

Organizational Agility in Educational Setting: A Case Study of Sekolah Murid Merdeka

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Abstract

Agility becomes the most significant dimension in facing the Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity (VUCA) situation. Schools as a key organisation in surviving any environment changes need to adapt and adjust. On the other hand, schools are viewed as conventional institutions. Comfortable with a traditional approach in managing the organization, schools consider as one of the latter in implementing change management. Lack of discussion and research related to agility in schools, particularly kindergarten to high school (K12) setting encourage this article to conduct a case study in one of the fastest growing schools in Indonesia namely Sekolah Murid Merdeka (SMM). This article was conducted using a qualitative method complemented with a survey as triangulation approach. The result from this research is that SMM argues to be implementing agility as a key variable in executing the operational system. Agility became a significant dimension in helping SMM adjust with the current environment and market demand thus resulted in gaining almost 10000 students in one year.

Keywords: *Agility, Organizational Agility, Agile School*

Introduction

Agility is a key determinant in the success of an organization (Trinh-Phuong et al., 2012; Menon & Suresh, 2021) in facing a 4.0 industrial revolution, all organizations will encounter Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity (VUCA). The disruptive changes in digitalization and technology empowers organizations to adapt fast and adjust with the situation. (Joiner, 2019; Omidvar et al., 2021). Agility according to Yusuf et al is the ability of an organization to respond and successfully give the right response in facing both internal and external changes (Yusuf et al., 1999; MENON, 2020).

For competitive performance and innovation in business environment, firms are depending rigorously in informational technology in terms of knowledge, process and communication to increase their agility since agility is the most vital element. This include agility in education in which nourish both business knowledge and insight for entrepreneurial alertness (Sambamurthy et al., 2003).

School as an organization argued is the last to adapt with the changes (Farzaneh et al., 2014; MENON, 2020) Agility has been implemented in the manufactured industry more than 20 years ago (Yusuf et al., 1999) whilst in education field agility starts developing during the world economic forum in 2018 It is evidence that the need of school and pedagogy to acquire agility is inevitable (Klaus, 2018)

Pedagogy has transformed into a technological function and the integration becomes more appealing particularly when addressing the education needs of continuously changing and evolving schools (Gupta & Bharadwaj, 2013; Sadeghi & Kalantari, 2021)

Sekolah Murid Merdeka (SMM)

Sekolah Murid Merdeka started in 2019 and became the first blended school from kindergarten to high school. Founded less than 2 years ago SMM has more than 9000 students from all across Indonesia. Believing that technology integration and collaboration is the DNA in the future education, SMM design their learning to prepare students acquiring 21st century skills.

“We collaborate with a lot of teachers from all across Indonesia to invite them to also contribute to SMM. We have teachers from Medan, Bandung, Pontianak and Sintang North Kalimantan teaching live from their hometown. Using technology including a suitable learning management system and virtual meeting platform enables us to respond to the changes of the situation” Yason, School Administrator.

SMM implements competence-based curriculum in their learning. Aligning with the 21st century skills that are brought by the world economic forum (Klaus, 2018), SMM believe that emphasising on students competency will prepare them to be successful in the future rather than focusing on content material that will change and constantly evolve

“We believe that we have to prepare our students to be able to solve future problems that do not even exist today, and succeed in the career choice that they choose even if the job is not here yet” Yason, school administrator

It is argues that SMM succeed in enrolling thousands of students due to its ability to adjust with the demand of the digital environment

“The reason I enrolled my child to SMM is because of the curriculum and the learning that describes 21st century education. I acknowledge that SMM initiated before the pandemi, They already prepare the learning should include both online and offline” Indah, Parents.

Parents are convinced that the future education has to start immediately. The use of technology will become the backbone in supporting the effectiveness of teaching and learning (Trinh-Phuong et al., 2012) SMM provides a digitalized learning that accommodates teachers to create an end to end learning design that supports them with the new way of carrying out a learning method. Teachers are also given the opportunity to implement the integrated technological teaching tools.

“We design our plan in the learning management system and both students and parents can monitor and evaluate their learning journey using the platform, that includes learning calendar, completion of the task given, electronic portfolio, transcript. It is definitely the highlight of the future learning” Adelia, Teacher.

“I've always defined this SMM as 100% school, 100% technology education, a start-up, so we depend a lot on technology”. Yason, School Administrator

Students as the centre of SMM policy and focus have also chosen SMM because of the innovative approach.

“They are very innovative. I think SMM is the answer for future education. I feel that I can get the freedom to learn various things with flexible time. Approach and support from the teachers and friends are very good. Unexpectedly, I truly enjoy the system of learning SMM offers”. Keya, Student.

Organizational agility define as is a thorough and comprehensive response in facing business challenges of profit driven situation from a fast changing, and meeting the demand of high quality, high performance of goods and services (Yusuf et al., 1999; Zhang & Sharifi, 2000). Organizational agility also describe as the ability of organization to fast sense and respond to situational changes and in the highly competitive and volatile environment, agility become the key factor of organizational success (Trinh-Phuong et al., 2012; Menon & Suresh, 2021).

Anticipate has a meaning of being prepared on threat and possible chances that may occur in a volatile situation. Agility has been identify as sensing and respond to unanticipated situation faster than the competitor (Gupta & Bharadwaj, 2013; Sadeghi & Kalantari, 2021).

Agility implies to the ability of one organization in responding to a quick environmental change and it is argued to be the key factor in determining the effectiveness of the school. Successful response to external and internal changes can identify as an agile school. (Farzaneh et al., 2014; Khakivatan et al., 2021)

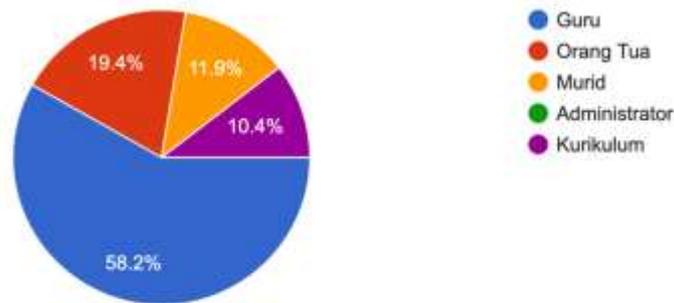
Some research argue that many indicators demonstrate traditional sequences that implement in the educational field are unsuitable to adapt the challenges therefore more global competencies and skills are very much needed to integrate both humanism and technology (Marope et al., 2017). There are increasing numbers of experts who agree with the urgency of developing a new approach towards the new situation called the “age of agility” (Gaulden and Gottlieb, 2017). Agile approach to teaching and learning in the 21st century education system should feature flexibility and demonstrate a structure that adapts with multiple choices. In order to comply with personalized learning that is a growing paradigm in the modern environment. The development of agile education is still at the early stage. This development is an action to encounter challenges in modern societies impacted by the evolving and changing of the school because of technology (Gaulden & Gottlieb, 2017)

Method

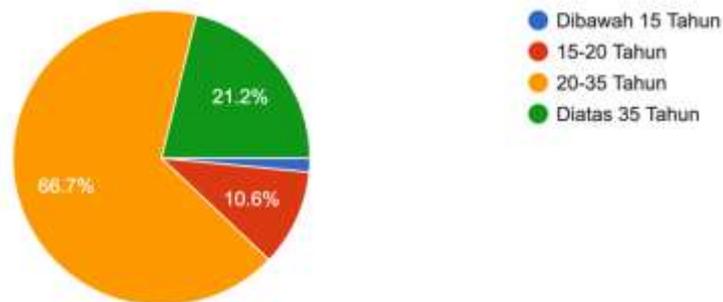
This article focuses on how agility is evidenced in the highest growing school in Indonesia. This article uses a qualitative approach by interviewing parents, students, teachers, and school administrators. Long distance interview was conducted due to the current covid situation in Indonesia. All participants are above 17 years old and agreed to give consent on the research. This article will look into the fastest growing school in Indonesia and identify how the school implemented agility in its organization.

As a triangulation process, the survey has been released to complement the data. 23 questions are divided into 4 dimensions of responsiveness, flexibility, competency, and speed.

Peran di SMM
67 responses



Usia
66 responses



The above diagrams demonstrate that most of the survey respondents are teachers 58,2 percent, follow by parents 19,4 percent, students 11,9 percent and curriculum are 10,4 percent. Mostly under the range of 20-35 years old.

The lack of literature in terms of the organizational agility in school settings create a gap in finding the empirical evidence and supporting facts to promote this approach in the educational field. This article may give contribution in the educational field and create a discussion on how agility may play an important role in maintaining the existence of the school in the future.

According to (Yusuf et al., 1999) agility has four dimensions, namely Responsiveness, Competency, Flexibility and Speed.

Results and Discussion

Responsiveness

According to Yusuf et al, Responsiveness has the characteristic of how one organization could sense, predict, embrace and finally have the ability to anticipate changes (Yusuf et al., 1999). SMM demonstrated its responsiveness by its flexibility in sensing the future risk and managing the expected changes.

Yason SMM school administrator said that SMM has demonstrated a highly responsive gesture towards changes

“Indeed, SMM itself can already be said to be one of the schools that is most ready to respond and adapt to changes even when other schools have not done it. How we predict the changes has always become the real action plan. One of the examples is how we stand out during the pandemic, where other schools were all struggling, the ecosystem and infrastructure in smm make it possible to develop and be accepted by the community. Furthermore, it seen as a the best solution in relation with distance learning”

Teachers also argue that SMM have the ability to sense and adapt with future risk and managing the abrupt changes

“During the pandemic where students feel that the learning is limited, teachers from other schools using whatsapp as the teaching tools and only occasionally contact the students, SMM has provided a learning management system. I know the struggle when I chat with teachers from other schools, they are really confused on how to deliver the best teaching method. Not that they do not want to, but the infrastructure is not provided” Adelia, teacher.

In facing changes, it is evidence that SMM could provide an immediate reaction by affecting them into the system. Based on the data analysis, SMM created a procedure to shift its policy according to the recent data.

Another real example on how SMM respond quickly to changes are elaborately explain by Yason as school administrator.

“The real example is when we look at the statistics, we talk about May and June 2021, yes, we are all getting ready to prepare offline schools but in June there was an extraordinary increase in covid Delta, finally we had to hit the brake and switch plans to strengthen our online schools again, for example. and in November the case decreased. We have statistics that the covid cases have started to decline, therefore even before the government decides we have to go to school again, face to face again. SMM of course has preventive measures, and we are switching direction again. In fact, when 90 percent of the area in Java was in the red zone, we got directions to look for the yellow zone and met in a small village in Kudus and even though it is not in the business pipeline, we have to try, let's do it, we contact the children, we invest in buildings there and so on. After that we are confident to add from 9 hubs to 17 hubs, it's like SMM is agile and continues to grow.”

Parents have argued that SMM capabilities of predicting the change become the key factor in choosing it for their children.

“I first chose SMM because it is the best school for online learning. But now as they are ready for offline and hybrid learning, I become more convinced that they are suitable for the need of the future learning” Indah, Parents.

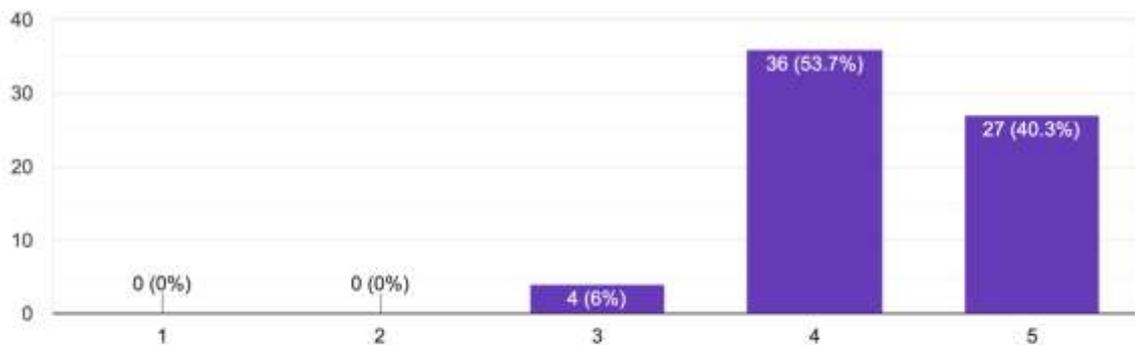
The students confirm SMM immediate response in changes by stated that each term there are always new system updated

“Systems are always updated, in each term there are always additional features/systems or new menus, for example Elective Classes which are always interesting because the choices are fresh. Another example is that in the early moments of the pandemic SMM haven't allowed face-to-face classes, but now there's an offline class option” Keya, Student

An organization display its responsiveness also demonstrated by its ability in recovery from the changes, when facing the sudden disruption SMM enable to initiate and deliver an action plan to recover from the changes

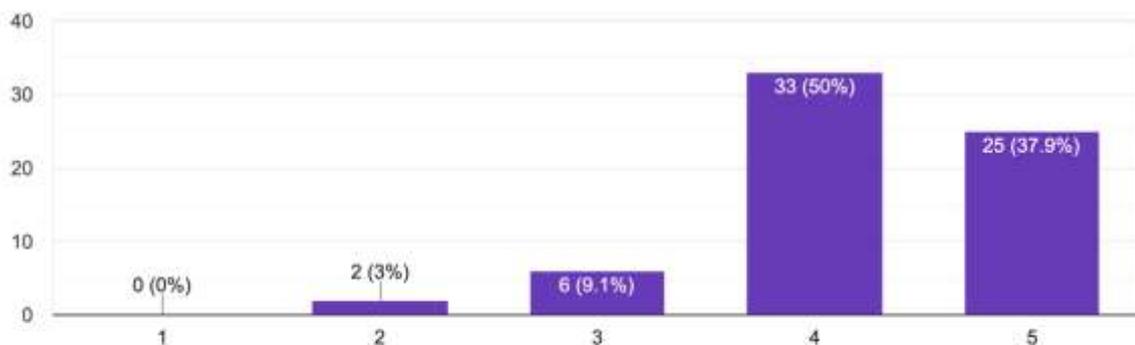
SMM mampu mendeteksi apabila akan terjadi perubahan situasi yang cepat

67 responses



SMM mampu memberikan respon yang tepat terhadap perubahan yang terjadi

66 responses



From the above graphic it is evidence that from 67 responses 40,3 percent strongly agree and 53,7 percent are agree with the statement SMM is able to detect and aware of the sudden changes. Furthermore, total 87,9 percent are agree and strongly agree that SMM is able to provide the appropriate response regarding the unprecedented changes.

Competency

Competency becomes a significant dimension in Agility according (Menon & Suresh, 2021) Organization needs to display its ability in demonstrating strategic vision, the use of appropriate technology in both hardware and software and monitoring the quality of its products and services (Omidvar et al., 2021)

SMM has the ability to demonstrate a clear strategic vision. According to parents, SMM is committed to deliver the best quality of education with affordable tuition.

“SMM has always been clear about its mission statement, in which to give equitable distribution of the quality of education” Indah, parents

The argument are aligning with the explanation from the school administrator and teacher.

“Reach as many students as possible to get affordable quality education” Yason, school administrator

“We want equal education for all students and not (focusing the learning) on results but try to maximize the process and (we try) as much as possible we don't judge the students first. (The learning method) It's different from what I used to be at school... in SMM all children are special and how are all students facilitated” Adelia, teacher.

The other dimension in competency is identify whether the organization use appropriate technology in both software and hardware

“SMM is highly depend on technology, we consistently develop the system that facilitate learning and operation” Yason, school administrator.

“Technology is an effective teaching aid today and QMS is well prepared for it” Indah, parents.

With the commitment of all digitally integrated, SMM has proven that technology is becoming the backbone of the success in delivering the learning and building the operating system. This integrated technology system is still facing several challenges as the user capabilities are varied from early adapter to digital proficiency.

“What is clear, when choosing SMM, I realized that I had to update the gadget/hardware once in a while and also the system/software so that it was compatible with the system used on the SekolahMu web/application. I can see that a stable connection is also a must. Although for this, I faced many challenges especially its hard to find a reliable internet provider in my area, whenever we found one, the system of SMM/SekolahMu is very easy for the users” Keya, student.

“For the use of technology, the facilities already exist, but sometimes we communicate it, because we are different from what we usually do, for example, there are still many who still ask to use wa, the problem is because it is unusual, there are still many, especially new students who are still confused.... the facilities are already there, it's enough but the obstacles are from those who don't know or the errors that are quite hindering” Adelia, teacher.

The development of individual capabilities becomes a key factor in the competency dimension. Organization should empower all of its members to expand their knowledge and skills.

“Every meeting is always inserted with certain materials that seem needed or directly at the meeting, for example, there are people who confide in students who need this, what does the teacher need to respond to immediately. Many trainings are held for free high school teachers, this is very helpful, especially for new teachers, the people are not rigid and don't feel patronizing when providing solutions or sharing knowledge” Adelia, teacher.

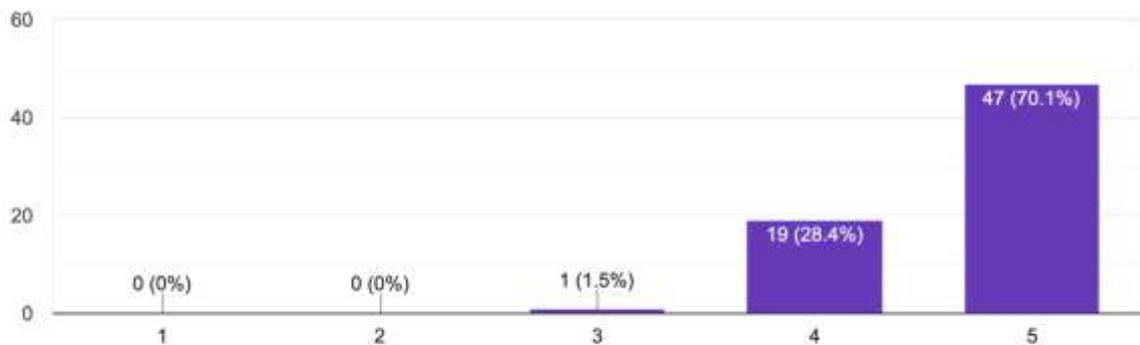
“I would say the teachers are great, their capacities in handling the class and teaching are amazing. But the students .. I can feel that they are very supportive but inactive in the live classes. The staffs are very helpful and nice” Keya, student.

“At the manager level, yes, there were scholarship programs that were given so that it would help managers to develop and (while) for SMM teachers we just held training for teachers and developed (their) competency” Yason, school administrator.

“Competence of knowledge and empowerment of SMM residents is quite high, seen from the interaction and involvement of citizens in all activities” Indah, parents.

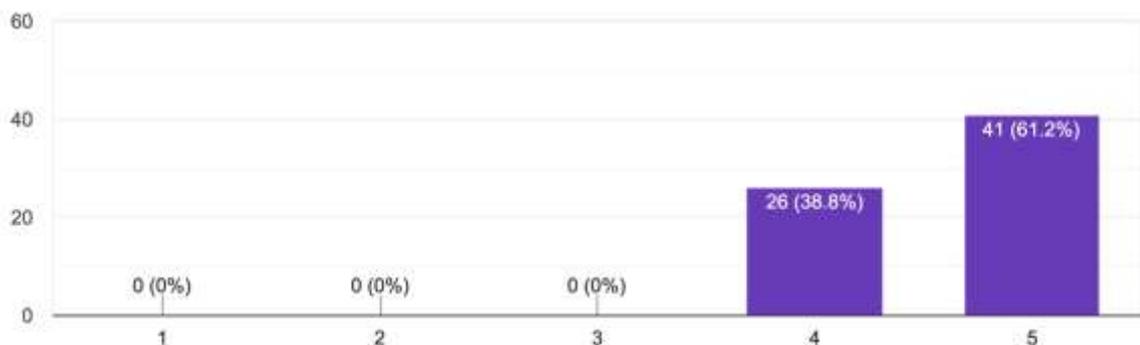
SMM memberikan ruang untuk penambahan pengetahuan

67 responses



SMM memberikan ruang memberdayakan semua warganya

67 responses



The above data demonstrated that 70,1 percent of the respondent are strongly agree that SMM encourages additional knowledge to its member. Another data represents that 100 percent respondent are strongly agree and agree with the statement that SMM empower all its member.

Another significant element from competency is how change management is implemented. The efficiency and effectiveness of managing knowledge and empower all member of the school community

“When it comes to operational procedures, which are richly systematic, I'm not sure they've reached that point, is there a chart that makes it easier or what, but I feel that change management is very happening and one of them is implemented because of the culture in it. So from the leadership type from my own leader, and what I pass on to my team, of course, is flexibility and room to try, there is room for experimentation to make mistakes and there are lessons learned that are expected to be new decisions. And at the level of the leader, manager, supervisor or at the school level, what do we say, the coordinator, they all have space, the teacher has room for it and that makes it conscious and unconscious. And that's to make it easier for me as a leader to give

new directions, of course, because everyone is prepared because everyone has the same DNA, we nurture them to be ready for change". Yason, school administrator.

"Moving forward, maybe it is because the team should continuously update the system and go along with the dynamic of life, especially during the pandemic". Keya, student.

"From the teacher's perspective, every time there are issues regarding changes, it seems that management has been able to adapt and direct where to go, so as a team, they can be directed and guided. and it feels like change can adapt quickly". Adelia, teacher.

For parents they are not aware of the nature of change management, they observe the overall operational system and management are sufficient.

"All operational systemized well" Indah, parent.

Flexibility

Flexibility in an organization indicates that agility transcends the system of its operation. Flexibility has an element of the ability to counter the issue of a constantly changing and evolving environment (Yusuf et al., 1999). In the manufacturing field, flexibility becomes very crucial due to keeping up with the market demand (Sherehiy et al., 2007; Manurung & Kurniawan, 2021). Schools have the urgency to perform flexibility too, in facing the 4.0 Industrial evolution, all schools need to adapt and adjust with the continuous change (Menon & Suresh, 2021; MENON, 2020).

SMM showcases its flexibility through responding quickly to the demand of the students' needs, changing situation or parents' insight. Parents view flexibility as the ability to adjust related to scheduling and program changing.

"Very flexible, SMM provide us with regular parents' session in which allowing us to give constructive feedback regarding the program and accommodate us with the flexibility regarding scheduling and program nature" Indah, parent.

Teachers argue that flexibility in SMM is internalized in all the aspect of their daily activity. They allowing the policy to develop and change based on the current data analysis.

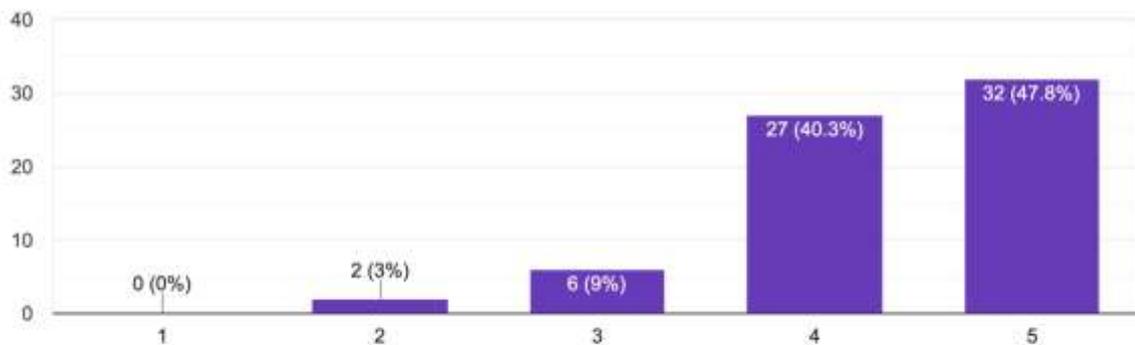
"Very flexible because we also aim for the needs of students, even if there is a well-made plan but it doesn't fit the student's needs, then everyone will be reluctant to step back and make a new plan, all of them are also very flexible to immediately replace the changes that occur. Additional add-on classes really look at the student's needs, if they don't match the student's needs, they are immediately changed according to the student's needs" Adelia, teacher.

"Flexible enough for children who have many activities. I can study and do assignments anywhere. For example, when I was in grade 10 participating in the Color Guard tournament for 1 semester, I often couldn't take Live classes, I could still update and watch recorded lessons, and during breaks, I practiced doing and uploading. PR. I can keep working and learning at the same time". Keya, students.

"Very flexible, very adaptive because maybe one of the drives is that we have big targets. We have a vision of reaching 20000 students, this vision makes everything flexible to change. For example, in April 2001 or June 2001, this SMM early childhood program had 25 teachers, which today has become 94 teachers in November. That is clear evidence that we have to adapt because the students went from 1600 to 6200. This situation makes us ready to adapt. Likewise with the program, in the past there was no religion class, now there is a religion class as well as elective class options in the past, there is no English class now" Yason, school administrator

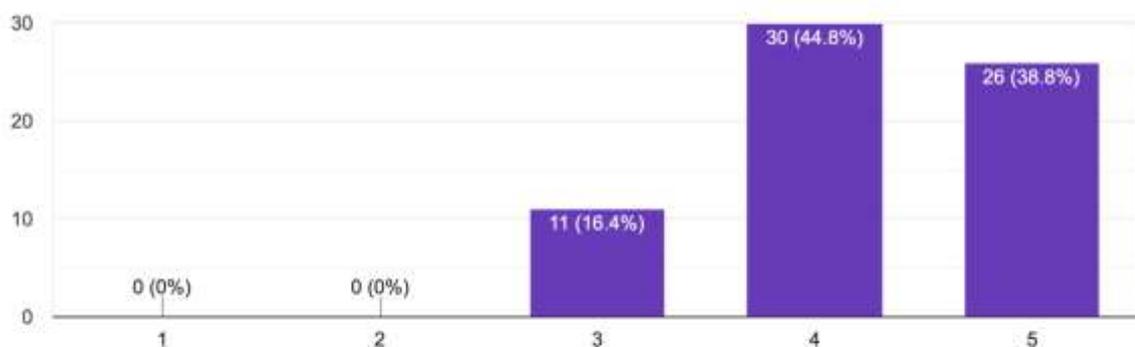
SMM sangat fleksibel dalam menambah program dan kegiatan baru?

67 responses



Warga SMM sangat fleksibel ketika menghadapi perubahan

67 responses



The survey data display that 89,1 percent respondent are agree and strongly agree that SMM very flexible in adding new program and new activity while 83,6 percent are agreed and strongly agree that SMM are very flexible in facing any environment changes.

Speed

We are living in a very time sensitive era(Sadeghi & Kalantari, 2021). The accuracy of operation in meeting the timeline is crucial (Omidvar et al., 2021). Organization demanded to deliver the product or services instantly(Menon & Suresh, 2021). SMM as an organization is also requested by the parents to introduce a new approach or program immediately.

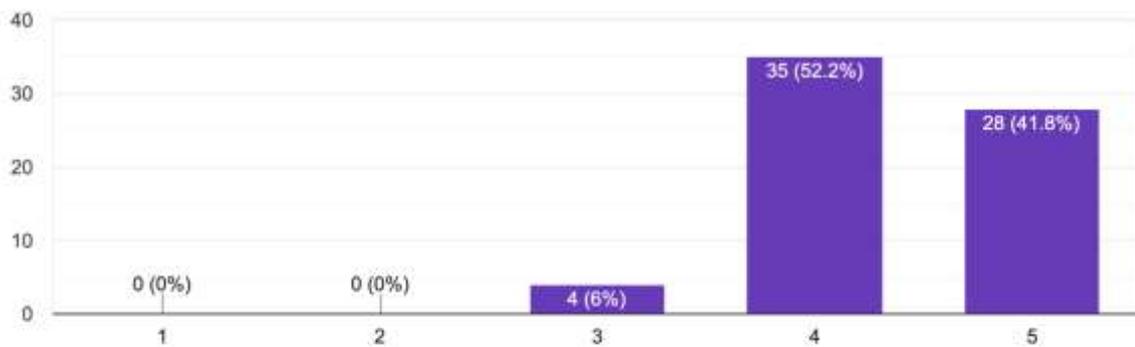
“Each term they announce *what’s new in SMM* during parents briefing. It really help to communicate with parents how fast we can deliver new program or new activity” Indah, parents.

“If there is data, we will be asked quickly, yesterday's example was related to face-to-face classes. We adjust and create new policies related to the new government rule for PTM (face to face session). Regarding the timeline, internally it has been designed so that it doesn't drag, so it's not too late from the original time. Even if there is a delay, it can be chased because it was made 2 days away” Yason, school administrator.

“If there is already supportive data, we will be asked (to act) quickly, yesterday's example related to face-to-face classes. Regarding the timeline, internally it has been designed so that it doesn't drag, so it's not too late from the original time. Even if there is a delay, it can be pursued because it was made two days away” Adelia, teacher.

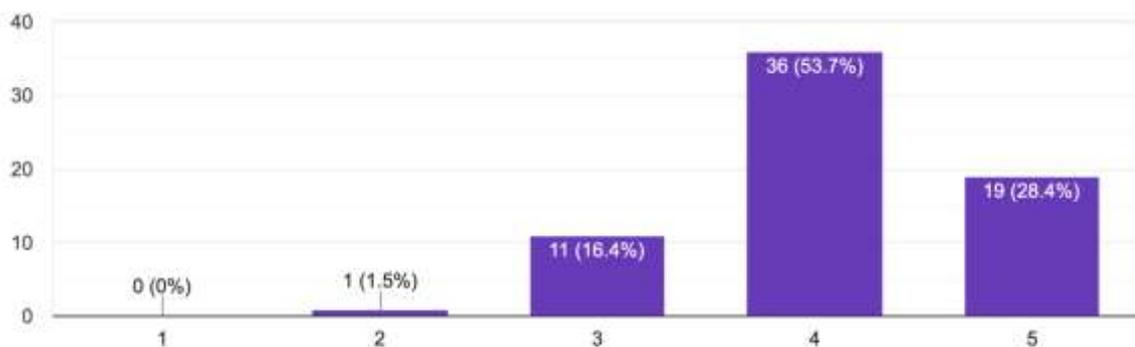
SMM cukup cepat dalam mengeluarkan program-program dan kegiatan baru

67 responses



Program yang dikeluarkan SMM sudah sesuai dengan timeline yang direncanakan

67 responses



From the data above we can conclude that 99,4 percent are agree and strongly agree that SMM are leading in speed in terms of releasing new program. Furthermore, 82,1 percent are agreed and strongly agree that the new program of SMM is already in line with the planned timeline.

Conclusion

The semi structured interview helped identify the four dimensions of Agility in Sekolah Murid Merdeka. The factors are responsiveness, competency, flexibility, and speed. It is evidenced that all member of the SMM including school leaders, teachers, parents and students are agreed that SMM has demonstrated all four factors and implemented the agility factors in their policy and daily activities. It is also argued that agility may play an important factor in gaining thousand of students in less than one year.

The survey complimentary support the evidence that SMM has implemented agility in their organization. More than 80 percent from all questions demonstrated that all agility factors have shown as most the answer are agree and strongly agree with the given statement. It can be a setting example on how a 21st century school develop an organizational agility and established themselves as an agile school.

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