

**THE CHALLENGES OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDONESIA AFTER COVID 19:  
Online and Offline Perspectives; Meaning of Religiosity and Spirituality  
(Divine Value)**

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**ABSTRACT**

Nowadays, it can be seen and found easily in higher education environment, namely the online learning phenomenon. Since COVID-19 pandemic, online learning has become a very common phenomenon both in public and private higher education. The learning system has become a pattern or design that is "ingrained" in our higher education. The implication made the learning shifts from "the process of changing the student's self" to "only getting cognitive value". As a consequence, the learning process does not touch the substantive dimensions of education that actually provide a foundation of faith and knowledge simultaneously and in integrated manner. Learning is only interpreted as the process of getting a "final grade" symbolizing having carried out learning.

For this reason, the researcher tried to provide a reflection on this phenomenon by trying to map out the problems of higher education learning after COVID-19 pandemic; and also tried to explain this problem critically to provide an explanation or description of conditions on education learning after pandemic. Researcher tried to offer a concept to be discussed together as a higher education learning discourse. Indeed, this reflection is focused on observations of the hybrid learning pattern that is oftenly carried out by lecturers at the state and private universities. It can be considered as a form of anxiety regarding the conditions of higher education learning after pandemic; or also as an explanation of the challenges faced by higher education.

**Keywords:** Higher Education, Covid-19 Pandemic, Online and Offline Perspectives.

**1. INTRODUCTION**

An alternative solution for finding the best model in providing education - starting from basic education to higher education - during the pandemic through optimalization in using the digital media for every learning process. (Rusydiyah et al., 2020; Sailer et al., 2021; Tejasvee et al., 2021; Utomo et al., 2021). Moreover, online learning has become a strategic and effective choice as the efforts to stop the spread of virus while still allowing the learning process to students by internet access.(Laksana, 2021; Suti'ah & Mardiana, 2021; Yudiawan et al., 2021). The provision of education based on the using of digital media can be carried out by using various platforms, and the most frequently used is utilization of *Learning Management System* (LMS) that expected to act as a digital learning system in leading to improve the quality of learning in educational institutions (Koh & Kan, 2021; Laila et al., 2021; Lin & Johnson, 2021; Saputro et al., 2021).

The implication on the discourse for online learning while pandemic boils down to two discussions, including: (1) studies on aspects of the application or implementation of online learning(Ayu & Pratiwi, 2021; Milla et al., 2021; Silvana et al., 2021); and (2) study at the level

of implications for online learning policies(Hwang et al., 2021; Marcus-Quinn & Hourigan, 2021; Rajabalee & Santally, 2021). These two frameworks lead to improve the learning process in the primary to higher education system that is oriented towards improving the quality of education. Moreover, higher education system that is able to be held online and independently, the education system can be encouraged to develop and improve the quality of education through online learning patterns and strategies.

In fact, based on these two discourse tendencies, higher education learning still has unequal spaces. One of them is the discourse on learning evaluation, that still leaves "acute problems"; such as incomplete assessment of the affective, psychomotor and conative domains, including the spiritual development of students. This component is an important element that must be present in every process of implementing a higher education system in ensuring the achievement of objectives according to specified standards. Therefore, this component needs to be pursued systematically, measurably and on target according to learning targets; especially related to design and variety of evaluations. These two criterias are very important to analyze in determining the level of achievement on learning objectives; as indicated in Mardiana & Sutiah's research(Mardiana & Sutiah, 2020).

After COVID-19 pandemic, higher education learning actually has enormous challenges with various implications. It means that higher education has educational patterns and strategies that are dynamic and accommodating to the flow of change. Higher education is not solely oriented towards government policy, but needs to consider the balance in achieving learning outcomes of cognitive, affective, psychomotor and conative aspects as well as the spirituality of students. The final point that needs to be determined is the criteria and proportions of higher education learning assessment with a proportional, detailed and systematic design. However, the implementation of higher education learning that is currently being designed tends to be in the visionary-didactical dimension, namely an education system that structured more towards digital. Learning with this pattern is actually more conducive to the development and improvement of students' skills in the field of technology by the using of various platforms such as LMS. In this context, technological literacy skills in students' learning processes become capital for the birth of a generation that is adaptive - read has assimilative sensitivity - to the pace of development of the times (Rahman & Firdaus, 2021)or Hermanto & Putri(Hermanto & Putri, 2021). However, religiosity and spirituality literacy is relatively vacuum (no significant development or improvement).

However, on the other hand, after pandemic, higher education has consistently emphasized the importance of students' vocational skills as an indicator of learning. However, the technological literacy abilities of students are relatively unbalanced by significant knowledge of religiosity and spiritual skills; it only produces scientists who do not have divine awareness. Therefore, higher education has the challenge of being able to open itself to develop learning technology that does not abandon the values of religiosity and spirituality. Thus, it needs to discuss these challenges critically and academically. The comprehensiveness of higher education learning still needs to adapt the principles of evaluation in education, namely by continuing to provide various ways/methods of involvement, representation and action of students directed according to their learning goals.(Oyarzun et al., 2021).

## 2. DISCUSSION

### a. Post-Pandemic Online Learning and Learning Management System (LMS).

Education in Indonesia after pandemic situation by adapting online learning is currently facing various other challenges; where higher education needs to adapt to the learning situation in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic with various designs, strategies and online learning methods to encourage the growth of digital or online-based learning habits. This condition has become an educational phenomenon that has been widely researched by academics with various perspectives, starting from the perspective of educators(Dorsah & Alhassan, 2021; Istenič, 2021; Sudirtha & Widiartini, 2021; Wang et al., 2021), learners(Aque et al., 2021; Fuady et al., 2021; Sintema, 2020), as well as graduate user stakeholders(Carloni et al., 2021; Epps et al., 2021; Gupta et al., 2021). This learning pattern also seems to gain legitimacy from the pace of development of society which is continuously faced with globalization, advances in science and information technology which require learning designs and patterns to be adapted to these developments.

The rate of adaptability of learning patterns can be translated by the higher education system through the use of various digital platforms which are strategic media for delivering teaching material from educators to students. Although on the one hand, the implementation of the online learning platform has indirectly reduced the quality of face-to-face meetings in conventional classes(Jin et al., 2021). Even in research by Maqableh, et al, it is said that online learning has had an impact on increasing students' internet addiction(Maqableh et al., 2021). The implication of this condition is that it gives rise to new consequences which are expected to provide academic solutions so that the quality and goals of education can still be achieved. But strangely, educational institutions are institutions that must be responsible for learning problems that arise due to the COVID-19 pandemic. For Dontre, the academic disruption that appears is in line with the increase in excessive use of digital learning devices due to the multitasking demands experienced by students as a consequence of the online learning they are taking.(Dontre, 2021).

For this reason, LMS has become an alternative online learning platform that often used after the pandemic. The higher education system in Indonesia not only focus on the mastery of academic competencies and also students' social competencies; but also emphasizes technological literacy skills through the using of digital-based learning media. It encourages higher education to continue developing learning technology through optimizing the using of LMS platforms. In this aspect, higher education should provide provisions for students to have resistance and ability to survive in global society. Since people is no longer unfamiliar with information and communication through technology; technological literacy is a competency that must be firmly attached to students. The implication that if students are able to develop digital literacy competencies - one of them through LMS usage skills - then it can be assumed that online learning process will be carried out better. However, other competencies such as conative aspects or spirituality are not necessarily realized in the form of learning outcomes.

It is not surprising that LMS for higher education can be a platform that promises to implement effective learning. Since LMS provides interactive communication facilities that can be done directly between educators and students. Through the using of information and communication technology, higher education is currently trapped in the assumption that LMS can bridge the delivery of teaching materials, conversation transcripts, academic documents and learning videos from subject teachers. It is common to conclude that the learning technology

presented through the LMS platform in its aspect is capable of creating learning effectiveness (Mardiana & Anggraini, 2019; Rabiman et al., 2020; Taufik et al., 2021) and student independence (Islahulben & Catur Widayati, 2021; Kim & Yoon, 2021). In addition, at the real level for students, skills in using LMS still require several aspects, including: (1) knowledge and skills in using the platform; (2) support from various education sectors, starting from internal policy makers in schools, parents, to infrastructure and facilities that support internet access; and (3) a paradigmatic orientation that strengthens the realm of conativeness and spirituality.

The implication of these challenges that the role of LMS in online learning systems – particularly after COVID-19 pandemic - needs to emphasize learning objectives in higher education; namely creating people who are strongly faith in God; and broad horizons of knowledge. It means that LMS is not only present as a solution to support the implementation of online learning process, but also positions the creator of digital higher education society that contains human and divine values. Based on this situation, in this context, Tarkar's research concluded that online learning is the most appropriate solution to continue in carrying out the teaching process without directly interaction. (Tarkar, 2020); can realize students' spiritual competence. The main purpose of implementing LMS in online learning is not only to fulfill demands for providing teaching materials, but also to maintain students' learning motivation through the using of digital-based learning technology. (Firman & Rahayu, 2020); as well as developing and increasing student diversity.

This description shows that the application of LMS in the higher education system and online learning for each course has an important position to continue developing and increasing its urgency, especially in strengthening student diversity. It also presents as a supporting component for digital-based learning construction that students need to practice directly in their lecture activities. It means that knowledge about the progress of information and communication technology comes through the application of LMS is not limited to cognitive understanding, but needs to be supported by the development of skills in interacting directly with the learning technology used. In fact, it is also necessary to strengthen students' paradigmatic about religious orientation; so that the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains grow along with the increase in students' religiousness and faith. In this way, students gain the skills to utilize digital media in the academic nuances of learning based on religious values or religiosity.

The conditions after pandemic have indeed forced the higher education to improve and construct innovative educational models. It encourages them to be able to carry out responsive and adaptive learning processes in facing the various dynamics of changes in learning system. The higher education needs to strengthen the theological and philosophical foundations in designing online learning that has become part of the education system in higher education. Therefore, higher education needs to play its role and position itself as a companion, motivator and guide to the continuity of learning. This position does not only carry out the obligation to "transfer of knowledge", but also implies the "transfer of value" in every learning process carried out in the higher education system.

#### **b. Higher Education Learning Design Bound by Divine Values: Challenges of Online Learning**

Basically, post-pandemic, higher education learning currently and relatively implementing hybrid learning. *Hybrid learning* is a learning method that combines online learning with face-to-face learning (PTM). Online learning that is often practiced in higher

education is LMS; it is a didactic product that is a web-based learning platform and functions to present information and learning materials, while also carrying out an evaluation function on student learning outcomes. LMS also facilitates students in communicating with fellow students and subject teachers (Susana et al., 2015). Through LMS, students have the opportunity to obtain material, conduct discussions, and receive assessments as a result of virtual learning (Goh et al., 2013).

These opportunities actually need to be reconstructed by adding and integrating values that are not included on online learning system. Just as divine values - read religiosity and spirituality - are not present in learning, higher education needs to internalize these values in the construction of online learning. It means that higher education widens the space for creativity in learning systems; do not include religious values that paradigmatically oriented towards divinity. Based on the construction of integrative learning, it will create students who have a unity of humanity and faith in their academic personality. Since the higher education needs to have creativity to design online learning strategies and models that contain the values of religiosity and spirituality.

Generally, LMS-based online learning has significant differences from conventional learning. In LMS, the emphasis on aspects of student foresight and thoroughness in managing information provided virtually by the internet network is an important priority to have. Meanwhile, the values of religiosity and spirituality need to be emphasized and internalized within students, so that the meaning of learning is not only limited to the process of changing mindsets; but also to a civilized and faithful personality. After the pandemic, higher education learning prioritizes the values of student activity in constructing their competencies through hybrid learning.

In implementing online learning, higher education is required to be more innovative in designing learning materials presented through LMS. The shift in learning design designed by higher education through LMS causes the changes in learning evaluation patterns; or there is even a need to add concentration to an integrative academic paradigm orientation (i.e. academic assessment and the religious domain). Students' understanding of learning currently lies in the final result – in the form of grades; not towards the process of changing themselves. It has a big responsibility to shift the construction of students' understanding through improving the education system to be more integrative (between academic and divine values).

As the example; it can be seen from the using of the Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment (Moodle), that is one component or software in the LMS to achieve predetermined learning objectives that need to be designed to contain divine (religious) values. As Ebarido & Valderama's research found, the features contained in the LMS such as online interaction, provision of learning materials, and assessment feedback provided by educators have a positive contribution while increasing student achievement. (Ebarido & Valderama, 2009). Therefore, it needs continuously to carry out the upgrading in optimizing LMS functions for higher education learning system.

The implication of higher education learning needs to design assessment designs that attempt to accommodate the development of some aspects of student's self (including: cognitive, affective, psychomotor, conative, and/or spirituality). For instance, the design for evaluating students' cognitive aspects is carried out through test and non-test assessments according to indicators of achievement for each course's learning material. The evaluation of students' affective aspects is carried out by using attitude assessment instruments that can be integrated

through LMS features. However, the evaluation of psychomotor aspects is carried out through practice that monitored and assessed periodically by course instructors. The evaluation of aspects of religiosity and spirituality is carried out through deepening the understanding and appreciation of divine values for each student. Thus, higher education learning needs to create learning designs that are comprehensive and cover several aspects of the student's self (including: cognitive, affective, psychomotor, conative, and/or spirituality) holistically.

### 3. CLOSING

Post-COVID pandemic<sup>19</sup> has an impact on the construction and design of higher education learning. It is a challenge for higher education to make their learning more effective. One of them is online learning that still utilize and preserve higher education. Learning Management System (LMS) is an online learning platform that often used in higher education through hybrid learning patterns. In fact, it is claimed to be an alternative solution in building an online learning system during and after pandemic. Since it has facilities that provide digital learning access for students with learning resources; they are no longer limited by time and space.

However, this learning construction still leaves a vacuum in its paradigmatic orientation, namely that it is difficult to realize and internalize the values of religiosity and spirituality in students. Ideally, higher education needs to organize learning that invites students to interact directly and build personal skills in the form of competencies. It means that the challenges of higher education learning that need to be answered are efforts to create learning designs that are comprehensive and cover several aspects of the student's self (including: cognitive, affective, psychomotor, conative, and/or spirituality) holistically. Therefore, higher education learning design needs or could be in the form of a pattern in blended evaluation that combines the optimization of assessment features in LMS with conventional assessment formats by reference to the formation of human and divine awareness - read religiosity and spirituality.

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