STRATEGIES AND POLICIES OF THE GOVERNMENT OF INDONESIA IN THE EDUCATION SECTOR DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC CRISIS

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Abstract

The purpose of writing an article entitled Strategy and Policy of the Indonesian Government in the Education Sector in the Crisis Period of the Covid-19 Pandemic is to find out how the Indonesian government's strategies and policies in the field of education are facing the Covid-19 Pandemic. In the field of education, a student no longer has to be present in the classroom to get an education and the teaching and learning process can be done anywhere. Online learning has become the new prima donna where many schools and universities are forced to carry out learning using telecommunication networks and internet access. This is due to the development of technology and communication that does not recognize space and time. The method used in writing this article is descriptive analysis, where this article tries to interpret and describe the existing data and the existing situation so that it can describe the characteristics and relationships between objects. In the end, the strategies and policies implemented by the Government of Indonesia during this pandemic are new and have never been implemented before. This policy or what the Indonesian government calls the Freedom to Learn follows the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia Number 3 of 2020 concerning National Standards for Higher Education, in Article 18 it is stated that the fulfillment of the study period and burden for undergraduate or applied undergraduate students can be carried out: 1) follow the entire learning process in the study program at the university according to the period and study load, and 2) follow the learning process in the study program to fulfill some of the time and learning load and the rest following the learning process outside the study program.

Keywords: Indonesian Education; Freedom to Learn; Distance Education; Distance Learning.

1   INTRODUCTION

The year 2020 is a turning point for the world of education where when people are more or more often using the face-to-face education system, they are faced with the choice of continuing the existing system with the consequences of contracting the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (or Covid-19) which is spreading or switching to education. remotely relying on information systems skills. For most people, of course, this is a compulsion considering their skills in using information system facilities are still very limited and internet access has not been able to reach remote areas.

After observing the coronavirus pandemic situation, the WHO advised maintaining social distancing as the first prevention step (Jena, 2020b). Each country then implements policies to prevent the spread of the 2019 Coronavirus Disease. Most of the countries affected by Covid-19 then take state lockouts and prohibit community mobilization between countries. This lockdown,

then, has an impact on people's lives, be it from the economic, social, or political sectors, and of course, also has an impact on education. In the field of education, many schools and universities were closed, and the teaching and learning process shifted from a face-to-face model in the classroom to a digital model with the help of advances in information technology.

This sudden change then caused many problems that occurred in the field. Starting from the limitations of the internet network that cannot reach all corners of the country, there are still many people who are not familiar with technological advances, to the results of student evaluations whose accuracy is doubtful, which is an obstacle that must be faced both by educators and by students. This is coupled with psychological problems where students who are used to learning face-to-face with their teachers or with their friends now must be "forced" to interact in the network. Thus, COVID-19 has created many challenges and opportunities for educational institutions to strengthen their technical knowledge and infrastructure (Jena, 2020a).

This sudden change then, makes many schools and universities experience challenges in using information technology that will be used in the teaching and learning process. E-schools with different teaching modes have appeared in the public field of vision, and web-based instruction has become a very common phenomenon (Xiaoju & Xin, 2018). Teachers, be they teachers, lecturers, or tutors, are required to be able to master various applications and keep up with the development of information technology. On the other hand, students are also very dependent on their parents to be able to help carry out the assigned tasks.

School closures due to Coronavirus have raised new issues such as how to transition to online learning at home. Additionally, school closures also increase the pressure on students, teachers, and parents, especially those with limited digital skills, education, and resources for continued education (Milian Prof. et al., 2020). It increases the burden on parents to not only struggle to provide for the home but also to perform the supervision task of protecting that their children learn from home (Onyema, 2020).

Indonesia as one of the countries affected by the Covid-19 pandemic is the same as other countries. However, if other countries have implemented lockdown measures to prevent the spread of the virus, Indonesia has implemented other policies. Since the first case was discovered in Indonesia on March 2, 2020, the government has immediately imposed social distancing or social distancing and physical distancing or physical restrictions. At that time, the President of Indonesia, Joko Widodo, directly urged people to worship from home, work from home, and study from home. The appeal was issued as an effort to break the chain of the spread of the Covid-19 virus, but it

does not mean that it also cuts off social interactions that occur in the community. The Indonesian government also made a breakthrough in the field of education with the launch of the concept of *Merdeka Belajar* (Freedom to Learn).

2   METHODOLOGY

The method used in writing this article is descriptive. Namely, this article tries to interpret and describe the existing data and the conditions that have occurred since the Covid-19 pandemic was first detected until now. Indonesia, as one of the countries that have not implemented lockdown measures, uses other measures to prevent the spread of the virus so that the economy and education can continue to run even during a pandemic. By using the data and facts found, then processed and interpreted to provide the information needed in writing articles.

3   FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The Covid-19 pandemic that has occurred since the beginning of 2020 has harmed all aspects of human life. But it cannot be denied that this pandemic has raised the prestige of Distance Education and has become the new prima donna in the world of education. *Freedom to Learn,* launched by the Indonesian Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, is an embodiment of the autonomy of the learner theory which was launched by Michael Moore in Hills & Keegan in his writing entitled Theory of transactional distance. Learner autonomy is the extent to which in the teaching/learning relationship it is the learner rather than the teacher who determines the goals, the learning experiences, and the evaluation decisions of the learning program (Hills & Keegan, 1994).

Autonomy refers to the extent to which the learner decides on certain factors, such as "what to learn, how to learn, and how much to learn (Moore & Anderson, 2003). Moore suggests that adult learners tend to set their own learning goals and pursue goal achievement. The autonomy of learners is then very similar to the *Freedom to Learn* policy implemented by the Government of Indonesia. *Freedom to Learn* provides freedom in learning, which can be anywhere, anytime, and even from any source. Especially in the current pandemic condition, like it or not. Like it or not, we must apply learning methods with various learning sources, one of which is learning through digital technology.

The Freedom to Learn policy has been launched into special programs which start at the end of 2019 until October 2022. There have been 22 programs. Each of these programs has a different target object, so it is hoped that education in Indonesia will not be disrupted by COVID-19.

Table 1. Caption for the table.

No.	Episode	Launch Date	Program
1	*Freedom to Learn 1*	December 10, 2019	National Assessment, USBN, RPP, and PPDB
2	*Freedom to Learn 2*	January 24, 2020	Independent Campus
3	*Freedom to Learn 3*	February 10, 2020	Distribution and Use of BOS Funds
4	*Freedom to Learn 4*	March 2, 2020	Driving Organization Program
5	*Freedom to Learn 5*	July 3, 2020	Motivator Teacher Program
6	*Freedom to Learn 6*	November 3, 2020	Transformation of Government Funds for Higher Education
7	*Freedom to Learn 7*	February 1, 2021	Motivator School Program
8	*Freedom to Learn 8*	March 17, 2021	Center of Excellence Vocational High School
9	*Freedom to Learn 9*	March 26, 2021	Independent Lecture KIP
10	*Freedom to Learn 10*	April 22, 2021	LPDP Scholarship Program Expansion
11	*Freedom to Learn 11*	May 25, 2021	Vocational Independence Campus
12	*Freedom to Learn 12*	August 26, 2021	Safe School Shopping Program with School Procurement Information System (SIPlah)
13	*Freedom to Learn 13*	September 3, 2021	Cultured Freedom with Indonesian Channels
14	*Freedom to Learn 14*	November 12, 2021	Free Campus from Sexual Violence
15	*Freedom to Learn 15*	February 11, 2022	Independent Curriculum and Independent Teaching Platform
16	*Freedom to Learn 16*	February 15, 2022	Acceleration and Increasing Funding of PAUD and Equality Education
17	*Freedom to Learn 17*	February 22, 2022	Regional Language Revitalization
18	*Freedom to Learn 18*	March 23, 2022	Freedom of Culture with Indonesiana Funds
19	*Freedom to Learn 19*	April 1, 2022	Indonesian Education Report
20	*Freedom to Learn 20*	June 3, 2022	Practical Teaching
21	*Freedom to Learn 21*	June 21, 2022	College Endowment
22	*Freedom to Learn 22*	June 3, 2022	Transformation of State University Entrance Selection

The learning arrangement with a chaotic approach is intended so that students can be safe, comfortable, and easy to learn. Learners as learning subjects – learner control, play an important role in the learning arrangement. The initiative of children as learners to learn –the will to learn-will die when faced with many rules that have nothing to do with the learning process, as has been explained in regular learning above. In addition to freedom, to bring up the will to learn is an attitude of realness – namely, the awareness that the child as a student has strengths and weaknesses; courage as well as anxiety; can be angry, can also be happy. Therefore, the curriculum and teaching materials for teacher education are designed as pedagogical vehicles to develop the ability to understand students, the ability to master educational learning, personality abilities as teachers, and the ability to master teaching materials in the field of study in the school curriculum, the ability to understand deeply the concepts and methodologies of the discipline. the science that overshadows the substance of the curriculum, and the social abilities of teachers as members of society (Setijadi, 2005).

In the *Freedom to Learn* program, the teacher will appear as the driving force. Here, the key to *Freedom to Learn* is the human being. Well, if humans are the key, then a sense of independence must always be attached. If the sense of independence is not attached, it is necessary to "learn to be independent". *Freedom to Learn* also needs to be strengthened before starting independent learning. Once purpose and freedom in design issues are resolved, then dimensions related to technology, support, review, or evaluation become critical aspects of discourse and decision-making (Rogers et al., 2009). The availability of technological devices for students and teachers, internet access, and the ability of teachers and students to navigate distance learning are key factors in sustaining effective educational efforts during the pandemic (Milian Prof. et al., 2020).

3.1   Freedom to Learn – Independent Campus

The *Freedom to Learn* Policy – *Independent Campus,* launched by the Minister of Education and Culture, is a framework to prepare students to become strong scholars, relevant to the needs of the times, and ready to become leaders with a high national spirit. In the regulation of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, No. 3 of 2020 gives students the right to study 3 semesters outside their study program. Through this program, there are wide opportunities for students to enrich and improve their insight and competence in the real world following their passions and ideals. (Dirjen Pendidikan Tinggi, 2020).

Freedom to Learn – Independent Campus according to the Minister of Education, Culture, Research and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia departs the desire that educational output produces better quality and no longer produces students who are only good at memorizing, but also have sharp analytical skills, reasoning, and comprehensive understanding in learning to develop themselves. *Freedom to Learn* is a form of learning in higher education that is autonomous and flexible to create a learning culture that is innovative, unfettered, and follows student needs. (Dirjen Pendidikan Tinggi, 2020). *Freedom to Learn* is a natural learning process to achieve independence. It is necessary to learn to be independent first, because there may still be things that shackle the sense of independence, the feeling of not being independent, and narrow the space for independence. The essence of *Freedom to Learn* is to explore the greatest potential of teachers and students to innovate and improve the quality of learning independently. Independent is not only following the educational bureaucratic process but truly educational innovation.

The main points of the *Freedom to Learn – Independence Campus* policy is, *first*, the opening of new study programs regulated in the regulation of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research and Technology No. 7 of 2020 on the Establishment, Amendment, Dissolution of State Universities, and the Establishment, Amendment, Revocation of Permits for Private Universities, as well as regulation of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research and Technology No. 5 of 2020 on Accreditation of Study Programs and Universities. Autonomy for Universities accredited A and B to open new study programs that are not in the fields of health and education. Additionally, new study programs are automatically granted C accreditation and study programs can be submitted if there is cooperation with strategic partners.

Second, the higher education accreditation system is regulated in the regulation of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research and Technology No. 5 of 2020 on Accreditation of Study Programs and Universities. Colleges with B and C accreditation can apply for an increase in accreditation at any time. The government can also review the accreditation status of universities or study programs if there are indications of a decline in the quality of the university or study program.

Third, the University's legal entities are regulated in the regulation of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology No. 4 of 2020 on Changes in State Universities to State Universities as Legal Entities and the regulation of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research and Technology No. 6 of 2020 on Acceptance of Undergraduates at State Universities. The government also facilitates the requirements for changing the status of higher education institutions

to legal institutions in the absence of minimum accreditation, and submissions for changes can be made at any time.

Fourth, the right to study for three semesters outside the study program as regulated in the regulation of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research and Technology No. 3 of 2020 on National Higher Education Standards. The university is obliged to give students the right to take credits outside the university for 2 semesters and take credits in different study programs at the same university for 1 semester. The goal is that students can learn new knowledge outside the study program taken. Additionally, it is also hoped that graduates will be more prepared to face the conditions of employment after college.

The purpose of this independent campus is to improve the competence of graduates, both soft skills, and hard skills, to be more prepared and relevant to the needs of the times, and to prepare graduates as future leaders of the nation with excellent personalities. One of the keys to the success of implementing the *Freedom to Learn – Independence Campus* Policy is to make the learning process in higher education more autonomous and flexible (Yusuf & Arfiansyah, 2021)

Following the principle of continuity, assessment in the implementation of the *Freedom to Learn – Independence Campus* policy, the program "right to learn three semesters outside the study program" is carried out during the activity (process assessment) and at the end of the activity in the form of a learning activity report (outcome assessment). Assessment in the process is done using observation (personality and social) as the main technique. While the assessment of the results is carried out at the end of the program implementation using reports made by students. The assessment is carried out by assistants from Third Parties related to activities taken by students and assistant lecturers in Higher Education.

Additionally, universities are required to create a system in the form of an online survey about students' experiences and assessments of the quality of the independent learning program that they undergo for one semester outside the study program. This can be used to get feedback from students as an evaluation tool for universities in developing their next program.

4   CONCLUSION

Apart from the Covid-19 pandemic, distance learning is the mission of the Indonesian government in realizing learning independence. The Independent Learning System of the *Freedom to Learn* is very supportive to improve the competence of graduates, both soft skills and hard skills, preparing students to be more prepared and relevant to the needs of the times, preparing graduates as future leaders of the nation with superior and personality. So that the existence of an independent campus can provide flexibility for students to choose aspects of their development following the partner collaboration that has been designed by the student's home program. This program is expected to provide new experiences for students to choose programs according to their characteristics and interests, encourage student motivation, and make them alumni who are useful for life and the surrounding community.

With globalization and reform, there has been a change in the educational paradigm. First, is the paradigm of a teaching-oriented educational process where the teacher is more of an information center, shifting to a learning-oriented educational process where students become the source (student center). Second, the paradigm of the traditional educational process, which is oriented towards classical approaches, and formats in the classroom, shifts to more flexible learning models, such as distance education. Third, the quality of education is a priority (meaning quality is international). Fourth, the growing popularity of lifelong education and the increased melting of the boundaries between education in school and outside school.

This paradigm shift makes the campus an institution to produce learning (Barr & Tagg, 1995) This shift frees the institution from various series of difficulties related to implementing teaching because the mission of the institution is to produce learning that is followed by all students through their best efforts. The learning paradigm provides opportunities for students to set the boundaries of learning and their success, while the teaching paradigm seeks to achieve success on what has been determined by the institution by developing certain teaching methods.

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