

# Primary School Supervision During the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Qualitative Study of How Elementary School Superintendent in Bontang City Responded to Growing Needs

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## Abstract

Supervisors are parties who are expected to provide professional development for teachers in teaching and learning activities and provide the latest information related to educational policies, provide alternative solutions when schools have difficulty improving quality or running educational programs. However, limited attention is paid to primary school supervision issues during the current COVID-19 pandemic. This article discusses the implementation of primary school supervision in Bontang City during the COVID-19 pandemic. A qualitative approach with a descriptive method is used to describe the conditions that occurred at the time the research was conducted and then examine the causes of the conditions under study. Then, the researcher also explained how the supervisory plan for monitoring, implementing and evaluating Bontang City elementary schools during the Covid-19 pandemic. The results showed that school supervision during the pandemic was not carried out properly. The implementation of supervision does not follow the supervisor's technical instructions during the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, the supervision process does not provide real implications for the implementation of effective learning.

*Keywords:* Supervision, Supervisor, Elementary School, COVID-19 Pandemic

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## 1. Introduction

When the new academic year 2021/2022 begins, only a few schools are allowed to conduct face-to-face learning by following the Covid-19 health protocol. Various efforts have been made by the school to anticipate the spread of COVID-19 in the educational environment, for example in Bontang City, implementing a shift system and freeing parents to allow or forbid their children to go to school. After one semester of face-to-face learning, all levels of education must re-enact limited face-to-face learning for 50% of the total number of students starting on Tuesday, February 8, 2022.

The learning process during the COVID-19 pandemic certainly has many challenges and obstacles (Amon et al., 2022). The Ministry of Education of the Republic of Indonesia, for example, noted that 59.3 million elementary school to university students were affected and had to study from home using an online system due to the spread of the COVID-19 virus. UNICEF (2020) also said that online learning has not been tested for its effectiveness, and in the long term, has an impact on social and economic development in Indonesia<sup>7</sup>. Furthermore, during the pandemic, the ineffectiveness of learning during the COVID-19 pandemic was also confirmed by research from the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection in its research on students from 29 provinces in Indonesia regarding the application of online learning. The results of the study stated that 58% of students felt uncomfortable undergoing a home study policy, and 38% of children thought that the school did not have a good program for carrying out learning activities at home.

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Uncontrolled pandemic conditions have a high risk for the implementation of education so it requires the role of all elements of education. In this context, the presence of a supervisor is very important, especially in conducting guidance and supervision of the way teachers teach during the pandemic, evaluating, coaching, or training teacher professionalism to increase the effectiveness of learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many studies that have been conducted state that the presence of supervisors as a component in the education system has a significant role in improving the quality of education and is an integral part of the education system as a whole (Kelkay, 2020; Kotirde & Yunos, 2015; Lorensius et al., 2022; Marsalin, 2019; Warman et al., 2022) In educational management, supervisory activities will provide a function to provide professional guidance in the implementation process to maintain the quality of education in order to keep following the standards that have been set (Amon et al., 2021; Mensah, 2019; Warman et al., 2021).

The success of quality education is the responsibility of the government (Haseena & Ajims, 2015). Thus, in an effort to achieve educational goals other than principals and teachers, it cannot be separated from the role of school supervisors. School supervisors in the education system act as supervisors who carry out managerial and academic supervision in schools. School supervisors act as government officials, and as professional officials (Omemu, 2017). School supervisors have a major role in improving the quality of education in schools. The role of supervisors for schools is very large because supervision carried out by school principals continuously and continuously can improve the quality of learning which in turn can improve the quality of education in Indonesia (Adib et al., 2021; Nurlaili et al., 2021; Warman et al., 2022).

Supervisors are parties who are expected to provide professional development for teachers in teaching and learning activities and provide the latest information related to educational policies, provide alternative solutions when schools have difficulty improving quality or running educational programs (Kotirde & Yunos, 2015). As managerial and academic supervisors, school supervisors are obliged to assist teacher professionals so that teachers can improve the quality of the learning process. The supervisor's role should be an education consultant who is always a companion for teachers in improving the quality of education.

Given the importance of the role of supervisors in the world of education, the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Indonesia has published a working manual for primary and secondary school supervisors as the main reference for supervisors in carrying out their duties. Then during the COVID-19 pandemic, technical guidelines for implementing special supervision during the pandemic were also issued. These guidelines are the main reference for supervisors to continue carrying out their duties during the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on this description, this study aims to describe how the management of primary school supervisors in Bontang City during the COVID-19 pandemic. Especially regarding the monitoring program plan, implementation, and evaluation carried out. By meeting these objectives, it is hoped that an overview of the efforts and roles of primary school supervisors will be obtained during the COVID-19 pandemic in Bontang City. Then it can also be used as input for supervisors and other stakeholders to improve the quality of supervision by supervisors during the COVID-19 pandemic in Bontang City.

## **2. Methodology**

This research was conducted in Bontang City using a qualitative method with a descriptive approach that aims to present a specific picture of a situation, social setting, or relationship. In qualitative methods, the key instrument in research is the researcher himself (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Through this approach, the researcher describes the conditions that occurred at the time the research was conducted and then examines the causes of the conditions under study. Then, the researcher also explained how the supervisory plan for monitoring, implementing and evaluating Bontang City elementary schools during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Informants in this study were school supervisors, principals, and teachers at an elementary school in Bontang City. Teachers and school principals who became informants were teachers and principals who were selected using a purposive technique. The data in this study were obtained from observations and interviews with supervisors, principals, teachers, and the results of relevant literature studies. In analyzing the data, the researcher used Miles and Huberman's analytical model called interactive analysis. This analysis is divided into several stages: data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. With interactive analysis techniques, the analysis process starts from data collection and continues until all data is collected (Miles & Huberman, 2014).

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. Elementary School Supervisor Program Planning in Bontang City during the Covid-19 Pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic that has hit since March 2020 has forced schools to conduct online learning. The same thing happened to elementary schools in Bontang City. In the pre-pandemic period, supervisors could carry out their duties easily because they could carry out direct supervision of educational units. However, during a pandemic, supervisors need other strategies in carrying out their supervisory duties. In response to this, the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia (Kemendikbud) launched a guidebook for supervisors to carry out their duties even in a pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic will not only be a disaster but will be an interesting challenge for education staff, especially school supervisors. School supervisors, principals, teachers, and students must stay healthy, but education must still be able to achieve its goals and vision. If this synergy continues and this pandemic end, then there will be School Supervisors, principals, teachers, and New Era Students who are accustomed to the digital era.

The issuance of supervision manuals during the pandemic is intended explicitly to keep school supervisors healthy, safe, and still working to carry out their duties. Normatively, the supervisory planning steps during the COVID-19 pandemic have been explained in detail, and the supervisors only have to carry out them. Regarding supervision planning, the author has interviewed primary school supervisors in Bontang City. In the interview session, supervisors revealed that in terms of planning supervision programs during the COVID-19 period, they only referred to ministerial regulations and regional regulations. leaders and related institutions. That is, they do not have special plans and programs on how surveillance is carried out in the pandemic era.

Personally, I dare not make a policy. However, looking at the ministry's policies, there are indeed ministerial regulations. For example, we teach in schools using the 2013 curriculum (K-13), we teach according to K-13 material, but it must be simplified. Then the learning time is shortened, learning tools such as one sheet lesson plan. Likewise, the way of teaching can be adapted to the conditions of COVID-19. (Supervisors)

The interview above shows that supervisors have not practiced the supervisory planning model as directed by the Ministry of Education in the supervision guidelines and supervision guidelines during the Covid-19 period. However, in terms of implementation, the supervisor admitted that he was involved in the preparation of learning guidelines during the pandemic issued by the regional government. The guidelines are adjusted to the learning policy during the pandemic. The supervisor also admitted that he was actively involved in preparing learning programs during the COVID-19 period. This was also confirmed by several principals and teachers at the schools we studied.

Supervisors often meet with us to plan how to study online during the covid-19 pandemic. As a result, we assigned teachers to monitor students studying at home. (Principals)

The principal's statement above shows that in the general context of preparing learning programs, supervisors are actively involved. However, what he did was not well planned and did not refer to the supervision manual published by the Ministry of Education and Culture. In addition, supervisors also do not have proof of planning documents following the supervision guidelines during the COVID-19 period as stated in the manual. Based on the results of the interviews above, it can be said that in terms of planning, supervisors have not prepared a supervision program properly. In addition, supervisors only follow the regulations issued by the government regarding learning during the COVID-19 pandemic but have not followed the supervisor's manual during the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### 3.2. Implementation of Supervision during the Covid-19 Pandemic

A program will run well if it is planned well, and without going through planning, the activity will lose its direction and orientation. This is what happened to an elementary school supervisor in Bontang City during the COVID-19 pandemic. In interviews that researchers conducted with supervisors regarding the implementation of supervision, participants explained:

The implementation process is carried out by asking schools to implement simplified central government policies. In the implementation process, we also monitor to ensure the program runs as it should and ask school principals and teachers to immediately report any problems in the teaching and learning process during the pandemic. (Superintendent)

Furthermore, before direct learning at school was held in Bontang City during the COVID-19 period, students did online learning. Then the supervisor supervises by visiting schools and students' homes to ensure teachers carry out learning both online and offline. An elementary school teacher in Bontang City explained:

The supervisor also went to the field to check the school because there was learning in the village, so the teacher rushed down to the village to teach the students. Because the supervisor goes down to check whether the learning process has been carried out. (Teacher)

In an implementation, the supervisor also gives instructions to the principal to regulate the learning process at school. One school principal in an interview said:

According to the supervisor's direction, we have arranged a schedule for teachers to come to teach at students' homes and the implementation has gone smoothly. (Principal)

In addition to monitoring the implementation of learning during the pandemic, supervisors also disseminate regulations issued by the education office and ministries. On the occasion of the socialization, the supervisor also conveyed to all teachers to continue the learning process and maintain health so that learning can be carried out properly. Supervisors are also ordered to comply with health protocols in carrying out learning in schools. The order also followed directions from the Bontang City Education Office. This was acknowledged by one of the principals and teachers interviewed by the researcher:

We invite parents to meet. In addition to filling out the statement letter, we will reaffirm the supervisor's policy regarding health protocols. (Principal)

The principal conveyed the same thing:

According to the supervisor's direction, during the COVID-19 period, schools must prepare health protocols, one of which is that students are required to wear masks. Entering the school yard, students must wash their hands and then enter class, learning is not as usual, but learning is divided up to a maximum of 50% of the number of students. (Principal)

Based on the results of interviews that have been carried out, it can be seen that the implementation of supervision by supervisors in Bontang City has not referred to the supervision guidelines during the COVID-19 pandemic. This is certainly understandable because the planning and implementation process also does not refer to technical guidelines. In simple terms, the implementation of supervision carried out by supervisors during the pandemic based on the results of interviews conducted are as follows. First, ensuring that education units implement central and regional government policies related to learning during the Covid-19 period. Second, socialization of learning rules during the Covid-19 period. Third, conducting field visits to see learning practices by teachers and education units. Fourth, ordering education units to implement health protocols.

### *3.3. Evaluation of Supervision Activities during the Covid-19 Pandemic*

Evaluation is a process after the supervisor runs the planned program. This evaluation process is important because conducting an evaluation will find obstacles during the implementation of supervision and then provide possible solutions that can be taken to overcome the problems encountered. Based on the interviews, the supervisor's evaluation process refers to the implementation of health protocols. Supervisor says:

Based on the monitoring we did, we evaluated, and the results were that there were schools whose learning process was going according to expectations, and there were also schools that did not run one hundred percent.

One of the problems is students who don't come. However, most of the learning that has been carried out in Bontang City has followed the government's recommendation. (Superintendent)

In addition, the evaluation process is also aimed at the obstacles experienced by teachers and school principals. Supervisor says:

The evaluation process is carried out by making learning instruments based on reports from the principal or teacher regarding the obstacles encountered during the learning process (Supervisor).

The supervisor's confession was strengthened by the confession of one of the principals who said:

Supervisors continue to evaluate, especially how to learn. The supervisor also made a statement about how to learn: children should keep a distance, when children are unwell, they cannot study at school, so they do assignments from teachers sent via WhatsApp or sent home. Supervisors also evaluate, for example, teachers who cannot use online learning applications, students who do not have mobile phones, do not have internet network access, and others (Principal).

Based on the interview above, it can be said that the supervisor has evaluated the education unit in Bontang City which is his responsibility as a supervisor. However, the evaluation process has not been directed because it is not based on evaluation documents as recommended in the school supervisor's manual.

#### **4. Discussion**

Management is an important part of an educational organization. In a broad sense, Hallinger & Lee (2013) define management as a process of planning, implementing, and monitoring organizational resources to achieve goals effectively and efficiently. While management in a narrow sense is school management which includes: school program planning, school program implementation, principal leadership, supervision/evaluation, and information systems. In the context of education in Indonesia, a school supervisor as stated in the Regulation of the Minister of National Education Number 12 of 2007 concerning Standards for School/Madrasah Supervisors, has several competencies, namely managerial, academic supervision, educational evaluation, research, and development competencies. Technically, these competencies can be seen in the implementation process in program preparation, coaching, completion of the implementation of national education standards, evaluation, program preparation and implementation, and evaluation of coaching and training, as well as coaching for school and secondary supervisors.

The role of education is very important for human life. Today's young generation must be prepared to be skilled and able to change lives for the better through education (Anggal et al., 2020; Matli & Ngoepe, 2020). In education management, planning is the initial process in determining goals or objectives to produce efficient and practical education. Planning determines future activities. Because with planning the educational process and supervision will run according to what is expected (Lorensius et al., 2021). In this context school supervisors must play an active role in developing school professional organizations and official organizations to plan these organizations can be used as a vehicle to improve professionalism and school supervisors in carrying out their professional duties (Kemdikbud, 2017).

In the school supervisor's manual, it is stated that a supervisor must develop a supervision program in carrying out supervision. Therefore, the preparation of the program is the responsibility of the school supervisor in carrying out the main tasks and obligations assigned to him so that in carrying out the tasks that are his main responsibility. School supervisors need to carry out stages that include program development, implementation of supervision programs, evaluation of program implementation results, as well as professional coaching and training of teachers and school principals (Kemdikbud, 2017). Based on the research results that have been described, it can be seen that the elementary school supervisors in Bontang City have not developed a good supervision program according to existing procedures. The data from interviews with supervisors that the researchers conducted showed that the supervisors had not specifically prepared the program. There are no planning documents prepared by supervisors in carrying out supervision during the COVID-19 pandemic. Even though school supervisors have been given various supervision guidelines in the technical instructions.

School supervisors have been given various supervision guidelines in the technical manual. Before the COVID-19 pandemic hit, supervisory guidelines had also been issued and used by supervisors in planning surveillance programs. The monitoring plan, if implemented properly, will produce a good monitoring planning document. This planning document is then used as the basis by superiors in carrying out supervision. However, based on the research conducted, the supervisor does not yet have a planning document that is in accordance with the technical instructions. So, when the researcher asked for the planning document, the supervisor did not have it. In carrying out their duties, supervisors only refer to circulars regarding learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.

However, when viewed from a more positive perspective, the ineffectiveness of the surveillance carried out during this pandemic period is understandable. The reason is, that the learning process in the classroom during the pandemic is a high risk, especially for students and teachers. then if the implementation of learning is not in accordance with health protocols, the possibility of the spread of the COVID-19 virus will undoubtedly be faster. This means that the focus of supervision which places more emphasis on aspects of health protocols is also important because it also concerns the safety of teachers and students. However, on the negative side, learning activities lose substance because the emphasis is not on educational protocols but on health protocols. When the implementation of supervision carried out by supervisors emphasizes the application of health protocols, then teachers and schools will also focus more on fulfilling this so that learning content does not receive full attention.

Furthermore, regarding program evaluation and the form of the evaluation carried out by elementary school supervisors in Bontang City, monitoring and providing evaluation instruments to schools and teachers. Program evaluation is a process, which is generally oriented toward achieving goals. In particular, program evaluation is an attempt to compare what has been achieved from program implementation with what should have been achieved based on the criteria/standards that have been set at the beginning of the program.

According to the supervisor's acknowledgment, evaluation activities are based on work meetings between supervisors in Bontang City by preparing evaluation instruments. However, at the time this research was conducted, the supervisor could not show the instrument documents in question. This means that the evaluation process carried out by the supervisor is not based on the previously planned documents. This is understandable because from the outset the supervisor did not plan and implement a monitoring program in accordance with the existing guidelines.

Supervision activities which are then carried out by supervisors are sudden and unplanned, such as monitoring and visiting schools for which they are responsible. This is in line with the findings of observations and interviews conducted by researchers, namely the evaluation process carried out by supervisors has not been structured and measured. Supervisors also do not have definite steps in terms of evaluation. If the monitoring program is planned and implemented according to the plan, the evaluation process will also be easy to carry out. However, if it is not planned properly, then the evaluation process is also not measurable because basically implementation leads to planned activities, actions, or system mechanisms.

## **5. Conclusion**

School supervision management during the COVID-19 pandemic was not carried out properly by elementary school supervisors in Bontang City. The implementation of supervision does not follow the supervisor's technical instructions during the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, the supervision process does not provide real implications for the implementation of effective learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Supervision activities that do not refer to supervisory management only cause schools and education units to implement health protocols for students and teachers. Likewise, the evaluation process carried out by supervisors has not been structured and measured because it is not based on good planning. So that supervisors do not have planned steps during the COVID-19 pandemic in carrying out tasks at elementary schools in Bontang City.

Supervisors must have a planned, structured, and measurable monitoring program, as well as evidenced by supervisory documents. Supervisors have been provided with a supervisory implementation manual that contains technical instructions for the preparation and evaluation of supervision programs, academic supervision, and managerial supervision. By referring to the existing manuals and technical instructions, the implementation of supervision will be carried out properly and will have an impact on the effectiveness of learning activities in schools.

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