

# School Principal's Strategy in Improving the Quality of Learning amid Covid-19 Pandemics

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**Abstract.** The article aims to describe the strategy of the Principal of At the school in improving the quality of learning in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemics. This research is a phenomenological type with a qualitative approach. The data collection techniques were unstructured interviews, participant observation, and documentary studies using snowball sampling technique. Data analysis techniques consist of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing and verification. Testing the validity of the data using data triangulation. The results of the research, including 1) the Principal of At the school increased collaboration with Counseling Guidance Teachers to carry out counseling activities offline and online; 2) The principal of At the school decided to study offline; 3) Principals increase cooperation and development of subject teachers in fostering online students; 4) Improving the ability of teachers, through online seminars, training and webinars; 5) The principal supervises online and offline.

**Keywords:** Principal's Strategy; Quality of Learning; Covid-19 Pandemic

## 1 Introduction

The 2019 coronavirus disease pandemic has changed the education system in Indonesia, especially the learning system in Indonesia. The 2019 coronavirus disease pandemic caused students, educators, and guardians of students to be stressed in dealing with learning. This statement was strengthened by [1], [2], which stated that there were many obstacles and problems that arose in the application of the online learning model at SMA Negeri 1 Gabus, Grobogan Regency, the problem came from students, educators, and student guardians. Based on a survey by [3]–[5] stated that based on the analysis of Man Whitney U survey data from 344 high school/job/MA students, it shows that students are less motivated to learn during online learning. The decrease in students' motivation in participating in online-based learning resulted in low student independence in learning.

Learning that is not face-to-face also creates problems and obstacles for teachers such as teachers who have low abilities in using technology, and network problems that are not good. This is in accordance with a survey [6]–[8] which states that online learning uses several applications, but the problem is that the network is not good at the time of the learning process and the teacher's ability is still low in using it. technology. Furthermore, it is difficult for teachers to give grades to students whose quality is not the same as the scores before the 2019 coronavirus disease pandemic, even though the numbers are the same based on assignments collected online.

Teachers do not know the children's abilities for sure whether they are able to receive learning well or not, whether students do assignments and exams honestly or not. Unfortunately, teachers have difficulty giving assessments to students considering the learning is done online, which is in accordance with the results of a survey conducted by [9], [10] which stated that during the COVID-19 pandemics, teachers, especially mathematics teachers experienced difficulties in giving grades objectively when referring to assessment aspects.

To overcome the problems, the school Principal must have a strategy, so that the quality of learning in schools continues to work well. Based on a survey [11]–[14], it was found that the principal's tips in maximizing the quality of learning include maximizing the competence of educators, optimizing the use of facilities, and collaborating with the community, carrying out online learning, developing an emergency curriculum as a temporary guide for educators to teach, involving educators in online Web Seminar activities, facilitating teachers by providing assistance in the form of pulses and free Wifi, and holding regular meetings every two weeks, improving the scientific and technological capabilities of teachers, the principal's following developments in the world of education both in the form of discourse, circulating issues to the decisions made, and maintaining professional educators. The novelty of the research was that the school principal fosters collaboration with educational counselors in schools to realize offline and online counseling activities through applications that has been designed by the counselor at the school.

## 2 Methods

The research used a phenomenological research type with a qualitative approach. This method was used to study phenomena in the field. According to [15] the qualitative approach is to study natural conditions, using the researchers as a central tool, to analyze the data qualitatively, and to focus on research results as something meaningful.

In this research, the informants consisted of the Headmaster, the Deputy Headmaster, the Deputy Head of Student Affairs at At the school, and education counselors of At the school. The researchers used snowball sampling technique to select the research subjects because to collect data with interview techniques it could not be done on one person alone but strengthening of several informants who supported the arguments or opinions of the main informants. The reason the researcher to use this technique was strengthened by [16] stating that the snowball sampling technique was carried out by choosing sources of information ranging from narrow to broad, until the sources of information became many, which aims to collect data until the data collected is really already known the context to be achieved.

Data collection in the research was carried out by participant observation, unstructured interviews, and documentary studies. Participant observations were conducted by using observation activistied domne at the scholl like supervisions done by the school Principal, counseling activities, etc Researchers use data collection techniques with participant observation because researchers want to observe and feel firsthand how the principal supervises and cooperates with counseling guidance teachers. The reason for the researcher is strengthened by [17] stating that participant observation is an observation in which the researcher is directly involved in the activity concerned. Unstructured interviews were done using interview guidelines, voice recorders, books, and pens as instruments. In this research, the researcher interviewed the Head master, Deputy Headmaster of Curriculum, Deputy Headmaster of Student Affairs, and Education Counselors of At the school. This is in line with the idea that

[18] explains that in fact unstructured interviews aim to get the informant's perspective in describing the topics discussed without any fear and anxiety from the researchers in describing them. A documentary study was also conducted to get the informations on the list of student achievements and the Computer-Based Written Examination for the years 2020-2021. This is in line with the idea [19] explaining that in fact documentation studies are stable which will not change due to factors of place and time.

The data of the research were analyzed using the technique developed by Miles and Huberman. This theory explains that there are three stages in conducting data analysis, the first stage is data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions and verification [15]. Researchers used data triangulation to test their validity.

### **3 Results and Discussion**

The quality of learning amidst COVID-19 Pandemics at At the school can be categorized as quite declining. This is evidenced by the difficulty of children in understanding online learning lessons. The survey results are in accordance with the statement of the second informant, who stated "...the quality of learning during the covid-19 pandemic is very, very bad..." . This is in line with the opinion of informant three who said "students said that online-based learning was very, very difficult, sir. Then I made a counseling application for SMAN 3, almost 100% said they did not understand online learning. They also protested about assignments, which I gave like making video which difficult to understand....". based on the results of the interview, the researcher stated that the quality of learning during the 2019 coronavirus disease pandemic was not very good because it could not reach the program determined by the 100% curriculum. This resulted in students' learning motivation is quite low because of the difficulties obtained in understanding learning.

The learning model amidst COVID19 Pandemics was indeed not very good, in spite of the improvements. This situation can be observed through the ranking conducted at the national level. This is evidenced by the history of national rankings obtained by students of At the school, namely in 2020 obtaining a ranking of 268 at the national level, and in 2021 obtaining a ranking of 228 at the national level. Based on the results of interviews and observations, there is an increase in the quality of education. This is inseparable from the principal's strategy. The strategy of the Head of At the school in improving the quality of learning during the 2019 coronavirus disease pandemic carried out by the Head of At the school, is as follows:

First, the Principal cooperates with the teacher counselor of At the school to carry out counseling activities offline and online through an application that has been designed by the counseling teacher at At the school. Counseling is carried out for 24 hours, both online and offline. The principal always monitors the performance of the guidance and counseling teachers and facilitates all their needs for the creation of services provided to students. during the 2019 coronavirus disease pandemic, such as free wifi services and internet data packages for the creation of individual counseling through the BK At the school BK application. This research was also strengthened by [24].

Second, in 2021/2022 the school learning activities were conducted online by ruling predetermined rules, namely students who take part in learning must follow the health protocol rules, which have been agreed upon by the school. Furthermore, the number of students in one class is calculated as 50% of the usual number. Then for the learning schedule there are two shifts where one shift is carried out in the morning and the second shift is in the afternoon. For

learning in the afternoon shift it should not be later than 12 noon. This means that 1 hour of learning is carried out for 30 minutes, in one day there are 8 hours of learning so that the learning objectives are not achieved completely because they only discuss the essential part. However, there is support from parents to include their children in tutoring activities that are carried out independently.

There are differences from the survey [26] in terms of the amount of time, The survey [26] used qualitative research with a problem tree approach. Furthermore, for the analysis [26] using alternative trees and problem trees. The results of the survey [26] prove that face-to-face learning during the pandemic has not been maximized, with one class technically divided into two sessions, with a maximum number of 18 people. The learning is carried out on condition that it adheres to the rules of the health protocol. Based on the results of a survey conducted by [26] it shows that there is a difference with the results of a survey conducted by researchers, namely that there is still online learning being carried out at SMK Negeri 2 Toraja Utara, while at the school online learning is no longer available.

The Principal increases cooperation and provides guidance to subject teachers in fostering students to participate in online focused, limited competition activities. During the pandemic there were competitions held, but student participation decreased slightly to 1/3 when compared to before the pandemic. However, students of the school can take part in various competitions during the pandemic with good results in 2019-2020, based on the results of the documentation study, it was found that there were student achievements in terms of academic and non-academic, in which the school was ranked 268 at the national level, and in 2021 they were ranked 228 at the national level. While the achievements in the non-academic field were obtained as many as 58 championships obtained by those who were registered. The results show the seriousness of the Principal [14].

Third, the Principal used seminars, training, online webinars through the zoom application. This is in line with the research conducted by [28]. The results of the survey [28] prove that the head of SMP Nurul Islam carries out activities to improve the quality of learning by motivating teachers, encouraging teachers to participate in seminars, and prioritizing teacher discipline. It is also in line with a survey [12] using a qualitative descriptive approach. The informants used in this research are the Head and the results of the study [12] show that the principal's strategies were implementing online learning, developing an emergency curriculum, involving teachers in conducting online web seminars, facilitating teachers by providing assistance in the form of credit and free Wifi, as well as holding regular meetings every two weeks.

Fourth, the principal of At the school conducts online and offline supervision, having discussions about the obstacles faced during learning and providing motivation and new information with the teachers of the school, using zoom meet. The implementation of teacher supervision and control during the pandemics was not as effective as it was before the pandemics [29] and the Principal only supervised the administration of teachers and even then it was not sustainable.

## **4 Conclusion**

The strategy used in improving the quality of learning amidst the COVID-19 pandemics namely increasing collaboration with counselor teachers, increasing cooperation and guidance towards subject teachers, improving teachers' skills through online seminars, training and webinars through the Zoom application, and doing online and offline supervision.

This study has limitations in collecting in-depth data because it is still in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemics. There was a change of principal at the school. So that researchers can only find a few strategies for school principals in improving the quality of learning amidst COVID-19 Pandemics. The researcher suggests that future researchers who are interested in this topic can explore more deeply and specifically about the principal's strategy in improving the quality of learning during the 2019 coronavirus disease pandemic.

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