

# Digital Shift in LIS Education: How Covid-19 Has Changed the Way the LIS Students Learn

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## **Abstract**

*Pandemic of covid-19 appeared in the middle of the term, in the end of the first quarter of 2020. The government's sudden announcement about closing schools, universities, offices, shops, malls, and others confused people in general. Like the other institutions, universities finally closed their campuses and replaced the traditional classrooms into online classes. This sudden shift affected students and faculties. Adjustment and trials with the use of technology for classes were experienced by both students and faculties. This was a qualitative study to find out whether students of Library and Information Science enjoyed online classes rather than traditional ones. The results showed that students could not concentrate better in the online classes, because the physical environment was different. The surrounding people often distracted concentration because they never thought about online education before. The students felt that they could not interact with their classmates socially like that in the traditional classes. They also experienced increasing cost for education especially those with prepaid wireless. Faculties need to find strategies for online classes so that students will not feel bored with the online classes.*

**Keywords:** Digital shift, LIS education, online classes, pandemic

## **1. Introduction**

Covid-19 emerged in Indonesia in the middle of March 2020 when students were enjoying their traditional classroom—meeting their classmates and professors face-to-face. Some students enjoyed finishing their thesis and discussed their works with their classmates. However, it did not last long and it was not even half of the Spring semester that they had to end the joy of meeting classmates and

professors in the campus. In such a sudden the condition changed: Students should stay at home, universities should close their traditional classrooms. Students could only meet the faculty through the screens.

The pandemic of covid-19 was announced when students were enthusiastic to study. People were asked to stay at home instead of working in the office, studying at schools or universities, and travelling. The university soon also announced the closing of campuses and shifted the teaching and learning model from onsite to online classes. People experienced confusion with this sudden condition, including students who were enjoying studying in the universities. They could not go to their campuses. Instead, they should stay at home or apartment and studying online.

In a very short time, campuses became so quiet. Few people visited the campus for only some important issues. Some students stayed in the apartments or boarding houses due to finishing their thesis or dissertation, but most students coming from different cities or provinces went back home, teaching staff were all at home and they gave lectures from home. Of course this was such a hard change as in Indonesia teaching and learning are usually held in the traditional classrooms, instead of online ones.

Online classes are not common for most educational institutions—from elementary schools to higher education institutions. The general regulation required campuses to hold traditional classes instead of online ones and students are expected to attend most of the classes. In addition, like other Asian countries, teaching in Indonesia is rooted from confucian heritage, in which teachers or professors are the center of the classroom. Students are not expected to speak when the teachers or faculties give a lecture and the students should listen to the them. Students may ask questions when the teachers or professors finish their talk. This style of teaching and learning may shift in the online classes, depending on their adjustment to the environment and technology. However, in the beginning of the “forced online classes,” in the early days of pandemic, it was clearly seen that the concept of online teaching and learning was still the same with that of the traditional classroom. Students were expected to listen to the professor who is explaining the topic in the online class. The same situation also happened in the elementary to high schools. Students wore uniforms and sat down in front of their laptops. Even during the ceremony, students should stand in front of the computer at home. When students should sing the national anthem, students were asked to stand up in front of the computer at home. In short, the physical real-world atmosphere was applied in the online space.

Nishikant (2009) stated that actually teaching online is different from the traditional one. Traditional classes require both students and faculty to be in the classroom during the sessions, while in the online classes, students are in distance and they even can hide their appearance on the screen and mute themselves. Onsite or traditional classrooms enable faculties and students to interact freely, without any barriers; and therefore, the atmosphere support their social and psychological ties. On the other hand, online classes do limit the interaction between faculties and students and among students

themselves (Capra, 2011). Therefore, they should make adjustment when they move from traditional classroom to the online classes.

The shift from traditional classroom to online classes has indeed affected students and faculties socially and psychologically. Senior faculty who never attended online meeting experienced hardship in making adjustment, while young faculty and students had no problem with technology and online meeting as they already lived in both the real world and cyber space. However, the shift also raised questions: Whether students and faculty could make adjustment with this change, whether they enjoyed studying online, what aspects they find as challenges and opportunities?

## **2. Objective**

This study was conducted to find out the impact of covid-19 pandemic on LIS teaching and learning process and the effectiveness of online classes instead of traditional ones and the future of Library and Information Science (LIS) education in the developing countries, such as Indonesia.

## **3. Methodology**

This case study was conducted at the LIS department (Graduate School of Information and Library Management), Gadjah Mada University in Yogyakarta, Indonesia during pandemic time. As it was impossible to distribute questionnaires and online distribution of questionnaires did not guarantee the responses, therefore, this study was conducted as a qualitative study by way of asynchronous and synchronous interviews using Whatsapp application. Whatsapp is used for this interview because most students use Whatsapp to communicate with anyone in Indonesia. Whatsapp is also the most popular medium for communication among university students and faculties. Students use whatsapp to contact their faculties or send files to them. Also, in the academic world, sharing files and contacting colleague are mostly conducted using mobile applications, while emails are not so common as Whatsapp. This is due to the convenience among them to use mobile phones for all activities. Sometimes they even joining the online classes using mobile phones instead of using desktop or laptop.

The study was conducted among 12 master's students who were still studying and those who was doing research for her thesis.

## **4. Discussion**

Gadjah Mada University opened the Graduate School of Library Management in 1996 due to the need of the government to prepare library officers at the department of education in all 34 provinces. After the government no longer needed the master's program in library management continued and

welcome any students to study librarianship at Gadjah Mada University. Since 2003, the Graduate School of Library Management changed its name into Graduate School of Information and Library management. Unlike in the old days, when students were mostly librarians who have already worked in the libraries, most current students are fresh graduates, especially from the department of library and information science.

The interviews were conducted using Whatsapp and it was conducted both synchronously and asynchronously depending on the students' availability to answer the questions due to the students' activities. There were two (2) students who were writing thesis while the other ten (10) were still taking courseworks.

#### 4.1. infrastructure

Based on the interview responses, it was found out that since the beginning of online classes, students were able to adapt to the new way of learning in the beginning of the online classes although they never experienced online classes before, and the platforms varied among the faculties. Some senior faculty preferred Webex, while some other faculty chose Zoom and Google meet.

The students stated that they were ready with the shift from traditional classroom to online classes as they were capable of working with technology, but the infrastructure did not always support the process of learning. In fact, not all cities and town had good Internet network.

Prepaid wireless did not always support their Internet access, while at some other time, some students had to find WIFI network by going to a café or any other places to get WIFI network because either their Internet connection at home was poor or they could not afford the budget for the prepaid wireless. Webex was the platform that students did not feel satisfied because it required so much bandwidth and therefore they spent so much budget for this medium for learning. According to Pratnyawan (2020) Webex is the medium for learning that required so much bandwidth.



*Pic. 1. Comparison of bandwidth requirements among Zoom, Skype, Hangout, and Webex. Cited from Pratnyawan (2020), Zoom, Skype, Google Hangouts, dan Webex, Mana yang Paling Irit Bandwidth? Suara.com. accessed from <https://www.suara.com/tekno/2020/03/31/182955/zoom-skype-google-hangouts-dan-webex-mana-yang-paling-irit-bandwidth>*

Students preferred using Zoom and Google meet instead of Webex due to the infrastructure of the Internet. Besides spending so much amount of budget for their prepaid wireless, they sometimes had to go to a café to attend the online classes because the Internet was not always good in their homes.

In term of infrastructure, another problem that could happen was power cut. When the power cut happened, students could not do anything but waiting for the power restored.

#### **4.2. Atmosphere**

As stated earlier, online classes are different from traditional ones. While in the traditional class, students and faculty are in the same physical space, in the online class, every student and faculty are in different places and each has atmosphere that may supportive or disruptive to the online class. In addition, during the online class, noise may come from the presence of someone in the same place, any passing vehicles, and other possible disturbance.

According to some students, as they never experienced online classes before, they could not concentrate well in the online classes as the environment of online classes was not a classroom with only students and faculty member speaking in from of the classroom, but a home with family members or a café with other people sitting down nearby and vehicles passing by. In their opinion, noise could come from the family members who asked questions or asked to do something as their family did not see them as “attending a class” but “only sitting in front of a laptop”. Another noise may come from the poor Internet connection that may cause poor sound or picture. Students sometime lost their connection too and therefore, they missed some of the lesson. These noise made them have less concentration during their online class.

#### **4.3. Time**

The university policy for teaching and learning during pandemic has changed in term of length of time. In the traditional classroom, students attend 14 sessions in one semester and 1 credit semester means students will study for 60 minutes per sessions. However, since the pandemic, the teaching was only about 30 minutes for 1 credit. Also, in one semester, students attend only 10 sessions in one semester instead of 14 sessions. For one thing, the faculty adapted their materials to the length of time they could spend in shorter sessions; while students might get less materials or too much in a short session.

Besides having less time to interact online with faculty in the online class, students often experienced another problem of time. When the class began, students sometimes had not got connection to the Internet yet causing them to miss some part of the session.

#### **4.4. Knowledge and research agenda**

Those who were doing research for their thesis experienced problems with their data collection. First, they changed their research from quantitative to qualitative because they had difficulties in finding respondents onsite and, secondly, the difficulty in distributing questionnaires online as the responses were not as many as they expected, due to the respondents' reluctance to respond online. Qualitative method was chosen because they could interview the informants using digital devices such as videocall, telephones, and online chats. However, for students who never experience qualitative research, they found it difficult to do so. In this study, both students changed their research method from quantitative to qualitative and they had to change their work and data collection.

#### **5. Conclusion**

The shift from onsite to online has made students change their learning process. There are four identified problems when traditional classroom is replaced by online class, namely (1) infrastructure, (2) social and psychological condition, (3) time, and (4) knowledge and research agenda.

Problem with infrastructure may cause students hardship in learning because they may find better internet connection by going to a café or other places, budget that students spend increase for the wireless connection, and uncontrollable infrastructure problem such as power cut. Meanwhile, people around the students sometimes disturb their online studying because they do not know there is someone who is studying or they disturb the student with noise. Students may also get noise from passingby vehicles and people.

Students may get less knowledge due to lesser time to study and work harder because they must change their research methodology.

It is important for higher education institutions to consider the impacts of changing policies, regulations, and even agenda due to unexpected happening. Making decision without considering them will impact on the teaching and learning outcome.

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