Limited Face-to-face Lectures at a State University During the Pandemic

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Abstract:
The Directorate General of Higher Education, Research and Technology has issued Circular Letter 4 of 2021 concerning implementing Face-to-face Learning for the Academic Year 2021/2022. Universitas Negeri Semarang (UNNES) has responded by giving Circular Letter Number: B/11898/UN37/KM/2021 concerning hybrid Lectures for Odd Semester 2021/2022 in Universitas Negeri Semarang. Hybrid learning during the Covid-19 pandemic came up with many challenges and required rigorous preparation. It is because UNNES will not take any actions that put both its employees and students at risk. This study uses a qualitative research approach framework that describes a phenomenon and information related to implementing hybrid learning during the pandemic. UNNES has successfully implemented both preparation and implementation stages according to the guideline. No Covid-19 cases have been found caused by performing mixed class. However, there is still a concern about the absence of temporary isolation rooms for academics and students with Covid-19 symptoms/criteria. This part is compulsory based on the circular letter issued by The Directorate General of Higher Education, Research and Technology. It has not been fulfilled yet in almost every department with a hybrid class.

Keywords: hybrid learning, face-to-face class, pandemic

The Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic has become a significant disaster for the world, which began to be detected at the end of 2019. In Indonesia, the first case of Covid-19 infection was seen on March 2, 2020. It was announced by President Joko Widodo and the Minister of Health at that time, Terawan Agus Putranto. Covid-19 has spread
rapidly and massively, causing social changes and behavior in life that are beyond the usual ones. The education sector inevitably has to participate in adapting to this pandemic by closing schools and educational facilities both at the elementary level and at the university or college level.

The Director-General in Higher Education of Indonesia responded to this situation by issuing a Circular Letter from the Director-General of Higher Education of the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia Number 1 of 2020. It concerns the Prevention of the Spread of Corona Virus Disease in universities by applying distance learning principles according to each University's conditions. The Government recommends that students and college students carry out learning from home with online learning, both synchronously and asynchronously. The letter even more explicitly stated that distance learning is highly recommended for the universities in the Greater covid-19 case areas. Such as the Jakarta area, Bandung, Yogyakarta, Solo, Semarang, Malang, Surabaya, Bali, and Manado, as well as other areas that have been confirmed to have COVID-19. On the same day, the Government announced a policy for productive activities at home to suppress the spread of Covid-19. This policy has been transformed into a movement campaigned with the hashtag #StayHome, buzzing on social media. From then on, all campuses in Indonesia implemented a policy of online learning activities or online lectures.

Furthermore, apart from teaching and learning activities that have been temporarily suspended, academic ceremonial activities such as graduation, the inauguration of professors, Dies Natalis, scientific orations, and scientific meetings (such as seminars and workshops) have had to be rescheduled or postponed. The mobility

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[accessed 12 January 2022].
of students and students was also limited. It considered the importance of social distancing at that time as a preventive measure in reducing the spread of Covid-19. For activists, they are forced to postpone the activities of student organizations that involve large crowds of people directly, both on and off-campus. Visitation of students and guests from abroad was also temporarily suspended. On the other hand, sending lecturers, students, and education staff to countries affected by Covid-19 was also prohibited.

Educational service providers certainly face challenges. This challenge is certainly different from one institution to another. The situation before the Covid-19 pandemic, such as face-to-face in class and direct guidance with lecturers, could no longer be carried out. For campuses or universities that are accustomed to using technology devices in teaching and learning activities, they will not face many difficulties, but this is not the case for a university that has never carried out online learning before. As explained in research conducted by Arifa\(^2\), use e-learning as a means of education that is ready in terms of human resources, has a mature curriculum, and is equipped with facilities to access learning resources and means of effective communication between students and tutors. However, there are still many educational institutions, especially those in disadvantaged areas, which are far from ready due to various limitations.

Learning from home also has challenges requiring students to master various media. With advances in technology and communication media at this time, students can choose and use them quickly and effectively. Lectures conducted online have resulted in using various applications to support online learning. However, intrapersonal communication outside of online classes to discuss preparation or discussion has not been able to run

smoothly. It is because the students' residences have different internet connection qualities\(^3\).

The difficulties faced by students and college students are not only a matter of technical skills but also a large task load considering that many courses must be taken during the Covid-19 pandemic\(^4\). The situation has changed learning patterns and provides problems for students. Students are accustomed to face-to-face learning regularly, whereas previously, distance learning was only done incidentally. Other findings from this study also explain that the presence of students studying at home due to the Covid-19 pandemic is prone to experiencing social media fatigue. It is because social media, commonly used as coping stress in this case, becomes a new source of stress.

A previous study revealed that Semarang Open University (UT) students at the Batang Regency Pokjar (Learning Group) chose face-to-face learning because the classical learning system was still desirable\(^5\). This finding is interesting because it turns out that face-to-face meetings have a unique attraction for students. UT is the first University to implement a distance self-learning system, but it also has many students who want to learn through face-to-face tutorials.

Indonesia has gone through the dynamics of daily Covid-19 cases since March 2020. Indonesia has passed two significant waves of Covid-19 cases. First Wave January 2021, weekly claims increased almost four times, and the peak of cases occurred on January 19-25, 2021, with the number of new Covid-19 patients as many as 89,052. The giant second wave of Covid-19 began to hit

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Indonesia from May to August 2021, with the addition of new cases reaching 253,600 on 6-12 July 2021, where the weekly case number rose more than seven times\textsuperscript{6}. As of September 26, 2021, the weekly number of cases in Indonesia was 17,250, a 20-fold decrease from the second peak. As conveyed by the Spokesperson for the COVID-19 Handling Task Force, Prof. Wiku Adisasmito, said that this number was lower than the cases in the middle of last year; to be precise, the data as of August 24, 2020, which was 18,675 cases per week. Wiku further said that Indonesia's target to reduce weekly case additions to as low as possible, at the very least, can be achieved below 10,000 cases per week. That way, it can be said that the Covid-19 condition in Indonesia is under control and ready to focus on the Covid-19 endemic," he said in a press statement on the development of handling at Graha BNPB, Tuesday (28/9/2021), which was also broadcast on the Presidential Secretariat's YouTube channel\textsuperscript{7}.

The controlled conditions of Covid-19 in Indonesia have brought fresh air to all parties, both for the business world, tourism, and education. The Directorate General of Higher Education, Research, and Technology has responded to this condition by issuing Circular Letter (SE) Number 4 of 2021 concerning implementing Face-to-face Learning for the Academic Year of 2021/2022. This circular letter was issued with regards to the Minister of Education and Culture (Number 03/KB/2021), Minister of Religion (Number 384 of 2021), Minister of Health (Number HK.01.08/MENKES/4242/2021), and Minister of Home Affairs (Number 440-717 of 2021) of Indonesia. It concerned Guidelines for the Implementation of Learning in the 2019


Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Pandemic, then learning in universities starting in the odd semester of the 2021/2022 academic year will be held with limited face-to-face learning while still implementing health protocols and learning online. The letter clearly states that in implementing learning, universities must continue to prioritize the health and safety of campus residents (students, lecturers, education staff) and the surrounding community.

Pandemic condition is increasingly being controlled and followed up with face-to-face university learning activities. This current study will describe the results of research on the practice of implementing face-to-face learning at the State University of Semarang (UNNES). As one of the state universities in the capital city of Central Java province, it has held limited face-to-face lectures in a hybrid (combination of online and offline) since October 18, 2021. In this study, the author will also seek to answer the question How is the implementation of face-to-face learning at the UNNES? There were many challenges and careful preparation in holding face-to-face lectures because if there is a new cluster of Covid-19 infections, then face-to-face lectures must be returned to virtual. Furthermore, the author will also provide suggestions for the implementation of face-to-face policies that have been carried out based on analysis and theoretical studies.

It was stated in the circular letter of Director-General of Diktiristek Number 4 of 2021 concerning implementing Face-to-Face Learning for the Academic Year 2021/2022. In face-to-face learning, lectures, practicum, studio, field practice, or other forms of learning methods, universities must meet the provisions, which are divided into three stages as follows:

I. Preparation
At the preparative stage, it was explained that universities in The Community Activities Restrictions Enforcement or CARE (Indonesian: Pemberlakuan Pembatasan Kegiatan
Masyarakat, commonly referred to as the PPKM) CARE level 1, level 2, and level 3 areas could organize limited face-to-face learning and report to the local task force. Furthermore, universities formed a task force for handling Covid-19 in universities to develop and implement standard operating procedures for Health protocols based on the Decree of the Minister of Health Number HK.01.07/MENKES/413/2020 concerning Guidelines for the Prevention and Control of Coronavirus Disease 2019. In addition to reporting to the regional task force, private universities report to the Higher Education Service Institute. Meanwhile, learning guidelines, graduations, and other activities for the academic community and education staff in the tertiary institution are issued by higher education leaders.

II. Implementation

Apart from being in good health, academics and education staff have received vaccinations as a condition for the opening of face-to-face learning. Furthermore, students who have obtained permission from their parents by a statement letter could attend offline lectures. On the other hand, students who are not willing to do face-to-face learning can choose online courses. Other conditions such as students from outside the region/overseas must ensure that they are in good health, self-quarantine for 14 days or do a swab test, or according to the regulations/protocols that apply in the local area. Regular tracking and testing were carried out in addition to routinely reporting on the implementation of learning to the Covid-19 handling task force.

Prevention of the spread of Covid-19 is done by:
1. disinfecting infrastructure facilities in the university environment before and after learning, focused on the facilities used during face-to-face learning;
2. checking body temperature for everyone who enters college;
3. avoiding the use of closed learning facilities, causing crowds, and the occurrence of close contact;
4. providing hand washing/hand sanitizer in strategic places;
5. using a 3 (three) ply cloth mask or a disposable mask/surgical mask that covers the nose and mouth;
6. maintaining a minimum distance of 1.5 (one point five) meters between people;
7. limiting the use of space to a maximum of 50% (fifty percent) of the occupancy capacity of the room/class/laboratory and a maximum of 25 (twenty-five) people;
8. implementing efforts to care for each other, look after and protect each other;
9. applying correct cough/sneeze etiquette;
10. providing temporary isolation rooms for academics and education staff who have symptoms/criteria for Covid-19;
11. preparing a mechanism for handling Covid-19 case findings in the university environment (both for those concerned and contact tracing);
12. training support for emergency measures for handling Covid-19; and
13. reporting to the local area Covid-19 task force if Covid-19 cases are found.

Suppose a positive confirmed case of Covid-19 appeared in a university. In that case, the university leader will temporarily suspend face-to-face learning in areas established as positive for COVID-19 until conditions are safe. In the event of an increase in the status of an increased risk of Covid-19 in a district/city, Higher education leaders coordinate with the local Covid-19 handling task force to continue or stop face-to-face learning.

III. Monitoring
Universities enforce standard operating procedures for health protocols and regularly monitor and evaluate the implementation of common methods for health protocol enforcement. In addition, regular monitoring of face-to-face learning activities in universities and monitoring results can be used as recommendations for follow-up on face-to-face learning activities.

**Method of Research**

This research uses a qualitative research approach framework. Data collection techniques were carried out through structured interviews with informants who had been determined by the researcher/purposive sampling. Informants are selected based on cognitively understood and direct contact with face-to-face university policies. Primary data obtained through structured interviews will later be intended to describe a phenomenon and specific information. In addition, data collection techniques were also carried out through observation and document studies to obtain secondary data. The data analysis technique used in this research is descriptive qualitative analysis to describe, analyze, and clarify the existing problems and circumstances. The data collected in this study were compared with other data obtained from different sources by triangulation techniques with three data collection techniques: interviews, observation, and documentation studies. Furthermore, qualitative data will be processed and analyzed with an interactive model through activities that appear simultaneously, including data reduction, data presentation, and concluding/verification.

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Research Finding and Discussion

Face-to-face learning activities at the State University of Semarang refer to Circular Letter (SE) Number: B/11898/UN37/KM/2021 concerning Face-to-face Lectures for Odd Semester 2021/2022, the State University of Semarang dated October 4, 2021. In this letter, the provisions limited face-to-face lecture activities carried out in a hybrid manner by applying health protocols according to the characteristics of each study program and subject. The SE of the Director-General of Diktiristek Number 4 of 2021 concerns the Implementation of Face-to-face Learning for the Academic Year 2021/2022. This SE also states that each Study Group (Rombel) for offline lectures attended 50% of the room capacity and 25 students. In addition, 3rd-semester students are also listed as one of the requirements.

From the information obtained by the author, the Task Force Team of the Faculty of Languages and Arts could implement face-to-face hybrid lectures after being given permission and receiving a recommendation from the UNNES Covid-19 task forced No. B/3248/UN37.5.2.2/TU/2021. It is also referred to as the Instruction from the Central Java Governor No. 8 of 2021 and the Instruction of the Mayor of Semarang No. 3 of 2021. The Faculty Task Force team regularly received developments on the status of the Implementation of The Community Activities Restrictions Enforcement (CARE) from the University level Task Force. They also intensively communicated with the City and Provincial Task Forces because face-to-face lectures can continue if the area is not in level 4 CARE. The author received information that the leveling of the Covid-19 task force at the university level that applies at Semarang State University is up to the faculty level as the lowest. There is no Covid-19 task force at the Study Program (Prodi) level. However,
the Covid Task Force in each Faculty consists of representatives from each department and study program in a faculty.

Based on information received by the author, he explained that the limited face-to-face hybrid lecture was only attended by one group appointed for each study program. It was based on the recommendation of the Covid-19 Task Force Team of the Faculty of Languages and Arts. Each study group usually contains up to 30 students and students. However, not all 30 college students would attend face-to-face lectures directly. The flexibility for students to choose either face-to-face or online learning is an added value in this pandemic condition because every student has their views regarding these online and offline lectures. Research conducted by Sulistiono10 explained that the advantages for students in online courses were that students felt free to study the material, collect assignments in the form of files, and do not use paper, so they did not incur printing costs. Students do not need to meet lecturers on campus because students and lecturers are connected, just like interactions on social media. Other studies11 revealed that students' perceptions of student interactions, both with lecturers and fellow students, when online lectures were reduced compared to face-to-face lectures. Meanwhile, in a learning atmosphere, students prefer face-to-face learning compared to online. Students are freer to ask questions when meeting directly with lecturers.

Both online and offline lectures have their advantages. In this pandemic condition, several additional requirements must be met for students at the State University of Semarang who wish to attend face-to-face lectures, including: (1) students who take face-to-face lectures are prioritized to be domiciled in the Greater Semarang area, which includes: Semarang City, Semarang Regency,

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Demak Regency, Kendal Regency, and Grobogan Regency, (2) already have the first and second dose of Covid-19 vaccination certificates, (3) do not have comorbidities that are at risk of exacerbating Covid-19 infection, and (4) have a PTM (Face-to-Face Learning) Approval Letter signed by the parent/guardian. The students concerned had previously uploaded all of these required documents into the web-based information system at the State University of Semarang, SIKADU (Integrated Academic Information System) on the https://apps.unnes.ac.id/23 page as a requirement to take part in hybrid lectures. After that, the department manager announced that only nine students from the English Education Study Program and five from the English Literature Study Program met the criteria and were allowed to take limited face-to-face lectures.

The following requirement for holding face-to-face lectures is that both lecturers and students are in good health. Indeed, it is not explicitly explained and in detail regarding health indicators for both lecturers and students in the form of circulars or other formats. The barometer of health from each student and lecture was based on the results of the temperature sensor measurement. Several temperature detection machines detect that the body temperature of both lecturers and students is in average condition based on a temperature measuring device placed near the classroom. Based on the information obtained through interviews with the lecture, the authors get additional information that young lecturers with no history of comorbid illnesses at risk of aggravating Covid-19 infection are allowed to teach project-based courses in a hybrid way.

Lecture preparation carried out in a hybrid manner is different from regular face-to-face lectures or online courses. In hybrid lectures, additional equipment is needed to support the smooth running of online and offline lessons that are held at the same time. The department manager prepares a particular class designed for hybrid courses. In this class, facilities are provided in
the form of a microphone which is specifically able to facilitate students to interact with each other, both online and offline. A camera is placed in the front position near the student/student desk so that the visuals of a lecturer who is teaching can be captured clearly for those who take lectures online. In addition, there is a Smart TV with a size large enough to be used to display presentation materials and live lecture participants who take part online through a licensed Zoom Video Conference facility. The seats and tables are arranged in a way that has been determined with a distance of 1.5 meters. In addition, outside the lecture building, there are also hand washing stations and hand sanitizers placed in places frequently passed by students, such as on the walls of the classroom hallway. All of the preparations were handled by the head of the laboratory.

As stated in the circular letter concerning the Implementation of Face-to-Face Learning for the Academic Year 2021/2022, the manager should prepare a temporary isolation room for the academic community to implement face-to-face lectures education staff who have symptoms/criteria of Covid-19. Based on the results of interviews and observations made by the author, no room was used as an isolation room. However, based on the information the author has received from informants, there have never been any complaints from students or academics related to health problems because awareness has been awakened. If their body conditions are not in prime shape, the student concerned will not attend face-to-face lectures instead of online. It is reinforced by weekly reports in the form of documents submitted by both the teaching lecturers and the Faculty Covid-19 task force to the University Covid-19 task force that there are no limited face-to-face lecture participants with a body temperature above 37.2. The average body temperature of the participants ranged between 36.1–37.2 degrees Celsius. Through interviews, the authors get additional information that this limited face-to-face lecture does not cause new clusters of Covid-19 to spread. Under these circumstances, few face-to-face
lessons in a hybrid manner can continue because if a positive Covid-19 confirmation case is found in a university, the university leader will temporarily suspend face-to-face learning in the area confirmed as positive for Covid-19 until conditions are safe.

Hybrid lectures at the Semarang State University only started on October 18, 2021, after the Mid Semester or only about 4-5 meetings. At that time, the CARE status in Semarang City was at level 2. In this case, lectures only taught one subject per class for a week for each study program and lasted about 50 minutes. Every student attending the offline course must wear a mask during the lesson. The masker types also have standard provisions, namely KF94 type masks or 3-layer medical masks. All students wore maskers according to what had been determined in the circular.

Hybrid lecture activities are carried out using Zoom Video Conference and Elena (Electronic Learning Aid) facilities and other e-learning sites developed by the State University of Semarang based on MOODLE version 2.0 to support academic activities. Previous research has shown that students' use of Elena UNNES can meet the need for modern learning\textsuperscript{12}. This hybrid lecture content is directed at supporting the achievement of Course Learning Outcomes and applying case methods and team-based projects, which are material learning activities, interactive discussion forums, and proportional assignments. That followed the lecture contract and credit load and did not give jobs to students that required physical working groups. At the end of the classroom lesson, sterilizing equipment and classrooms using disinfectant liquid is the responsibility of the teaching lecturers with the equipment provided by the Covid-19 task force at the faculty level. In addition, sterilization activities for the area/environment around the classroom are carried out by the Faculty's Covid-19 Task Force with an intensity of 1 time a week.

As conveyed by the Minister of Finance of the Republic of Indonesia, Sri Mulyani Indrawati, Government Policy has always made health a priority sector in handling the Covid-19 pandemic. Other lecture activities at UNNES, such as academic guidance for the final project/thesis in pandemic situations carried out online using available applications based on an agreement between lecturers and students in Thesis and Dissertation Information System (SITEDI). This model aims to reduce the intensity of face-to-face meetings that have the potential to spread Covid-19 and to make time more efficient. Regarding completing and working on assignments, the supervising lecturer can provide alternatives to use secondary data, change the scope of study activities, collect data online, study literature, or other options by submitting first to the study program coordinator or section head.

The Conclusion

The lecture would constantly update the implementation of limited face-to-face lectures on a hybrid basis. The absence of new cases or findings of clusters of Covid-19 spread caused by holding face-to-face lessons is also evidence that both lecturers and students comply with health protocols to prevent the spread of Covid-19. In this pandemic condition, health is still a priority for the Government. In short, lecture activities at UNNES during the pandemic have met the recommendations of the Circular Letter.

The precautionary principle has always been the basis for conducting face-to-face lectures. First, the preparation stage implemented the mechanism according to the Circular Letter. Second, the implementation stage is also relatively smooth. Seating arrangements according to the standard Covid-19 prevention

protocol and the availability of facilities and infrastructure related to sanitation have met the requirements. The last, the selection of teaching lecturers also considers the history of diseases/comorbidities that can trigger and exacerbate the symptoms of Covid-19 infection. Other activities, such as thesis/thesis/dissertation guidance conducted online using applications. UNNES has enforced standard operating procedures for health protocols and carried out regular monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of standard operating procedures for health protocol enforcement.

As stated in the Circular Letter Number: B/11898/UN37/KM/2021 issued by the State University of Semarang, most of them have included important points as mandated in the Circular Letter of the Director-General of Diktiristek Number 4 of 2021 concerning the Implementation of Face-to-Face Learning for the Academic Year of 2021 /2022. However, there is still one missing item related to preventing the spread of Covid-19 regarding providing temporary isolation rooms for academics and students with symptoms/criteria for Covid-19. There were empty classrooms for emergency use. However, it would be better if the isolation rooms were available and equipped with emergency facilities for handling Covid-19. As long as the status of the pandemic has not changed to endemic, any activity that has the potential to cause COVID-19 The spread of Covid-19 needs extra attention and anticipation.
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