

ENHANCING THE QUALITY OF DISTANCE EDUCATION IN INDONESIA: INTEGRATING NATIONAL REGULATIONS WITH GLOBAL EDUCATIONAL CONCEPTS

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Abstract

This study investigates the alignment between Indonesian Distance Learning (DL) legislation and established pedagogical theories in higher education. It is imperative for educators to have the capacity to teach effectively online, especially as distance learning (DL) becomes increasingly prevalent owing to the COVID-19 epidemic. This study employs a qualitative, literature-based technique to analyse Indonesian regulatory frameworks in connection to established online education theories, including Moore's Transactional Distance Theory, the Community of Inquiry model, and Holmberg's theory of personal communication. Indonesian distance learning (DL) is governed by Law No. 20/2003 and Ministerial Regulation No. 109/2013, which set out the rules and standards. There are major gaps when you compare it to the finest techniques to teach in the world. The lessons aren't very good, the students can't work on their own, the lessons aren't interesting enough, the lectures aren't personal enough, the teacher isn't helpful enough, and the quality assurance methods aren't good enough. In general, rules put technology infrastructure and administrative compliance ahead of crucial educational challenges. In light of these problems, this paper gives specific suggestions for how to improve the quality of remote learning in Indonesia. Some good ideas are to teach instructors about DL theory, modify the norms for higher education so that they work better for today's teachers, provide DL teachers more help at schools, and make online learning communities that everyone can join. The goal is to shift DL in Indonesia from just obeying the rules to giving great lessons and making sure that all students have pleasant, fair, and high-quality learning experiences.

Keywords: Guidelines for Distance Learning (DL), Pedagogical Theories, Online Instruction Quality, Educator Training and Support.

1 INTRODUCTION

Distance Learning (DL) has been an important part of higher education in Indonesia, especially since the COVID-19 outbreak forced the use of digital technology and remote teaching methods. DL is more flexible and available to more people, but how well it works depends a lot on how well the professors can make and teach high-quality online courses. The rapid transition to distance learning has revealed numerous issues inside schools and

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pedagogical approaches, particularly regarding the alignment of national regulations with the requirements of remote education. Indonesia has always thought that DL is a great approach to study. Laws like Law No. 20/2003 on the National Education System, which indicates that DL is a legitimate means to educate (Article 31), and Ministerial Regulation No. 109/2013, which tells higher education institutions how to use DL, are what make it possible.

These standards tell people how to use DL by emphasising on Learning Management Systems (LMS), digital content, and techniques to grade students from a distance. Research shows that the government's guidelines are not enough for effective distance learning (DL), even if they are lawful. Pannen (2020) asserts that policies emphasise administrative compliance and infrastructure at the expense of instructional design, learner autonomy, and engagement. Salehudin et al. (2021) assert that despite the promotion of e-learning and the incorporation of social media, educators' digital pedagogical competencies remain inadequate, particularly in rural and under-resourced regions. Real-world examples show that the rules for remote learning in Indonesia don't always work for teachers or students. Azzahra (2020) asserts that the shift to online learning due to COVID-19 intensified difficulties for students in distant places with insufficient internet connectivity, as well as for educators deficient in computer skills. Yaqin et al. (2024) contend that the digital gap persists in obstructing access to remote learning for all individuals. This is because the levels of infrastructure, digital literacy, and institutional support are varied in different places. Lestari and Riatun (2024) contend that, although the growing implementation of blended learning during the pandemic, challenges in system integration, student adaptation, and instructional quality persist. These statements illustrate that we need a legal system that puts people and learning first, not just technology and educational methods.

2 METHODS

This essay aims to analyse the congruence between Indonesian distance learning regulations and global educational theories, including Moore's Transactional Distance Theory, the Community of Inquiry framework, and Holmberg's Guided Didactic Conversation. The goal is to figure out what is the same and what is different about Indonesia's policies and practices for distance learning. Then, utilise that information to create ideas for how to improve them.

3 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A Look at the Rules for Distance Learning in Different Countries Indonesia has a variety of rules and legislation governing distance learning (DL). The Directorate General of Higher

Education's Technical Guidelines, Ministerial Regulation No. 109/2013 on Distance Learning, and Law No. 12 of 2012 on Higher Education are all examples. These agreements together explain how DL should be set up, run, and use technology. A comparison analysis demonstrates that the level of instruction, student support, and quality assurance are all very bad when compared to worldwide standards. Article 31 of Law No. 12 of 2012 specifies that distance learning (DL) is a valid means to learn, which helps it flourish.

The law, on the other hand, largely talks about how businesses work and how they are run. It doesn't go into detail on what makes a good teacher or how to make things that are helpful for the learner. Ministerial Regulation No. 109/2013 explains how DL works. It says that it is a long-distance learning process that uses a lot of different types of media (Article 1) and that people should be open and self-directed. Article 3 talks about how to utilise ICT to help kids learn, and Article 6 talks about how to make sure that all students do well. There are three ways to provide the service, according to Article 5: single, dual, and consortium. It also specifies that schools must create Distance Learning Resource Units (USBJJ) to support students with both schoolwork and tech problems (Article 8). The main problem with these rules is that the law puts too much emphasis on technology and not enough on new approaches to teach. Article 7 talks about structured and supervised learning, but it doesn't say anything about how to make people feel like they belong, how to get people emotionally invested, or how to make learning more flexible.

3.1 Theoretical perspectives on distance education

The field of Distance Education (DE) has been shaped by numerous foundational theories that continue to affect educational practices in online and blended learning environments. Some of the most well-known ideas are Moore's Transactional Distance Theory, the Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework, and Holmberg's Theory of Guided Didactic Conversation.

Recent studies have re-evaluated and improved these models, leading to a deeper comprehension of their importance in contemporary digital education. Michael G. Moore's Transactional Distance Theory (TDT) posits that educational distance extends beyond physical dimensions to include psychological characteristics shaped by conversational dynamics, structural elements, and learner autonomy. Moore (2013) defines transactional distance as "a psychological and communicative space to be traversed, a realm of potential misunderstanding between the inputs of the instructor and those of the learner" (p. 22). Recent systematic reviews have validated the importance of TDT in post-pandemic schooling.

Achuthan et al. (2024) analysed 275 papers and identified three primary domains: (1) the impact of course design on learner performance, (2) the role of TDT in enhancing engagement and satisfaction, and (3) the integration of TDT into pedagogical frameworks for effective distance education. Their findings indicate that heightened discourse and diminished structure alleviate transactional distance, hence fostering learner autonomy and improving engagement.

The Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework characterises significant online learning as the integration of social presence, cognitive presence, and teaching presence. Garrison et al. (2000) contend that “a community of inquiry is composed of individuals who collaboratively engage in purposeful critical discourse and reflection to construct personal meaning and confirm mutual understanding” (p. 89). Recent research has expanded the paradigm by include learning presence as a fourth dimension, representing self-regulation and metacognitive engagement. Alsayer et al. (2024) found that this new method makes it easier to figure out how well online education works and helps come up with solutions that put students at the centre.

Börje Holmberg's thesis emphasises the imperative of sympathetic, dialogic involvement in distance education. Holmberg (1995) asserts that "feelings of personal relation between the teaching and learning parties promote study pleasure and motivation," and that these feelings can be fostered through well-crafted self-instructional materials and reciprocal communication (p. 36). Holmberg's Guided Didactic Conversation model is particularly advantageous in asynchronous learning environments, where the absence of immediate interaction may be mitigated by tailored feedback and a conversational tone. His ideas are important again on digital platforms that use AI-powered tutoring systems and interactive media to get people talking again. All of these ideas support a style of learning from a distance that puts the student first and makes them think and be interested. They don't like programs that focus on delivery and give clear guidelines on how to construct online learning experiences that are helpful.

3.2 Comparative analysis: Regulations vs. Theory

The compatibility of Indonesian legislative frameworks with fundamental principles of Distance Education reveals some critical shortcomings. The guidelines say what the organisation and administration should be like, but they don't do a good job of covering things like how well the students learn, how active they are, and how flexible the teaching is. Article

4 of Ministerial Regulation No. 109/2013 says that the course design must follow the National Standards for Higher Education. These standards indicate how significant the curriculum framework is and how it relates to programs that are taught in person. This rule says that everyone needs to teach courses in the same way, which usually means that the formats are too strict.

Moore's Transactional Distance Theory, conversely, advocates for adaptable frameworks that facilitate autonomous student learning. A more regimented course can make transactional distance greater, which can make students less interested in learning (Moore, 2013). The Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework also helps you make designs that are adaptable and enhance cognitive presence by getting people to think and ask questions. Indonesian laws put more weight on consistency than on being able to change. This makes it tougher to come up with systems that work for everyone. Law No. 12/2012 and Ministerial Regulation No. 109/2013 say that ICT and Learning Management Systems (LMS) should be used to teach the curriculum. Article 7 of the Ministerial Regulation talks about how to use digital media to help with structured and guided learning.

Holmberg's Theory of Guided Didactic Conversation stresses how important it is for people to talk to each other in a way that is both sympathetic and dialogical. DE should try to make it easier for people to talk to each other, even if not everyone is there at the same moment. People will be happier and more motivated because of this (Holmberg, 1995). The majority of the restrictions pertain to technology. There are standards for generating content that moves people and gets them involved, but there is no help system. Article 8 of Ministerial Regulation No. 109/2013 says that schools must use Distance Learning Resource Units (USBJJ) to help students with their studies and technical skills. But it doesn't say how to improve social presence or give each person their own say.

The CoI idea says that having a social presence is very important for learning online that matters. This indicates that people need to be connected in a way that is real, long-lasting, and emotionally strong (Garrison et al., 2000). Moore's thesis underscores communication as a vital factor in reducing transactional distance. A lot of people think that teachers shouldn't have to talk to students, but that it's a wonderful thing for them to do. This makes students less interested and more alone. DL tests should be graded like other tests. A lot of individuals think that Article 6 of Ministerial Regulation No. 109/2013 entails formal, final tests because it says that learning outcomes must be the same. On the other hand, DE theories

back strict, continual, and formative review. The CoI paradigm enables tests that make people think deeply and be completely present. Moore's paradigm, on the other hand, supports feedback systems that give students more freedom. Assessment methods often have a rigid and formal character, lacking the formative feedback loops essential for the efficacy of online learning.

Finally, Law No. 12/2012 says that the Ministry should help teachers grow, but it doesn't stipulate that DE educational theory should be taught in training programs. DE instructors need to know how to teach online, use digital resources, and get students interested in order to do their jobs well. Instructional presence is a key part of the CoI method. It includes the skills needed to plan and deliver a course. Teachers get a lot of instruction in how to do administrative and technological tasks. People don't pay much attention to teaching abilities that are only useful for online learning.

3.3 Approach

We need a multi-level approach to make sure that the best practices and rules for Distance Education (DE) work together. These suggestions come from Moore's Transactional Distance Theory, the Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework, Holmberg's Guided Didactic Conversation, and a comparison of policies.

First, make sure that teachers are aware of DE theory. Training programs for lecturers shouldn't merely educate them how to do technical tasks. They should also talk about the major ideas behind Distance Education (DE), like Social Presence and Teaching Presence (CoI), Dialogue and Learner Autonomy (Moore), and Empathetic Communication (Holmberg). The government should support DL pedagogy, and schools like Universitas Terbuka should work together to help design the curriculum.

Second, the rules for getting into college need to be altered. The rules that are in place now, such as Ministerial Regulation No. 109/2013, need to be updated so that they work better with the needs of teachers today and the newest technologies. The three primary areas that need to change are assessment (moving from summative to formative and reflective models), interaction (requiring scheduled opportunities for social and cognitive engagement), and flexibility (enabling adaptable course design and modular learning paths).

Third, schools need to do more to aid students. Schools should help their DL teachers a lot. Some examples are mentoring and helping other teachers set up communities of practice for new teaching methods, innovation spaces for digital pedagogy labs to test and make content,

and making sure they have access to multimedia tools, analytics platforms, and instructional design expertise.

In the end, we need to establish online learning communities that everyone may join. Schools should build communities (like forums, peer review, and group projects to improve social presence), provide personalised help (like AI-driven tutoring and adaptive feedback systems), and make sure everyone has equal access (by putting money into targeted infrastructure and mobile-friendly platforms to close digital divides). This will make it easy for people to get involved and speed up transactions.

4 CONCLUSION

Distance Learning (DL) is a new way to make higher education in Indonesia simpler for everyone to access by eliminating gaps in location, economy, and society. To make the most of this chance, we need more than simply technology. Laws and the best ways to teach should be very similar. Indonesia has made DL legal by passing laws like Law No. 12 of 2012 and Ministerial Regulation No. 109 of 2013. Most of these principles are about how to set things up, and they don't do enough to make sure that online learning is effective. DL has a hard time getting students involved and giving them freedom because there aren't enough chances for them to participate, learn in their own way, and get feedback on their work. Schools could improve remote learning by utilising ideas from Moore's Transactional Remote Theory, the Community of Inquiry framework, and Holmberg's Guided Didactic Conversation in their rules and everyday work. This means changing the rules so that they fit what kids need in today's classrooms, adding theory to teacher training, and making it easier for everyone to join online learning communities.

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