

## **Educational Leadership Strategies In Facing The Challenge Of Learning Loss in Sophos Preschool Indonesia**

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**Abstrak.** Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk menganalisis strategi TK Sophos Indonesia dalam mencegah learning loss. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dan metode deskriptif. Data dikumpulkan dengan teknik wawancara, observasi, dan dokumentasi. Teknik analisis data yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah analisis kualitatif seperti yang dikemukakan oleh Miles dan Huberman, yaitu pengumpulan data, pengurangan data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Validitas data dalam penelitian ini dilakukan dengan metode triangulasi yaitu metode triangulasi sumber dan triangulasi. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa strategi yang dilakukan oleh Kepala TK Sophos Indonesia berhasil mencegah learning loss. Strategi tersebut terdiri dari tiga langkah yang dikemukakan oleh Fred R. David, yaitu perumusan strategi, implementasi strategi, dan evaluasi strategi. Ketiga langkah ini berhasil mencegah learning loss di TK Sophos Indonesia.

**Kata kunci:** Kepemimpinan; Learning Loss; Strategi; TK Sophos Indonesia.

**Abstract.** *The purpose of this study is to analyze the strategy of Sophos Preschool Indonesia in preventing learning loss. This research uses qualitative approaches and descriptive methods. Data is collected with the interview, observation, and documentation techniques. The data analysis technique used in this study is qualitative analysis as proposed by Miles and Huberman, namely data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion withdrawal. The data validity in this study was done by triangulation, namely source triangulation and triangulation methods. This study concludes that the strategy carried out by the Head of Sophos Preschool Indonesia succeeded in preventing learning loss. The strategy consists of three steps as proposed by Fred R. David, namely strategy formulation, strategy implementation, and strategy evaluation. These three steps succeeded in preventing learning loss in Sophos Preschool Indonesia.*

**Keywords:** Leadership; Learning Loss; Sophos Preschool Indonesia; Strategy.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Education is something that every individual must go through to achieve a better life. Humans need education in their lives. Education is a conscious effort that must be passed by a systematic and directed planning activity using certain procedures, mechanisms, and tools to support the smooth implementation of the implementation procedures (Ahmad, 2020). As stated in Law No. 20 of 2003, education is a fundamental and planned effort to create a learning atmosphere and learning process so that students actively develop their potential to have religious, spiritual strength, self-control, personality, intelligence, noble character, and skills, which is needed by himself, society, and the State.

Rasulullah SAW said:

طَلَبُ الْعِلْمِ فَرِيضَةٌ عَلَى كُلِّ مُسْلِمٍ

Meaning: "Seeking knowledge is an obligation for every Muslim." (HR. Ibn Majah).

Schools are formal institutions entrusted with the mandate to educate, train and guide the younger generation for their future roles, while the community uses the education services (Elihami, 2019). The school is one of the forums for providing education in which the learning and teaching process occurs by teachers to students under the principal's leadership. The principal's leadership is very important in running the organization's wheels so as not to lose direction. The era of the fast-paced industrial revolution 4.0 requires the right strategy in carrying out leadership so that the expected goals can be appropriately achieved (Aryawan, 2019).

Leaders who follow technological developments can influence, encourage, guide, and direct others in implementing and developing education in the era of the industrial revolution 4.0. so that professional school principals will understand the needs needed in the school (Harapan, 2016). According to Minister Nadiem Makarim, in the International Symposium, Principals and School Supervisors said that leadership 2.0 is how to change thinking as a leader in the new era. Currently, the world is facing extraordinary challenges; the era of technology makes changes so fast that it is impossible to predict the changes that will occur. Along with the dynamics of life with the progress of the times and relatively rapid changes, school institutions must improve the quality of education. The school is an open system which, of course, must have innovation in maintaining its existence so that it does not go out of business. If that were to happen, the entire unit must keep the school's existence. The principal is a leader who can bring forward or backwards a school by taking a step in improving the quality of education (Makarim, 2019).

The world is currently facing a disaster, namely the spread of the COVID-19 virus. The Covid-19 pandemic is being felt by all aspects of life, including the education sector. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic is very much like many schools in the world are closed to suppress the spread of this pandemic. But on the other hand, the impact of the closure of schools by the government has caused at least 290.5 million students worldwide to be disturbed in their learning activities (Mastura & Santaria, 2020). The Minister of Education, Nadiem Makarim, has issued Circular Letter Number 4 of 2020 on Education Units and Number 36962/MPK.A/HK/2020 concerning the Implementation of Education in the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Emergency Period which then provides directions that teaching and learning activities by participants Learning is done by utilizing facilities on the internet network or commonly referred to as online (Kemendikbud RI, 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic is changing the educational process as schools around the world must quickly adapt to digital systems to facilitate distance learning. So learning on the internet during this pandemic is, of course, through cellphones, laptops and computer monitor screens. This educational change process also leaves the danger of a mental health crisis, one of which is learning loss. Le Thu Huong and Teertada Na Jattunas, in The Education and Development Forum 2020, stated that learning loss is a situation where students lose knowledge and skills, both general and specific or academic decline, which occurs due to prolonged gaps or the discontinuity of the education process. This is largely due to the disruption of the formal education process.

This year, 75% of schools worldwide have not even reopened face-to-face learning. Data from various studies there are three main problems as a result of schools not conducting face-to-face meetings, including: (1) Decreased Level of Desire to Learn. By not going to school, most students feel like they don't have a strong enough reason and motivation to learn. When teachers usually pay attention to them directly in class, their level of desire to learn is relatively more awake. But when there is no teacher, usually this learning awareness decreases. Leave the parents at home to fight harder to keep the spirit of learning while ensuring they are in a safe and healthy condition; (2) Unequal Learning Levels. Learning through online or distance learning (Distance Learning) opens up opportunities for disparities or learning gaps for students. Students with good learning facilities, and complete family support, almost certainly have a good level of success and involvement in learning. Undeniably, many students who lack facilities and family support remain enthusiastic about learning, but this is an anomaly. The ineffectiveness of formative tests, and the elimination of various evaluations, are enough to make students and teachers lose reference on how far learning is successful; and (3) Drop Out of School. Uncertainty about when school will return to routine has resulted in boredom, prompting some students to want to quit school. The lack of facilities, confusion in dealing with assignments/homework that are considered continuous and burdensome, and boredom pave the way for students who live amid limitations to choose to work to ease the burden on their families and support themselves. Of course, we must face this with great empathy, especially those already in the final grade/level of education. Their time and energy will be wasted (Huong & Jatturas, 2020).

Educational institutions have been closed around the world since early February to contain the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19). And how can this "learning loss" be reduced? In dealing with the phenomenon of learning loss, a leader is needed who is considered the most understanding about how to solve problems and take the necessary steps during a crisis. That is why a leader needs to have the ability in an emergency to take an approach or strategy to deal with this learning loss challenge or to have leadership skills in a situation with uncertainty as it is today. Educational institutions' success depends on the leadership strategies leaders use. Based on the description above, this research focuses more on what strategies are carried out by leaders in dealing with the learning loss challenges in the world of education today.

## **METHOD**

This research was conducted at Sophos Preschool Indonesia, located in the CBD area of Kav. AH 2 No. 6, Rawa Buntu, Serpong, South Tangerang City, Banten 15310. Researchers chose Sophos Preschool Indonesia because it is one of the leading schools for the people of South Tangerang and its surroundings. The time of research was carried out in October-November 2021. The approach used in this research is qualitative, where the research starts from a phenomenon that has been observed. The method used in this research is descriptive; this research method will be able to describe the actual situation of the leadership strategy of the Sophos Preschool Indonesia Principal's leadership in facing the challenge of learning loss. Data collection techniques are the most strategic steps taken in a study. Data collection techniques used in this study are as follows.

1. Interview. Primary data obtained from interviews or what is often referred to as interviews are oral questions and answers to get data on the strategy of the principal of the Sophos Preschool Indonesia in dealing with learning loss. The speakers in the interview included the principal, 4 class teachers, eight students and eight student guardians. Interviews were conducted by telephone or WhatsApp.
2. Observation. In addition to interviews, this study also conducted observations, commonly known as the observation method. Observations were made offline and online to observe the situation directly and indirectly in implementing learning and using tools such as laptops and supporting applications, namely google meet, google

classroom. Observations were carried out directly in the principal's office and classrooms. Meanwhile, online observations were made through the Google meet classroom at Sophos Preschool Indonesia.

3. Documentation. Documentation is used to determine the school's profile which includes (the history of establishment, vision, mission, and goals), as well as the State of school resources which include (leaders, educators, education staff, students, facilities, infrastructure, and organizational structure). Documents are also related to learning, such as school administration documents such as KTSP, lesson plans, and other class administration documents. Documents are also in the form of photos and learning videos from Sophos Preschool Indonesia teachers and students. Secondary data is collected from published data such as printed and online articles, journals and books.

The validity of the data in qualitative research is a very important part of determining the degree of trustworthiness of the research results that have been carried out. Several ways are usually chosen to test the validity of research data. In this study, researchers used two kinds of triangulation: source and method.

## **RESULT**

### *Educational Leadership*

A literature study conducted by analyzing the contents of several national and international journals found that a leader of an educational institution needs to adapt to all existing conditions, including during a pandemic or disaster. Currently, in Indonesia, learning activities that were originally carried out face-to-face have to be done remotely through media or platforms. Based on the research results conducted since the beginning of the pandemic, the Head of Sophos Preschool Indonesia took steps to implement the distance learning system (PJJ) to break the chain of the spread of Covid-19. He also said that learning takes place using the Google for Education platform as a media. Teachers use laptops, computers, and other devices that support effective learning.

The principal's leadership is one of the critical factors in advancing the school so that it can realize its vision, mission, goals and objectives through various planned and implemented programs. Therefore, principals must have strong or robust management and leadership competencies or abilities to take decisions and initiatives to improve school quality (Duryat, 2021). Drs. Ngali Purwanto argues that leadership is an action/deed between individuals and groups that causes individuals and groups to advance towards specific goals (Purwanto, 2007). Quality education is an investment in supporting the nation's progress and the intelligence of the nation life. Quality education is obtained through quality educational institutions. The principal strongly influences the quality and success of schools as a leader with full power and responsibility in managing the school (Aulia & Trihantoyo, 2019).

The pandemic must be addressed wisely so that quality education can still be realized because quality education is a significant investment that can support the nation's progress. The head of Sophos Preschool Indonesia has several strategic steps in maintaining the quality of education. He supervises the teaching and learning process on a scheduled and spontaneous basis. He entered the class without the knowledge of the class teacher first. According to her, this is done to find out the findings of problems that occur in each class to be used as material for evaluating teaching and learning activities.

In responding to this learning loss challenge, a leader needs to react quickly and appropriately so that this does not happen in the institution he leads. It takes the responsibility and authority held by the leader to manage and determine the right policies with the determination of practical educational activities. A leader, as a determinant of the quality of education, must have a particular strategy to improve the quality of the implementation of education in any conditions and situations. The principal's leadership strategy is expected to be a bulwark of strength in maintaining the quality of educational institutions in times of crisis, such as the current pandemic so that educational activities can continue even though the learning method from home and the quality of education is maintained.

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A leader, in this case, the principal, dramatically contributes to student success. Where the principal determines the teacher's quality, then the teacher's quality determines the quality of learning. So effective principals are principals who can streamline the education of their teachers so that they can streamline the teaching and learning process. To realize effective and quality learning, a strategy is needed as a leader's step in carrying out a program in his institution where a leader must have the right leadership strategies in carrying out the planned program of activities. An organization with a strategy will be more vital because it already has better planning, knowledge and experience in meeting needs and handling unexpected conditions and situations.

The principal's leadership strategy is to overcome all obstacles or challenges by utilizing all school resources, including increasing teacher professionalism to achieve school goals (Fakhrunnisa & Utama, 2018). According to (Sanjaya, 2006), leadership strategy is a plan, method, or series of activities designed to achieve a particular educational goal. So the principal in leading must understand what strategic management is. According to Pearce II and Robinson Jr., strategic management is decisions and actions resulting in formulating and implementing plans to achieve goals (Pearce & Robinson, 2008). Leaders must find the right strategy to deal with the problems that exist in

their institutions, especially in facing this learning loss challenge. Principals in formulating strategies will not be separated from applying strategic management concepts that experts have put forward. According to David, strategic management is the art and science of formulating, implementing, and evaluating cross-functional decisions that can lead organizations to achieve certain goals. David also mentioned that strategic management consists of three steps: strategy formulation, implementation, and evaluation (David, 2006).

1. Strategy Formulation. The first stage in strategic management is strategy formulation which includes program planning by considering the school's vision, mission, goals, opportunities, threats, strengths, and weaknesses. The principal of Sophos Preschool Indonesia plans a school program involving teachers and parents. The preparation of the program is carried out by looking at the needs of students so that the programs made are effective, efficient, fun, and valuable. Some of the programs designed by Sophos Preschool Indonesia are as follows.

- a. The extracurricular program aims to develop student's talents and potential in cooking classes, drawing, and dancing.
- b. Extra Class is an academic program for kindergarten 2 as preparation for entering the primary, namely English Cambridge Enrichment.
- c. A family Project is a project that students work on with family members based on a theme.
- d. Sophos Preschool Competition is a student competition according to the talents and potential of each student.
- e. Festivities are celebrations of religious and national holidays, such as Hero's Day, Father's Day, Mother's Day, and several other celebrations.
- f. Year End Celebration is a year-end art performance.
- g. School Production is an art degree at the end of the school year,
- h. Graduation is the completion of a student's graduation.
- i. Parenting is an activity for parents, and resource persons come from education experts or practitioners.
- j. Sharing session is sharing from parents of students with expertise or professionalism to be shared with other parents.
- k. Guest teacher is a program that invites parents to attend as guest teachers in teaching and learning activities for students in class.

In addition, there are many other programs designed to realize quality education while at the same time facing the threat of learning loss. For example, religious and moral programs that teach children to be tolerant and aware of the celebrations of other religions, social-emotional programs (Preschool Overnight Camp) which train students to be confident and learn to be independent, cognitive programs (science day), language programs (language day, literacy day), and so on.

2. Strategy Implementation. At this stage, the principal, as the leader of the educational institution, implements the strategies that have been determined at the strategy formulation stage. The implementation stage of this strategy requires emphasizing the motivation of all school components from the principal so that the previously formulated strategy can be carried out optimally and the learning loss challenge can be overcome. The head of Sophos Preschool Indonesia said that the teaching and learning activities process during the pandemic must still be carried out and be able to make students happy. This is done by how the teachers make a teaching and learning process run effectively and pleasantly. To support these efforts, the Head of Sophos Preschool Indonesia collaborates with various parties, including Google, for education in the teaching and learning activities process, using platforms such as Google Meet, Google Classroom, and others. Ms. Ella, one of the teachers, also said that this collaboration benefited the teaching and learning activities process, including collecting assignments. Implementation of teaching and learning activities and programs planned through several methods used by Sophos Preschool Indonesia during this pandemic. First, the online method uses a platform such as Google Meet. Students will be given their accounts to access the class when online teaching and learning occur quickly. Students are also given a schedule of activities for the week and will enter their classes according to the given schedule. Second, Project Based Learning. Students are given small projects they can do with their families at home. This method is effective in collaboration and teamwork between family members. This will also create a bond between each family member. Children will be more confident because it is done with family members—the third Home Visit Method. Sophos Preschool Indonesia also holds a home visit program, where principals and teachers visit students to motivate and encourage students and parents at home. Teaching and learning activities is carried out with the help of several learning resources. During PJJ, the teacher maximizes the learning resources closest to the students. In an interview on November 19, 2021, Miss Ella said that the most frequently used learning resources are those that children like the most, namely books and learning videos. In addition, Miss Farah, in an interview on November 19, 2021, said that students also take advantage of the environment around them as a learning resource. Teaching and learning activities is carried out by considering children's conditions, needs, and mental health so that the time allocation for each child is made from 1 to 1 hour a day so that children can still maintain their health by not always being in front of the monitor screen. Mr Prihastono, in an interview with him on

November 17, 2021, said that this strategy is very effective because not all students learn simultaneously so children can concentrate more. Teachers can focus more on each child.

3. Strategy Evaluation. This stage is the last in strategic management. At this stage, performance measurement, corrective action and conformity with the strategy implemented with the plan are carried out. This evaluation stage functions so that the selection of strategies in determining future policies will be better by avoiding repeating the same mistakes. In evaluating the strategy, the Head of Sophos Preschool Indonesia, facing the challenge of learning loss, implemented the following steps. First, the leader ensures that all teachers can use online learning media. They are delegating teachers to various existing training programs, training and webinars. In addition, teachers take turns sharing a topic with other teachers every week. Second, leaders must ensure that teachers and students can understand the mechanics of online learning. At the end of the session, the teacher always asks about students' understanding and opens a question and answer session.

Third, the leader ensures that teachers and students are ready to learn from home. This readiness can be seen from the availability of learning facilities at home that, from the beginning, Sophos Preschool Indonesia has conveyed to the guardians of students about learning facilities and infrastructure at home in online and offline learning. Fourth, the leader controls and supervises the learning activities. The head of Sophos Preschool Indonesia at a particular time is directly involved in classroom learning. What and how is the learning process in the classroom as an evaluation material regarding the obstacles found. In addition, he also asked for progress and reports on learning outcomes. Fifth, leaders can cooperate reasonably with external parties and regularly coordinate and report learning activities' results. Based on research and interviews with students, they stated that they were happy to study at Sophos Preschool Indonesia. They are all happy with online learning at school. The activities that they like the majority are art and craft, the art of making works, painting and drawing, and counting activities. They are also happy because they are accompanied by their parents (father or mother) at home during the learning process. They also said there were no difficulties when they went online because of the easy learning videos. The majority of children do not feel bored and bored in learning, and it's just that some feel bored in sports lessons because, according to her, the learning time is too long. Even so, they prefer to learn face to face and come to school to learn.

A principal school tries to carry out his leadership very carefully, where everything is done based on an analysis of conditions, needs planning, procedures and supervision. The principal understands what to do and what not to do in carrying out his role so that the education process goes according to plan and the quality of the school can be improved. Leaders must be more systematic and carry out their leadership based on the management process flow. The principal's process approach strategy as a leadership strategy shows that the leader can carry out his managerial competence. Managerial competence is defined as activities, knowledge, skills or attitudes, and personal characteristics needed to improve management performance (Martina et al., 2012). Managerial competence is the ability to manage education. Includes the ability to plan, implement and evaluate an educational institution (Wahjosumidjo, 2013) which in managerial competence aims for the Principal of Sophos Preschool Indonesia to manage quality educational institutions following educational goals.

## CONCLUSION

Principals must design strategic steps to improve the quality of school education they lead. The first stage in strategic management is strategy formulation which includes program planning. The principal of Sophos Preschool Indonesia plans a school program involving teachers and parents. The preparation of the program is carried out by looking at the needs of students so that the programs made are effective, efficient, fun, and useful. Next is the strategy implementation stage so that what has been formulated previously can be carried out optimally to overcome the learning loss challenge. The head of Sophos Preschool Indonesia ensures that the teaching and learning process during the pandemic can still be carried out and make students happy. In the last stage, namely strategy evaluation, the Head of Sophos Preschool Indonesia implemented several steps in dealing with the challenge of learning loss, including supervising all learning programs. So based on the results of the study, there was no learning loss found in Sophos Preschool Indonesia.

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