

TEACHERS' CHALLENGES AND PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS THE  
IMPLIMENTATION OF EMERGENCY REMOTE TEACHING DURING  
PANDEMIC COVID-19

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## **DEDICATION**

To my beloved father and mother, my husband and son.

And to all educators and learners who are fighting hard out there. Stay strong  
and keep inspiring.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Dr. Norasykin Binti Mohd Zaid, my research supervisor, for her patient guidance, enthusiastic encouragement, useful critiques, and constructive suggestions of this research work. Her willingness to give her time so generously has been very much appreciated. I also wish to thank the School of Education, its leadership and the staff for providing me with an academic base, which has enabled me to take up this study. Finally, I am grateful to all my family members for their understanding of the importance of this work.

## **ABSTRACT**

The coronavirus (Covid-19) which raging around the world in 2019 has claimed the lives of nearly 400,000 people in the world and has brought tremendous changes to mankind in this century, including education sector. In order to stop the spread of the epidemic, all schools and institutions must be closed, both students and teachers had to adopt remote teaching methods they have never used to ensure the continuity of education and learning. In a state of emergency where most educators have never received any training, they faced numerous obstacles. This study was conducted to identify the challenges teachers faced when conducting emergency remote teaching, to investigate teachers' perceptions towards the implementation of emergency remote teaching as well as to identify the interrelationship between teachers' challenges and teaching implications. This research adopted qualitative research design using a case study method. A purposive sampling method was employed to sample 10 Malaysian public elementary school teachers, a semi-structured interviews were conducted to gain the insight of teachers' challenges and perceptions. After an analysis of using thematic analysis, and a facilitation of Nvivo 12 programme, six main themes emerged on teachers' challenges, namely directing gateway, lack of skill and knowledge, unable to meet all needs, unable to engage students, lack of support from parents, and having no proper guideline. For teachers' perception, six main themes were emerged which are, new opportunity, negative influence on students, leadership is the key, motivation and enthusiasm, effectiveness, and family background. Research indicated teachers' challenges faced affected teacher's self-efficacy and influenced teaching implications during and after pandemic. It is fairly crucial to listen to teachers' voices, so we could gain information about how teachers can be supported to benefit learners and the communities. The integrating of flexibility, resilience effective collaboration and communication from all stakeholders regarding future plans and compile thinking to support the most vulnerable learners is important.

## ABSTRAK

Coronavirus (Covid-19) yang berkecamuk di seluruh dunia pada tahun 2019 telah meragut nyawa hampir 400,000 orang di dunia. Coronavirus telah membawa perubahan besar bagi manusia pada abad ini, termasuk sektor pendidikan. Untuk menghentikan penyebaran wabak ini, semua sekolah dan institusi mesti ditutup, kedua-dua pelajar dan guru harus menggunakan kaedah pengajaran jarak jauh yang tidak pernah mereka gunakan untuk memastikan kesinambungan pendidikan dan pembelajaran. Dalam keadaan darurat di mana mereka tidak pernah mendapat latihan, guru menghadapi banyak rintangan. Kajian ini dilakukan untuk mengenal pasti cabaran yang mereka hadapi ketika melakukan pengajaran jarak jauh kecemasan, untuk menyelidiki persepsi guru terhadap pelaksanaan pengajaran jarak jauh kecemasan serta untuk mengenal pasti hubungan antara cabaran guru dan implikasi pengajaran. Penyelidikan ini menggunakan reka bentuk kajian kualitatif dengan menggunakan kaedah kajian kes. Kaedah pensampelan bertujuan digunakan untuk mengambil sampel 10 guru sekolah rendah awam Malaysia, wawancara separa berstruktur dilakukan untuk mendapatkan gambaran mengenai cabaran dan persepsi guru. Setelah analisis menggunakan analisis tematik, dan fasilitasi program Nvivo 12, terdapat enam tema utama yang muncul mengenai cabaran guru, iaitu mengarahkan pintu masuk, kekurangan kemahiran dan pengetahuan, tidak dapat memenuhi semua keperluan, tidak dapat melibatkan pelajar, kekurangan sokongan daripada ibu bapa, dan tidak mempunyai garis panduan yang betul. Untuk persepsi guru, enam tema utama muncul yaitu, peluang baru, pengaruh negatif pada siswa, kepemimpinan adalah kunci, motivasi dan semangat, keberkesanan, dan latar belakang keluarga. Penyelidikan menunjukkan bahawa cabaran guru yang dihadapi mempengaruhi keberkesanan diri guru dan mempengaruhi implikasi pengajaran semasa dan selepas wabak. Dengan mendengar suara guru, kita dapat memperoleh maklumat tentang bagaimana guru dapat disokong untuk memberi manfaat kepada pelajar dan masyarakat. Penggabungan fleksibiliti, ketahanan kolaborasi dan komunikasi yang berkesan dari semua pihak berkepentingan mengenai rancangan masa depan dan menyusun pemikiran untuk menyokong pelajar yang paling rentan adalah penting.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

|          |   |                           |
|----------|---|---------------------------|
| ERT      | - | Emergency remote teaching |
| Covid-19 | - | The coronavirus           |

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Introduction

This research intends to assess the challenges and perception of teachers towards the implementation of emergency remote teaching during pandemic Covid-19 in elementary school in Johor. Besides the background and statement of the problem, this chapter also includes the objectives and the importance of the study. The scopes, limitations and operational definitions had been discussed in detail as well.

Pandemic of Covid-19 which struck the world in 2019 has dreadfully forced a global shut down of educational activities. This has caused a frightful crisis-response where universities, secondary schools as well as primary schools prompted online learning to serve as the alternative educational platform. In April 2020, Malaysia Ministry of Education had sent forth an initiatory emergency policy - Suspending Classes without Stopping Learning, which meant sustaining teaching activities when all the schools in the country were closed to stop the spread of the virus. All teachers and students under the Ministry of Education Malaysia were entitled to a registered email account and free access to use any Google applications to continue teaching and learning activities. Teachers were encouraged to implement Google Classroom as a platform to share contents and materials. Some teachers use WhatsApp to deliver tutoring sessions and assessments via voice note. A compulsory modification in education administrators, instructors and learners has resulted in the migration of traditional brick and mortar classroom teaching to online teaching.

## 1.2 Background of Study

According to Quick Facts Malaysia Education Statistics, nearly 50% of elementary school teachers in Malaysia are digital immigrants who were born before the year of 1980. As (Schmidt et al., 2009) mentioned,

“Teachers often have inadequate (or inappropriate) experience with using digital technologies for teaching and learning. Many teachers earned degrees at a time when educational technology was at a very different stage of development than it is today. It is, thus, not surprising that they do not appreciate its value or relevance to teaching and learning.”

(Schmidt et al., 2009)

In line with Schmidt’s argument, (Prensky, 2009; Schmidt et al., 2009) also stated that “not only do these identified teachers think differently, but they may also process information, not through a technologically wired system, but a foundational locus based on more traditional, linear reading and writing literacy patterns, which may lead to many challenges faced in the classroom”.

As schools were closed due to pandemic Covid-19, these primary school teachers were urged to shift from face-to-face teaching to online teaching when students were not able to go to school. Since they have a little or no training in conducting online teaching, and yet online teaching is totally different from what they were trained for. The migration from a face-to-face teaching system into an online system that had never been implemented or trained before tended to lead to a tremendous problem.

The researcher conducted a preliminary survey among public elementary school teachers. The result shows that some teachers experienced difficulties in preparing digital content before conducting online teaching. They also encountered frustration when dealing with parents and students who have low or no digital literacy. During the time these teachers conducted online teaching, they were educators as well

as technicians who supported all technical problems which were faced by students and parents. Some of them even revealed that they were actually performing two tasks on the same screen, one window is for teaching, the other window is Google or YouTube video showing the steps of presenting the digital content. All the awkward moments caused unpleasant teaching and learning experiences for both teachers and students.

It is thus this research aimed to assess the challenges of elementary educators in Johor when conducting emergency remote teaching during pandemic Covid-19. The researcher offers a small sample of what kinds of challenges were encountered by these educators and how they perceived the implementation of emergency remote teaching during pandemic Covid-19.

### **1.3 Statement of Problem**

Instead of saying that as an ad hoc transformation to online learning, there is a more appropriate term to address this situation – emergency remote teaching, which represents “a temporary shift of instructional delivery to an alternate delivery mode due to crisis circumstances” (Ferri, Grifoni, & Guzzo, 2020a). As (Charles Hodges, 2020) mentioned in his research, emergency remote teaching is totally different from online learning. The in-depth study of the implementation of emergency remote teaching among these elementary school teachers could give us an insight of challenges that teachers faced and their perception, their readiness towards online learning in the future.

Although we address this implementation as emergency online teaching, however, we do not know when this emergency crisis would fade. It is possible that even with an effective vaccine, there will be a prolonged post-pandemic recovery of another two to three years. We eagerly need a voice from our education front-liner to develop an appropriate teaching framework to ensure the continuity, integrity and quality of nation education.



As this emergency remote learning became a catalyst to educational technology, this study aimed to explore teachers' challenges and perception of implementing emergency remote teaching during pandemic in order to gain valuable insights about the challenges they had faced and their implementation of teaching online. This is also important in future as other researchers could use it further to develop a more appropriate model or pedagogy to suit the needs of elementary students and teachers.

#### **1.4 Research Objective**

The objectives of this study are as follow:

- I. To identify challenges faced by elementary teachers in conducting emergency remote teaching during pandemic Covid-19
- II. To investigate teachers' perception on implementation of emergency remote teaching during pandemic Covid-19.
- III. To identify interrelationship between teachers' challenges and teaching implications

#### **1.5 Research Questions**

The purpose of this study was to understand the perception and challenges faced by elementary teachers who had conducted emergency remote teaching during pandemic Covid-19. There were two research questions in this study. The research questions were stated as follows:

- I. What are teachers' challenges in conducting emergency remote teaching during pandemic Covid-19?
- II. What are teachers' perceptions towards the implementation of emergency remote teaching during pandemic Covid-19?
- III. What is the interrelationship between teachers' challenges and teaching implication?

1.6 Conceptual Framework

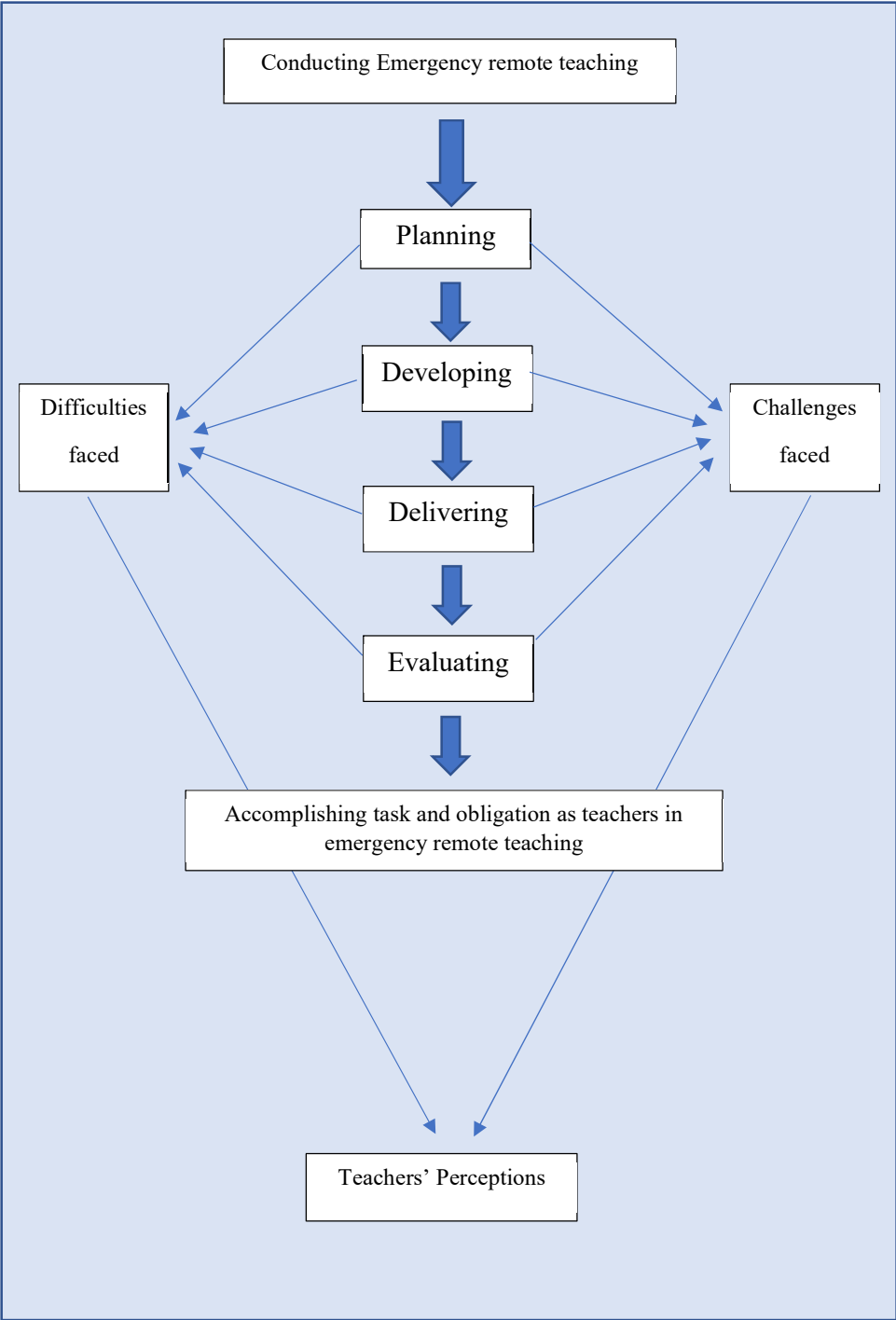


Figure 1.1 Conceptual framework of the study

The researcher explores public elementary school teachers' perceptions and challenges faced in conducting emergency remote teaching during pandemic Covid-19 using a distinct conceptual framework.

As these elementary school teachers received their training during the time when Covid-19 did not exist. They were trained to conduct instructional activities in face-to-face format. Before the pandemic, these teachers carried their duty based on the contents and materials which were designed to be taught in face-to-face format to achieve the learning goals which were set to best suit the face-to-face learning environment. In the context of pandemic Covid-19, all schools were closed and these teachers had to change their teaching mode from face-to-face into online teaching as an emergency mechanism which they have had no experience with before.

Teachers experienced great changes in their working environment as well as format. In terms of planning, teachers had to embrace different instructional media, mediums and strategies for instruction; in terms of preparation, they had to develop digital-based materials to be delivered online; in terms of delivering, they had to adapt to online teaching which they had never undergone any professional training before. Besides assigning online assessment, they also had to evaluate students' performance to determine the effectiveness of the pedagogy as well as students' learning progress.

This process formed a distinct experience when teachers and all stakeholders were not ready or unprepared to take on the remote teaching and learning. By exploring the challenges they faced during the experience could help us explore the weakness and the strength of the implementation, and investigate the key factors that affect the implementation. As these teachers were the key players in future remote teaching programs, their sharing of experiences and perceptions were fairly important to the future implication.

Thus, the researcher adopted a qualitative case study design method to explore the challenges and the perceptions of public elementary school teachers towards the implementation of emergency remote teaching during pandemic Covid-19.

## **1.7 Research Rationale**

The rationale of conducting this study was to explore the perceptions and challenges faced by Malaysian public elementary school teachers who had conducted emergency remote teaching during pandemic Covid-19. The study was a qualitative study gathering data from in-depth individual semi-structured interviews. A case study framework would be utilized to explore the challenges faced by elementary school teachers and how elementary teachers perceive the implementation of emergency remote teaching during pandemic Covid-19.

## **1.8 Research Importance**

There is a need to have more in-depth research on teachers' challenges and perception in conducting emergency remote teaching during pandemic Covid-19 as this can contribute to the adoption of educational technology in the future. The collaboration of teachers' perceptions and experience can help clarify what stakeholders could do in order to support teachers in accomplishing tasks. This not only would benefit teachers, but also the learners as well as the community. Last but not least, the current study is considered the first and foremost step for the future solution and adoption to develop a better remote learning framework for educational ecology.

## **1.9 Research Scope and Limitation**

This section discussed about the scope and the limitation of the study. Scope and limitation of the study is essential as it was set as the boundary as well as to steer the study into the right direction.

### **1.9.1 Research Scope**

The purpose of this study was to explore the essence of challenges and perceptions among public elementary teachers who have adopted emergency remote teaching during pandemic Covid-19. In this case study, the researcher explored teachers' perceptions and challenges faced in implementation of emergency remote teaching. The participants of this study included teachers who teach Bahasa Malaysia and English subjects in public elementary schools in Johor.

### **1.9.2 Limitation**

There are few limitations in this study. First, this study is aimed to explore teachers' perception and challenges faced in emergency remote teaching. As this study only focused on a small sample of teachers who teach language subjects, hence the result and findings could not generalize to all teachers. The other limitation of this research is that this study only includes Johor public elementary school teachers who have at least five years of teaching experience in public elementary schools with good internet connection. This study excludes all teachers who faced poor infrastructure or facilities problems like internet connection. The rationale of excluding these teachers is because we can't do much improvement in developing national infrastructure and facilities although it is the most common challenge faced by educators from all over the world.

## **1.10 Operational Definitions**

This section discussed about the operational definition in this research. The operational definition is important as it clarified the terms used in the study as well as to standardize data.

### **1.10.1 Challenges**

Challenges were characterised as a difficulty, a barrier or a problem which arises in a confronted situation. In order to overcome this difficulty, barrier or problem, the person had to make a special effort mentally, physically or financially to get things done. (Sedrakyan, Marandzhyan, Aismontas, & Tyulikova, 2018) Simply put, challenges were difficulties or problem faced which requires great efforts, perseverance, and determination to deal with a set of situations to overcome (Adedokun-Shittu & Shittu, 2015; Maboe, 2019; Schnackenberg, 2021; Vaidya & Ali, 2021; Wang, 2011). In this study, the researcher studies the teachers' challenges and difficulties they have had in the process of conducting emergency remote teaching during pandemic Covid-19.

### **1.10.2 Perceptions**

As (Efron, 1969) stated “perception is man’s primary form of cognitive contact with the world around him.” “Perception is not something that happens to us or in us. It is something we do. It is the process of attaining awareness or understanding of sensory information (Noë & Noë, 2004).” The word “perception” which was *‘perceptio’* in Latin means “receiving, collecting, action of taking possession, and apprehension with the mind or senses.” The perception process consists of three stages: selection, organization, and interpretation (Qiong, 2017). In this study, perception is how a perceiver perceives what he or she did in the past.

Here, the researcher aimed to explore teachers' perception on the implementation of emergency remote teaching.

### **1.10.3 Teaching**

As (Brophy, 1999) mentioned in a book of 'Teaching', to support an effective instruction, there are twelve principles which cover all aspects from curriculum, instruction, assessment, classroom organization and management practices. The twelve principles included supportive classrooms which offered opportunity to learn, aligned curricula which contained coherent content and thoughtful disclosure, learning orientation which established functional practice and applications activities, engaged learners with scaffolding task and strategy teaching, expected learners' achievement with goal-orientated assessment (Brophy, 1999). The teaching variables mentioned here "is the process of attending to people's needs, experiences and feelings, and intervening so that the students learn particular things, and go beyond the given." In this study, teaching is the process of how the public elementary school teachers carry out their instructional duty in school closure during pandemic Covid-19.

### **1.10.4 Covid-19**

Covid-19 is a short form of Coronavirus Disease. Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus. Covid-19 was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organisation (WHO) in 2019. People infected with the coronavirus will experience mild to moderate respiratory diseases. The patient can heal on his own without receiving special treatment. Generally, elderly, people with cardiovascular or chronic diseases or cancer patients are prone to severe illness and death. The common way to prevent the transmission of the virus is to practise social distancing and hygienic etiquette, like washing hands and wearing masks. As the disease spreads rapidly over the world, in consideration of safety, many schools and institutions have been closed to stop the spread of the virus.



However, to ensure the continuity of education, policy makers have urged educators to shift educational activities online. Although there is not any effective vaccine for this highly contagious disease, and it is still going widely and deeply at the second when this research is conducted, the Covid-19 period in this research refers to a time from Mar to December 2020.

#### **1.10.5 Emergency Remote Teaching**

Malaysia government has closed all schools including higher education in Mar of 2020 in order to stop the spread of coronavirus. Meanwhile the Minister of Education has ordered all teachers and educators to work from home and continue teaching activities. In July 2020, all teachers and students are allowed to go back to school. However, this did not last long. In November 2020, Malaysia government closed all schools again to the last day of the 2020 academic calendar year. The emergency remote teaching mentioned in this research referred to these two periods, which are from Mar to July 2020, and from November to December 2020

#### **1.10.6 Elementary School**

Pre-School, Primary School, Secondary School, Pre-Graduate and Higher Education formed the five stages of formal education in Malaysia. There are two categories in public primary school in Malaysia in which *Sekolah Rendah Jenis Kebangsaan (SJK)* and *Sekolah Rendah Kebangsaan (SK)*. The difference between SJK and SK was the instructional medium language where SJK used either Chinese or Tamil and SK used Malays as medium language. All the children in Malaysia are required to receive six years of primary education and begin primary education at the age of 7. This research focused on the emergency remote teaching which was conducted in public elementary schools.

## **1.11 Summary**

This chapter presented an introduction containing background of study information that is related to the emergency remote teaching conducted by elementary school teachers in Johor. The objective of the study is to explore the challenges faced by public elementary school teachers in emergency remote teaching, and their perception towards implementation of emergency remote teaching. The chapter also described the statement of problem, the purpose of the study, research question, the conceptual framework of the study, significance of the study, the limitation of the study and all the key variables.

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