Review of: "Lecturers' information literacy experience in remote teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic"

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Introduction:

In a timely and thoughtful contribution, Heriyanto et al. investigate the lecturer's information literacy experience in emergency remote teaching during the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic [1]. The contribution is timely for all those teaching higher education to our future generations. Like other disciplines, the disruptions in medical student and post-graduate resident teaching and training caused by the COVID-19 pandemic have been significant. During these unprecedented times, clinical laboratory services and associated training and teaching programs faced many challenges. Although the analysis by Heriyanto et al. revolves around different disciplines of higher education in the Faculty of Humanities, educationists in health care can also learn from their findings and observations. In this post-publication review, I shall briefly share with readers our teaching experience in laboratory medicine and pathology during the pandemic and highlight some critical aspects of the study by Heriyanto et al.

Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on teaching in Pathology:

In anatomical pathology, a branch of laboratory medicine, there were three primary traditional modalities used to teach rotating medical students and residents in training before the pandemic. These included traditional in-person glass slide case reviews on multi-head microscopes, theme-based in-person didactic lectures, and online learning platforms. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the didactic lectures shifted to online video conferencing, utilizing different platforms (e.g., Skype, Zoom, WebEx, Microsoft Teams). This transition of lectures from in-person to online platforms was relatively straightforward and was embraced by our 'digital native' millennial generation learners. The plethora of available online learning resources also flourished during the pandemic, with an exponential increase in content on interactive websites and apps, live and recorded lectures by experts, and online libraries containing textbooks and virtual slides. However, the essential traditional in-person glass slide case reviews on multi-head microscopes became more and more challenging to continue due to mandated institutional policies of physical distancing. In some institutions, as an urgent measure to continue teaching, the educators transitioned to virtual multi-head microscopes for teaching during regular case reviews and sign-outs [2]. However, this change was not ideal due to a lack of nonverbal communication, dependence on the quality of available technology, and the educator's familiarity with the technology. Faculty, program directors, and trainees in laboratory medicine concurred that some of these modifications impacted the effectiveness and quality of the teaching and learning experience [3].

Exploring lecturers as a specific group:

The educator's information literacy experience in remote teaching during the pandemic is a relevant and timely topic. The qualitative study by Heriyanto et al. is well-organized and has a broader appeal to educators in diverse disciplines. Although it does not diminish the importance of their findings, the sample size of 15 participants is small. The authors note that the recruitment flyers were posted twice on the WhatsApp group of lecturers. Using WhatsApp as the primary means of recruitment may have excluded a particular small group of individuals who were 'social media averse' or technically challenged. This technically challenged group may have faced greater challenges and stress during the transition. The specific focus on lecturers is worth noting, as this group is probably not the most studied cohort in such studies. It is noteworthy that this group comprises relatively younger individuals, most of them in the millennial generation. This group generally tends to be more 'tech-savvy' and comfortable coping with the new technologies. With the advent of rapid changes in teaching modalities from traditional to online, the more senior 'digital immigrant' faculty members were more likely to face challenges in coping with the changes during the pandemic [4]. As the authors note in the discussion, familiarization was simple for some lecturers and stressful for others, especially senior lecturers.

Challenges faced during remote teaching:

Difficulties in optimally performing practical learning modalities, monitoring students in exams, and lacking quality feedback are challenges during remote learning. The transition of didactic lectures from in-person to online platforms was relatively smoother than interactive and practical learning modalities, which were more dependent on teamwork and nonverbal communication. Heriyanto et al. do not discuss the details of lecturers' coping strategies when dealing with more interactive and practical learning modalities, such as laboratory sessions, field trips, brainstorming groups, or other relevant workshops requiring teamwork and collaboration. If these modalities were partly or entirely moved online, how was the lecturers' information literacy experience coping with these modifications? Did the qualitative data collection (i.e., semi-structured interview) highlight their learning experience dealing with changes in practical learning modalities? The Kanji letters writing exercise in the information repackaging section is one place a group knowledge sharing exercise is discussed; however, more emphasis on practical learning modalities would have been beneficial for the readers. The lecturers' learning experience regarding monitoring students during online exams and providing feedback or evaluations on their performance, two significant challenges during remote teaching, are also not highlighted in detail.

The take-home message for the readers:

The transition from in-person to remote or hybrid teaching models during the COVID-19 pandemic was rapid. One disadvantage of this rapid change was that initially, several educators had to learn and familiarize themselves with new modalities through daily on-the-job experience rather than any formal training. There were minimal guidelines and instructions available to initiate these changes effectively. Heriyanto et al. highlight several findings that can benefit a wider audience. Creating video recording of lectures, initiating texts by lecturers to generate discussion, support of students as independent learners, the experience of familiarization with online platforms, and study group formation by lecturers to learn from each other are all excellent points that other educators can employ. However, deriving from their

findings in their cohort, it would have been beneficial for the readers if the authors had provided a conclusive summary or take-home message of any practical strategies they recommend for educators.

Conclusion:

In sum, Heriyanto et al. effectively present lecturers' unique information literacy experience during the COVID-19 pandemic. An insight highlighting how they utilized the information technology and familiarized themselves with this brand-new teaching environment is provided. Our adaptability and innovation are critical for us as educators in coping with these unprecedented times. After the pandemic, the education systems need to learn from our collective experiences and reform how we educate our future generations. Studies such as these can help formulate future guidelines regarding educator training for effective remote or hybrid learning models.

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