

## THE DYNAMICS OF REOPENING ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS IN BEKASI DURING PANDEMIC COVID-19

Kurniawati Hasjanah<sup>1</sup>, Melissa Balqis<sup>2</sup>, Nana Nurwaesari<sup>3</sup>

<sup>123</sup>SGPP Indonesia Postgraduate Student

<sup>1</sup>*kurniawati.hasjanah@sgpp.ac.id*

<sup>2</sup>*melissa.balqis@sgpp.ac.id*

<sup>3</sup>*nana.nurwaesari@sgpp.ac.id*

Corresponding Author

(*nana.nurwaesari@sgpp.ac.id*)

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### ABSTRACT

This paper discusses how the negotiation process between schools, the Bekasi City Government and The Central Government in responding to reopening school in pandemic Covid-19. The Bekasi City Government allow 110 schools to reopening and face to face learning based on their negotiation. Data collection methods are through primary and secondary data collection in the form of interview, news analysis, books and related journals. Some efforts were taken by the Bekasi City Government to reopening schools since August 2020, but unfortunately at that time, reopening schools policy not allowed yet. In the process, The Bekasi City Government used more direct lobbying and negotiation process, which in turn led to The Bekasi City Government's beneficial results to reopening schools on March 2021.

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### INTRODUCTION

In early 2020, the world was shocked by the spread of infectious diseases that attack human respiratory system due to infection of the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) or known as Covid-19 disease. The Covid-19 has had a huge impact not only on economic sectors but also on the education

sector. To control the spread of the coronavirus, most of government has suspended face-to-face teaching in school (Engzell, Frey, & Verhagen, 2021).

According to The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) around 192 countries have temporary closed access to face-to-face teaching learning and 1.6 million students are affected by the school closure (Psacharopoulos, Patrinos, Collis, & Vegas, 2020). Meanwhile, in Indonesia there are 68 million students that have been affected by the school closure (Reuters, 2021). To ensure the sustainability of the learning process the governments around the world including Indonesia have provided several alternatives regarding the learning process such as learning through television, radio, online platforms, and so on (Conto, et al., 2020).

The government decided to close all schools when the Covid-19 Pandemic spread to Indonesia in early March 2020. The learning process in classrooms must be stopped, switching to online learning. The decision to close schools and online learning in accordance with Circular Number 3 of 2020 in the Education Unit and Number 36962 / MPK.A / HK / 2020 concerning the Implementation of Education in the emergency period of Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) (Kemdikbud, 2020).

Online learning is learning that uses internet networks with accessibility, connectivity, flexibility and the ability to generate various types of learning interactions. The use of the internet and technology is able to change the way of conveying knowledge and can be an alternative to learning that can be done in traditional classrooms (Zhang et al., 2004). In the implementation of online learning, there are important factors that must be considered such as internet access, and the presence of teachers to interact with students.

The Bekasi City Government is one of the local governments that has implemented online learning to prevent the spread of the Covid-19 virus. However, within a few months of implementing online learning, plans emerged to reopen schools in Bekasi. Based on Law Number 23 Basic Secondary Education of 2014 (Kemdikbud, 2018) the opening of schools is under the authority of district / city governments. In addition, the authority to open schools is also regulated by a Joint Decree (SKB) of the Four Ministers.

The plan to hold face-to-face schools was initially sticking out since July 2020. At that time, the Bekasi City Government held face-to-face learning simulation in four schools, there were SMPN 2 Bekasi, Sekolah Victory Plus Kemang Pratama, SDI Al Azhar Jaka Permai, and SDN Pekayon Jaya 6 (Kepala Sekolah SMPN 2 Bekasi, 2020). This decision was made based on the results of the student's parent survey that 61 percent of parents approved to do face-to-face learning. However, the school must make adjustments, such as referring to a Joint Decree (SKB) of the four ministers, that only high schools could be apply face-to-face learning at that time.

The Bekasi City Government held learning simulations in six schools, there were SMP 2 Bekasi City, SMP Victory, SMP Nassa, SDN Pekayonjaya VI, SD Negeri Jaticepaka VI, and SD Al Azhar VI (Kompas, 2020) in August 2020. At that time, the Bekasi City Government allowed face-to-face learning at schools because the number of Covid-19 transmission was below one and there were 11 schools that had applied for permits to do simulations. Schools that had been submit face-to-face learning simulations would like to meet requirements such as the proposal for the implementation of COVID-19 prevention which contains a percentage of parents' permission for their children to participate in face-to-face learning. Also schools must also ensure close accessibility to health services.

However, the simulation only lasted three days out of the month-long plan. This learning simulation is considered to violate the Four Ministerial Decree which contains the requirements for opening schools in the green zone. Meanwhile, Bekasi City was in the orange zone at that time. Moreover, the Bekasi city government claimed not to violate the SBK of the four ministers. They emphasized face-to-face learning were only limited to simulations and also to adapt learning activities in September (Sunaryo, 2020).

The Mayor of Bekasi Rahmat Effendi has rolled out again a plan to reopen schools in November 2020 due to the downward trend in Covid-19 cases in his area. At that time, Rahmat insisted on opening the school again because he felt the impact of the online learning process which was considered increasingly ineffective (Republika,

2020). Based on the statement stated by Rahmat Effendi as the Mayor of Bekasi to the media, there are several main reasons why he insisted that face-to-face teaching and learning activities (PTM) should be implemented immediately.

**Table . The Three Main Reasons Rahmat Effendi Persists in the Application of Face-to-Face Learning (PTM)**

Date	Reasons
July 13, 2020	The Bekasi City Government is considered to have succeeded in reducing the spread of Covid-19 because there was no additional death number for a month
July 20, 2020	The facilities and infrastructure owned by Bekasi City considered has fulfilled health protocols and support the application of Face-to-Face Learning (PTM)
December 28, 2020	Bekasi City is in a moderate risk zone, but Bekasi City Government believe that there is no relevance between the status of the Covid-19 spread zone and the implementation of offline schools

Source: compiled from various sources by the authors including AyoBekasi.net and kompas.com

Rahmat Effendi's hope for the application of Face-to-Face Learning is of course not only based on the three main reasons above. This is also supported by requests from parents as guardians of students who complain about not being able to support their children to learn online optimally, as well as private schools in Bekasi City who feel that school income is starting to erode because parents have difficulty paying school fees which are considered sufficient. expensive (Kompas.com, 2020).

This desire was further supported by the results of the Bekasi Radar survey, which was delivered directly by Ali Fauzie as Chairman of the Bekasi City Education Council. The survey stated that nearly 90 percent of parents in Bekasi City agreed that Face-to-Face Learning was held again during the pandemic. The protracted online learning is increasingly troubling for parents. Not only related to school fees, but also considered ineffective (Kompas, 2020). More specifically, this Radar Bekasi survey involved Basic Education Data (Dapodik) November 2020 starting from elementary school (SD), junior high school (SMP), high school (SMA) to vocational high school (SMK) level students.

The total data collected is 440,218 students, where the highest number was from the SD level, namely 238,926 students. In this survey, 257 parents of students were collected as respondents in which 73.3 percent of parents agreed that Face-to-Face Learning was restarted in January 2021. In addition, 91.4 percent of parents believed that their children had understood health protocols, 86.3 percent believed that the facilities and infrastructure in schools had met health protocol standards, and 13.7 percent felt that the facilities and infrastructure had not been fulfilled (Bekasi.pojoksatu.id, 2020).

Although the majority of parents in Bekasi City agree with the application of Face-to-Face Learning, the central government, namely the Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemendikbud) has a different perspective and standards from the Bekasi City Government regarding the feasibility of opening face-to-face schools. The Ministry of Education and Culture considers that the regional zone is the main standard for the application of Face-to-Face Learning (PTM). Meanwhile, the eligibility standard used by the Bekasi City Government is the number of positive cases compared to the cure rate. According to the Mayor of Bekasi, Rahmat Effendi, there is no area apart from the

current red zone. If the facilities and infrastructure prepared by the City Government have met health protocol standards, PTM should have been able to be implemented in Bekasi City (Kompas, 2020).

Meanwhile, on January 22, 2021, Nadiem Makarim stated that implementing Limited Face-to-Face Learning is the only way to overcome the learning loss faced by students due to online learning (PJJ) (edukasi.sindonews.com, 2021). This rapidly change in public policy has become a complicated problem, in which the Ministry of Education and Culture as the representative of the central government is also unsure of the request of the Mayor of Bekasi, Rahmat Effendi, who at the beginning convinced the Ministry of Education and Culture that schools in Bekasi are ready to implement face-to-face learning in advance. From this main problem, this study will examine how the negotiation process carried out by parents, schools, and stakeholders in Bekasi City, and finally obtains permission to apply limited face-to-face learning.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This study used a qualitative method. Bogdan and Taylor in (Moleong, 2007) define qualitative methods is research that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken . This data collection was taken from the period June 2020 to March 2021 in several elementary schools in Bekasi City. The samples used in this study were several elementary schools (SD) in Bekasi City, where this data collection was taken from the period June 2020 to March 2021.

In a survey previously conducted by Radar Bekasi, parents of students in Bekasi City were involved as respondents' survey. However, in this study, the researchers will involve several categories of other sources, such as the Special Staff of the Ministry of Education and Culture, representatives of the Bekasi City Government, school principals, teachers, and parents of students from several elementary schools in Bekasi City who were selected randomly.

The researchers were analysis using the model of interactive analysis. This model has three components, namely data reduction, data presentation, and verification. These components are interactive and continuous, forming a cycle. Here the explanation about the process based on (Miles, 1984). *Data reduction*: The researchers resume, consider the essential things, focusing only on the important parts, and find a theme and pattern of the weaknesses of the dissertations found by the Commission. The researchers arrange the data at a glance. *Data presentation*: In this component, the researchers reduce the in-hand information from the first procedure and present the narrative texts based on the common weaknesses of the dissertations found. In this procedure, the researchers only arrange the data at a glance. *Verification*: The researchers elaborate the research focus in detail and do deeper analysis until the conclusion about the common weaknesses of the dissertations is drawn.

## RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Process Reopening School in Bekasi City

In implementing face-to-face teaching and learning activities in Bekasi City, there is a negotiation process between actors, the Bekasi City Government, and Schools. The face-to-face learning policy negotiation process has been going on for a long time since July 2020 and its implementation continues to be delayed due to the conditions of the spread of Covid-19 in Bekasi City. The Bekasi City Government uses a rational approach to reopening school, they had been paying attention to the spread of Covid-19, based on indications of an increasing number of RT areas with green and yellow zone status.

**Table II Covid-19 Cases in West Java on March 31, 2021**



City / District	Confirmed Cases	Under Treatment/ Isolation	Recovered	Deaths
Kota Depok	42,410	6,635	35,453	322
Kota Bekasi	37,815	2,052	35,545	218
Kab. Bekasi	24,965	4,088	20,817	60
Kota Bandung	16,038	2,161	13,788	89
Kab. Karawang	15,826	3,583	12,006	237

Source: Pusat Informasi dan Koordinasi Covid-19 Propinsi Jawa Barat

Before the implementation of face-to-face teaching and learning activities, a survey was conducted by the Bekasi City Education Office to the parents of students. The first survey on July 2020 that showed 60 percent of parents approval for reopening school. From this survey, the Bekasi City Government held face-to-face learning on four schools with health protocol, SMP 2 Bekasi, Sekolah Victory Plus Kemang Pratama, SD Islam Al-Azhar 6 Jakapermai, dan SD Negeri 6 Pekayon Jaya. However, the face-to-face learning implementation was postponed because it was deemed to violate the regulations of the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Bekasi Government claims that it is still carrying out technical readiness. At that time, there was only one school that had conducted face-to-face learning, Sekolah Victory Plus for junior high and high school students (Pemkot Bekasi, 2020).

Moreover The Bekasi City Government had been survey about approval parents for reopening school plans starting January 25, 2021. The results showed that 90 percent of parents would like to re-opening the schools (Kompas, 2020). Many students' parents have asked when their children can go to school as normally. Head of Bekasi City Education Office Inayatullah suspects that the distance learning carried out due to the Covid-19 pandemic has been going on for too long. It's not just the students who are depressed, their parents also complain. Unfortunately, at that time the Covid-19 cases in Bekasi increased in every day.

Furthermore, The Bekasi City Government create a survey again on December 2020 with results show that on average 80 percent of parents want face-to-face learning in schools to be held again (Inayatullah, 2021). On this situations, there were meetings held by stakeholders such as the Chairperson of the Bekasi City Education Council; Bekasi City BMPS Management; Supervisors and Oversight at the Bekasi City Education Office; Chairman of the MKKS in Bekasi City; Chairman of K3SD; Chairman of the KKPS; District representatives throughout Bekasi City; Assistant for Development and Community Welfare; Head of Office and the ranks of leaders in the Bekasi City Education Office; Bekasi City Health Office; Head of the Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Bekasi City; and Chairman of TWUP4.

The results of the Bekasi City education stakeholder meeting, after being coordinated with the Chairperson of the Committee on Policy for Handling COVID-19 and the Transformation of Economic Recovery for the City of Bekasi, agreed on the following points (Setda Bekasi Kota, 2021) :

1. *Education Units in Bekasi City can start face-to-face learning through the implementation of the Education Unit's New Life Adaptation or hereinafter abbreviated as ATHB-SP; and*
2. ATHB-SP can be held starting March 22, 2021, provided that the implementation is regulated by the guidelines made by the Bekasi City Education Office, in the context of organizing ATHB-SP according to health protocols.
3. Guidelines for the Implementation of ATHB-SP

Guidelines for the implementation of ATHB-SP have been prepared by the Education Office, based on Circular Number: 421/2624 / Disdik.set / III / 2021 concerning Guidelines for Implementing Adaptation of New Living Orders for Educational Units in Bekasi City. This guide is a follow-up to the improvement of PTM and PJJ regulatory products that were previously made, but delayed, due to the implementation of PPKM since January 6, 2021.

ATHB-SP is an activity of an educational unit in carrying out face-to-face learning, where the educational unit is capable of adapting itself in preparing face-to-face learning (PTM) health protocol, starting with PTM for 3 (three) study groups control and evaluation independently so that gradually increasing the number of classrooms for PTM up to 50% of the number of classrooms in the educational unit (Setda Bekasi Kota, 2021).

Policy stability is achieved after compromising the interests of each actor. The face-to-face school scheme is contained in the education unit's new life order adaptation policy which refers to the guidelines made by the Bekasi City Education Office. Face-to-face teaching and learning activities in Bekasi began on Monday (22/3/2021). At this step, 110 schools were opened, consisting of 88 SD and 22 SMP. The face-to-face learning in these 110 schools comes from a proposal submitted by the school, not an order from the government. The 110 schools that have reopened, according to the Bekasi City Education Officially, are a small fraction of the total number of existing schools, such as 280 private SD, 396 public SD, 49 state junior high schools, nearly 300 private SMP (Inayatullah, 2021).

Head of Bekasi City Education Office Inayatullah explained that face-to-face learning in Bekasi City is actually preparation because online learning is still the main choice, so face-to-face preparation at that time does not involve all schools. In three groups studied in each one school (Setda Bekasi Kota, 2021). There have been only 18 students for each group. So there are three groups in one school that can hold face-to-face meetings with as many as 54 students. Meanwhile, the technical management about face-to-face learning is the responsibility of each school.

Based on data from the Bekasi City Education Office as of March 29, 2021, there have been no reports for positive cases of Covid-19 in schools until this time. When something happens that is unexpected, for example, a suspect Covid-19 is found in the educational unit during face-to-face learning, the implementation of the Bekasi City face-to-face school is postponed for 14 days.

The Bekasi City Education Office will increase the capacity of study groups or classes in schools that have been doing face-to-face learning since April 2021. For the first time, there were only three classes, later it will be added to six classes with a capacity of 18 students per class. This capacity increase has the result of learning evaluation face-to-face at school for two weeks. There had been 110 schools, either elementary or junior high had been doing face-to-face learning. During implementation, the health protocol was running optimally, and no new cases Covid-19 were found (Inayatullah, Pembelajaran Tatap Muka di Bekasi, Kapasitas Rombongan Belajar Bakal Ditambah, 2021). According to report, there are 611 elementary schools at Bekasi City that have held face-to-face learning in early September 2021, which is 356 public elementary schools and 255 private elementary school. The Bekasi City Education Office has formed a team tasked with reviewing the standards for implementing health protocols in schools and the requirements that each school needs to meet. In each education unit, a school Covid-19 Task Force has also been formed.

The school also coordinate with neighborhood association, hamlet, urban village, sub-district and Puskesmas in order to control the spread covid-19 when reopening schools. The existing rules describe that reopening schools will be implemented in two phases, transition and new habits. In the transition period, reopening schools is limited to two months. Meanwhile, in the latest customary period, face-to-face learning is limited to being carried out after the transition period is complete. Educators and education personnel who have not received the Covid 19 vaccine are advised to provide Distance Learning (PJJ) services from home.

Although the Ministry of Education and Culture has provided free quota assistance to students, teachers, and lecturers in 2021 in order to help those who are affected by Covid-19 in doing online learning. But, there are some

negative social impacts that occur such as, decreased learning outcomes (learning loss), students dropping out of school, and violence against children. On Thursday, March 18, 2021, Nadiem Makarim as Minister of Education and Culture (Mendikbud) considered the possibility of implementing limited face-to-face learning (PTM) during the Covid-19 pandemic. This limited PTM is planned because of the negative social impact for students who have difficulty carrying out distance learning (PJJ). Therefore, Nadiem Makarim as the Ministry of Education and Culture feels that the application of limited face-to-face learning (PTM) must be implemented immediately, but the PJJ method still exists.

### **Implementation of Face-to-Face Learning of Elementary School in Bekasi City**

In early April 2021, there were 5 public and 2 private elementary schools in North Bekasi District that passed the selection to be able to apply face-to-face School Examinations, and continued by implementing face-to-face learning in schools. One of the permitted private schools is SDIT Ibnu Hajar (haksuara.com, 2021). Based on the results of in-depth interview with one of the SDIT teachers Ibnu Hajar, Uum Umiyati, S.Pd.I said that initially the face-to-face learning was opened for grade 6 only who would face the School Examination. But now face-to-face learning has also been applied to students in grades 4 and 5.

She also said that permission for the application of face-to-face learning is also inseparable from the negotiation process carried out by the parents of the students to the school and the school to the Ministry of Education and Culture. Negotiations were carried out by taking online questionnaires (*angket*) which distributed by the school to parents regarding their opinions on the application of limited face-to-face learning at SDIT Ibnu Hajar. Online questionnaires were conducted twice, namely, at the end of December 2020 and the beginning of the 2021. The results of the questionnaire indicated that the majority of parents wanted face-to-face learning to be implemented immediately.

In her statement, Mrs. Uum said that the ongoing negotiations between the school and the parents were carried out with the strong trust that the face-to-face learning system could be implemented immediately. In addition, parents also believe that the Bekasi City Government with its regional autonomy can help to persuade the Ministry of Education and Culture to implement the face-to-face learning in 2021. The online questionnaires that were distributed twice to the parents provided an opportunity for both parties to know the obstacles faced by parents and students during online learning.

Meanwhile at Islamic Green School (IGS) Ms. Andiani Dwitami, S.Pd said that as school roll out their face-to-face learning plans they must ensure that parent also trust with decisions that committee takes through dialogue of negotiations. When the dialogue started the parents of students said they have concern on health issues and the committee need to consider of Map of Strict Control Area in the neighborhood they lived. The students that lives in red and yellow zone will not attend the school and continue to do remote learning. However, if parents agree to do in-person learning they must sign the letter of agreements with schools.

The school reopening has been implemented since March 2021 with a mix of remote and in-person learning (hybrid system). According to Ms. Andiani the school committee considered a model where the 1<sup>st</sup> grade attends on Monday and Tuesday and the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade attends on Wednesday, the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade on Thursday while 4<sup>th</sup> until 6<sup>th</sup> grade attends everyday with restriction only three children per day. In the implementations the government trough Covid-19 Handling Acceleration Force or Satuan Tugas Penanganan Covid-19 (Satgas Covid) has been inspect school readiness to implement the health protocol during this pandemic situation. In addition, the teacher has been vaccinated and the school provided hand washing also with hand sanitizer.

Hasan Jenih stated that SDN Kayuringin Jaya XXIII implemented face-to-face learning system on September, 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021 and divided the face-to-face learning system into two sessions, the first session at 07:30-09:30 and the second sessi on at 10:00-11:30. There are rules that must be obeyed by students, parents / guardians of students and school management is that students must be picked up by parents / guardians of students or the party responsible for

taking students to school. Supervision is also carried out by supervising teachers, especially for students in grades 1,2 and 3 (Pemerintah Kota Bekasi, 2021).

By knowing the existing obstacles, the school and the Ministry of Education and Culture can find solutions for the presence of learning loss of student learning competencies during online learning. In fact, according to the latest Ministry of Education and Culture survey results, there is a learning loss gap of up to 20 percent (jawapos.com, 2021). This is what then prompted the Ministry of Education and Culture, Nadiem Makarim to approve the implementation of limited face-to-face learning in several schools that were deemed capable of implementing health protocols according to their facilities and resources.

All parties, namely the parents, the school, the Bekasi City Government, and the Ministry of Education and Culture focus on finding solutions together, so that a win-win solution can be created. The distribution of online questionnaires in this case can be categorized as Integrative Negotiation. In integrative negotiation, the focus is on expanding the pie by finding creative ways to add value for everyone involved. By focusing on creating value rather than claiming it, the parties that are involved not only leave the negotiation satisfied, but foster goodwill and pave the way for future discussions (Gavin Matt, 2019).

As evidence, the first proposal of the Bekasi City Government to implement the face-to-face learning system has been rejected by the Ministry of Education and Culture. However, in April 2021, face-to-face learning could finally be carried out in several Elementary Schools in Bekasi after the survey showed a learning loss gap and the results of online questionnaires held by SDIT Ibnu Hajar and Islamic Green School in asking for face-to-face learning continuously.

Reporting from the Pandemictalks Instagram account (Ike Nesor and Radiany Firdza, 2021), criticism was conveyed against the results of the school readiness survey conducted by the Ministry of Education and Culture to 535 thousand schools. The survey results stated that 252,360 or 47.16% of schools had not responded to the readiness survey. In addition, the implementation of an online Teaching and Learning Readiness Evaluation Survey during the Covid-19 Pandemic only focused on four variables, namely, (i) sanitation and hygiene facilities, (ii) mapping of school members, (iii) health facilities, and (iv) agreement with the school committee. From this survey, three other important variables were not included, namely, ventilation, duration and distance. In fact, these three variables are considered important because not all schools have supporting facilities to implement physical distancing in the classroom and have good air circulation as an effort to prevent the spread of *coronavirus*.

## CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Negotiations and coordination between parties are critical components of school reopening during pandemic situations. As schools reopen policy makers should coordinate actions, resources, use existing administrative and survey data to identify risk factors throughout reopening process to support the implementation and adaptation. The Bekasi City Government had been doing some efforts to reopening schools since August 2020. But, at that time, reopening schools not allowed yet because cases of covid-19 still high. Moreover, The Bekasi City Government used more direct lobbying and negotiation process, which is turn led The Bekasi City Government to reopening school on March 2021. Currently, reopening school is implemented more than a month with health protocol and The Bekasi City Government still consider to reopening more schools because there are some proposals from schools and parents that would like to face-to-face learning.

### Implication

Future studies need to involve data from the Bekasi Health Department on a regular basis, so that future researchers can gain other insights into the negotiation process and conflict resolution for the reopening elementary schools in Bekasi. In addition, the evaluation of the reopening schools policy also needs to be carried out, even



though the schools that have been opened previously have passed the screening selection, such as the facilities that meet the health protocol. However, this evaluation still needs to be done in order to reduce the number of the spread of Covid-19 in the school environment. Thus, the Ministry of Education and Culture not only focuses on overcoming Learning Loss caused by online learning, but also pays attention to the health and effectiveness of teaching and learning activities between teachers and students.

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