

Gadgets And Pupils With Special Needs During Covid 19 Pandemic: A Brief Study From The Field

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Abstract : *Technological devices were very important in the teaching and learning process when the Covid 19 pandemic hit the world, especially in Malaysia. The use of this gadget is very educational in the process of educational delivery, including for special education. However, various constraints have to be faced by teachers, students with special needs and parents in providing the device and have the skills to use it. This study was conducted to explore the function of technological devices on students with special needs during this pandemic phase. This study uses a qualitative approach in the process of collecting data. A total of 10 special education teachers were involved in this study in providing their views on the function of the device for students with special needs. Interview sessions were conducted online with the Google Meet platform. The findings of the study show that, the device serves as learning materials, assessment materials, entertainment and networking for students with special needs during a pandemic. The results of this study are expected to help future researchers in conducting further studies.*

Keywords: *special needs student, special education, Covid19 pandemic, effective learning, role of teachers, gadjets*

1. INTRODUCTION

The use of devices became a key issue in the online teaching and learning process when the Covid 19 pandemic hit the world, including in Malaysia (Badaruddin et al., 2021, Abdul Rasid et al., 2021). Optimal use as well as according to need, makes the device perform its function well as a medium of knowledge delivery (Irma et al., 2021; Suzana et al., 2021; Rohanida et al., 2021; Nazrah et al., 2021; Shahrulliza et al. , 2021). Proper and efficient skills are required by teachers, students and parents in making the device the best material for the continuity of knowledge reception remotely (Ahmad Shafarin et al., 2021; Junaidah et al., 2021; Farah Adibah et al., 2021; Ahmad Shakani et al., 2021; Muhammad Amin et al., 2021). Nevertheless, there are various constraints in using the device more effectively, especially involving students with special needs (Farah et al., 2021; Syahrul et al., 2021; Quah et al., 2021; Ahmad Syarifuddin et al., 2021; Jumiah et al., 2021; Jumiah et al. al., 2021). The challenges of using devices effectively can be seen through the level of ability of students with special needs, the diversity of disabilities of students with special needs that affect concentration during online classes, well -functioning and up -to -date devices, quality

internet connection and skills in using devices (Mohd Ali et al., 2021 ;Parimala et al., 2021; SitiJamilah et al., 2021; Nor Fauziyana et al., 2021; Noel et al., 2021). These existing challenges and constraints make the use of devices limited and interfere with the effectiveness of teaching delivery by teachers (Mohd Arafat et al., 2021; Sumaiyah et al., 2021; Hifzan et al., 2021; Shahrul et al., 2021; Helme et al., 2021). This study was conducted to explore the function of technological devices to students with special needs during the Covid 19 pandemic.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative approach in obtaining research data. Interview sessions were conducted involving 10 special education teachers randomly selected in the district of BatuPahat, Johor, Malaysia. The interviews conducted were semi structured which involved some planned questions and some additional questions. The interview session lasted between 15-20 minutes per session. These sessions are conducted online using the Google Meet platform. Recordings were made when the interview session was conducted and a transcript was issued as soon as the interview was completed. At the end of the process, thematic analysis is performed to obtain the required data. The thematic analysis conducted involves three phases, namely open coding, axial coding and selective coding. These three phases were analyzed based on the transcripts of the interviews of the respondents involved. Results on selective coding became the theme and findings of this study.

FINDINGS

As a result of the thematic analysis conducted, there are statements that form the use of the gadgets for pupils with special needs during Covid 19 pandemic. Summaries of these statements are such as, learning materials, assessment materials, entertainment and networking. The relevant statements have formed a specific code in the axial coding phase before a code is selected in the selective coding phase i.e. ‘gadgets for pupils with special needs’ which is the main finding of the study. Table 1 shows a summary of the findings of this study.

Table 1: Thematic Process Analysis That Shapes the Nature Gadgets for Pupils with Special Needs DuringCovid19 Pandemic

Open coding	Axial coding	Selective coding
SET1, SET 2, SET3, SET4, SET5, SET 6, SET7, SET 8, SET9, SET10	learning materials	gadgets for pupils with special needs
SET2, SET3, SET4, SET6, SET8, SET9, SET10	assessment materials	
SET1, SET 2, SET3, SET4, SET5, SET 6, SET7, SET 8, SET9, SET10	entertainment	
SET1, SET3, SET6, SET7, SET9, SET10	networking	

Based on Table 1, all respondents issued statements related to learning materials and entertainment. Meanwhile, seven respondents stated related to assessment materials and six respondent agreed about networking. All of these statements form the ‘gadgets for pupils with special needs’ theme for selective coding.

3. DISCUSSION

Based on the findings of this study, it can be proved that, technological devices are very important in the delivery of education during a pandemic. Respondents interviewed stated that, technological devices are the main tools to implement the learning process at this time. All respondents also think that, skills in using technology is the key to the effectiveness of online learning. Moreover, they also agreed that, additional factors to the effectiveness of use were the type of device used and internet access. There are previous studies that have found that, when a pandemic occurs, the level of mastery and skills of using the device is still at a low level (Abdul Jalil et al., 2021; Mohd Noh et al., 2021; Mustafa et al., 2021; Roszi et al., 2021; al., 2021; Tumisah et al., 2021). The situation occurs because, the education system is shocked by the rapid development as well as the practice of new norms in education (Santibuana et al., 2021; Nor Diana et al., 2021; Zarina et al., 2021; Khairul et al., 2021; Rohani et al. ., 2021). Respondents collectively agreed that, technology devices serve as learning materials to students with special needs during a pandemic and at the same time act as entertainment materials to reduce learning stress. Respondents also expressed their concern if the entertainment function exceeds the function of the device as learning materials. But they noted that such constraints can be overcome if, its use is monitored by parents at home. In addition, respondents also stated that, technology devices can serve as assessment material for students with special needs. If previously the assessment medium used was more of a diverse physical tool, it has changed to the use of devices during a pandemic. Even more exciting is that technology devices are also capable of being networking materials for students with special needs.

4. CONCLUSION

Indeed the Covid 19 pandemic has changed many things in human life. No exception for education in general and special education in particular. The use of technological devices in the teaching and learning process has become the new norm. However, the effectiveness of the method in this new norm has not been fully ascertained yet. Having the latest devices, quality internet connection and determination can help teachers and students to succeed in online learning. It should be emphasized here that, the device not only serves as a learning material, but it can also be used as entertainment. Therefore, prudent use should be implemented so that the device is not misused by students with special needs. As a suggestion, the next researcher can make this brief study as a basic guide to conduct a more empirical study on this issue.

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