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## The madrasah principal's strategies to maximize teaching and learning processes during the covid-19 pandemic

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### ABSTRACT

The Madrasah principal's strategy is the most decisive factor in the success of maximizing teaching and learning processes at Madrasah. This research was motivated by the difficulties of Madrasah Jauharussa'adah in carrying out learning processes during the Covid-19 pandemic to describe the Madrasah principal's strategies to maximize teaching and learning process during such. This research adopted a qualitative approach. The consideration of taking this research object was because the researcher wanted to reveal that not a few educational units were confused in carrying out learning processes during the pandemic COVID-19. Meanwhile, the object under study was in the countryside. Data collection processes were carried out by interviews, observations, and documentations. The subjects of this study were the Madrasah principal and the teacher council. The data were analyzed by means of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The findings showed that the first Madrasah principal's strategy to maximize teaching and learning processes at Madrasah Jauharussa'adah during the covid-19 pandemic was using a module system. The second strategy was the application of a small-group technique. The module system was implemented in a face-to-face mode. The duration of learning was set to only took 25 minutes.



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## Introduction

The impacts arising from the Covid-19 pandemic have affected all aspects of human activity, economic activities ranging from macro and micro scale, land and air transportation, workers in government and companies, farmers, fishermen, including education, especially the learning system carried out by educational institutions. from basic education to higher education.

Based on the Joint Decree of the Minister of Education and Culture, Research and Technology, the Minister of Religion, the Minister of Health, and the Minister of Home Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia Number 05/KB/2021 Number 1347 of 2021 Number HK.01.08/MENKES/6678/2021 Number 443-5847 of 2021 concerning Guidelines Organizing Learning During the 2019 Coronavirus Disease (Covid-19) Pandemic. In article I letter A, that learning at the PAUD level (Early Childhood Education) and Elementary and Secondary Education levels is carried out face-to-face limited by applying strict health protocols.

Following up on these regulations, the head of Madrasah Intidaiyah Jauharussa'adah took steps that were deemed effective by considering the condition of students, the ability of students' parents, the ability of the teachers who teach, and the availability of existing internet signals. After studying and considering the conditions of madrasahs in rural areas with the ability indicators stated above, then by agreement of the head of the madrasa with the teachers, it was agreed that learning was carried out in a limited face-to-face way with the way the teachers who taught would make simple learning modules.

Weaknesses if implemented online learning include; the students do not all have android-based cellphones, even if there are students who already have, most of them have not been able to operate them properly; there are still many parents of students who do not have the funds to buy their children an android phone, and for those who can afford it, most of the parents of students have not been able to operate the android phone proficiently when accompanying their children in learning. Most of the teachers have an android phone, although for those who already have an android phone and may have been able to operate it, the obstacle faced is a weak signal because they live in rural areas and not all cellular operators can be accessed.

Therefore, the head of the madrasa continues to carry out face-to-face learning in a limited manner, by entering the class in turns, with short learning times, using simple module media because the guidebooks that will be taught to students are not sufficient to be loaned to all students.

Leadership is entrusted to the Madrasah principal, who is expected to improve the quality of Islamic education in Madrasah, human resource capability, and community service. Madrasah is an Islamic educational institution that requires a leader who can devise strategies to address various issues that arise in Madrasah. The principal's leadership is a process that influences a person's or organization's activities to achieve educational goals in specific situations (Marno & Supriyanto, 2008: 32).

Leadership is a leader's abilities to move, influence, motivate, invite, direct, order, advise, guide, command, prohibit, even punish if necessary, and foster the intention that humans work as management media to achieve administrative goals effectively and efficiently (Fadhil, 2019). The foregoing demonstrates that the Madrasah principal's leadership consists of at least three interconnected elements, namely the existence of a leader and his characteristics; the existence of a Leader and his followers; and the existence of a place where a leader and the followers interact with one another.

The abovementioned concept is also true in Madrasah where the leadership is led by the Madrasah principal. The Madrasah principal's leadership style is extremely influential and even determines the Madrasah's progress. As a result, in modern education, the Madrasah principal's leadership is a strategic position in achieving Islamic education's goals. According to Sumidjo (2002: 83), the principal of the Madrasah consists of two words: the principal, which can be interpreted as the chairman or leader in an organization or institution, while Madrasah is an institution where lessons are received and taught. As a result, the principal is simply defined as a functional teacher whose job it is to lead a school or Madrasah where teaching and learning processes take place or a place where there is an interaction between the teacher who gives lessons and the students who receive lessons.

According to the above description, the Madrasah principal is a leader who strives to maximize education and teaching while being burdened with various obligations to achieve the goals of the Madrasah he leads.

The Madrasah principal has the main obligation as an educator. Teaching and learning activities are at the heart of the educational process, and teachers are the primary implementers and developers of the Madrasah curriculum (Mulyasa, 2002: 99-122). The Madrasah principal must show a strong commitment to curriculum development as well as teaching and learning activities in the Madrasah. Of course, this will pay close attention to the level of competence possessed by teachers, as well as always try to facilitate and encourage teachers to continuously improve their competencies, so that the teaching and learning process activities can run optimally, effectively, and efficiently.

The Madrasah principal is one of the people responsible for maximizing teaching and learning processes because he is the direct supervisor of the teachers who teach. He is also the one who at any time can see and must be able to do all the tasks affiliated with his responsibility, such as monitoring the teachers as his subordinates. He by nature is also a teacher. The Madrasah principal also serves as the manager, coach, administrator, and supervisor (Lazaruth, 1994: 20). Due to the importance of the Madrasah principal, his ability to lead Madrasah is very decisive for the quality and the name of Madrasah per se. Maintaining the disciplined works of teachers and staffs is also a measure of the maximum success of educational activities carried out under the Madrasah principal's leadership. The maximum process of teaching and learning activities has a significant impact on educational success in madrasah.

As an educational leader, the principal plays a critical role in improving the quality of Madrasah and maximizing the quality of learning he leads (Bush & Coleman, 2008: 91-93). This goal is achievable if the Madrasah principal can develop relevant strategies to improve the quality of learning under normal and abnormal conditions, such as the Covid-19 pandemic.

A strategy is a set of fundamental decisions and actions made by top management, in this case, the Madrasah principal, that is determined and implemented by all levels of an organization to achieve the Madrasah's goals (Siagian, 2004: 20). The Madrasah's principal must be able to devise new strategies that will allow the Madrasah he leads to carry out the most effective teaching and learning processes. Such teaching and learning processes will be properly implemented by the teachers at the Madrasah.

To maximize teaching and learning processes in Madrasah, the principal employs at least three broad strategies: hierarchical, transformational, and facilitative strategies. In managing the organization, the hierarchical strategy provides a broad perspective, delivering on the promise of efficiency, oversight, and planned routines. The transformational strategy can both motivate and inform members. In the meantime, the facilitative strategy is a behavior that makes use of the school's collective ability to adapt, solve problems, and improve performance (Syafaruddin & Asrul, 2013: 145).

The above strategies can at the very least serve as a guide for Madrasah in designing various programs to maximize teaching and learning processes. When the world is struck by the COVID-19 pandemic, a strategy for how students' learning processes can continue to run optimally is required. The Covid-19 pandemic has forced changes in the process of implementing education in Indonesia, where learning that was previously done face-to-face by teachers and students is now done online or online, beginning at the Madrasah/school level and progressing to the university level. Online learning is a type of distance learning media in which students communicate with one another via the internet (Putrant, 2020: 140). The online learning system, which aims to reduce the spread of the covid-19 virus, has been implemented throughout Indonesia, from Madrasah Ibtidaiyah to tertiary institutions, including Madrasah IbtidaiyahJauharussa'adah, Pulau Kidak Village.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Madrasah IbtidaiyahJauharussa'adah was among those affected. Based on the data from researcher's observations, the teaching and learning process in Madrasahs before Covid-19 was optimal, including teaching and learning activities in class, extracurricular, and others. When the covid-19 pandemic struck Indonesia between March 2019 and early 2022, the teaching and learning process at Madrasah IbtidaiyahJauharussa'adah was disrupted by unstable internet connections, teachers who lacked discipline in the classroom, and a lack of textbook references (Preliminary observation at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah on June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2020). As a result, the researcher identified three major issues:

First, the internet connection was unstable; second, the only network that existed was the mini tower, which could only be used for making calls and SMS; and third, two teachers who lacked the discipline to teach. When the covid-19 pandemic struck, there were even some unscrupulous teachers who taught only twice a month, only giving assignments without further detailed explanations, and teaching only whenever they wanted without ignoring the decision. As the highest leader in the Madrasah, the principal must devise strategies to improve teaching and students' learning processes during the covid-19 pandemic.

In connection with the above, the Madrasah principal's strategies must maximize the quality of learning processes. How the application of the right curriculum, the discipline of teaching teachers, infrastructure, and madrasa arrangement greatly affect the maximization of teaching and learning processes at Madrasah. This will have a positive impact on the sustainability of teaching and learning process in Madrasah. From the description stated above, the researcher considers it important to conduct this research even though the Covid-19 condition tends to be sloping.

## Method

The method in this study is a qualitative descriptive approach, to process and analyze qualitative data the researcher uses the NVIVO application. Methods of collecting data by observing three times; The first observation made general observations of what patterns were carried out by madrasah principals for learning models in responding to the covid-19 pandemic.

The second observation observed that initially the principal and teachers were able to carry out online learning but there were many weaknesses, in the observation the three principals and teachers conducted limited face-to-face learning by preparing simple module media; The second data collection was interviews with the informant of the head of the madrasa, several teachers, parents of students, students.

The data collected in the form of primary data obtained from the field and secondary data obtained from several reference books that have relevance to what the researcher discussed. Furthermore, data processing is carried out with data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusions.

## Results and Discussion

### **The Madrasah Principal's Strategies to Maximize Teaching and Learning Processes during the Covid-19 Pandemic at Madrasah Jauharussa'adah, Pulau Kidak Village**

The Module System was the strategy used at the Jauharussa'adah Madrasah during the COVID-19 pandemic. This strategy was applied as it referred to the Ministry of Religion circular, specifically the Ministry of Religion of Muratara Regency, regarding teaching and learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. As mentioned, the circular addressed the discourses of distance learning process and module system. The module system was implemented in a way that the learning processes were conducted in groups.

This was because the internet connection in Pulau Kidak village and the Jauharussa'adah Madrasah, in particular, did not support the implementation of online learning optimally; many Madrasah students did not have cellphones; some had cellphones but could not operate them or were still technology stuttering; and even some teachers were still technology stuttering when doing online learning. The foregoing issues led the Madrasah principal to determine policy by instructing the teaching council to create modules and groups to maximize teaching and learning processes during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The module system was used during teaching and learning processes, with groups of five students, and a three-day-a-week learning system with twenty-five minutes of learning time. As this system was implemented, the teaching council could control students so that there were no crowds, as part of an effort to implement health protocols to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Although the Madrasah principal and the teacher council acknowledged that the teaching and learning processes at the Madrasah Jauharussa'adah, Pulau Kidak village had not been able to satisfy various parties, this step was taken as an effort to ensure that the conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic did not halt the teaching and learning process, even with minimal facilities (an interview with Azailan on March 13<sup>th</sup>, 2021).

Because the conditions in Pulau Kidak Village had unstable internet, many students did not have cellphones and were not yet proficient in operating them. Some teachers even did the same. The Madrasah principal's policy was not instantaneous but through the deliberation of the principal and teacher council at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Jauharussa'adah. The Madrasah then used the module as the alternatively best strategy to implement teaching and learning processes. Because it was a more detailed short-term strategy, and for the implementation of the teaching and learning process using a module system, a group learning system was created in which one group consisted of five students. Considering the Covid-19 pandemic period, the teaching and learning process only took 25 minutes of lesson gems, and the students entered the class three days a week. In such a condition, the students did not need to wear Madrasah uniforms at every Madrasah entry (an interview with Dini Ardila on March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2021).

Other than the aforementioned considerations, the other strategy to support teaching and learning processes during the Covid-19 Pandemic was a middle path that the Madrasah principal could take while sharing difficult signal conditions and the difficulty of having cellphones as faced by either students or teachers. It was also stipulated that technology was still stuttering for both students and some teachers, even though the learning process should not be halted (an interview with Amri on March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2021).

The condition of elementary-level madrasah education units in Indonesia, which are located in rural areas, cannot be equated with quality and ability in many ways related to the learning process during the COVID-19 pandemic, this is due to natural conditions and the individual abilities of students, including some teachers in rural areas have minimal knowledge of technology. The atmosphere and climate when compared to the basic level education units in the city are very different, especially in the Ibtidaiyah madrasa where researchers conduct research. Because of that the only strategy that can be taken is by conducting limited face-to-face learning using simple module media.

Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Jauharussa'adah is located in the village of Pulau Kidak, which is a village quite far from the sub-district city where the conditions are quite alarming, especially related to internet signal access, therefore in the midst of such conditions, the online learning process is very difficult to realize, especially some There are still a few students who have an Android-based cellphone.

From the research it was also found that some teachers who teach under the same conditions as their students do not have an android phone and it is very difficult to get internet network access. Because the learning process must continue to be carried out, the principal and the teachers who teach agreed to hold limited face-to-face learning, by taking turns, reducing face-to-face time, making small groups with learning

patterns using self-made modules. by teachers who teach in a simple and emergency manner, but still by applying process discipline.

### **The Implementation of the Madrasah Principal's Strategies to Optimize Teaching and Learning Processes during the Covid-19 Pandemic**

During the covid-19 pandemic, the Jauharussa'adah Madrasah used a learning strategy based on modules to maximize the teaching and learning process. In its application, Madrasah students were divided into groups of five students for each class, where one group of five students went to school three days a week. The first-to-third grade students took three days from Mondays to Wednesdays. The fourth-to-six grade students took the rest of the days from Thursday to Saturday.

Considering the covid-19 pandemic period, the study hours only took 25 minutes for the first lesson by complying with health protocols. The actions were taken in implementing learning the learning strategy using modules and encouraging students' parents to understand the situation due to the pandemic period, as well as urging students to follow health protocols while attending Madrasah. Furthermore, it was realized that it was not optimal, but from the Madrasah, maximizing the facilities and conditions in the Madrasah even though they were still trying to fulfill and referred to the fulfillment of the curriculum even though it could not be realized optimally.

The learning processes were consistently oriented towards fulfilling learning guides such as syllabus and lesson plan (an interview with Azailan on March 13<sup>th</sup>, 2021). During the COVID-19 pandemic, Madrasah Jauharussa'adah was unable to implement an effective distance learning system because it was very constrained by weak signals and even difficult. Some students did not have an Android cellphone and were still not proficient in operating such device. Also, some teachers faced similar challenges (an interview with Dini Ardila on March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2021). Furthermore, because Madrasah Jauharussa'adah in Pulau Kidak Village faced the aforementioned challenges, Madrasah Jauharussa'adah implemented learning modules, reduced learning time to only 25 minutes of lessons, and entered the Madrasah only three times per week with free uniforms (an interview with Amri on March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2021).

### **Conclusion**

First, during the covid-19 pandemic, the Madrasah principal's strategy to maximize teaching and learning processes at the Jauharussa'adah Madrasah is the application of a learning strategy based on modules. As the highest leader, the Madrasah principal directs the teacher council to form modules and study groups so that the teaching and learning process can run optimally. Second, the implementation of the aforementioned strategy to maximize teaching and learning processes during the COVID-19 pandemic uses a module system by forming small groups. The duration of classroom meeting only takes 25 minutes of lesson gems. Subsequently, the meetings only take 3 days a week.

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