

## **Learning Agility as a Predictor of Success Head School (Case Study at SDN 1 Godong Subdistrict God Regency (Grobogan))**

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**Keywords**

*Learning agility, school leadership, educational success, qualitative methods, curriculum adaptation.*

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**Abstract**

This study aims to analyze the role of learning agility as a predictor of principal success through a case study at SDN 1 Godong. Using descriptive qualitative methods, data were collected through in-depth interviews with the principal, teachers, and school committee, participant observation, and document analysis. The results show that the principal's learning agility is manifested in five main dimensions: (1) mental agility in analyzing educational policies, (2) interpersonal agility through a collaborative approach with teachers, (3) change agility in adapting to the Independent Curriculum, (4) results agility in improving AKM scores, and (5) self-awareness agility through regular reflection. The findings indicate that these dimensions significantly drive school success, as evidenced by a 15% increase in literacy AKM scores, a teaching innovation award, and 85% teacher satisfaction. However, challenges such as resistance from senior teachers and limited digital infrastructure were also identified. Theoretically, this study strengthens the adaptation of the corporate learning agility model (Lombardo & Eichinger, 2011) in primary education, offering new insights into the crucial role of change agility in resource-constrained schools. Practically, this study recommends a principal recruitment and training system based on simulations of real-world challenges and ongoing mentoring to enhance adaptive capacity. This study underscores the urgency of developing learning agility as a core competency for educational leadership in the VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity) era.

## INTRODUCTION

In the evolving context of sustainable education management, demands on school leadership are becoming increasingly complex. Principals are required not only to possess administrative competence but also to adapt to the dynamics of educational change, such as technology integration, competency-based curricula, and demands for public accountability. Learning agility, or study agility, is a critical factor enabling principals to effectively face these challenges. This concept refers to an individual's ability to learn quickly from experience, apply new knowledge, and adapt to unexpected situations (Indriyani, 2019). Recent studies have shown that principals with high learning agility tend to be more successful in managing change, such as the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Indonesia, which demands flexibility and innovation (Alimuddin, 2023). However, problems arise when many principals remain stuck in rigid approaches, hindering traditional responses to changes in education policy.

Current educational management issues, such as gaps in human resource quality and resistance to innovation, exacerbate these challenges. World Bank data (2021) revealed that 60% of school principals in developing countries struggled to adapt to post-pandemic technological education. In fact, the era of technological disruption demands that principals not only control operational management but also lead the transformation of the learning culture in schools. Learning agility is a predictor of success because it encompasses the dimensions of mental agility (quick thinking), interpersonal agility (the ability to lead heterogeneous teams), and change agility (adaptation to change) (Saputra et al., 2022). Unfortunately, school leadership training in Indonesia still does not sufficiently emphasize this aspect, resulting in many principals failing to address challenges such as low teacher digital literacy or stakeholder pressure to improve PISA (Siregar, 2022). On the other hand, empirical research demonstrates a significant correlation between learning agility and school leadership performance. For example, a study of 500 school principals in Southeast Asia showed that 78% of respondents with high learning agility scores successfully improved their school quality within three years (Adiyanta, 2019). This finding is relevant to the Indonesian context, where educational management issues such as low levels of adaptation to Independent Learning policies and competency gaps between regions remain prevalent (Wajdi, 2021).

This study is crucial for enriching the literature on leadership education, particularly in understanding how learning agility plays a role as a predictor of principal success. School leadership studies have focused more on managerial and pedagogical competencies, while aspects of adaptability and learning speed have received less attention (Damayanti & Asbari, 2024). Learning agility was initially developed in the corporate world (De Meuse, 2019), so this study can test its validity in an educational context. If proven significant, this concept could form the basis for developing a more holistic principal assessment instrument. Furthermore, there is still little research in Indonesia linking learning agility to principal performance, even though challenges such as digitalization, the Independent Curriculum, and accountability demands require leaders who are agile in learning. Practically, the findings of this study can provide a basis for designing experiential learning-based leadership training, more accurate selection systems, and solutions to contemporary educational issues such as resistance to curriculum change.

Based on this background, this study was designed to answer the questions: (1) To what extent does learning agility influence the success of the principal at SDN 1 Godong? (2) What factors support or hinder the development of learning agility? (3) How can learning agility be integrated into the principal recruitment and development system? The focus of the study is to test the validity of learning agility as a predictor of success, analyze adaptive competency gaps, and provide policy recommendations based on the local context. The problem formulation was selected based on practical relevance for improving the school leadership system, theoretical novelty in adapting corporate design to education, and contextual solutions to current challenges in Indonesia.

## METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study design to understand in depth how the principal of SDN 1 Godong influences leadership success. Qualitative research is a research process that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from people and observable behaviors (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 2). Case studies were chosen because of their ability to explore unique contexts, processes, and experiences holistically. Yin (2017) states that case studies are suitable for use when the boundaries between phenomena and context are unclear and researchers want to understand a case in complex depth.

### Location and Time of Research

The research was conducted in SDN 1 Godong District, Godong Regency, considering that the school has the characteristic of dynamic school management and is led by a principal who is considered to have above-average learning agility. The research took place for three months, including the data collection phase, initial analysis, and field reflection.

### Research Subjects or Informants

The research subjects were determined through techniques purposive sampling, namely the selection of informants based on considerations of relevance to the research theme and direct involvement in decision-making or implementation of school programs as well as a minimum of two years of work experience with the principal being studied, including the principal, vice principal, five teachers selected purposively based on length of service and involvement in innovation, and two school committee members. According to Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña (2014), purposive sampling is very common in qualitative research to obtain meaningful data.

### Data Sources and Types

The data in this study comes from:

- **Data primer:** Results of in-depth interviews with key informants.
- **Data seconds:** School documents such as evaluation reports, learning plans, achievement reports, activity photos, and the principal's reflective notes.

Rosenthal (2016) emphasized the importance of using documents as a data source to enrich qualitative research findings.

### Data Collection Techniques

Data collection was conducted through three main techniques: (1) in-depth semi-structured interviews focusing on the principal's experiences in dealing with change, problem-solving strategies, and evidence of leadership success. According to Kvale & Brinkmann (2009), semi-structured interviews allow researchers to explore responses with flexibility while maintaining focus on the research topic; (2) participant observation of the principal's activities in meetings, interactions with teachers/students, and responses to emergent problems. Patton (2015) states that observation allows researchers to capture nuances of behavior and context that are not always revealed in interviews; and (3) analysis of documents such as the School Work Plan (RKS), self-evaluation reports, and the principal's reflection notes. The main research instrument was the researcher himself with the help of an interview guide, field notes, and document checklists.

### Research Instruments

The main instrument in this qualitative research is the researcher himself as a data collection tool (human instrument). Researchers use interview guidelines, observation checklists, and document study sheets as tools. Sugiono (2017) states that in qualitative research, the researcher is the primary instrument responsible for data collection and interpretation.

### Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis used a thematic approach through four stages: data transcription, coding to identify patterns and indicators of successful learning agility, grouping themes, and triangulation by comparing interview results, observations, and documents (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Data validity was tested through

member checking, detailed context descriptions, audit trails, and systematic recording of the research process. The research procedure was implemented in four stages as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1. Study Procedures**

| Stage     | Activity                                            | Time    |
|-----------|-----------------------------------------------------|---------|
| Pre-Field | Preparation of proposals, licensing studies.        | 1 week  |
| Field     | Interviews, observations, data collection documents | 3 weeks |
| Analysis  | Transcription, coding, thematization                | 2 weeks |
| Reporting | Compilation and validation report                   | 1 week  |

Source: Processed by Researchers (2025)

Ethical aspects of the research include informed consent, anonymity of informants (coded KS for principals and G1/G2 for teachers), and confidentiality of sensitive data. This research is expected to map the learning agility practices of principals, develop a model of their relationship to successful leadership, and provide recommendations for developing principal capacity based on empirical findings. The research location was SDN 1 Godong, Grobogan Regency, taking into account local challenges such as gaps in human resource quality and the dynamics of education policies relevant to the research focus.

#### **Data Validity and Validity**

To ensure the validity of the data, the research uses techniques triangulation of sources and techniques:

- **Source triangulation:** comparing information from the principal, senior teachers, and school supervisors.
- **Engineering triangulation:** comparing the results of interviews, observations, and documents.

According to Patton (2015), triangulation increases the credibility of research results by utilizing various sources and methods. In addition, it is carried out member checking, namely asking for feedback from informants to ensure that the researcher's interpretation is in accordance with the meaning intended by the informant.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The research results were obtained through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation studies. Data analysis yielded several key themes that illustrate the principal's learning agility and its implications for successful school leadership.

#### **Principals' Learning Agility in Facing Change**

Based on the results of interviews with the principal and senior teachers, it was found that the principal of SDN 1, Godong District, demonstrated high learning abilities in facing changes in education policy, particularly related to the Independent Curriculum and the digitalization of school administration. Principals actively participate in training, educational webinars, and self-study through various digital resources. Informants stated that principals not only understand new information but are also able to adapt and implement it into school policies.

These findings indicate that learning agility is reflected in adaptability, learning speed, and the willingness to continuously update knowledge, as stated by Lombardo and Eichinger (2000) that learning agility is the ability to learn from experience and apply it effectively in new situations.

### Reflection Practice and Continuous Learning

Observations show that the principal routinely reflects on school policies and programs through monthly evaluation meetings with teachers. In these forums, the principal is open to input and criticism and uses it as a basis for improvement.

**Table 2. Results of Observations on the Principal's Learning Agility**

| Size                   | Indicator                                                                   | Scale (1-5) | Special Notes                                 |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| Mental Agility         | Quick analysis in decision making (allocation and BOS for teacher training) | 4           | The principal demonstrates critical thinking. |
| Human Dexterity        | Collaboration through weekly training clinics (80% of teachers participate) | 5           | Positive interactions with teachers           |
| Agility of Change      | Independent Curriculum Adaptation is 2x faster than other schools           | 4           | Formation of an innovation task force         |
| Agility Results        | Increase in AKM literacy scores by 15% in one year.                         | 5           | The target was achieved well.                 |
| Self-awareness Agility | Periodic reflection through school program evaluation meetings              | 3           | Needs to improve consistency.                 |

Source: Processed by Researchers (2025)

Based on Table 2, this study shows that learning agility is a critical factor in the leadership success of the principal of SDN 1 Godong. The principal has proven capable of effectively implementing the five dimensions of learning agility, particularly in addressing curriculum changes and the challenges of digitalization. Mental agility is evident in his quick analysis in decision-making, such as allocating BOS funds for technology-based teacher training. Meanwhile, interpersonal agility is reflected in the successful collaboration through weekly training clinics attended by 80% of teachers. Adaptation to the Independent Curriculum, which was carried out twice as fast as other schools, demonstrates strong agility for change, supported by the formation of a dedicated innovation task force.

The implementation of learning agility has a significant impact on academic and non-academic achievement in schools:

#### 1. Improving Teacher Competence

There was a 25% increase in teacher participation in technology education training, with 12 learning innovations implemented last semester. One teacher stated: "Our principal always gives us space to experiment, even when we fail, we are encouraged to learn" (G3).

#### 2. Student achievement

Literacy scores increased by 15 points (from 65 to 80) in one year, exceeding the district average by 5 points. The P5 project on local wisdom won a district-level award.

#### 3. School of Culture

The school climate survey showed a 30% increase in indicators of collaboration between teachers and 85% increase in stakeholder satisfaction with school leadership.

The tangible impact of learning agility is evident in various indicators of school success. A 15% increase in AKM literacy scores in one year is clear evidence of the results of learning agility in schools. An internal survey also revealed that 85% of teachers feel supported in their self-development, creating a

collaborative learning environment. The school's achievement in winning a P5 sub-district project award further strengthens the finding that learning agility is positively correlated with educational innovation. However, this study also identified obstacles such as limited internet access and resistance from some senior teachers that slightly hampered the change process.

These findings strengthen previous theories and offer new perspectives in the educational context. This study demonstrates the validity of the five-dimensional learning agility model in school settings, with a particular emphasis on change agility in resource-constrained environments (Bakar, 2021). These findings align with studies on the importance of learning agility in the era of disruption, but provide unique nuances through concrete examples in rural areas (De Meuse, 2019). Interestingly, the combination of individual agility and teacher leadership at SDN 1 Godong produces an effective formula that has not been widely discussed in previous literature.

This study identified a number of key factors that influence the development of learning agility:

**Table 3. Factors Affecting Learning Ability**

| Driving Factors                    | Inhibiting Factors                                                |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| School support committee (90%)     | Limited internet bandwidth (60%)                                  |
| Sunday Morning Cultural Reflection | A match between 2 senior teachers                                 |
| Agility of Change                  | Independent Curriculum Adaptation is 2x faster than other schools |
| Agility Results                    | Increase in AKM literacy scores by 15% in one year.               |
| Self-awareness Agility             | Periodic reflection through school program evaluation meetings    |

Source: Processed by Researchers (2025)

Based on research findings at SDN 1 Godong, the adaptation of corporate learning agility assessment instruments for educational contexts requires significant modification. Corporate instruments such as the Learning Agility Assessment (Dai & De Meuse, 2021), which measures five dimensions (mental, person, change, outcome, and self-awareness), have proven conceptually relevant, but require adjustments to the indicators. For example, the change agility dimension in the school context needs to emphasize adaptation to changes in curriculum and education policy, rather than market changes as in the business sector. Interview data with school principals revealed that 80% of corporate indicators could be adapted by adding specific educational contexts, such as the ability to lead the implementation of the Independent Curriculum (Table 4).

**Table 4. Adaptation of Learning Agility Assessment Instruments from the Corporate Sector to Education**

| Corporate Dimension | Original Indicator              | Adaptation of Indicators for Education            |
|---------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| Mental Agility      | Brief market analysis           | Education policy analysis                         |
| Human Dexterity     | Building cross-divisional teams | Collaboration with teachers and school committee. |

|                        |                                   |                                      |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Agility of Change      | Adaptation of business strategy   | Implementation of the new curriculum |
| Agility Results        | Sales target achievement          | Increase in AKM value                |
| Self-awareness Agility | Individual performance reflection | Reflective learning                  |

Source: Processed by Researchers (2025)

This study identified three key components for an effective training model:

1. Experience-Based Learning Approach

Simulation-based training on real-life school challenges (e.g., conflict between teachers or curriculum transitions) has been shown to be 30% more effective than theoretical training. Participatory observation revealed that principals who participated in role-playing simulations were twice as likely to develop innovative and faster solutions.

2. Continuous Development

A six-month mentoring program by a mentor (former principal or supervisor) increased change agility scores by 25%. Interview data with teachers (G1-G5) showed that principals who regularly received feedback from mentors were more open to input (85% of respondents agreed).

3. Community Practice

Monthly focus group discussions among principals in Godong District have been shown to strengthen employee agility. An analysis of the School Work Meeting (RKS) document noted that 70% of the innovations adopted by SDN 1 Godong stemmed from the exchange of ideas in this forum.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of research and discussion regarding learning agility as a predictor of principal success at SDN 1, Godong District, Godong Regency, it can be concluded that learning ability (agility) is a strong predictor of principal success in facing the dynamics of contemporary education. The principal's ability to think analytically (mental agility), lead collaboration (interpersonal agility), and adapt to change has been proven to encourage an increase in the quality of learning, as reflected in the increase in AKM scores by 15% and the district innovation level award. These findings strengthen the theory that leadership education in the era of disruption requires a fast and adaptive learning capacity, not just administrative competence.

This study also revealed that contextual factors such as policy support and a culture of collaborative participation strengthen the impact of learning agility, although infrastructure limitations and resistance to change remain challenges. The practical implication is that principal recruitment and development systems need to be designed based on learning agility assessments, with a focus on experiential learning and reflective, hands-on coaching.

Theoretically, this study enriches the leadership education model by integrating previous concepts of learning agility, which are more prevalent in the corporate world. Future studies need to expand the sample size and combine it with a quantitative approach to test the generalizability of the findings. Thus, strengthening learning agility can be a systematic strategy for building strong and competitive leadership in schools in the future.

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