

IMPLEMENTING PERSONALIZED LEARNING IN UNIVERSITIES CLASSROOMS: LECTURERS' CHALLENGES AND PERCEPTIONS

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Received: 22nd August 2022/ Revised: 25th November 2022/ Accepted: 25th November 2023

How to Cite: Herawati, A. (2023). Implementing personalized learning in universities classrooms: Lecturers' challenges and perceptions. *Humaniora*, 14(2), 167-172. <https://doi.org/10.21512/humaniora.v14i2.8890>

ABSTRACT

The research aimed to investigate the challenges faced by university lecturers and how they overcome them, as well as the perceptions towards the implementation of a personalized learning approach. Personalized learning was considered a teaching approach that emphasized how to achieve the learning objectives, students' active learning, and self-regulated learning that could not be fully served in traditional classes. This approach focused on each student's learning pace and their active participation in the learning process. In the long run, implementing personalized learning was hoped to develop students into responsible and lifelong learners. Although lecturers showed an excellent perception of the implementation of personalized learning, however, it was no doubt that conducting this approach brought some new experiences and challenges for the lecturers as well. Mixed method was applied in the research. The result shows the difference between personalized learning and traditional one in terms of time management, students' responsibilities and motivations, and class interaction, and those become the most challenging matters faced by the lecturers. How lecturers make use of technology to realize better-personalized learning classes and other crucial things that are needed by the lecturers in implementing personalized learning are also presented.

Keywords: *personalized learning, active learning, students' motivations, lecturers' challenges*

INTRODUCTION

Students' learning is influenced by several aspects, such as their interests, learning habit, motivations, and learning pace, and personalized learning is believed as the learning approach that may cater to all those aspects and even the differences in students' capabilities. This becomes the main reason why personalized learning is advised to be implemented in classrooms nowadays. The implementation of personalized learning brings differences from the traditional one, which focuses more on students' activities rather than on lecturers' centered (Rollins, 2017).

The fast development of technology and the effect of the Covid-19 pandemic also force schools and universities to move from traditional classrooms to

personalized learning that is supported by technology (Hwang et al., 2020). Technology provides students with free access to many varied resources, and at the same time, it is realized that one and the same teaching approach is not suitable for all students. The lecturers must be more creative and innovative, especially in modifying the learning process, in order to increase students' knowledge and abilities (Becker et al., 2017).

Based on these conditions, personalized learning is then thought of as an appropriate approach to face this current condition. Personalized learning allows students to learn at their own pace, so the learning activities should be modified suitable to their needs. The implementation of personalized learning would develop and support students' learning, and in the end, it would impact the lower number of students' drop-out rate (Hsieh & Chen, 2016).

Moreover, personalized learning is believed as an approach in which students may manage their own learning pace, and furthermore, it influences their learning engagements and ownership (LeGeros et al., 2022). It enables lecturers to conduct students' active learning and flexibility in learning and shows students' competencies (Akyuz, 2020). Personalized learning is developed to gain students' participation in the learning process and gain their learning motivation that will impact increasing their learning retention and achievement. However, the implementation of personalized learning needs a condition that is flexible for the learners to develop their individual knowledge, experience, and interest; and at the same time, the learning objectives can be reached (Brown & Englehardt, 2017).

In line with what Brown and Englehardt (2017) explained, Walkington and Bernacki (2020) have added that personalized learning is a problem-solving for the student's cognitive, motivational, and affective processes. It means that its personalized learning activities may enable students to reach maximum learning performance. Personalized learning is also considered the answer to several problems, such as increasing students' learning motivations, participation, and knowledge (Lee et al., 2021).

In the educational field nowadays, the most implemented method is student-centered learning. Students are the most active side and become the main point of attention in the teaching-learning process. For university students, student-centered learning can be conducted by allowing students to manage their own learning and implement their self-controlling learning process. However, on the lecturers' side, they are pushed to be more creative in terms of providing a more flexible teaching-learning design, activities, steps, and assessment, which are the main points of personalized learning implementation (Lee et al., 2021).

The implementation of personalized learning also needs the use of technology, an important thing that cannot be avoided in the world nowadays, and it makes personalized learning a new trend in the educational field. Technology enables lecturers to conduct personalized learning in their classrooms, and at the same time, it also helps them choose the teaching content and activities suitable to their learners. So, without a doubt, technology plays a crucial role in implementing personalized learning since it appreciates students' distinctions and promotes the enhancement of personalized learning. For the students, technology provides them various contents, and they may process the information and knowledge in their own ways.

Furthermore, technology helps students with personalized learning by providing them with chances and breakthroughs to accomplish their needs and goals. Moreover, Bulger (2016) has explained that the advancement of technology helps students solve their problems in obtaining learning materials and insight, as well as learning barriers. Using technology

in personalized learning classrooms will support lecturers and students with tools that enable them to have virtual classes and cooperation among them.

In line with what Bulger (2016) stated, Christodoulou and Angeli (2022) have explained that technology might promote the lecturers-students' engagement in personalized learning class experiences by considering their various needs and preferences. Moreover, all this rapid progress in getting information and experience can also be through social media and accessing several learning platforms that, in the next run, it would impact the students' autonomous learning (Christodoulou & Angeli, 2022).

However, although personalized learning is closely related to the use of technology, the direct and personal interactions between lecturers and students are still mandatory to successfully implement it (Sun, Tang, & Zuo, 2020). Technology provides all parties with learning solutions to increase learning efficiency and achievement, yet the opinions, ideas, and demands from all related parties, such as parents and lecturers. Materials designers are often neglected. In the next step, this condition would lead to a challenge that may impact the effectiveness of personalized learning implementation (Luke & Young, 2020).

Regarding lecturers' roles in personalized learning classes, the implementation of personalized learning forces lecturers to conduct some roles that are quite different from the traditional ones. In this class, they must be able to organize, arrange, and develop knowledge and skills to be learned, provide personal advice for their students during the learning process, explain the learning steps and content, and make use of students' prior knowledge (Sun, Tang, & Zuo, 2020). In other words, lecturers in personalized learning classes must be able to adjust their teaching methods based on students' needs and characteristics. Spector (2016) has mentioned that personalized learning has to be understood as a learning process with some steps and a variety of emphasis on the learning content. So, lecturers must be able to modify their teaching methods and activities suitable to the focused content.

Another important thing that lecturers must be aware of is students' learning objectives. In personalized learning classes, learning objectives are important because they influence learning activities and assessments. Learning objectives enable students to think about how they can participate in the learning process (Basilaia & Kvavadze, 2020). However, it is also emphasized that in personalized learning, the lecturers should customize the learning instruction and modify what is taught (the learning materials), how it is taught (the content delivery), and the pace at which the materials are taught. All of these will meet each student's needs and interests (Shemshack & Spector, 2020).

Alamri et al. (2020) have also explained that in personalized learning class, it is important for the lecturers to tailor the course instruction and assignment in order to minimize the lack of relevant content and encourage students to learn the theories on their own

and discuss them with their group. The role of the lecturers here is not about teaching the theory or concept to the whole class but rather encouraging them to be more active in learning. However, it does not mean that the implementation of personalized learning does not need any other teaching techniques or methods; personalized learning's main idea is how all teaching methods can be implemented based on students' learning needs. Traditional classes push students to learn the same topics in the same ways, and sometimes they are not suitable for them. This condition will lead to an ineffective process of learning that will also result in low learning students' achievement. In personalized learning, lecturers have to understand that their roles are not only about controlling the classes but more about becoming personal instructors for each student.

Thus, the research discusses how personalized learning is implemented in universities classrooms contexts. The progress of digital technology affects the increment of the implementation of this type of learning. Personalized learning is described as a learning approach that focuses on students' responsibilities and control of their learning progress. Personalized learning enables students to decide the noticeable points that are suitable for them in learning. Furthermore, although the implementation of personalized learning is more viable today, however, some challenges are there for the lecturers to face and overcome. Based on this condition, this research aims to answer the problem regarding what challenges arise in implementing personalized learning and how they overcome them to implement it better.

METHODS

Mixed method is applied in the research because it provides more complete data that would lead to a better understanding of the challenges faced by lecturers in personalized learning class, their perceptions, and how they overcame them. As stated by Dawadi, Shrestha, and Giri (2021), mixed-method research allows the researcher to collect and analyze quantitative data to inform the qualitative one of the research, which describes more toward the quantitative results. Based on this description, mixed method is suitable for the research.

The data are gathered from the survey obtained through a questionnaire that explained the challenges lecturers face in implementing personalized learning in their classes and their perceptions about personalized learning. In the past, quantitative research design was implemented to analyze data. Besides the quantitative research, the qualitative one is also occupied with analyzing the open-ended answers that asked for a more detailed description of the challenges as well as lecturers' suggestions for a better implementation of personalized learning. The research data are taken from 25 university lecturers from four private universities in Jakarta, Banten dan East Java, Indonesia. They are from several different departments: Management,

English Education, and Psychology. Regarding the questionnaire for quantitative data, they are allowed to choose more than one answer.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Figure 1 shows lecturers' perceptions of personalized learning. The first question stated on the questionnaire is about how lecturers perceive personalized learning. For many lecturers, personalized learning is considered a new method, and it is supported by the data that more than 50% of the participants think that they have just heard about it and never conducted it before. Despite this condition, most of them agree that personalized learning is a good way for students to learn at their own pace; this is one thing that cannot be found in traditional classes. In personalized learning, students are free to manage their own time and even their energy in studying, and this is supported by the data that show lecturers' opinions in which personalized learning enables the standard students to learn the standard content and the advanced students to learn the advanced or beyond the expected one.

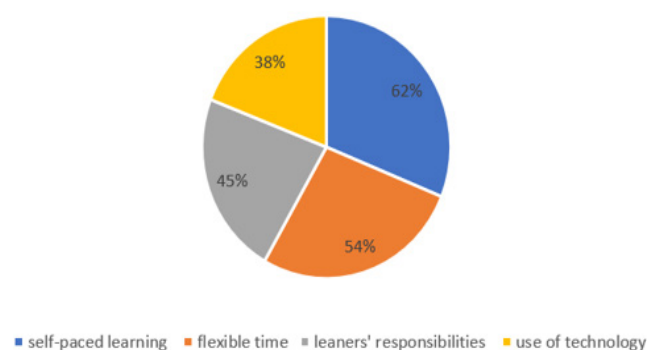


Figure 1 Lecturers' Perception of Personalized Learning

The self-paced and flexible time given by personalized learning also provides students with more time to finish the materials and assignments that, according to the lecturers, is a difficult thing to get in the traditional one in which the learning time is limited by the specific duration and the lecturers sometimes prefer to focus more on explaining the content. Personalized learning also provides lecturers with more time, especially in checking the students' assignments and providing direct feedback. Traditional classes are limited to a specific time, and lecturers tend to add more time outside the dedicated time to give direct feedback to the students, but personalized learning, with its flexible time, makes lecturers able to provide more complete and accurate feedback for the students. Other good lecturers' perception of the implementation of personalized learning is related to how to gain learners' responsibilities. In personalized learning, students are free to decide when, where, and how to learn the content that would help students

practice being responsible and lifelong learners.

This part also asks lecturers what they perceive regarding the use of technology in personalized learning. Most lecturers have stated that personalized learning would maximize the use of technology to support learning. Personalized learning enables both lecturers and students to occupy applications such as Zoom, Google Classroom, Miro, and Microsoft Teams to discuss and share complete learning materials. Moreover, technology makes lecturers provide various learning materials taken from the internet, ranging from educational videos to online exercises, which brings advantages for the students, in which they could enlarge their knowledge. Technology also makes students able to share their assignments, not only the classical ones such as exercises but also the more advanced ones, for example, presentation videos, real problem-solving activities, and role plays, so lecturers are able to check them more carefully because of the more and flexible time provided by personalized learning.

The questionnaire also includes one open-ended question asked about other lecturers' perceptions. Lecturers have mentioned that personalized learning gives them a good perception in terms of their understanding of their students. Through this learning, lecturers can understand their students better since they can concentrate more on how they learn and do the assignment. Furthermore, the lecturers can analyze each student's way of thinking, learning pace, strength, and weaknesses. This condition cannot be achieved from another teaching approach; for example, in a traditional class, since it has classroom time limitations in traditional classes, lecturers tend to focus on the whole students, while in personalized learning, they have flexible time and place to work together with the student individually. It influences how students appreciate their learning process and lecturers as well. This process will help the lecturers with what and how they are doing, especially since most of them have first experience with personalized learning.

The next question is related to the challenges faced by lecturers in personalized learning. The data about lecturers' perception of Palized learning shows they have a good perception of it. However, when they have to conduct it in class, they also share that they face several challenges, especially because they conduct it for the first time or because it is considered new.

Figure 2 shows the challenges in implementing personalized learning. Most lecturers have stated that students' motivation becomes the number one challenge for implementing it. Personalized learning offers a flexible time for learning; however, this condition needs students' intrinsic motivation, and unfortunately, lecturers explain that this is what the students are still struggling with. Personalized learning is mainly about student-centered learning in which the students are expected to participate actively during the learning process and manage their own time effectively, and it needs motivation to be successful in this class.

Nonetheless, it cannot be denied that online games and online movies come to the students without any time limitation, and it becomes a disturbance that should be considered as the source of their lack of motivation. Furthermore, since this is a relatively new approach for the students, lecturers have stated that they have not been familiar with self-responsibility, especially in managing their own time effectively. This condition leads to a situation where they cannot finish learning the materials or doing the assignment, and the saddest condition is that they do not even learn anything in this personalized learning class.

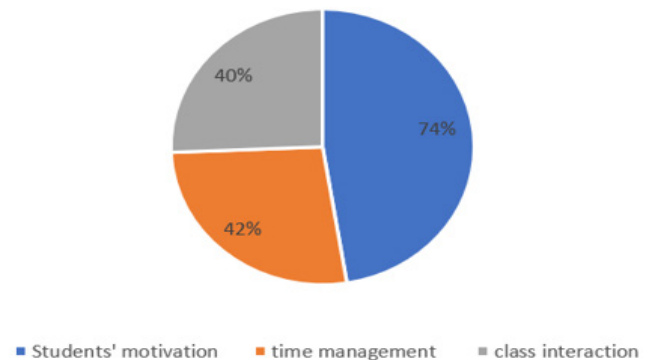


Figure 2 Challenges in Implementing Personalized Learning

The second challenge faced by the lecturers is their time management. It has never been imagined before that, compared to the traditional class, personalized learning requires more time for teaching preparation and classroom management. Personalized learning gives students a more flexible time to study; however, on the lecturers' side, they are expected to provide more time to prepare the learning materials, and because of its flexibility, lecturers should also be able to monitor their classes and even give personal guidance and advice for their students. It means that in personalized learning, the teaching time is not limited to the teaching shift but even the whole day. Another lecturers' challenge is about checking their students' assignments and tests. Unlike the traditional class, personalized learning encourages lecturers to give assignments and tests in the form of projects in which the students will be encouraged to learn the theory and solve the problems based on the related theory. This kind of assessment is good since it will show students' creativity and innovation. However, lecturers need more time to check, read, and provide feedback on their students' assignments and tests.

The third challenge is related to class interaction. In personalized learning class, students are hoped to participate more actively during the learning process, especially in contacting their lecturers and peers when they have something to discuss. However, most of the students are reluctant to do it. Some lecturers explain that in order to overcome this challenge, they have to conduct the onsite class several times for the students

to meet and discuss their progress and problems with the teacher and friends. The lecturers mention that they have to do it since they do not want their students to misunderstand the learning materials and instructions.

The questionnaire also includes open-ended questions asking about their suggestions regarding the implementation of personalized learning to make this class more effective.

For most lecturers, personalized learning is considered new, so it is not surprising that all of them said they need to increase their knowledge and skill in implementing it. The personalized learning training should include material about the concept of it since it is the basic knowledge of personalized learning, and most of them do not familiar with it. Another training material that must be considered is how to prepare the relevant learning materials, assignments, and tests, design lesson plans for personalized learning classes, and tips and tricks for implementing them.

They also mention that personalized learning training programs are very much needed; however, they suggest that the training program is also in the form of personalized learning training instead of the traditional or the usual face-to-face method. This training process will provide them with experience regarding how to conduct personalized learning. Furthermore, when the training program is prepared based on the lecturers' needs, they will have opportunities to learn how to comprehend and individualize the training process and materials that will influence their insights and skills regarding how to implement personalized learning. School leaders and lecturers should work together to prepare a more impactful training program that is not only suitable for personalized learning class implementation but also provide chances for lecturers to experience a personalized learning process. This type of training will gain lecturers' capabilities.

The last suggestion that is proposed by some lecturers is related to how to increase students' motivation in personalized learning classes since it is the number one challenge faced by the lecturers. According to them, they are still struggling to increase students' intrinsic motivation. Personalized learning provides students with a more flexible time and place to study; however, it needs more motivation from the students. To overcome this challenge, some lecturers say that stating deadlines for each stage of personalized learning and giving rewards and punishments are still the most effective solution.

CONCLUSIONS

The research aims to discuss the implementation of personalized learning in university classes, especially how the lecturers perceive this teaching approach, their challenges, and their suggestions for implementing it. Without a doubt, implementing personalized gives new learning experiences for both lecturers and students. Self-paced and self-regulated learning in personalized learning allows students to

learn learning materials and do the exercises in their own ways, time, place, and pace. Personalized learning also provides students with learning autonomies that cannot be obtained from traditional classes. Implementing personalized learning trains students to be more responsible and lifelong learners.

However, personalized learning is considered new for many lecturers, and its implementation gives them new teaching experiences and challenges at the same time. Personalized learning forces them to provide more time to prepare the learning materials and activities and check students' work. This is because, compared to traditional classes, personalized learning classes need different forms of materials and assignments, which impacts the longer time needed by the lecturers to prepare them.

Other challenges that are also faced by the lecturers are related to students' motivation and class interaction. The flexibility brought by personalized learning needs students to have intrinsic motivation so they can follow it; however, gaining students' motivation still becomes a challenge for most lecturers, and in the end, giving rewards and punishment becomes the most effective way to solve it.

The research brings an implication that, in reality, personalized learning requires a special approach to the design, implementation, and assessment of learning. Personalized learning is a good approach to the teaching-learning process. However, the implementation of it needs ample knowledge and skills of the lecturers. A set of training programs is believed to help them gain their capabilities in implementing it and achieving personalized learning outcomes. Nowadays, conditions and the progress of technology give people unlimited access to sources and information, which will lead to an essential implementation of personalized learning; thus, lecturers' efficacies in conducting these classes should be increased so that they can give better learning experiences for the students.

Hence, based on the result explained, the research intends to contribute to ascertain the importance of implementing personalized learning at universities. The research would add to the theoretical development by integrating personalized learning theory with the best practice of its implementation. However, this research also encounters several flaws; the first is that the preliminary descriptive research should be further conducted. The next limitation is that there is no direct classroom observation conducted. Further research in personalized learning with a focus on fulfilling these limitations should be conducted to either validate or revoke the findings of the research.

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