

E-Learning Teachers' Strategies in Developing Students' Self-Directed Learning During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly transformed the educational landscape, necessitating the rapid adoption of e-learning strategies to ensure instructional continuity. This shift has introduced various challenges, particularly in fostering students' self-directed learning. This study examined teachers' strategies to develop students' self-directed learning capabilities during this unprecedented time. The focus is to identify practical approaches facilitating student engagement and autonomy within the e-learning context. This qualitative descriptive study involved teachers from six high schools in Banjarnegara, Central Java. Data were collected through interviews and observations, providing a comprehensive understanding of the teachers' strategies and implementation. The data were analyzed using an interactive analysis technique, including data collection, reduction, display, and conclusion drawing/verification. This approach allowed for an in-depth examination of the teachers' methods and effectiveness in promoting self-directed learning among students. The study revealed that teachers faced two main challenges in developing students' self-directed learning and employed six strategies to address these challenges. The findings suggest that when effectively implemented, these strategies can significantly enhance students' ability to engage in self-directed learning, thereby mitigating some of the challenges posed by the shift to e-learning during the pandemic.

Key words: COVID-19 Pandemic; Strategies; Self-directed Learning

INTRODUCTION

The globalization era influences the development of information and communication technology. It happens in all sectors in our environments. One of them is in the field of education. The information and communication technology products are beneficial for our life. Internet, as one of the products is very amazing to be utilized in learning. The Internet has been used as a platform for accommodating the teaching and learning process. It is inevitable that the use of the internet in the education system becoming an essential thing.

Recently, the COVID-19 pandemic has spread rapidly all over the world, giving effect on human life, including the education system in Indonesia. It makes the

teaching and learning process changes. The Minister of Education has instructed to apply online classroom in facing this COVID-19 pandemic. Teachers have to apply online classes in conducting the teaching and learning process. The students are forbidden to come to school to attend the class activities traditionally, but they must keep studying at home. The students have to open the internet to study and learn the materials and assignments given by their teacher. To solve the problems, the school stakeholders have to create a new innovation in supporting the school system. They have to create a new regulation related to the application of school from home and work from home system.

In dealing with the teaching-learning process in this pandemic era, the use of media is an essential part. In the utilization of the media, particularly in the online classroom, it takes creativity and also a mature instructional consideration of the teacher. The use of the internet and supported application contributing teaching and learning process is unavoidable. Unfortunately, many problems and limitations also arise in conducting the e-learning system during the COVID-19 pandemic. Learning success occurs when there is positive interdependency between teachers and students. According to Suryabrata (2007:233), in the learning process, two factors affect the success of learning, namely internal and external factors. Internal factors include non-social factors and social factors. External factors include physiological factors and psychological factors. The learning process contains a set of lesson perceptions that teachers process up to the learning evaluation. Learning evaluation is designed to measure the extent of student knowledge that can be obtained after getting knowledge presented by the teachers. Evaluation of learning is to explore various things including knowledge and students' self-directed learning. After an assessment, the teacher can see the students' learning sustainability. At this time, learning is directed to student-centered learning, and then the teacher should be able to determine the students' self-directed learning.

According to Knowles (1975), students' self-directed learning can be known from the student's decision-making rights in setting learning goals; students can manage their activities, and students can make outcome evaluations. Students' self-directed learning can be improved by using learning strategies. According to Kemp (1995), he explains that learning strategy is a learning activity that should be done by teachers and students in order to achieve learning goals effectively and efficiently. Concurs with the opinion above, Dick and Carey (1985) also points out that the learning strategy is a set of learning materials and procedures that are used together to create students' self-directed learning outcomes (Betu, 2023). Students' self-directed learning is needed in developing students' self-directed learning using e-learning or online class. It is crucial to be facilitated by the teachers.

Based on this situation, the researcher attempts to reveal the challenges faced by teachers in developing students' self-directed learning on English e-learning and to reveal the teachers' strategies in developing students' self-directed learning on English E-learning during Covid-19 pandemic. Thus, the objective of this research is to find out the challenges faced by the teachers in conducting e-learning during

this COVID-19 pandemic and also to reveal the teachers' strategies in developing students' self-directed learning on English e-learning. The result of the research is to describe the teachers' strategies in developing students' self-directed learning on English e-learning during COVID-19 pandemic.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly disrupted traditional education systems worldwide, forcing a rapid shift to e-learning. This transition created challenges for both teachers and students, but it also presented new opportunities to enhance self-directed learning (SDL), a crucial skill for lifelong learning. In this context, e-learning teachers have adopted various strategies to foster students' SDL during the pandemic, enabling them to become more independent and self-regulated learners.

E-Learning and Self-Directed Learning

Self-directed learning refers to a process where learners take the initiative in planning, carrying out, and evaluating their learning experiences (Knowles, 2015). The rapid adoption of e-learning platforms has had a profound impact on SDL, providing students with more flexibility in their learning environments. Research shows that the transition to online learning can promote self-regulation and autonomy if teachers implement strategies that encourage independent learning (Lee & Tsai, 2016). Teachers' roles in e-learning shift from traditional instructors to facilitators who guide and support students in managing their learning.

Teachers' Strategies in E-Learning

Teachers' strategies for promoting SDL in e-learning environments vary across different contexts. A study by Johnson et al. (2020) identified key strategies employed by teachers, including the use of interactive digital tools, asynchronous learning activities, and personalized feedback. These strategies are essential for creating an environment where students can develop self-regulation skills, manage their learning pace, and engage with the content in a meaningful way. Furthermore, digital tools like learning management systems (LMS) and online discussion forums can support student autonomy by allowing students to access resources and interact with peers at their own pace (Sahin & Ozan, 2020).

E-Learning During the COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the integration of digital tools into education. Studies have shown that teachers were forced to adopt e-learning strategies that not only facilitated content delivery but also encouraged students' self-directed learning. According to a study by Ahmad et al. (2021), teachers focused on creating learning environments that promoted active participation and critical thinking. These strategies were especially critical during the pandemic, as students had

limited face-to-face interactions with teachers, necessitating greater independence in learning.

Furthermore, the pandemic highlighted the importance of teacher professional development in e-learning pedagogy. Teachers who were well-trained in using digital tools and techniques were more successful in fostering SDL in their students (Sari et al., 2021). In contrast, a lack of training and support for teachers was found to hinder the effective implementation of e-learning strategies, resulting in a less engaging learning experience for students.

Challenges and Limitations

Despite the positive impact of e-learning strategies on SDL, the transition to online learning was not without challenges. One of the major barriers identified by teachers was the lack of student motivation and engagement in online classes (Zhou et al., 2020). Students' lack of access to technology, inadequate digital literacy skills, and the absence of a structured learning environment contributed to difficulties in maintaining self-directed learning. As such, teachers had to adopt innovative strategies to engage students, such as gamification, interactive activities, and peer collaboration, to sustain motivation and enhance SDL (Ong et al., 2020).

METHOD

Design and Sample

This research employed a qualitative method with a case study design, aimed at collecting detailed information through various data collection procedures over an extended period (Sugiyono, 2020). A case study is particularly effective for examining specific instances within real-world contexts, allowing for an in-depth exploration of a small number of cases to gain insights into broader phenomena. In this study, the focus was on how EFL teachers in Banjarnegara implement strategies to develop students' self-directed learning. The researcher used a purposive sampling technique to select six EFL state senior high school teachers in Banjarnegara who met specific criteria: at least five years of teaching experience, teaching twelfth-grade students, possessing knowledge in developing students' self-directed learning, being active in teachers' forums, and being civil servants in Indonesia. This purposive sampling technique, as described by Suwartono (2014), ensures that participants are selected based on their relevance to the research topic, providing valuable insights into the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 2012).

Instrument and Procedures

Data collection involved interviews and observations. The interviews were semi-structured, offering flexibility to gather in-depth responses, while the observations allowed the researcher to examine the teachers' classroom practices in fostering self-directed learning. The procedures began with selecting and contacting the teachers based on the established criteria. Interviews were conducted to gather

insights into the teachers' strategies, and classroom observations were scheduled to observe their methods in practice. The data collected from interviews were recorded through voice recordings, and observations were documented using field notes.

Data Analysis

The data analysis followed the steps outlined by Creswell (2012), beginning with data management, where the researcher organized and prepared the collected data, such as transcribing the interviews and eliminating irrelevant information. The next step involved reading and 'memoing,' where the researcher reviewed the transcribed data multiple times, making notes and forming initial codes. Following this, the researcher described the case and its context, detailing the teachers' strategies and challenges in promoting self-directed learning. The data were then classified into themes, allowing for the identification of patterns and connections. Interpretation followed, where the researcher analyzed the data to draw conclusions about the factors influencing the development of self-directed learning among students. Finally, the researcher represented the data in a narrative form, summarizing the findings and presenting the key insights. To ensure the validity of the findings, triangulation methodology, including investigator triangulation, was applied. This approach cross-checked data from both interviews and observations to verify consistency and enhance the credibility of the research (Suwartono, 2024).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Teachers' Challenges in Developing Students' Self-Directed Learning (SDL)

As education continues to evolve, the emphasis on fostering student autonomy has become a central goal. Self-Directed Learning (SDL) is increasingly recognized as a key component in preparing students for the demands of the 21st century. SDL encourages students to take ownership of their learning by setting goals, identifying resources, and evaluating their progress, which cultivates lifelong learning skills. However, in practice, teachers face numerous challenges in promoting SDL. Through interviews with teachers, several significant obstacles were identified, providing a nuanced understanding of the difficulties encountered in nurturing SDL among students.

One of the primary challenges highlighted was the lack of access to technology and resources. Many teachers noted that students, particularly those from less privileged backgrounds, often struggle to access the necessary technological tools and learning materials that would support their independent learning. This lack of access creates a barrier to fully engaging with SDL, as students cannot take advantage of online resources, interactive platforms, and other educational technologies that facilitate self-directed learning.

Another significant challenge emerged around students' time management skills. Teachers reported that many students face difficulties in managing their time

effectively, often due to procrastination, a lack of structured study habits, and an inability to balance learning with other daily responsibilities. These time management struggles align with the principles of Self-Regulated Learning (SRL) theory, which emphasizes the importance of goal-setting, self-monitoring, and using adaptive strategies to overcome procrastination and manage time effectively. Teachers indicated that these challenges often hinder students' ability to engage in SDL and develop the necessary skills to become independent learners.

Teachers' Strategies to Promote Self-Directed Learning

In response to the challenges identified in fostering SDL, teachers have implemented several strategies to better support students' development of self-regulated learning. These strategies aim to address the barriers students face and guide them toward becoming more independent and effective learners. One key strategy employed by teachers is providing clear guidance on how students can access and utilize online platforms. Many teachers have created detailed instructions and resources to ensure students are familiar with the platforms used for learning, helping them navigate the digital tools necessary for SDL.

Additionally, teachers emphasized the importance of explaining the learning objectives to students. By ensuring that students understand the purpose of their learning activities, teachers help them set specific goals and become more engaged in the learning process. This clarity also helps students develop a sense of ownership over their learning, which is a key aspect of SDL. Another strategy highlighted by teachers was the development of comprehensive learning materials. Teachers have invested time in creating materials that cater to diverse learning needs, ensuring that students have access to resources that support independent learning. These materials not only provide content but also offer guidance on how students can explore topics autonomously.

Providing step-by-step guides for independent study was also mentioned as an effective strategy. Teachers break down complex tasks into manageable steps, which helps students build confidence in their ability to work independently. These guides offer structure while still allowing room for student autonomy. In addition, teachers emphasized the importance of giving clear and concise instructions. By offering explicit directions, teachers ensure that students understand the expectations and can follow through with their learning tasks without feeling overwhelmed or confused.

Finally, the use of appropriate technology was identified as a crucial element in promoting SDL. Teachers who are able to integrate technology effectively into their teaching provide students with tools that enhance their learning experience. By selecting the right technology, such as online learning platforms, apps, and digital resources, teachers can support students in taking charge of their own learning. Through these strategies, teachers aim to mitigate the challenges students face in developing SDL, ultimately helping them build the skills necessary for lifelong

learning and success in an increasingly independent and self-regulated educational landscape.

This research explored the challenges faced by teachers in developing Self-Directed Learning (SDL) among students and the strategies they implement to overcome these barriers. The findings from the interviews and observations shed light on several significant challenges and strategies that align with existing literature while also revealing new insights into the complexities of fostering SDL in today's educational context.

One of the most prominent challenges identified in this study was the lack of access to technology and resources. Teachers reported that many students, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, struggle to access the digital tools and materials necessary for effective SDL. This finding aligns with prior studies that have highlighted the role of technology in promoting SDL, but also the disparity in access, particularly in developing regions. For example, a study by Al-Mahrooqi and Denman (2015) found that limited access to technology could hinder students' ability to engage in independent learning, as it restricts their ability to utilize online resources and digital platforms. The digital divide continues to be a significant challenge in education, particularly in rural and underprivileged areas, where access to reliable internet and devices is often limited.

Additionally, the challenge of students' time management emerged as a critical barrier to SDL development. Teachers noted that students often struggle with procrastination and creating regular study schedules. This finding is consistent with the work of Zimmerman (2016), who emphasized that time management is a key component of Self-Regulated Learning (SRL) and that students' inability to manage their time effectively can significantly impact their learning outcomes. Similarly, a study by Moos and Azevedo (2019) found that students with poor time management skills often exhibit lower levels of motivation and engagement, which directly affects their capacity to engage in self-directed learning activities.

In response to these challenges, teachers implemented various strategies to support SDL development. One notable strategy was providing clear guidance on how to access online learning platforms, which is particularly important given the lack of technology access. Teachers ensured that students were familiar with the platforms and tools used for independent learning, helping them navigate digital environments confidently. This approach aligns with the findings of Chen et al. (2020), who emphasized the importance of teacher guidance in helping students effectively use online platforms for SDL. In addition to providing access to technology, teachers also ensured that students had clear instructions for completing independent tasks, which helped students stay focused and organized.

Another strategy that emerged was the development of comprehensive learning materials. Teachers created resources that not only provided content but also offered step-by-step guidance for independent study. This approach is supported by

research from Paris and Paris (2015), who found that well-structured learning materials and clear instructions significantly enhance students' ability to manage their own learning. These materials were designed to scaffold students' independence while still offering enough structure to keep them on track. The use of appropriate technology also emerged as a critical strategy. Teachers who were able to integrate technology effectively into their teaching provided students with tools that helped facilitate their independent learning. This strategy echoes the findings of Wang and Lee (2018), who demonstrated that well-chosen technological tools can foster SDL by providing students with immediate feedback, resources, and opportunities for reflection.

The findings of this study suggest several implications for both educational practice and policy. First, it is essential to address the technology gap in educational settings. Schools and policymakers should work toward ensuring equal access to digital resources for all students, regardless of their socio-economic background. This could involve providing students with devices, ensuring stable internet connections, and offering training on how to use online learning platforms effectively. The integration of technology in education is not only a means to enhance SDL but also a crucial factor in ensuring equity in learning opportunities.

Second, the study highlights the importance of time management skills in fostering SDL. Educational programs should place greater emphasis on teaching students how to manage their time effectively, as this skill is crucial for success in SDL. Teachers should incorporate time-management strategies into their lessons and provide students with tools such as study schedules and goal-setting techniques. Furthermore, schools should provide ongoing support to students in developing these skills, which will serve them well beyond their formal education. The research underscores the importance of clear guidance and well-structured learning materials. Teachers should receive professional development training that equips them with the skills to design learning materials that promote SDL while still offering adequate support. The role of the teacher as a guide in the SDL process is pivotal in ensuring that students can navigate their independent learning journeys successfully.

While this study provides valuable insights into the challenges and strategies related to SDL, it has several limitations that should be considered. First, the research was conducted in a specific geographical area (Banjarnegara), and the findings may not be generalizable to other regions or contexts. Future studies could explore the experiences of teachers and students in different settings, such as urban vs. rural areas or across different educational systems, to provide a broader perspective on the challenges and strategies related to SDL. Second, the study relied on a small sample size of six teachers, which may limit the diversity of perspectives. A larger sample size would offer more comprehensive insights into the challenges and strategies for developing SDL across a wider range of educational settings. Additionally, future research could incorporate a mixed-methods approach, combining interviews with quantitative data such as student surveys or academic

performance, to provide a more holistic understanding of SDL development. Lastly, this study primarily focused on teachers' perspectives. Future research could also investigate students' views on the challenges and strategies for developing SDL, as this would provide a more balanced understanding of the phenomenon and help tailor interventions to meet students' specific needs.

CONCLUSION

This study explored the challenges faced by teachers in developing Self-Directed Learning (SDL) among students and the strategies they implement to overcome these obstacles. The findings revealed that key challenges include limited access to technology and resources, as well as students' struggles with time management. These challenges underscore the importance of addressing the digital divide and teaching students effective time management skills to enhance their SDL capabilities. Teachers, in response, have adopted various strategies, such as providing clear guidance on using online platforms, offering well-structured learning materials, and integrating appropriate technology into their teaching practices. These strategies help students navigate the complexities of independent learning while still offering the necessary support to foster autonomy.

The implications of this research emphasize the need for greater equity in technology access and the integration of time-management education into the curriculum. By providing students with the tools and support needed to engage in SDL, educators can help them become more self-regulated learners, better prepared for lifelong learning. While the study provides valuable insights, it also acknowledges limitations, such as the small sample size and the focus on a specific geographic region. Future research could expand the scope to include a larger, more diverse sample and explore students' perspectives to offer a more comprehensive understanding of SDL development. Ultimately, this research highlights the vital role of teachers in fostering SDL and the importance of continued support, training, and resources to enhance the self-directed learning experiences of students.

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