the remote and rural areas, and less financial support for conducting LFH. These are becoming the huge problems during the Pandemic as these obviously impede the succeed of learning policy.

Keywords: COVID-19, Policy, Learning, Government, Capacity

A. **Introduction**

The world is facing a global catastrophe as the pandemic of Coronavirus Disesase (COVID-19) becomes more widespread. With the COVID-19 pandemic rapidly crawling, many countries across the globe encounter the terrible phase to cope with the COVID-19. As elaborated by Anderson et al., 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) announced COVID-19 as a global pandemic on March 11, 2020 which the disease started with small chains of spreading, further culminating into larger chains of spread in many countries resulting in the widespread transmission consequently across the globe affecting all the continents (Shammi et al., 2020). According to Worldometers (2020), 14 May 2020, with the total coronavirus case rising to 4.490.958, USA is the worst affecting country from the COVID-19 pandemic with 86,098 deaths (Shammi et.al., 2020). While the case of Indonesia shows that the death rate from the corona virus is also quite high. Data as of June 4, 2020 released by the Task Force for the Acceleration of COVID-19 Handling showed the number of positive victims had reached 28,818 people, 8,892 people recovered, and 1,721 people died (National Communication Team of the National Task Force, June 4, 2020).

The impact of COVID-19 brings the state in uncertainty. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, government was compelled to adjust the problems with certain policies. Seeing the number that was stated to be positively continuing to creep up, the Indonesia Government had decided to implement a Large-Scale Social Limitation

(PSBB). It is in fact that PSBB was applied as a response to the public's criticism regarding the ineffectiveness of social distancing. PSBB was then imposed in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19 by forcefully restricting people's activities. Through Government Regulation No. 21 of 2020, the government is trying to accelerate the handling of COVID-19 by regulating more firmly related to close schools and workplaces; restrictions on religious activities; and/or restrictions on activities at public places or facilities.

In regards to education, the Ministry of Education and Culture (MOEC) has boosted the transformation of educational institutions through the Learning From Home (LFH) policy. LFH concerns with serving students for learning activities through the distance learning either via online or offline. The goal of this policy aimed at mitigating its immediate impact, which means the rapid spread of COVID-19 can hopefully be decreased while at the same time the quality of learning process could be maintained. In doing so, MOEC decided to push all school activities by at-home online/distance learning through its Circular Letter No. 4/2020 (Azzahra, 2020). This policy is just like other countries made in response to the COVID-19 outbreak. In many cases, the school closures also has taken place in US, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, China, Mongolia, and UK (Viner et all, 2020; Cronert, 2020; Rundle, 2020). The School closure strategies are carried out in response to student infection rates (Viner et.all, 2020) by which Governments employ proactive to slow transmission (delay phase), decrease burden on health care, or protect at-risk populations (mitigate phase), both the benefits for transmission and the adverse community effects should be considered (Armitage and Nellums, 2020).

Harking back to the MOEC's policy, the essence of LFH pushes learning activities in the home in which most education process are conducted through online *(daring)* or offline media *(luring)*. To deal with, MOEC supports the policy which enable schools to re-allocate School Operational Assistance (BOS) by amending MOEC Regulation No. 8/2020 about Financial Technical Guidance with new Regulation No. 19/2020. This new regulation rules schools to reallocate School Operational Assistance (BOS) in order to prevent COVID-19 by facilitating liquid or hand sanitizer, disinfectant, mask or hygiene, and the the like. In addition, MOEC also grants freedom for each school to choose their preferred online learning platforms and to encourage knowledge sharing, facilitates a free online learning portal called 'Rumah Belajar' which supports learning materials and a communication feature for its users, and 'Program Guru Berbagi' for an online-learning sharing platform for teacher which shares lesson-plans (Rencana Pelaksanaan Pembelajaran/RPP) with teachers across Indonesia (Azzahra, 2020). Lastly, as reported by BeritaSatu, for regions where internet connection is patchy, the government cooperates with TVRI, the state-owned television broadcaster, in delivering school materials under the "Belajar di Rumah" program for a few months (Azzahra, 2020). With regard to these explanation, how does the policy work to support effective learning? What are the barriers for schools to create effective learning during pandemic?

B. Method

This study used qualitative method by which data collection carried out through secondary sources as the main document. The documents from various information are the evidences needed in answering research questions. As argued by Guba and Lincoln (1981), document is an evidence that can be used as a basis for preventing the error of interpretation and explaining the context of the problems as the focused of study (Alwasilah, 2006). In this case, some sources are very pivotal such as journals, books, documents published by an organization or government reports, memos, meeting minutes, bulletins, documents policies, proposals, codes of conduct, files, records, and so on (Bogdan, C. Robert., Biklen, 2007). This study also utilizes data like regulations/news from online newspapers both national and local, and data that is related research results (Fatkhuri, 2019). Through this sort of information, the key point closely related to the theme is identified to support the data analysis.

C. Finding and Discussions

To begin with, it is noteworthy that the COVID-19 outbreak has driven social change as indicated by changes in many sectors of life. In terms of education affairs, the COVID-19 pandemic has changed the ways and habits in the learning process. Schools that normally organize teaching and learning programs in the classroom are immediately required to replace these habits with online strategy or learning from home to prevent the spread of the Corona virus. This is the phenomenon of disruption which enforces us to cope with the problem. Many people should make adjustment with this new phenomenon. Since the issuance of the Minister of Education and Culture Circular Letter Number 36962/MPK.A/HK/2020 dated March 17, 2020 regarding online learning and working from home in order to prevent the spread of Covid-19, as mentioned above schools must move the learning process to home or learning from home (LFH). How does the policy work to support effective learning? What are the barriers for schools to create effective learning during pandemic? To answer these questions, this study use the model of policy evaluation which deal with four policy evaluation criteria that consist of state resources, institutions, infrastructure, and financial support (Agustino, 2016). These criteria are used to obtain the answers as to how the LFH policy is working and what are the actual factors which inhibit the effectiveness of the learning policy.

The State (apparatus) resources

State resources in this case is defined as the understanding of the role of government apparatus with regards to what they have to do in dealing with the COVID-19 Pandemic. This concept can also be described as State capacity to cope with the existing problems. In the case of COVID-19, capacity means the ability to respond effectively to a pandemic in which the leaders are able to adopt longer-term time horizons required to prepare a country to address tough challenges (Hickey, et.all, 2020). In the civil war literature, state capacity is ordinarily related to the capability of state to response rebellion, which means that if the state is capable of repressing, then the likelihood of capture will be higher and rebellion will be less likely. And if the state is capable of accommodating grievance through some institutionalized channels, then rebellion will be lessened (Hendrix, 2020).

According to Back and Hadenius (2008), state capacity refers to the extent to which competent, impartial and efficient state agencies enable the government to take action in appropriate and effective manner (Cronert, 2020). While in the context of responding to pandemic, as quoted by Cronert (2020), State capacity is described as the state capacity which enables countries to prepare for and implement school closures more rapidly (DSB, 2011; Kahn 2005 et.all). In relation to state capacity, in this study I will concern about the ability of MOEC to deal with the COVID-19 outbreak through making the policy of LFH. How MOEC response the pandemic and implement the policy will be analyzed in order to measure the effectiveness of the policy.

As mentioned above, in relation to the response of the COVID-19 outbreak, MOEC has already made policy through school closure. However, many said that this is not effective. Based on the data, it shows the problem lies in the fact that MOEC could not provide a comprehensive policy to support distance learning. The unclear of policy on how to conduct distance learning encounters a contention during the pandemic. It is in fact that the Circular Letter Number 36962/MPK.A/HK/2020 regarding online learning and working from home does not completely give a clear message for whole stakeholders as guidance for teacher, parents, and students to carry out the learning program in the home. There is not set of technical information as an instruction for LFH admittedly causes many parents find it hard to adapt learning policies. As said by Budi Trikorayanto, parents actually have to be guided in relation to how implement distance learning. This guidance is important so that parents know how to apply distance learning, knowing the learning orientation that is not oriented toward competency standards (curriculum) and so on (detik.com, 9 April 2020).

As far as this study concerned, due to the lack of technical information, in many cases learning activities could not achieve the goals. For certain cases, the teacher only gave and collected assignments without any learning interaction. As the Indonesian Protection Children Commission's survey results show that only 20.1 percent of teachers who make interactions between teachers and students during in the period of distance learning, and many teacher did teaching via chatting (87.2 percent), and video calls (7.6 percent) (Harsono, 2020). Similar to this case, one of parents told in a webinar on April 19, held by the Women's Empowerment and Child Protection Ministry that she was clueless about how to support her child's studies because the teacher only gives out homework without providing adequate learning tools or materials (The Jakartapost, May 2, 2020). It is surprising that the teacher is actually no stranger enough to the internet. It means they had an adequate access to the internet within their daily life particularly for those who live in the urban areas. But, the use of the internet has nothing to do with their office tasks. The survey results of the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII) in 2018 showed that the average use of the internet in Indonesia was only for the purposes of establishing communication, social media, leisure time, playing games, and watching movies (60.8%), and only a small proportion use it to support work and school/college material (23.3%), and the rest is for news, product information, and so on (APJII, 2018). That is, even though technological devices are already available, so

far teachers have not been able to make full use of technology for greater importance in work and learning.

In addition, the policy which is also not supported by a specific curriculum makes learning does not properly take place. The absence of amended curriculum in the phase of COVID-19 contributed to the divergence of teaching-learning process. As also described by Retno Lisyarti from the Indonesian Child Protection Commission, she said within the COVID-19 outbreak, schools need specific guidelines regarding the fixed of curriculum for distance learning. This is because in many cases, LFH has driven the different perceptions among stakeholders which in turn will make teaching and learning difficult to control (Radar Cirebon, May 10, 2020).

From the above information, it is clear that the incomplete learning policy reflects who government was not ready to face the pandemic challenge. As a result, LFH policy did not succeed to full fill people's needs. In the case of LFH policy, government should actually provide a clear information related to strategies, models, methods, or learning techniques that can be undertaken including the learning assessment model and the source of teaching materials used. In addition, government could hand in hand with other stakeholders make a short training program which involve teachers and parents in relation to perform teaching and learning program during the Pandemic. The training program for teachers and parents is very important because the teachers own limited ability to use technology, need to adjust learning methods within the pandemic, and minimize miss-communication with parents.

The Institutions

The institutions in this context are defined as a smooth coordination, flexible discretion, systems within the organization, patterns of leadership, and synergy. This study uses coordination between MOEC and other stakeholders as the main focused. It is noteworthy that during the implementation of LFH, many schools failed to conduct affective learning as a result of the weak of Government coordination in dealing with other stakeholders. Although the learning policy has been made, the lack of a coordination impede the effectiveness of the policy. The lack of coordination between MOEC and other stakeholders can be traced from these facts as follow.

Firstly, MOEC does not make any effective coordination with local governments. This contributed to not all regions abide by the rules. It means some schools tended to conduct teaching and learning programs based on their innovations or they neglected distance learning due to low information they had. For example, in Banda Aceh some high and junior high school still allowed students in the early period of school closure to go to school because they had not received official information from the teacher council (bbc.news 18 March, 2020). From this case, it is clear that the coordination is very important to ensure that learning policies run well. Therefore, MOEC policy must get the full support of the region because the education administration authority in the region belongs to the province and district government.

Secondly, the ineffectiveness of learning program because MOEC did not completely make any synergy with the private sector or mass organizations to support LFH. The exclusiveness of MOEC in response to the COVID-19 outbreak hindered learning activities at home. As a central agent, MOEC can actually invite other communities to hand in hand support distance learning. In doing so, the partnership can support distance learning for all regions and for all schools including private schools. Event though MOEC had already initiated to involved private sectors to support distance learning activities, but many noticed that in most cases the partnership program only focused on providing access to the internet, and nothing deal with learning method or how teacher creates learning interactions with students and parents which were clearly becoming the problem. In addition, this program only facilitates schools from which are located in areas with a good internet access. This program does not cover all schools particularly within the remote or rural areas with no internet access.   Accordingly, the support from Indosat Ooredoo to provide free internet quota up to 30 GB for those who engage in online learning (Kemdikbud.go.id March 26, 2020) did not give any significant impact to improve learning program during the COVID-19 outbreak.

Infrastructure gap among regions

LFH as a policy during the pandemic depends entirely on the existence of technology. Technology, more specifically the internet, smart phones and laptops are now widely used to support distance learning (Azzahra, 2020). However, Indonesia with its characteristic has a disparity in terms of not only access to schools, but also technology and other facilities. This is the discrepancy that becomes the barriers particularly for those who are from remote and rural areas across Indonesia. This disparity can be seen from the data which shows as to people's access to the internet. According to the Indonesian Central Statistics Agency data in 2018, the percentage of people that could have accessed to the internet per person every household was dominated by people living in Java such as DKI that accounted for 89.4 percent. In contrast, person who lives in Papua constituted only 29.50 persen per household (Azzahra, 2020).

The facts aforementioned however become a critical problems to implement the policy. To certain degree, the implementation of LFH might be partially succeeded in the certain areas in Java, but it is not the case in non java island particularly in the Frontier, Remote and Disadvantaged regions so called 3T. In many remote areas, learning activities did not happen because parents do not own the devices to support learning programs. The data shows that one out of five parents did not have the facilities such as laptops, smartphones and access to the online learning platform (The Jakartapost, May 2, 2020). In addition, the learning materials also still become the huge problems. Both teachers and parents did not have adequate quality online materials that can support teaching and learning programs. This challenge is a quite complicated problem. To encourage the realization of quality, accessible, and affordable education services, the government must intervene such as seeking continuous assistance to schools that do not yet have ICT infrastructure, especially in 3T regions. Just to elucidate one case, in Sumenep regency on Madura Island, East Java, there is a school in which almost all students do not have cellphones,

computers or televisions. The teacher then took the initiative to visit his students' houses one by one whereas a journey took 22 kilometers with challenging routes (The Jakarta Post, May 2, 2020). This condition shows that not all regions can follow the policy. To reduce this problem, MOEC should make guidelines for poor students. This is actually very important for the government to improve the quality of education in all over Indonesia. MOEC needs to accelerate the provision of learning facilities through Radio and Television as a short-term solution. Thus, the teacher can play an optimal role in guiding students offline, face to face directly, the arrangements can be left to each school.

Financial Support

Financial support is very important criterion to assess the LFH policy. The changing patterns of learning activities from classes to distance learning through online approaches demands financial support from government. The use of technology especially to access to the internet needs enough quotas. Even though MOEC currently have initiated to make collaborative online learning arrangements with various institutions that have so far focused on developing the education system online, such as: Google Indonesia, Smart Classes, and the like, not only teachers but also parents should be taken into account. It means to run teaching and learning program, both teachers and parents should supported by adequate quota as the program can be run smoothly. Unfortunately, government does not pay attention for this need. It is because the implementation of MOEC's new regulation number 19 of 2020 concerning Amendments to the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture Number 8 of 2020 Regarding Technical Instructions for Regular School Operational Aid only concerns with supporting schools. In this case, MOEC emphasizes that during the COVID-19 outbreak, schools can use BOS funds for the purposes of financing power and service subscriptions, credit purchases, data packages, and/or paid online education services for educators and/or students in the context of implementing learning from home. Through this regulation, MOEC stressed that education should be continued without ignoring the quality aspects, both in the learning process and the quality of teachers through financial support for school residents to use applications, the internet and quotas. The absence of government attention to support parents' financial problems aggravates the effectiveness of learning in the home.

D. Conclusion

In short, as aforementioned the COVID-19 pandemic compelled Government to adjust with the pandemic case through certain responses. In regards to education, the MOEC has boosted the transformation of educational institutions through the Learning From Home (LFH) policy. In its implementation, MOEC made Circulation Letter as foundation to conduct learning activities in the home through LFH. LFH concerns with serving students for learning activities through the distance learning either via online or offline. The goal of this policy aims to mitigate its immediate impact, which means the rapid spread of COVID-19 can hopefully be decreased while at the same time the quality of learning process could be maintained.

Using the model of policy evaluation (four policy evaluation criteria), this study elaborates the rooted causes of the ineffectiveness of LFH policy. Based on the data, the factors which impede the LFH policy are the incompetence of state (apparatus) resources. It means MOEC does not response the COVID-19 outbreak with a comprehensive policy which in turn made ineffective distance learning. In addition, as an institution, MOEC does not make any a effective coordination with both local government and private schools to support LFH Policy. This is contributed to not all regions abide by the rule and at the same time learning programs failed to achieve the goals. Furthermore, the infrastructure gap among regions has become obviously barriers as to why learning at home is not conducted properly. Finally, less financial support for conducting LFH particularly with the absence of financial for parents has become the critical problem. Financial support is one of the important things that should be taken into consideration because the changing patterns of learning activities from classes to distance learning method demands the rise of the internet access.

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