

Online Learning during the COVID-19 Pandemic: An Experience of Catholic Religion Teacher

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Abstract

This paper reports a qualitative study on Catholic religious learning during the COVID-19 pandemic in East Kalimantan Province, Indonesia. Studies on online learning have actually been done a lot, however, especially in Catholic religious learning, it seems that it is still rare. The development of the results of this study was obtained from interviews with Catholic religious teachers about learning patterns in their schools. Data were collected through a qualitative approach to enable the collection of substantial descriptive data to form the basis for the design of the conceptual framework. The results of this study show that teachers have carried out their learning well by integrating learning and support, namely schools, teachers, and parents. Through this integration, students can achieve an essential Catholic moral and spiritual experience. Students gain positive and meaningful experiences about family life, especially through learning experiences with their parents or guardians.

Keywords

Catholic religious education; online learning, covid-19 pandemic



I. Introduction

Education is now increasingly complex, no longer just overcoming illiteracy, but more about developing the potential of students. The same applies to Catholic religious education for students in schools. The development of education has an impact on all aspects of life, including science and technology. The rapid development of science and technology requires students to have high knowledge and expertise in order to be able to adapt and keep pace with developments and changing situations that occur. Especially in the current COVID-19 pandemic situation (Lorenius et al., 2021). The outbreak of this virus has an impact of a nation and Globally (Ningrum et al, 2020). The presence of Covid-19 as a pandemic certainly has an economic, social and psychological impact on society (Saleh and Mujahiddin, 2020). Covid 19 pandemic caused all efforts not to be as maximal as expected (Sihombing and Nasib, 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic has put most of the world in "pause" mode, this has also affected the world of education, so it has to switch to online learning. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has become the main driver for facilitating information sharing, continuing educational processes carried out online, however, with this said, the issue of unequal diffusion and adoption of ICTs cannot be ignored. While the pandemic highlights the importance of digital, it has also exposed the various forms of digital divide that exist between societies.

Schools are also experiencing the impact of the development of digital technology which has become a lifestyle for today's society (Amon et al., 2021). To educate students to be active, creative and collaborative, a transformative pedagogy that utilizes digital technology is needed (Swallow, 2017). Schools face the challenges of technological

change and development as they transform traditional learning into digital learning. Learning using digital technology emphasizes several features, namely interactive, symbolic flexibility, interactive with various other people, and using various sources of information (Kololo, 2019).

Catholic religious education in schools is challenged to rediscover the purpose of education in these situations. Teachers are required to be able to adapt their learning, so that the educational process for students continues (Komariyah et al., 2021). In the Final Document of the XV Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, 27 October 2018, article 21 states, “the digital environment is a feature of the contemporary world”. Most of humanity is immersed in a routine and continuous way. No longer just using communication tools, but living in a culture that is almost entirely digital. It has greatly influenced the concept of space and time, perceptions of oneself, others and the world, based on how to communicate, how to learn, how to get information, and how to build relationships with other people. (Hariprabowo, 2019).

Teachers are determinants of educational success through their performance at the institutional and instructional levels. This strategic role is in line with Law Number 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers, which places the position of a teacher as a professional as well as a learning agent. As a professional, the teaching profession can only be carried out by someone who has academic qualifications, competencies, and educator certificates in accordance with the requirements for each type and certain level of education. The main task of a teacher as stated in article 1 paragraph 1, where a teacher has roles and obligations and responsibilities that greatly affect the development of students, both in physical and spiritual education.

Catholic Religion Teachers are professionals who have the task of teaching, educating and training (Haru, 2020). The participation of Catholic teachers in carrying out duties in the Church and society as believers is the obligation of people who are loyal to God, thus the ministry of lay teachers will produce the results of love, joy, peace, patience, generosity, kindness, loyalty, gentleness, and mastery self (Gal 5:22-23).

II. Research Method

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive method. Collecting data using interview methods and team discussions involving three Catholic religious teacher informants from different schools. The informant is a Catholic religion teacher who has experience teaching Catholic religious subjects at the primary and secondary school levels for approximately three years. Based on the agreement with the informant, interviews and discussions were conducted online using the zoom application and video calls, for reasons of health and reducing mobility during the Covid-19 pandemic. Analysis of interview data using interactive analysis which consists of four stages, namely: data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. Testing the validity of the data using source triangulation.

III. Results and Discussion

Broadly speaking, the efforts made by Catholic religious teachers in implementing online learning are by developing an integrated pattern between core and supporting learning and using a direct experience approach. Meanwhile, from the teacher's point of view and assessment, the efforts made by the teacher have had a sufficient impact on the spiritual development of students through various forms of learning activities, both online and through assigning students to study at home.

3.1 Catholic Religion Lessons in Schools during the Covid-19 Pandemic

The Catholic Religion teachers were asked what strategies they used in carrying out online learning during the Covid-19 pandemic in developing core learning for Catholic religious education for students. Most of the teachers' answers said that they used problem-based learning and contextual learning by utilizing available technology. This was revealed in the interview:

“We use a problem-based learning strategy in this study of Catholicism. The methods applied are problem solving, case studies, and discussions. To provide a stimulus to students, we provide several cases or problems in the surrounding environment, especially those in their own homes. Armed with the knowledge that students already have, they try to find solutions to these problems. Thus, the power of reason, analysis, and student creativity will continue to grow. This is intended so that students can be responsive to the problems of everyday life in the family, community, especially the Church.”

Another Catholic Religion teacher argues that:

“The learning strategy we apply is online learning which is more contextual with the current situation (Covid-19). In this case the method used is that students are asked to cooperate with their parents, so we work with parents at home to assist their children to achieve learning goals. We give assignments to students to observe things at home related to the subject matter. For example, to study My Family Members, students are assigned to make observations at home, observing their families.”

Meanwhile, when asked about the efforts made in supporting the learning of the Catholic religion. The teacher explained that schools, teachers, and parents cooperated in organizing online learning during the pandemic. The learning activities carried out are oriented to the student's experience directly through collaboration with parents or family members at home. This can be seen in the results of the interview:

"We are working with schools and parents at home in implementing learning during this pandemic. In practice, learning activities are held in one semester as usual, and technically, we ask parents to help their children control learning at home. In this activity, we teachers design lessons that are adapted to the current context, in the design of the Catholic religion lesson itself, we ask parents to teach their children to pray, accompany assignments, control study time, and we hold meetings with parents and students through zoom to explain the learning process. This activity is one way to improve the quality of student learning to positively influence students' daily behavior. As for Catholic religious learning which is designed to be funeral-based and provides practical skills, this activity is intended to increase students' awareness of the nature of their life in the world while not to waste their lives just for momentary pleasures."

Another Religion teacher also shared that:

"How to teach and develop technology, yes, we must not stop to keep updating related to what are the latest applications for teaching in particular, for example like the zoom application we can use now, and we have to find out about technology in teaching technology so we can support in our teaching, especially Catholicism. Our students have a lot of talent, if in the curriculum there is a lot of local content that is in the school and can be an option for children. The way we train and develop their skills is to motivate them so that they realize what abilities they have first. We try to motivate children to make them aware that each of them has the ability, skills or talents naturally, and we can also motivate them to persevere, practice if the child has the intention to become capable."

Meanwhile, the reflection of Catholic Religion teachers in facing current learning challenges commented that:

"Of course, teachers must play an active role in educating students so that there is no identity crisis as a nation, especially in terms of behavior related to the good and bad morals of students. If the crisis has occurred, it should be strengthened in the life of prayer, the life of faith, and re-instilling the values of Pancasila as a role model ideology so that it can strengthen the character as students themselves, so that they become 100% Catholic and 100% Indonesian."

The Catholic religion teacher also explained that this online learning is related to a process that allows students to be more creative in learning.

"This online learning allows children to do it in their own way or with the help of others, it also helps our children to shape their thoughts, behaviors and ways, to change themselves to achieve a certain state of happiness in learning, as well as in this case, our terms are honesty, wisdom, and perseverance. So, by encouraging, and continuing to motivate students to keep learning even though they are online. Of course, as a teacher, we have to keep reminding students to be active and do every assignment they are given."

Religion teacher Catholicism also instills the values of courtesy in the lessons given to students, it is conveyed that:

"Manners are a behavior that must be instilled in students. One of them is with a number of schools that implement 5S, namely greetings, smiles, greetings, courtesy and courtesy. Although it sounds trivial, but manners need to be taught to students so that they can maintain an attitude of mutual respect. As teachers, we have to reprimand students who are not polite enough to correct this behavior. Reprimand doesn't mean you have to scold students, but rather remind students if the behavior is not good. Don't forget to always set an example of polite and courteous behavior."

The teacher also explained that Catholic religious learning given to students is integrated with faith-building activities in the Church, it aims to shape the religious character of students so that the religious lessons learned can be applied in their daily lives, this was found in the results of interviews with religious teachers. Catholic Elementary School, that:

"How to carry out the role as a Catholic religion teacher to foster children's faith: teach students apart from applying knowledge about religion, but practice it in daily life both at home and at school, for example: teaching to share with friends; familiarize children to always start everything with prayer; encourage students to always be involved in church activities, such as Sunday school; and conduct training activities in the church".

Another Catholic religion teacher added that:

“Being a teacher is a noble task, which we often hear about unsung hero teachers. As a religion teacher, I feel proud to be able to educate children, not only to be smart in terms of knowledge, but more than that, to make students have deep faith, especially in Catholicism, so that they are not only intelligent people, but also faithful and capable. practice it in everyday life about good attitudes and behavior towards friends and neighbors. In addition, they can share in the work of the Church, and participate in community activities.”

3.2 Learning Experience

Teachers were also asked about the impact of their learning experiences on encouraging students' spirituality. Almost all teachers agree that the learning experience during their education, or before they become teachers, greatly influences the importance of learning technology in learning to support their work as teachers. One of the Catholic Religion teachers who participated in this study stated that:

“In short, the lessons or knowledge we gain during college are very helpful in our current job as a teacher, including the developments we receive in the field through training, or teacher development activities in schools. This experience also became my basis in carrying out learning for students, by realizing that of course every student has a different grasping power, some are quicker to understand when explained, some are slower. The best way is to repeat the existing material until the children understand more and because what we teach as religious teachers is about faith, our students must really understand what they believe and they believe in.”

Other Catholic religious teachers also shared their experiences that:

“Outside of class, we are usually given the task of lecturers to directly observe parishioners in parishes or stations with various community service activities or community service. We were there to learn about the extraordinary pastoral and catechesis of the faithful firsthand. This is a unique task as well as teaching real-life examples. From this activity, I feel that religion is about symbols and how Catholics show their identity (full of love). If this is realized in all learning activities in schools, it can encourage the realization of the spiritual spirit and religious culture of our students or students. Of course, this made me more aware and excited to apply religious teachings in my daily life. Currently, I can work as a teacher and make friends with anyone with a diverse social background, religion, and belief.”

3.3 Discussion

This study was conducted to reveal the reflections of teachers in carrying out Catholic religious learning during the Covid-19 pandemic and how they design learning by utilizing technology to achieve learning goals in schools. First, we will describe the teaching of Catholicism by teachers in schools, the first important theme identified from the analysis of interview data to answer the questions or problem formulation in this study.

The Catholic religious teachers discussed and conveyed that the teaching of the Catholic religion was carried out in collaboration with various parties, namely schools, teachers, and parents or guardians of students. They also voiced the importance of using technology in facilitating the learning process during the current Covid-19 pandemic. Figure 1 shows the learning of the Catholic religion that is trying to be drawn based on interviews with teachers. This study found similarities between Catholic religious teachers in carrying out their learning, namely applying an integrated pattern between learning design, learning experience, and the use of technology.

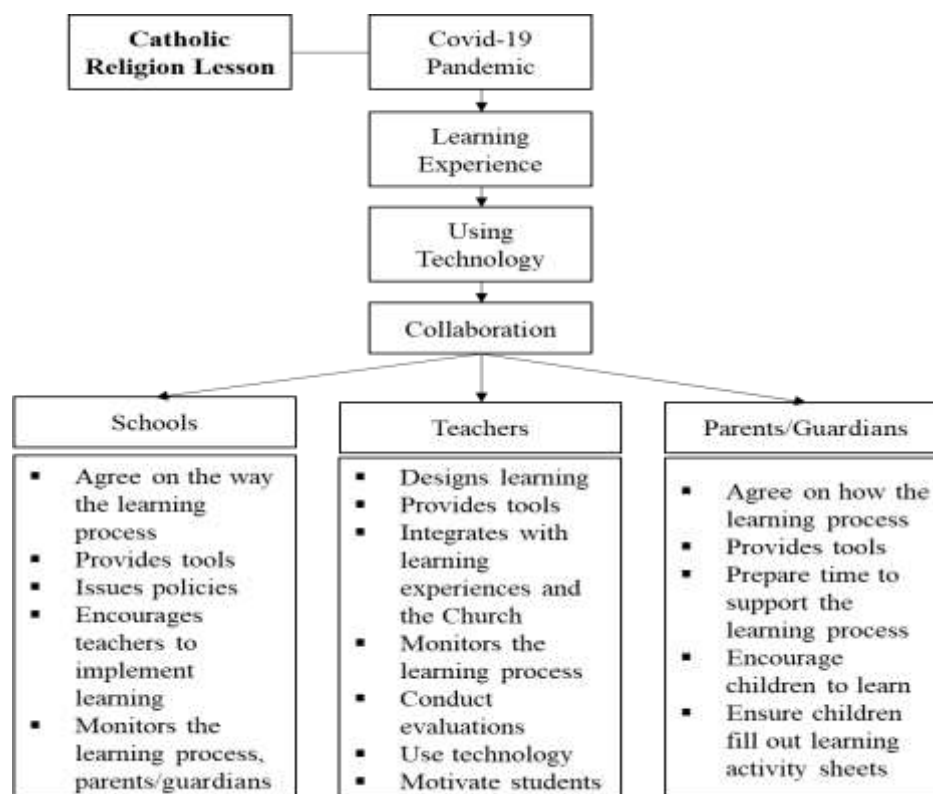


Figure 1. Catholic Religious Learning Framework during the Covid-19 Pandemic

Based on the shell above, the learning strategies of Catholic religious teachers include learning planning, providing learning tools, integrating the learning process with learning experiences and coaching activities in the Church, and through the use of technology to support learning during the pandemic. The teachers agreed to apply this pattern and approach because they believed it could improve the quality of teaching Catholicism in schools. The teachers also explained that the great potential of applying the direct experience approach was that Catholic religious lessons in schools would be oriented to the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects to grow students' religious awareness. Education and the environment (home) must continue to instruct students to value their lives (Helton & Helton, 2007; Warman et al., 2021).

Meanwhile, the use of experiential learning approaches in Catholic religious lessons is also supported by a lot of literature (Bartolo, 2010; Cornell et al., 2013; Navarrete et al., 2020; Widiyanti, 2012) which states that all types of educational activities are actually created through experience, but not all experiences are related to education. In this case, the teacher's task is to organize all types and experiences that are relevant to students' lives, both now and in the future. The current experience as a provision for future experiences is called a continuous experience, or a series of continuous experiences. This can explain some of the learning strategies chosen by Catholic religious teachers in providing experiences for students, such as learning activities at home, and learning experiences with their parents/guardians.

Learning by experience is also known as learning by doing. The main principle is to develop cognitive aspects and affect the affective and psychomotor. When students learn, there is a relationship between themselves and the subjects they are studying. There are things or experiences that must be discovered by students through their learning activities.

Studying with parents/guardians and teachers can reduce the time and effort required to understand complex actions and behaviors (Foti et al.,2018).

The main concern of teaching Catholic religious teachers is the aspect of faith and student growth through involvement in a significant environment. Learning itself is emotional, by placing oneself in a certain environment, one can bring a behavioral perspective and understand the nature of that environment. Navarrete et al.,(2020)also stated that successful education is an individual experience that can be carried out with care for the problems and challenges of his environment. This study can explain how Catholic religious teachers choose their experiences, for example the learning strategies used and the methods students study with their parents at home.

Based on this, it can be concluded that another important thing is the availability of experience in preparing the learning process (Katz-Buonincontro & Anderson, 2018). Teachers must be able to ensure the involvement of all parties, both schools, teachers, and parents or guardians of students. Teachers must provide relevant learning media, and must be facilitators and determinants of how students can gain meaningful experiences, namely positive experiences and religious experiences that lead to faith growth. This experience can require someone to think, so that they can act wisely and correctly, which will affect the students' religion.

Regarding the principles of Catholic education, in particular (in Declaration Gravissimum Educationis art. 3, Second Vatican Council,1965)It is said that the learning experience at home (in the family) is considered an essential element. In addition, learning must be taught by adding relevant real-life examples and experiences to be meaningful and effective(Declaration of Gravissimum Educationis art. 4; Second Vatican Council,1965). Teachers and parents have the obligation and right to educate their children(Declaration of Gravissimum Educationis art. 6, Second Vatican Council,1965), so that the education of children in all schools can be carried out according to moral and religious principles(Slap,2018). From experience, students were asked to do self-reflection to take lessons from the activity and grow their awareness, as the teacher acknowledged in the interview. By leveraging the deepest faith-based beliefs(Silpanus,2021), Catholic religious education can effectively educate from and for the faith, and is increasingly needed for the life of the world.

In summary, this study reinforces the Catholic learning principle which states that it is necessary to provide real insight and knowledge, adhering to moral and religious principles that illuminate and strengthen faith, according to the spirit of Christ. (Declaration of Gravissimum Educationis art. 4; Second Vatican Council, 1965). Children's education is generally aimed at achieving human maturity and maturity. To achieve that goal, children's education includes several things, one of which is spiritual development (moral and religious). Given the importance of the purpose of education, and how it should be carried out in a Christian manner, it is important to underline the role of parents as the main educators of their children. Thus, parents must provide time for their children to shape them into individuals who know and love God. The obligations and rights of parents to educate their children cannot be completely replaced or transferred to other people(Apostolic Exhortation Familiaris Consortio, art. 36; John Paul II,1981).

IV. Conclusion

The efforts of Catholic religious teachers to provide religious education to students during the Covid-19 pandemic have been carried out well within the framework offered by integrating learning and support, namely schools, teachers, parents, and utilizing technology as a learning medium. There is the application of learning experiences and the use of technology as a learning medium that supports the Catholic religious learning process for students during the Covid-19 pandemic. Through this integration, students can achieve an essential Catholic moral and spiritual experience. Students gain positive and meaningful experiences about family life, especially through learning experiences with their parents or guardians.

Although this study can describe Catholic religious learning during the Covid-19 pandemic, further research needs to be done to obtain maximum implications. This study is also limited to the experience of Catholic Religion teachers, so the experience of other religious education is not included in the results of this study. Finally, this study was carried out by undergraduate students, who are generally beginners in doing research, so there are many weaknesses and shortcomings in the results and discussion.

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