

# The implementation of the online thesis supervision during pandemic covid-19 at one of graduate and postgraduate programs in Indonesia

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## **Abstract**

The Covid-19 pandemic has affected almost all departments, including academic activities, and almost all campuses have been locked down. One of the most affected by the covid-19 pandemic is the composing of scripts/theses or papers for short. The purpose of this research is to fill in the gaps. Although they cannot come to campus, they can still consult their papers and get feedback from their supervisors. To achieve this goal, the researcher has used advances in information, computers, and technology (ICT). Notwithstanding the usage of ICT has been widely used, as well as in universities, the usage in the process of paper supervision is still very limited. Different from a lot of learners and lecturers in some universities even before the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, they got difficulties determining the right moments for them to meet since their different affairs of the lecturers or learners. The pandemic worsened the situation. The purpose of the research is to get a new successful scheme to supervise learners in composing papers, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic. So, there are three main sub-goals of the study: 1) researching how to realize online-based paper supervision, 2) tracking learners' opinions on the implementation of online paper mentoring, and 3) finding the latest and powerful ways of paper mentoring. Questionnaires, interviews, and documents were used to collect data. People have found that using online is very effective and efficient in guiding paper composing. Learners and lecturers can communicate via the internet anytime and anywhere, even if it is under the threat of the Covid-19 pandemic; the supervisor's advice is easy for learners to understand, easy to follow, and tidy. More importantly, learners' composing results are better, tidier, and broader.

**Key words:** *supervision strategy, online-based thesis supervision, and innovative supervision.*

## **Introduction**

Learners of graduate and postgraduate should be able to compose a thesis or dissertation rationally and structurally according to the scientific method. They must be able to demonstrate their language and communication skills to the assessor before they are given a graduate or a master's degree.

Although, they often encounter few problems while composing a research paper, like shortage of abilities of grammar, deficiency in vocabulary, and difficulty in meeting with busy supervisors, and limited time to meet supervisors due to long working and living time in the office or staying in miles.

### ***What is online-based thesis supervision?***

It is the supervision of composing scripts/theses/dissertations or paper for short, (from now on *papers* will be used throughout this paper) for graduate or post graduate learners for comprehensive examination, and then granting them a Graduate's degree or Master's degree. Online supervision is relatively different from traditional one. In traditional supervision, the supervisors and learners are located in a certain place, such as an office or campus. Notwithstanding in online-based paper supervision, the learners and the supervisors are in the different location. The reason for this may be due to the pandemic of Covid-19, their work off campus, the learners' on vacation or staying in their hometown. This supervision and guidance is carried out through emails with specific functions and layouts. These emails are written in a method which learners get it simple, interesting, and easy to read (Almeatani, Alotaibi, Alasmari, Meccawy, & Alghamdi, 2019; Filippou, Kallo, & Mikkilä-Erdmann, 2017).

Learners are required to produce scientifically standardized paper quality in terms of the substantive, syntactic, lexical and stylistic factors of composing. Surely, the paper is still the most significant end composing assignment for graduate and postgraduate learners. For a lot of Indonesian learners who want to be awarded a Graduate's degree or Master's degree in English education, they are required to write and submit a paper in English, which is usually the most difficult piece of the process of obtaining a upper degree. Even though, not only graduate learners but also postgraduate learners have experienced in composing reports and essays related to the topics they are studying, many people believe that composing scripts/thesis is still a daunting challenge (Filippou et al., 2017). In fact, reports, scripts, and papers are all similar because they all express the results of some investigations and the conclusions drawn from them (Evans, 1995; Mapolisa & Mafa, 2012; Mesquida & Pérez, 2015; Teitelbaum, 1989). Even though there are few distinctions in length, readership, and goal, in essence, these kinds of composing should always adopt the same structure, that is, at the starting, the problem statement to be studied; in the middle, the issue of the investigation to be described; and at the end, a conclusion to be drawn.

When composing, learners should focus to the stream of thought in every paragraph that is generated. Every paragraph should only contain single idea. It should include a topic sentence, some supporting sentences, and end with a summing up sentence (Evans, 1995; Oshima, 1999). The supervisor's role is to guide and control them in composing learners' own papers so that learners' papers not only in the

essence of composing, but also in terms of language, grammar, vocabulary and style always meet the required standards (Zaheer, 2020). Composing requires some skills and is very important.

A long with the expansion of information and communication technology (ICT), the fast growth of learning electronically and the usage of learning management systems Jati (2012) have prompted few universities and schools in Indonesia to utilize and expand e-learning. However, as he farther pointed out, generally their e-learning ingredients and load still do not fully utilize the powerful functions of ICT (Jati, 2012). Jati (2012) studied ICT (online) from the perspective of subject matter and load, yet the present research is from the perspective of supervision. Although the two studies look different, the mainstream is the same, that is, underutilization of the powerful functions of online learning. Consistent with Jati (2012) and Alberth (2013) highlight the usage of online supervision as the main teaching mode or a complement to conventionally direct communication. Alberth (2013) farther pointed out that online supervision is necessary because it has big potential to promote the growth of EFL learners' English capability. However, despite the need to grow EFL learners, Ciptaningrum (2012) got that lecturer, prominently those who are just starting online learning may benefit only for knowledge learning and skill acquisition purposes. The learners have not yet integrated their knowledge of ICT to practice. Therefore, after the professional development of teachers organized by certain LPMPs in Indonesia, classroom practices may not change. Most importantly, there is very little research on the use of ICT (online) to monitor student research papers. The current research mainly deals with this problem. Related to the corrective feedback provided in online supervision, Dewi and Jati (2017) have found that the corrective feedback in online supervision is statistically significant and can help learners improve the quality of composing. Related to the supervisor in paper supervision, Manyike (2017) found that senior and professional supervisors will provide more expert advice and can predict learners' weaknesses. Finally, they can help learners be more effective and successful. The author suggests that senior and more professional supervisors should hold seminars for junior supervisors to improve the quality of their student papers.

### ***Why online-based supervision?***

In general, since online education has great advantages in education, especially in the supervision of research paper composing, the focus of this research is based on online paper supervision. Online education has many advantages, including English education.

A few of the advantages of online activities for schooling include the following:

1. grow learners' comprehension and acquisition of subject matters;
2. give studying chances to learners in different places at different times;
3. develop learners' learning drives;
4. make learners personalized study;
5. enable learners to obtain information that is difficult to afford;
6. allows learners to collect materials from the past, which might be very difficult to collect;

7. can make a more appropriate studying environments;
8. If carried out in a conventional way, it may make learners carry out very difficult, unaffordable, hardly or risky experiments;
9. can expand learners' innovation and vision;
10. can supply learners with opportunities to study amazingly with little lead; and
11. can develop learners' acquisition and performance of ICT.

Generally, Suparman (2013) and Umboh (2012) pointed out that the usage of ICT in instructional may be divided into four groups: tutoring, implementation, investigation and relation. More specifically, citing the research of Alavi and Gallupe (2003) by Umboh (2012), the usage of ICT has the goals and/or benefits as follows:

1. To improve comparative reasoning;
2. To increase trademark;
3. To improve instructional standard;
4. To cultivate learners' study attainment;
5. To increase the income (of teachers and/or institutions);
6. To develop the learner base;
7. To improve treatment standard;
8. To minimize processing costs; and
9. To develop new goods and treatment.

In addition, Corporation (2012) classifies the advantages of information and communication technology (ICT) into four major groups, namely learner advantages; school-wide advantages; society advantages and national advantages. The detailed description of each category is as follows:

Student advantages:

1. Enable individual learning. It is said that studying varies from person to person. Technology is able to supply an individual educational environment to adapt to the personal distinctions of learners: grade of progress, ability, hobby, learning type and background. Technology supplies the endorsement and challenges needed to make learners motivated and motivated, and enables them to realize their potential.
2. Strengthen teamwork and collaboration. ICT devices can improve the development of an surroundings where student collaboration and teamwork continue to increase anytime, anywhere. Similarly, the application of technology will guide develop cooperation and teamwork among educators who are planning to integrate ICT into their curriculum.
3. Rich STEM study. Future goods and treatment will rely on engineers, scientists and technical experts to make. ICT can help learners design products, collect and analyze performance data in collaboration with peers and experts, and in some cases, can really help to build goods.

Educational welfare:

1. Estimated teacher results - Information and communication technology has led to many important and amazing alterations in the way educators teach and study. Educators use ICT to format and evaluate studying activities, transmit to

learners, parents and group members, and take part in expert growth impressions.

2. Relating the gender space - ICT minimizes gender differences in education performance. Boys with poor grades can improve their grades and assessment scores through ICT. Other researchers suggest that ICT can help increase the skills and behavior of female learners in conventionally male-dominated sector.
3. Strengthen worldwide cooperation - ICT device enable learners to establish connections and exchanges with classrooms around the globe, thereby enhancing worldwide consciousness and cultural identity.

Group advantages:

1. Wider group participation - technology may assist families and society members participate in student study through the use of school websites, emails, blogs, and text messages to aid interested groups understand and participate in their indigenous schooling structure.
2. Reasonable investment in education – In view of the tight allocation of mostly schools, regions and education ministers, ICT is one of the important capitals that should benefit teachers and learners.
3. Increase academic reports - good ICT blending supplies schooling with a diversity of appliances, group participants and teachers can utilize these tools to inspect data like demographics, achievements, and money allocation. The feedback and analysis loops aid to make the school accountable to the community.

Advantages nationwide:

1. Support for economic growth - study indirectly shows that the application of ICT in the classroom and the transition to student-centered teaching provides support for the economic and social interests of the entire nation.
2. Increasing international competition - investing in technology can help schools achievement better. Information and communication technology is playing an increasingly important role in economic development, and it is changing rapidly, which creates it hard for schools and nations that do not invest in technology to participate on a global scale.
3. Promote the development of the workforce - non-technical jobs are obliteration in developed and developing countries. The quick changes took about by technology require manpower not only to learn how to make use certain devices, but also to learn how to apply lifelong learning strategies in the job.

### ***How is online/ICT-based supervision?***

To realize online/ICT-based paper control is by making use email. The student sends the draft paper to the supervisor. Then the mentor reads it and checks the matter, style, syntax and vocabulary issues. Under this mentoring, the concept was checked paragraph per paragraph. If the supervisor gets mistakes or inappropriate content, he

will mark the not true items, then click "View" in the menu, and then click "New Comment". A colored line will be displayed on the script, which connects the incorrect item and the column with comments to the right margin of the document. The mentor then types to comment and suggestion or ask in the comment box. These comments and suggestions look very neat. Psychologically, it does not hurt the student writer feeling. Unlike handwritten comments and corrections, typed comments and suggestions using ICT-based mentoring are clearer and easier to read. So, it can lead learners feel more pleased, convinced, and energized.

## **Methods**

The purpose of the research is to get a choice method to assist graduate and postgraduate learners increase the standard of the paper from the perspective of the nature of the paper, language and composing style.

The study is qualitative by design. This research uses three research tools: documents, interviews and observations. These documents consist of research papers by five graduate learners and five other papers by five postgraduate learners, which were carried out under the researcher's supervision at Lampung University, Indonesia. Six of them have completed the study, while the other four are still in the process of composing research papers. The six learners who completed their studies received an "A" score (81-100) when they took the comprehensive examination. Interviews were conducted with participants to collect their thoughts on the usage of online/ICT-based paper supervision. Open-ended questions were used in the interviews. The relevance of the questions to the interview objectives has been verified by experts. The experts' verification was intended to track broader and deeper data about participants' views. The final tool, observation, was used to view the achievement of participants in online/ICT-based paper supervision to show their revisions based on suggestions made during the discussion process. According to the nature of the study, the effectiveness of the instrument is set qualitatively by using triangulation method.

## **Findings**

According to the tools used, there are three types of data: document-based, interview-based, and observation-based. Document-based data is composed of student research paper composing products. Participants reviewed their papers and conducted indirect supervision via email. The reason for this is that due to the pandemic Covid-19 threat, not only participants but also supervisors are working from home (WFH). The study was conducted from April 2020 to October 2020.

Interviews were done with participants to collect their thoughts on the usage of online/ICT-based paper mentoring. This type of data is very significance to ensure that the use of online/ICT for paper supervision is suitable for them; and to look at the advantages and disadvantages of this kind of supervision. All interviews are conducted via WhatsApp video calls, so both the participants and the researcher can see each other directly on the screen. If the participants have questions or something unclear, they can directly observe the body language of the supervisor and the sub-language used to make them feel that they are directly communicating with the researcher.

According to the data analysis results of these three data sources, the following conclusions are drawn: 1. Students are more energized to use online/ICT-based paper supervision to write their own research paper; 2. They think their superior provides them with suggestions The way of and opinions has received great support, which is different from the traditional way; 3. They find that the suggestions and opinions of the supervisor seems more expert, neater, and easier to understand and read; 4. They think this is very useful and convenient since even though they are in their hometown due to the Covid-19 pandemic, they can still communicate "directly" as if they were consulting their research paper face-to-face with their supervisor; 5. They make revisions faster than when they used conventional methods; 6. Aesthetically, they think it is more expert and looks better; 7. More importantly, they say that they will follow the online/ICT-based paper supervision in their institutions in the future; 8. More importantly, the quality of their papers has been greatly increased not only in substances, but also in typing, syntax and vocabulary accuracy. We can see from the outputs of the comprehensive exam, where they have to defend their research paper, six of them took the final exam and all of participants received an "A" score. The supervision proves that online/ICT-based paper mentoring is quite good in helping learners develop paper composing skills.

## **Discussion**

The outputs of the data analysis, the following discussion author conducted that participants are more energized to use online/ICT-based supervision to write their papers. The participants said that they are very keen on composing papers because the supervisor's suggestions are easy to understand. In addition, these recommendations are more straightforward than those using conventional mentoring. This result is consistent with Intel's inception and previous research results (Almeatani et al., 2019; Casado-Lumbreras & Colomo-Palacios, 2014; Filippou et al., 2017; Manyike, 2017; Mapolisa & Mafa, 2012). Mapolisa and Mafa (2012) found that due to the advantages of online paper supervision, tutors are happy to see learners grow into independent and capable writers. Almeatani et al. (2019) investigated the opinions of learners on the basis of surveys and interviews, and found that learners who write papers are encouraged to communicate with their thesis supervisors in an effective way, thereby producing higher-quality paper results and reducing the delay in composing paper process. This means that online/ICT paper supervision can make learners more motivated to write and modify their papers based on the recommendations of the supervisors.

A lot of thoughts and recommendations are brand new, mostly in terms of what, how and why to compose. The following is an excerpt from the participants:

The way my superintendence used online/ICT comments and suggested paper corrections made me motivated, happy and diligent in revising, since it is interesting.

I got it to be exactly good, instructive and fascinating since it is conveyed in a very structured method. I love it. And I am much energized to keep composing.

The participant comment reveals how to improve the motivation of participants by using online/ICT, which is simpler and easier to follow.

Other student answered the question about whether online/ICT-based paper supervision is helpful to them:

*Kesalahan yang saya buat dalam menulis tesis lebih mudah dipahami dan saya dapat memperbaiki lebih mudah. Hal ini karena email memuat kekeliruan dan itu harus diperbaiki.*

"It's easier for me to understand the errors in the composing of the paper and know to modify them, because the e-mail clearly pointed out the errors that should be corrected."

The quotation shows how online/ICT-based paper supervision helps participants recognize their mistakes and how to correct them.

Another comment from another participant answered the question about whether online/ICT-based paper supervision is interesting, noting:

*Sangat menarik karena saya bisa menuli skripsi yang lebih rapi juga warna-warni dan saran perbaikkan lebih jelas terbaca tidak terkesan kotor. Ini semua membuat sya lebih bersemangat untuk memperbaikinya.*

"Of course, it is very interesting, because my script looks neater and colorful, so I am also more enthusiastic to revise it than when it was checked by handwriting, impressing less tidy and so makes me lazy to revise it."

The saying describes how online/ICT-based paper supervision altered the manner of participants and felt quite keen to modify, because the online/ICT-based paper supervision provided colorful annotations that showed errors and how to correct them. Compared with the mentor's handwritten comments that seem dirty and boring, the online/ICT-based paper supervision is cleaner and more expert. This finding showing the positive changes of learners' attitudes and behaviors in composing their paper is in line with the previous research carried in Pakistan (Zaheer, 2020). This finding can be interpreted that the learners provided positive attitudes and behaviors because the performance of online/ICT-based paper supervision is quite attractive and challenging that may have increased their motivation and efforts to finish their final assignments in their university.

The following quote shows the participants' answers to the following questions: "The online/ICT-based paper supervision is beneficial when you are away from the supervisor (for example, when you are not at campus, due to pandemic Covid-19 or other reasons.)"

Ya, benar itu. Saya tidak menghabiskan banyak uang untuk ongkos ke kampus, lebih-lebih saya berada jauh dari Bandar Lampung. Sangat sulit untuk bolak-balik Bandar Lampung-Kota Padang untuk bimbingan.

“Yes, it is. It is not necessary for me to spend much money only to go to campus, especially for me who lives far away from Bandar Lampung. It is little possibility for me to go to and from Bandar Lampung – Padang Sidempuan for consultation.”

The quotations show the benefits of online/ICT-based paper supervision for learners away from campus. It is affordable and more comfortable since, for example, learners can refer to their paper without going to Bandar Lampung without spending their precious time with their families, for example.

These positive findings are also attributed to relatively good Internet access and good Internet connectivity throughout Lampung Province, at least for graduate and postgraduate graduate learners who wrote the final assignment (script or thesis). We are very lucky in this matter. This is different from the findings of (Zvavahera & Masimba, 2019). The authors conducted a study to assess the level of preparedness of universities; supervisors; and PhD learners' use online/ICT during their studies. The authors surveyed 10 universities in Zimbabwe. They found that due to various shortcomings, learners, universities, and supervisors were not fully prepared to use online/ICT for work. Some of them said that some universities did not have the required internet infrastructure. Some supervisors and learners lacked basic computer expertise, which affects the quality of supervision and the speed of feedback. The authors also report that lack of Internet availability and poor connectivity are also considered challenges, especially in the current Covid-19 pandemic.

## **Conclusions and suggestions**

According to the results of data analysis and discussion, the following conclusions are drawn. Online/ICT-based paper supervision during the Covid-19 pandemic proved to have:

1. improved the quality of supervision;
2. increased students' motivation to compose scripts/topics;
3. expanded more students' skills and mastery of online/ICT use;
4. caused the revision of scripts/papers faster than using conventional supervision methods;
5. made suggestions and opinions clearer; easier to understand and understand;
6. caused students feel supported to write better papers;
7. increase their willingness to conduct identical supervision in their own institutions in the future;
8. increased the standard of manuscript/paper composing style (margins, font type and size, terrain accuracy, punctuation accuracy and spelling accuracy);
9. increased the content or essential quality of the papers;
10. cultivated the accuracy of vocabulary selection (it turns out that a lot of learners do not realize the significance of vocabulary accuracy); and finally
11. increased the standard of grammar; (many learners do not realize the importance of grammatical accuracy).

Based on the above inference, the following suggestions are made:

1. Especially during the Covid-19 pandemic, it is recommended that supervisors or lecturers use online/ICT to supervise learners' paper composing;

2. It is recommended that learners use more online/ICT-based academic activities to make them accustomed to using it to deal with few problems that are difficult or almost impossible to solve when using traditional methods, especially in the pandemic Covid- 19
3. Learners should be more motivated to increase their composing skills and capabilities, which is still difficult for some Indonesian learners.
4. A formal or informal seminar should be held to discuss how to use online/ICT for paper supervision, not only for learners but also for lecturers to overcome the epidemic of Covid-19 barriers.
5. Learners should be made aware of the significance of grammar, vocabulary, spelling, and punctuation when composing research paper.
6. More research need to conduct on the application of online/ICT-based supervision in elementary and junior secondary education, and on the basis of undergraduate learners' preparation of homework or project reports.

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