

Leading from Home: Leadership Skills in Developing School Programs in the Digital Age and Covid 19 in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to describe the principals' skills in leading the school from home (LSFH) based on the digital age and Covid 19 pressure. This study was a qualitative approach, where data was collected naturally by using a google form, distance open-ended interview, and online forum group discussion as a tool for data exploration and verification. The essential data was from 1.037 principals and 47 selected principals around the provinces in Indonesia. This study showed that 1) proper management of social media and digital tools were critical; 2) communication practice by conventional and modern strategy integration; 3) giving useful feedback for professional school understanding; 4) build and develop self-confidence for the growth of various initiatives from teachers, employees, and students' parents.

Keywords: covid-19, leading from home, digital-based, social media, school principal, school program.

1. INTRODUCTION

Education and schooling are absolute requirements for the inheritance of a better civilization. The quality of education and learning mostly determines the quality of the beneficiary for the future. In this connection, the principal is a very decisive position [1], [2]. The quality of school principals dramatically determines the quality of education and learning [3]–[5]. It means that school principals play a critical role in the formation of quality education to produce quality future generations [6], [7].

In line with the unstoppable development of science and technology, the quality of education has developed a significant definition. The quality of education is not only determined by high accreditation achievement scores or by proud knowledge outputs. The skill of utilizing artificial intelligence technology must be integrated into the school system, from input selection to output, even out-come [8], [9]. These AI-based skills will school's awareness of integrating and implementing it as a school program that is not only integrated but permanent and continues to be developed sustainably. Provision of infrastructure, teachers, employees, school leadership policies, and the commitment of all education stakeholders are strategic keys to guaranteeing the school

system's quality. Of course, all of these prerequisites will function properly if the principal, as the front agent in the school system, appears as a strong leader and strategic manager [10]–[12]. An empowered school principal is a person who deserves to be at the forefront of the ranks of staff and stakeholders because of the quality of his competence, especially in making efforts to develop school programs sustainably based on the development of digital products, both social media, and other relevant digital tools. They are people who understand digital stretches, select them well, use them appropriately, integrate them into every coaching program in the context of developing their schools, and proportionally transform digital values to everyone involved in the school [13]–[15]. The school principal eventually became a digital leader by continuing to move wisely according to local context values' needs [5], [9], [16]. Particularly in Indonesia's context, where the paternalistic culture is still very high, the traditional approach cannot be abandoned in any way, including in making important school decisions. Even from a variety of research related to schools located in suburban areas, it was found that the success of a school was primarily determined by how close the principal and staff were to local community leaders. Acceptance of directives from

community leaders is the main entry point for the success of school programs [2], [5].

Such school principals have adequate capacities to carry out their leadership roles regardless of time and space [9], [13], [17]. The busyness of the school principal's coordination, which increases in frequency, is not the reason for the choke in coordination, synchronization, and monitoring and evaluation of school programs, because leading schools can be done both offline and on-line. Training for school staff can also be integrated into cyberspace, with a myriad of relevant materials for the growth and development of school programs.

In the current anomaly, when the Covid-19 pandemic attacks all aspects of human life, including education, the role of school principals is increasingly expected [18], [19]. Government policies relating to physical closure of school activities require principals to find creative ideas so that the education process can continue to run effectively, even with a guarantee of stable quality [20], [21]. The principal and all staff are expected to carry out a quality online schooling process (remote- meeting) and a physical meeting (shake- meeting). The meetings on sustainable development of the school quality move from physical to non-physical. The principal eventually has to lead the school remotely or even from home (LSFH). It needs to be done so that schools do not become the cause of the growth of the new Covid-19 cluster, which will create a negative image about schools, although, if it is related to the desire of some people who still want off-line learning at school, this situation is very confusing.

This phenomenon is fascinating to be studied in depth from various aspects, especially concerning the readiness of school principals to carry out their leadership roles online. Education must continue with undoubted quality through LSFH. This study seeks to approach this phenomenon, collect relevant data, interpret it hermeneutically, and describe it argumentatively. The findings of this study will contribute new ideas to the world of education, especially school principals in leading and managing their schools online while remaining within the corridors of quality that must be effectively and efficiently achieved.

2. METHOD

This study aimed to describe the principals' skills in leading the school from home (LSFH) based on the digital age and Covid 19 pressure. Some of the focuses include: 1) how do social media management and digital tools strengthen the role of school principals in implementing LSFH; 2) How doe principals make the communication in implementing LSFH; 3) How do principals building mutual understanding in developing school programs through LSFH; and 4) How do

principals play the role of LSFH to build self-confidence for teachers, employees, and parents.

This research was qualitative research, where data collection was done naturally. In Covid-19, data was collected using closed and open interview methods with google forms support. The essential data comes from 1,037 school principals from all provinces in Indonesia (table 1), and 47 of them were selected to join the FGD.

For data validity analysis, analysis of reduction, presentation, verification, and the conclusion was used. Besides, the validity of the data was also proven by its credibility through the continuous involvement of various activities carried out by school principals in regular FGD activities. In the FGD activity, member checking was also carried out and testing between colleagues. Furthermore, the dependency test was carried out through a data audit process in the field, and confirmation was carried out by looking at the relationship between the data obtained, the information received, and the interpretations.

Table 1. Respondents for Each Levels

No	Level	Number of Principals	Percentage
1	Pre-School	34	3%
2	Primary Education	924	89%
3	Secondary Education	79	8%
Number of Respondents		1037	

3. RESULT

Indicators of success for school principals in developing school programs always change from time to time. Fundamental aspects of development demands and critical situations resulting from a disaster and contribute to changes in these indicators. Principals in the digital era, as a result of the development of artificial intelligence information technology, have increasingly complex roles and tasks. As the pressure for the Covid-19 pandemic, where school programs, especially those related to learning, are mostly carried out from home, the principal should continue to carry out his leadership effectively. This study recommends four skills that principals need to master in order to be successful in carrying out their leadership roles and duties from home or LSFH.

2.1. Proper Management of Social Media and Digital Tools Were Critical

The era of artificial intelligence has spawned a myriad of social media and digital tools. Of course, each variety of artificial intelligence products has its strengths and weaknesses. In general, this study found that the most dominant use of social media was WhatsApp (93.83%) with the main reason being practical (99.52%).

Meanwhile, digital tools that are widely used include zoom, google meet, and google classroom. In carrying out his leadership role, the principal needs to make the right and most strategic choices.

From the results of this study, there are at least six steps that the principal needs to consider in carrying out his leadership duties from home, including setting goals, setting goals, selecting content, considering infrastructure availability and costs, determining channels, and selecting relevant evaluation tools and real-time.

2.2. Communication Practice by Conventional and Modern Strategy Integration

The success of the principal in implementing his leadership role in the digital era and the pressure of Covid-19, apparently does not only depend on the use of modern digital-based communication devices (remote meetings). Especially in rural schools, the use of conventional communication (shake-meetings) is still very much needed, although it needs to be structured in such a way, following the applicable Covid-19 protocol. Often specific problems can only be resolved in a shake-meeting, especially related to the discussion of certain things that lead to critical decision making. Physical presence with touch, feeling and gesture provide negotiating power to accept an idea of the leader more easily. Therefore, the principal's proficiency in integrating modern and conventional communication is a critical skill that determines the effectiveness of school program development through the application of online leadership from home.

2.3. Giving Useful Feedback for Professional School Understanding

Feedback is closely related to identifying and analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of the individual. The principal, in this study, agreed that feedback is an essential activity in organizational development and leadership. Feedback can provide an overview and direction for more effective action plans. In the context of leadership from home, feedback is carried out jointly, both on-line and off-line, especially concerning the six substantive steps for management of the use of social media and digital tools as well as the performance and transformation of the values of principal leadership as an impact of the implementation of LSFH.

2.4. Build and Develop Self-Confidence for the Growth of Various Initiatives from Teachers, Employees, and Students' Parents

School communication and interactions in the context of Covid-19 have undergone drastic changes. Principal leadership and teaching practices have moved from off-line within schools and classrooms to on-line without boundaries of school spaces and classrooms. In this

study, principals, especially teachers, felt uncomfortable when their videos (synchronous and a-synchronic) were seen directly by parents and the community at large. They agreed that schools should implement various options in leadership and learning, for example, the option of using the drive-through model. The majority of school principals in this study agreed that the self-confidence of teachers and employees, and also parents needed to be developed. Some school principals do many things related to building their self-confidence, for example by inviting teachers and employees to practice frequently compiling video-based media/teaching materials that are integrated with on-line videos, being relaxed with comments from their creative products, ensuring that every business must have logical consequences, and so on.

4. DISCUSSION

The principal's digital leadership represents all technology-related activities in the school, including organizational decisions, policies, and technology implementation [22]– [24]. One of the developments in technology and information that is very familiar with today's life is social media. Social networking sites dominate the level of internet access. It is due to the support from operators with many intelligent and relatively inexpensive communication devices [25]. In general, in carrying out their leadership roles and duties from home, the principal dominantly uses WhatsApp social media for the main reason being practical.

Meanwhile, digital tools that are widely used include zoom, google meet, and google classroom. Social media such as WhatsApp provide an online space to allow communication between principals, teachers, parents of students, students and alumni. Of course, this is an opportunity for the principal, as the highest leader in the school, carry out his role and duties.

In carrying out their roles and duties, the principal does not only depend on the use of modern digital-based communication devices (remote meetings). Especially in rural schools, the use of conventional communication (shake-meetings) is still very much needed, although it needs to be structured in such a way, under the applicable Covid-19 protocol. The skills and wisdom of the principal as a leader are critical. Digital leadership applied by school principals should not leave interpersonal skills [26], [27]. When new technology is implemented in schools, the leader must provide support [28]. The principal must demonstrate an understanding of the need for technology and attention to the school, recognize and respond appropriately to the feelings, attitudes and behavior, motivation and desires of other people (school members) using various communication channels either directly or indirectly. The principal must communicate effectively with all school members and stakeholders [5], [9], [28]. Therefore, the principal's

proficiency in integrating modern and conventional communication is a critical skill that determines the effectiveness of school program development through the application of online leadership from home.

Effective school principals must continue to carry out the function of monitoring and assessment, followed by providing feedback [7], [29]. In the context of leadership from home, feedback is carried out jointly, both on-line and off-line, especially concerning the six substantive steps for management of the use of social media and digital tools as well as the performance and transformation of the values of school principal leadership as a result of the implementation of LSFH. Providing feedback is carried out in order to provide an overview and direction for further more effective action plans.

The majority of school principals in this study agreed that the self-confidence of teachers, employees, and parents of students needed to be and developed. Given the influence of teachers and employees and parents as agents of change, this certainly has new potential and benefits for school development [30][31]. Given the importance of the family for children's development and learning, the involvement of parents in education is essential [32]. To increase parental involvement and foster relationships, schools must often create opportunities to communicate with parents. Activities should allow the school to respond to parents' suggestions and concerns. Thus, parents feel more comfortable, confident and empowered in their essential role in their child's development.

Transformation in schools occurs when school leaders engage school personnel, communities and stakeholders in dialogue regarding school program development [33], [34]. The transformative use of education requires changes to pedagogy, curriculum, assessment and policy. Managing this change requires highly skilled leaders who can (a) inspire strong-minded individuals, (b) implement significant change and advance school culture to enhance collaboration, inspire innovation, and build a cycle of continuous improvement [35].

5. CONCLUSION

In order to anticipate problems that can arise and to develop school programs during the pressure of Covid-19, it is necessary to optimize the digital leadership role of school principals, which are characterized by, among other things, agility, speed and being able to adapt in carrying out the organization. It is because organizational flexibility is the work of people who are capable of being proactive, creative, innovative and non-conventional. These individuals are needed as organizational leaders under the pressure of Covid-19. There are at least six steps that the principal needs to consider in carrying out

his leadership duties from home, including: setting goals, setting goals, selecting content, considering infrastructure availability and costs, determining channels, and selecting relevant and real-time evaluation tools.

In the context of leadership from home, feedback is carried out jointly, both on-line and off-line, especially concerning the six substantive steps for management of the use of social media and digital tools as well as the performance and transformation of the values of school principal leadership as a result of the implementation of LSFH

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