

Higher Education Learning Policy in the Covid-19 Pandemic (Country Case Studies: Turkey, Egypt, Pakistan, And Sudan)

Sintya Kartika Prameswari^{1*}, Rifda Zulfani Aisyah¹, Nabila Thyra Janitra²

¹ University of Darussalam Gontor, Indonesia

² Murabbiyah at Thursina International Islamic Boarding School, Indonesia

*Corresponding author: Email: sintyakartika692@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to determine educational policies in universities during the Covid-19 pandemic, to determine learning policies during the Covid-19 pandemic in Turkey, Egypt, Pakistan, and Sudan, and to determine the positive and negative impacts of learning policies during the Covid-19 pandemic. This study uses qualitative methods through interview collection, observation and documentation to get precise data about university learning policies during the Covid-19 pandemic. Thus, the results of this study are the application of educational policies in learning during the Covid-19 pandemic has been implemented through government policy planning in every educational institution, compliance with health protocols in each country, development of human resources and cognitive approach to students. Online learning was developed to expand the reach of educational services and increase their availability.

Keywords: Policy, Education, Learning Process

1. INTRODUCTION

Education is essential to human development on earth because human development is based on the educational process that occurs in life. Educators are responsible for the development of students with efforts to develop all the potential of students, both affective, cognitive, and psychomotor potential. Educators also mean adults responsible for assisting students in their physical and spiritual development to reach a level of maturity, capable of being independent in fulfilling their duties as servants of Allah and caliphs on earth (Umar, 2011).

The Covid-19 pandemic has become a major humanitarian crisis. Humans are forced to stop their daily routines and are asked to stay at home. Countries in the world are currently facing the problems of the Covid-19 pandemic. The spread of the coronavirus in various countries has made significant changes in the fields of economy, politics, technology, and education is no exception. The pandemic forces social distancing policies to avoid direct contact with many people to prevent the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic (Rizqon Halal Syah Aji, 2020, p. 395).

The central and regional governments issue policies to dismiss and replace the learning process in every educational institution during the pandemic. The study at home policy and the policy (lockdown) or quarantine is carried out to prevent social interactions with many people who can give access to the spread of the virus. Many countries have taken the policy of closing schools as a step to save education from the dangers of the virus, including neighboring countries and Indonesia. The closure of educational institutions leads to a policy of learning from home, teaching from home, or working from home. Everything is all at home, which automatically uses media or space to change from offline to all online (Saleh, 2020, p. 3).

The learning process carried out before and during the pandemic was very different, and this impacted educators (teachers). The process of delivering material and understanding to students is not optimal. Therefore, it results in the ineffectiveness of online learning. Teachers who, from the beginning, carried out the face-to-face process were then forced to give lessons via the internet. Barriers

to teachers related to learning instructed by the educational material policy, the impact that has been caused by the pandemic with such policies, on the other hand, has had a significant influence on the student learning process (Saleh, 2020, p. 3).

Talking about education policies in neighboring countries, the policies decided by governments in neighboring countries vary greatly, according to the capabilities of human resources (Human Resources) in the country. The positive and negative impacts of implementing policies during the Covid-19 pandemic cannot entirely be a solution to educational policy problems. Learning carried out during the COVID-19 pandemic is through an online learning process (online) (Jati, 2020, p. 380).

We all know that online learning was developed to expand educational services' reach and increase the availability of educational services. Even so, at first glance, it looks fun, but learning that takes place from home is not an easy matter. While studying from home, students get many assignments. In this case, the family education process is crucial to the success of the learning process while at home. The policies implemented by the government from one country to another are very different, so the differences in policies during this pandemic can affect an educational institution's learning process.

Thus, based on the problems above, learning policies in education significantly affect the learning process in an educational institution, especially higher education. This paper aims to see and discuss university learning policies during the Covid-19 pandemic in various countries, namely Turkey, Egypt, Pakistan, and Sudan.

2. METHODS

This research paradigm uses a qualitative approach. By using this approach it is hoped that researchers can solve problems as expected (Meleong, 2010, p. 4). This type of research is a case study, which is a study that is directed to data collection, taking the meaning, and gaining understanding from case studies (Syaodih, 2009, p. 64). In the context of this research, it tries to connect theoretically based on the condition of students, lecturers, and educational institutions.

Data sources are sources from which the data was obtained, including primary and secondary data sources. Primary data sources are data obtained directly from the source. All data collected through interviews and observations are primary data. Meanwhile, secondary data is data collected by the researchers themselves, for example, magazines, information on online and offline publications, and research journals (Syaodih, 2009, p. 56).

The object of research is where the research is carried out, for example, the school, community, and institution being researched. While the research subjects are people or communities whose information will be extracted for research data, if qualitative research collects interview data, then the information is the subject (Shobron, 2014, p. 18).

Data collection in this study:

- a. Interview/Interview is a conversation with a specific purpose (Meleong, 2010, p. 186).
- b. Documentation is any written material or video of student activities covering daily life, magazines, and newspapers. Official documents are divided into two, namely Internal and External (Meleong, 2010, pp. 216–219).
- c. Observation is a method of direct analysis by systematically recording and observing a particular individual or group (Sugiyono, 2010, p. 300).

Data Validity by using data triangulation techniques to maintain the feasibility of observations in the study. Data analysis uses several techniques, including data reduction, categorization, then conclusions (Sugiyono, 2010, p. 288)

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Analysis of Higher Education Learning Policies During the Covid-19 Pandemic, Case Studies: (Turkey, Egypt, Pakistan, and Sudan)

The term policy is a series of concepts and basics that become guidelines and plans for a job, leadership, and how to act. The impact of the new policy implementation will be seen after the policy is implemented. This shows that the policy implementation process is one of the critical stages in determining the following policy formulation process. Therefore, the success or failure of a policy in achieving its objectives is determined by its implementation and many factors (Irianto, 2012, p. 31).

Foreign policy is the official external relations directed by actors in international relations. Foreign education policy is one part of the discipline of international relations. The State's existence does not guarantee that the citizens will carry out policies properly. A country experiencing instability in the fields of education, economy and politics will lead to changes that cause the policy to change. In this case, the author will explore and discuss in-depth related to education policies during the Covid-19 pandemic in 4 countries, namely Turkey, Egypt, Pakistan and Sudan.

Learning Policy in Turkey

Turkey's education system is governed by the national ministry of education. Its responsibilities cover a wide range of services from providing curriculum and developing educational materials to building schools. The curriculum prepared by the ministry is reviewed and approved by the Supreme Court of National Education. The Director of National Education is responsible for education affairs in the province. An overview of the system of educational institutions in Turkey includes:

- a. **Pre School:** Age 3-6 years.
- b. **Primary School:** Age 6-8 years. The system of educational institutions at that age is free in public schools, with foreign language lessons starting from the 4th grade of elementary school.
- c. **Secondary School:** Age 14-15 years. Lasting 4 years, education includes general, vocational and technical schools.
- d. **Higher Education:** Age 18-over. Includes, Universities, Faculties, Institutes and Conservatories.

Education and learning in Turkey during the Covid-19 pandemic will close all aspects of primary, secondary, and higher education institutions. The Ministry of National Education and the Ministry of Health provide the distance education system free of charge to protect and prevent measures against pandemic diseases. Turkey is an example country with the world's first national-scale television and internet-based curriculum, following an interview by one of the Turkish journalists to Selçuk, the head of the Minister of Education (*Waspada Corona, Turki Tutup Sekolah Dan Terapkan Kebijakan Belajar Menggunakan Internet*, 2020).

Colleges and educational institutions preparing for exams will benefit from the ministry's free academic support platform. For access via cell phones, the government will provide free internet of 3 GB (gigabytes) for students to do online learning (*Waspada Corona, Turki Tutup Sekolah Dan Terapkan Kebijakan Belajar Menggunakan Internet*, 2020). The phenomenon of the Covid-19 pandemic, which was officially detected and has spread to more than 105 countries in the world, has prompted the government to provide new policies for other Turkish people, including the ease of implementing learning during the pandemic, namely the latest application called BiP. This policy was drawn up after the use of WhatsApp was judged to have the potential to interfere with the convenience of its users. This application is an application that has been presented since 2013.

Thus, the reputation for privacy security also makes this application very popular in Europe. Throughout 2020, BiP noted that this application had been used to send 140 billion messages and voice conversation records. This application has a space of 2 billions call durations and video call records that have reached 150 million minutes.

The BiP application made by the Turkish State government has had a tremendous and positive impact. The government provides the application to facilitate the online learning process. The government has completely blocked the use of the WhatsApp (WA) application in their country by providing more accessible access to the BiP application. This application makes it easier for social media users, such as the Telegram application, which can only be accessed in Turkey (*Interview with a Student of Zain University Turkey*, n.d.).

In the economic field, Turkey lost 10% of its currency. Before the pandemic hit, the 1 lira currency was worth Rp. 2,200-Rp. 2,500. When the pandemic hit, the 1 lira currency was worth a very low Rp. 1,900-Rp. 2,000. All food staples in Turkey are threatened with a higher value than usual. However, in addition to economic problems that go up and down, the government provides educational services in Turkey very well (*Interview with a Student of Ankara University Turkey*, n.d.).

Learning Policy in Egypt

The history of education in Egypt, especially Al-Azhar, relates to the dynamics of Islamic diversity in the country. It can be seen from the gait of its alumni who have filled and developed science covering all aspects of social, political, cultural and religious life (Arikarani, n.d., p. 88) Al-Azhar was founded by Jauhar al-Katib al-Siqilli, a warlord of the Fatimid dynasty in 970 AD. Al-Azhar was originally a building that was not prepared as a university or school. However, it was built as a mosque for the Fatimid dynasty, as a center for spreading its teachings and da'wah. Then in 378H Al-Azhar officially became an educational institution with the arrangement of the material schedule and the teachers. According to each material, the model and the teaching system use halaqah guided by a sheikh in one part of the subject. In addition, there are special assemblies for women. Besides being involved in the world of science, Al-Azhar is also involved in the fields of art, philosophy, language and sports (Hanafi, 6 C.E., p. 121).

A Sheikh is very charismatic in determining the direction of Al-Azhar's policy but was officially appointed as the first Sheikh of Al-Azhar is Sheikh Muhammad bin Abdullah al-Khurasyi, was officially appointed as the first Grand Sheikh in 1101 H. He was born in Khurasy from the province of Buhaira. Until now, there are 40 Sheikhs of Al-Azhar, the last one is Sheikh Muhammad Sayyid Tahantawi (Hanafi, 6 C.E., p. 130).

The level of education in Egypt is very centralized and is divided into 3 stages:

- a. **Primary School :** It consists of a primary stage and a preparatory stage. For basic education 4-14 years, kindergarten for 2 years followed by elementary school for 6 years and preparatory school for 3 years.
- b. **Secondary School:** 3 years secondary school for between 15-17 years old.
- c. **Higher Education:** About 30% of Egyptians in the relevant age group go to a public university standart university education. In the current education system, there are 17 public universities, 51 public non-University institutions, 16 private colleges and 89 private colleges from S1 non-university institutions (Atrisna, 2009, p. 3).

At this time, the outbreak of the Covid-19 Pandemic is attacking the world, causing the situation to become increasingly difficult for educational institutions in the State of Egypt. Even if the pandemic lasts a long time, something extraordinary will happen in the country, namely problems in the economic field. Several Middle-Eastern countries that rely on tourism are also going through difficult times. Egypt, which every year relies on tourism for its economic sector, must face a harsh reality that has never happened in the past. When acts of terrorism are rampant, the tourism sector also experiences difficult times but what happened due to the pandemic, the situation is much more difficult (Misrawi, n.d.). Economic assistance for the Egyptians during the Covid-19 pandemic was minimal because, with their low economic numbers, the government had not yet found a good solution to the economic and health assistance problem.

Al-Azhar is an educational institution that does not depend on the Egyptian state government system, because the curriculum and all educational management are centered on Al-Azhar. During the learning process, the Al-Azhar lectures went well, almost every week entering the lecture hall depending on the respective faculties. Schools at Al-Azhar carry out the learning process using the Halaqah system with the Sheikh, more centered on studies of the turast book. When the Covid-19 pandemic hit Egypt and the world, all educational institutions in Egypt were threatened with holidays. Suppose the initial meeting in one week is 5-6 meetings, then the pandemic outbreak changed the system of meetings in one week to 2-3 meetings. Lectures run intensively in the class, and students must follow the health protocol that has been determined. Then for students at the end of the semester, the final exam will be changed by making a paper as a requirement for the final lecture. Not only that, halaqah class meetings can run online instead of meeting with *maseyikhs* (Interview with a Student of Al-Azhar University Egypt, n.d.).

In addition, the Egyptian economy is minimal and low, resulting in educational institutions experiencing difficulties in online learning. Some educational institutions temporarily give students a leave of absence for a year due to the difficulty of accessing online learning. The government's policy in overcoming this is at a limited economic level so that the use of educational facilities and

infrastructure in the State of Egypt will be limited in use. Just as the government gives no free quota to educational institutions (*Interview with a Student of Al-Azhar University Egypt*, n.d.).

Learning Policy in Pakistan

Education in Pakistan is under the guidance of the Ministry of Education of the Government of Pakistan as well as the provincial government, while the federal government largely assists in curriculum development, accreditation and in financing research and development. Article 25-A of Pakistan's constitution obliges the State to provide free and compulsory quality education to children from the age group 5-16 years (Suwardi, 2018, p. 43).

The education system in Pakistan is generally divided into five levels:

- a. Primary: grade 1-5
- b. Middle: grade 6-8
- c. High: grade 9-10, leading to high school, Certificate or SSC.
- d. Intermediate: grade 11-12, leading to Higher Secondary, *Cerificate* or *HSC*.
- e. Leading undergraduate and graduate program universities.

There are two types of undergraduate programs in Pakistan: Pass and Honors. Graduating the degree requires two years of study and students typically read three optional subjects (such as chemistry and economics) in addition to an almost equal number of compulsory courses (such as Pakistani and English studies). Most master's degree programs require two years of education. The Master of Philosophy (M.Phil) is available in most subjects and can be undertaken after undertaking the Master's Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.).

Pakistan is a country that is highly dependent on foreign aid. Financial institutions have a significant role in assisting Pakistan. In 2002 Pakistan was in the order of the two countries that received the most assistance from various International Development Agency (IDA). Pakistan's dependence on foreign funds is due to the lack of sources of income due to the increase in domestic staple food commodity prices caused by rising food and oil prices in international markets. In addition, bad weather at that time also caused agricultural production to decrease. These policies make it difficult for people to access food. In addition, (Ardianti, 2019, p. 16) in the case of Pakistan, one of the essential indicators of economic access to food is the number of population living below the poverty line, Pakistan's poverty rate has increased since the 1960s. As the following picture shows:

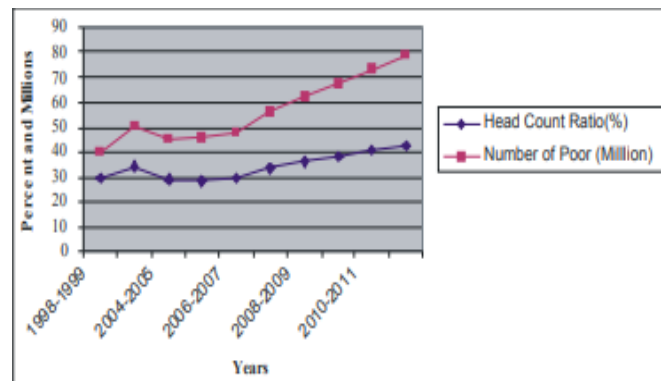


Figure 1.

Source: Pakistan Bureau of Stats, Economic Survey of Pakistan 2013.

The Covid-19 pandemic has caused an unprecedented educational emergency, with 9.7 million children affected by school closures at risk of permanently dropping out. The economic catastrophe of the crisis can push 90 to 117 Million children into poverty, which directly impacts enrollment in schools. At the same time, the charity warned that the crisis caused by the coronavirus could lead to an education budget shortfall of up to \$77 billion (Rp. 1.112 trillion) worldwide (News, n.d.).

Pakistan is the 26th largest country in the world with an economic growth of 3.29% in 2019. Nevertheless, wealth and economy are growing with the help of foreign countries (*Gambaran Umum Republik Islam Pakistan*, n.d.). After implementing a lockdown for several months, Pakistan finally reopened government access because the country's causality tends to be poor. Several universities, including Islamabad of Univeristy, closed all access to education for three weeks in anticipation of the

coronavirus outbreak. Education Minister Shafqat Mahmood issued a policy that all educational institutions were closed until a decision was made. The World Health Organization (WHO) declared the coronavirus a global pandemic. So far, the number of confirmed cases is more than 132,000, with the death rate reaching 5,000 people (Azzam, 2020).

Education policy in the government of Pakistan is the center of serious attention, even though in the face of a low economy, the government places great emphasis on education and the educational process. Educational institutions with students and students residing in remote parts of Pakistan will be given waivers not to take part in the learning process for one semester (Break/free). Then the Pakistani government provides good facilities and infrastructure for internet quota users in learning at educational institutions, especially universities. The government provides wifi and quota for free during the online learning process (*Interview with a Student of University of Islamabad Pakistan, n.d.*).

Referring to research findings in the field, the University of Islamabad Pakistan is an educational institution that processes online learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. The institution has classrooms that are regulated when used. During the Covid-19 pandemic, classrooms are divided into morning and afternoon classes with a specified duration. Even though they try to enter online classrooms, the government still urges its citizens to continue obeying the health protocols set. Then, the learning system at the University of Islamabad uses the *Halaqah Ilmiyah* system by using the *talaqqi* method, which means that the *tholib* reads one by one and Masyeikh confirms and explains the lesson (*Interview with a Student of University of Islamabad Pakistan, n.d.*).

Learning Policy in Sudan

Primary education in Sudan is followed by three years of secondary education and 6 years of primary education. Junior high school for 3 years and senior high school for 3 years. The primary language at all levels is Arabic. Starting from the 2020/2021 school year, English is taught starting from Kindergarten (TK). Schools are concentrated in urban areas, many in southern and western Sudan damaged by years of civil war. Sudan has 36 public universities and 19 private universities, all of which teachers prioritize Arabic, one of which is the International University of Africa Sudan. All teachers or lecturers come from the original Masyeikh Arab Africa, Medina, Saudi Arabia and several other eastern countries (*Interview with a Student of International University of Africa, Sudan, n.d.*).

African International University is the first higher education institution in Sudan, the education level starts from an undergraduate degree, master degree to Doctoral. The existing faculties include the Faculty of Sharia with majors in sharia and law, majoring in Islamic Studies. In addition, there is also a Tarbiyah Faculty consisting of departments of history education, Arabic language education, exact education and Islamic education. This university also has a faculty of Letters with majors in Arabic Literature, English literature and Informatics. In addition to faculties with majors in Religion and Arabic, there are other faculties such as the Faculty of Medicine, Engineering, and the Faculty of Computer Science (Rahma, n.d.).

The COVID-19 pandemic has threatened several educational institutions in the world, including the State of Sudan. Policies issued by the government to save students from the dangers of the virus will have several impacts, especially on students, teachers and parents. Students themselves will feel forced to learn from home which actually does not have adequate facilities for this, so that the learning process will be hampered, which should be before the start of learning supporting facilities must be available first. Then the learning process will require various kinds of learning adaptations and understanding of the learning model in the network, so the policies given may lead to a lack of student understanding of learning (Rahma, n.d.).

Sudan is a country with an insufficient economic capacity. Sudan's inflation is 300%, and the country's economic crisis is getting deeper. The government continues to struggle with chronic currency shortages. Sudan's Central Statistics Agency attributed the increase to rising prices during the Covid-19 pandemic. Data on the unemployment rate in the State of Sudan remains active reported by the Central Bureau of Statistics, reaching a record high of 20.70%. Some of the causes of the decline in the Sudanese economy are the civil war over the instability in the government. Then when the Sudanese economy had problems by seeking help from abroad, there was no response to help these problems. The crisis comes as protests continue against President Omar al-Bashir's 3-decade government (News, n.d.).

The following impact in the field of education is that the State of Sudan is a country threatened with meager education. During the Covid-19 pandemic, educational institutions in the State of Sudan closed all educational facilities. The learning process takes place online. Some higher education institutions are continuing their learning and some are taking a day off for semester meetings for one year. Teachers or educators have responsibility for the learning process of their students. However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the enactment of government policies on health protocols and PJJ, the learning process is also negatively affected due to several obstacles for teachers to carry out the online learning process (Purwanto, 2020, p. 56).

The people of Sudan have difficulty understanding the limitations of knowledge in the technology field. The use of technology during the Covid-19 pandemic is a significant obstacle to the learning process carried out by teachers or *masyekh*s. In this case, a training process for teachers should first be needed to increase the online media-based teaching capacity. The learning process that had been carried out before the Covid-19 pandemic certainly made teachers very minimal in online learning. These problems will have an impact on the process of delivering material and conveying understanding to students or students (R.H.S Aji, 2020, p. 97).

The policy of the Government of the State of Sudan has decided to dismiss students from several universities, especially the International University of Africa, Sudan. Based on the conditions in the field, the learning process leads to an online learning system and applies the *halaqah* method as in Egypt and Pakistan.

Halaqah took place with an online system with *Masyekh* during the Covid-19 pandemic. Before the outbreak spread, *halaqah* took place with the *Talaqqi* (face-to-face) system. Several universities in the State of Sudan prioritize the studies of the *Turast* book and studies with *Masyekh* because 90% of studies and 10% are lectures. During the Covid-19 pandemic, educational institutions in the State of Sudan have provided relief for students to continue learning. Then, some universities cannot carry out the learning process during the Covid-19 pandemic because the problems of each university are different. All educational institutions provide relief for students not to attend a class for one semester (*Interview with a Student of International University of Africa, Sudan, n.d.*).

4. CONCLUSION

The impact of university learning policies during the Covid-19 pandemic experienced many internal and external pressures. Thus, the application in the online learning process creates new lessons to better master the technology as a whole. In the era of globalization, it has become a new center of education experienced by many people in general. Therefore, education that is identical to face-to-face directly turns into virtual online in the learning process. This can be seen in education policies in neighboring countries, especially in Turkey, Egypt, Pakistan and Sudan.

Education has provided knowledge transformation and provided good learning to its students. Education today needs to be open and flexible to the demands and developments of the world but still provides a good filter and figure for an educator and must have fundamental educational values so that they do not fade. In a sense, education becomes a priority in life. It not only provides external transformation (Output) but needs to transform inside wisely (Input).

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