

Hybrid Learning in VUCA Times: Keeping The Balancing Act Between Aiming Ideal Expectations and Managing The Realities

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ABSTRACT

The most needed thing during a pandemic is empathy. People need to be intellectually, emotionally, physically and socially aware that every individual has their own battle. This paper avoids being very prescriptive when discussing possible solutions. Hybrid learning has been the way of learning in the transition from school closure to reopening the school period. There are three important things to be remembered when entering the journey of seeking the best solutions. First, having the right mindset that students are the core of our business. Everyone shall take aside their interest and move only under the interest of delivering the rights of our students in learning. Second, teachers are key actors at the school level. They design, enable and execute the learning for the students. Therefore, it is a moral responsibility of everyone to support teachers' role as instructional leaders. Lastly, there are no uniform solutions nor the same recipe for all schools. Thus, each school can optimise hybrid learning in this changing situation by balancing their ideal expectations and realities.

Keywords : VUCA, Hybrid learning, balance act

I. Introduction

Since the market in Wuhan City closed on 1st January 2020 due to confirmed positive SARS-CoV-2 cases in December 2019 (WHO, 2020), we all have been entering intense VUCA (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous) times. No one can predict what will happen nor provide a clear recommendation on what to do. It is the worst situation in the 21st century but the best-shared learning at the same time. We learn together, contribute to collective statistics data, share best practices, and try our best for contextual implementation at the local and national levels. We

migrate together to not only a very new civilization but also a new paradigm. The great shifting challenges the status quo, and we can no longer apply the same approach to overcome problems, including those in education.

II. Discussion

In Indonesia, the rapid nature of school closures and sudden programmes that were implemented in responding to shortcomings on students, teachers, parents, curriculum, and technology showed the unplanned strategies (World Bank Group, 2020). Distance learning was implemented during the school closures, but it did not solve all but revealed other problems. Most students have no access to devices and the internet, are unprepared with learning autonomy and self-regulation and are not equipped with an adequate support system and conducive learning environment. Teachers are also struggling with distance learning solutions. Most of them are not trained nor familiar yet with technology. Meanwhile, they also needed to convert learning materials and processes into a distance-learning format. The most struggling ones must be the subjects reliant on physical interactions such as sports, arts, and experimental-based subjects such as science (UNESCO, 2020). It is a huge task for teachers. Not to mention addressing the emerging pedagogical aspects during the pandemic. It demands not only empathy but a holistic socio-emotional approach to learning.

As the Joint Ministerial Decree, issued on the 8th April 2020, allows face-to-face learning with certain terms and conditions (SKB, 2020), reopening schools in Covid 19 pandemic is possible. However, the limit number of students per classroom can only be roughly 50 per cent of the previous capacity. Within this policy, teachers have to prepare double planning, teaching and evaluation formats. They have to serve students who study at home and at the same time those who attend the class physically. This situation urges the need to envision the learning, providing a roadmap for all the teaching efforts and resources flow. Moreover, when there are so many interests within. For example, the Indonesian Paediatric Society advises

children to study from home. However, parents are unable and, teaching wise, incapable of supervising their children because they need to work and earn money for a living. Here, understanding students as the key stakeholder are very important, for it is why everyone takes part in succeeding the education during the pandemic. It aligns with the interests of all parties. Teachers are the important key drivers of the most possible learning at the classroom level because they are front-liners who have daily interactions with the students. They are learning designers, enablers and executors. However, they often have no power to make voices, choices, and decisions regarding what is needed for their students. Thus, government and school administrators need to ensure necessary support to enable teachers' role as instructional leaders to bring out the expected changes effectively and efficiently.

There is no such one-size-fits-all approach in hybrid learning. Every school faces a different context and owns different assets as well as access to solutions. For example, when using technology in hybrid learning, solutions must be different when teaching early years, primary, middle year or secondary. Similarly, when teachers from different subjects look for appropriate EdTech to support their learning. The same thing for other systemic aspects such as budget, human resources capacity and digital culture. It gets fragmented and very complex. Thus, keeping the balancing act between being idealistic and realistic when enabling teachers to run the solutions is really important. Referring to six key trade-offs by UNESCO (2020), some considerations need to be balanced when supporting teachers applying hybrid learning.

Firstly, whether to limit or expand the scope of distance learning is very important. When the school wants to mitigate as well as quickly respond to disruptions of Covid-19, the scope of the distance learning programme for teachers has to be limited. Let the teachers set the technological implementation's priority. However, when considering long-term use as part of changing the digital school culture, the scope can be expanded. Distance learning can be designed for a

continuous post-Covid-19 recovery programme. Secondly, consider the curriculum weight. It is not a big secret that achieving all the minimum standard competencies during distance learning has been a burden for the teachers. Therefore, focusing on what is important to be taught is crucial. On the other hand, the potential learning loss has to be also mitigated. Seeking the opportunities to go back to the full curriculum expectations need to be carefully done with tight monitoring and evaluation on the process. Thirdly, learning pace is something to be managed. Teachers may encourage the students to follow the class's pace at the same level. At the same time, they can also consider different learning needs of the students by allowing self-paced learning with available teachers' support.

The next consideration is resources. In distance learning, there are many available technological products and services available for free. Having a list of helpful freemium EdTech can reduce costs when initially building up digital culture at school. The aim is not to have sophisticated technological solutions but to pick the technology that enhances students' learning. When things are possible and resources available, the school can step up to more customised technological solutions that specifically address the students' needs. It does not always require the school to spend, but rather it encourages collaboration among stakeholders to acquire it. The fifth consideration is practicality. There are many available hybrid learning solutions from both research and best practices. Teachers just need to adapt and make iterations from the feedback. However, it is also important to address learning quality that can optimise learning outcomes. Therefore, in this case, aiming for having a high-quality platform for specific and contextual needs can be great. Lastly, balancing coverage is very important. Teachers may not wait until everyone attends the class virtually and just start with those who can study. It is to avoid the bigger potential of learning loss of all the students. On the other hand, teachers may also achieve universal coverage. Having everyone in the room before the lesson begins fundamental to maintaining learning equity and equality.

III. Closing

It is very dangerous to be very prescriptive when it comes to solution finding, more dangerous when it is about an essential sector like education. Instead of providing a formula, giving every actor a compass according to their context and capacity is way more practical. Six considerations provided in this paper can guide the school community whenever they want to make decisions regarding hybrid learning in these changing situations.

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