

Principal Leadership Strategy In Improving Teacher Performance And Learning Quality In Junior High Schools

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the principal's leadership strategy in improving teacher performance and learning quality in Junior High Schools (SMP). The study was conducted qualitatively with descriptive-analytic methods at SMP Negeri 3 Ambara, Semarang Regency. Data collection was carried out through interviews, observations, and documentation. The results showed that principals who implemented transformational leadership succeeded in increasing teacher motivation and commitment. Effective strategies include routine supervision, teacher training, creating a conducive school climate, and consistent learning evaluation. Routine supervision provides constructive feedback to teachers, while a conducive school climate encourages collaboration and innovation in the learning process. However, several obstacles were found, such as time constraints and the difficulty of building collaboration between teachers in an individualistic environment. Overall, this study confirms that effective principal leadership plays an important role in improving teacher performance and the quality of education in schools.



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INTRODUCTION

Improving the quality of education in Indonesia is one of the government's top priorities in facing the challenges of globalization and international competition. Schools as educational institutions have an important role in producing a quality generation, where the principal acts as a leader who is responsible for the effectiveness of teacher performance and the quality of learning. Effective leadership in the school environment has a direct impact on improving the quality of education, because the principal is the main driver in the managerial process and coaching of educators (Mulyasa, 2004; Abdullah, 2020; Soleh et al., 2019; Fitria and Suminah, 2020).

According to several studies, the right leadership strategy not only has an impact on teacher performance, but also has implications for student motivation, innovation, and academic success. Leadership has a very important role and functions as a determining factor for success in every group or organization. The success or failure of a school is highly dependent on the quality of the principal's leadership. Therefore, the principal must be able to carry out his leadership role well to advance the school as an educational organization (Gaol, 2018). Several studies have shown that the implementation of effective leadership strategies not only has an impact on teacher performance, but also influences student motivation, innovation, and academic achievement.

However, in various junior high schools (SMP), there are still significant challenges in optimizing teacher performance and learning quality. Some problems that often arise include lack of teacher motivation, low classroom management skills, and minimal innovation in teaching methods. This condition is exacerbated by various dynamic curriculum demands, changes in education policies, and limited facilities and infrastructure in several areas.

In this context, the principal is expected to be able to formulate and implement leadership strategies that do not only focus on administrative aspects, but also pay full attention to the development of human resources, especially teachers, as the main agents in the learning process. Teachers are the

direct implementation of the curriculum. No matter how well the curriculum and education system are designed, without the support of adequate teacher capabilities, everything will not be effective. Teachers must have competence, effectiveness, and responsibility in directing student development to achieve maximum potential. The ultimate goal of all mentoring efforts by teachers is the formation of mature adults as a whole (Syamsul, 2017).

The success of the principal in improving teacher performance and the quality of learning is highly dependent on the leadership model applied. Transformational leadership style, for example, has been proven effective in inspiring teachers to be more committed to their duties and providing quality learning to students. In addition, the principal must also have the ability to supervise, provide constructive feedback, and create a school climate that is conducive to the teaching and learning process.

Quality education is the main key in forming competent human resources who are able to compete in the global era. At the high school level, the quality of education is largely determined by teacher performance and the quality of learning. Teachers as the spearhead of education play an important role in delivering lesson materials and shaping students' characters. Therefore, improving teacher performance is an aspect that must receive special attention from school management, especially the principal as the highest leader in the school environment.

The principal is not only responsible for the administrative and operational management of the school, but also has a role as a mentor and motivator for teachers. In this case, the principal's leadership strategy is one of the crucial factors that can influence the effectiveness of the learning process. Various literatures reveal that participatory, innovative, and visionary leadership strategies can significantly improve teacher performance, which ultimately has an impact on the quality of learning in the classroom. To achieve this, various improvement efforts are needed to improve the quality of education, including "fighting against circumstances" which often traps them in stagnant situations. There is a strong desire to improve the situation, but they are often reluctant to make changes for the better (Mukartik et al., 2020; Zulaiha et al., 2020; Darmiati et al., 2020; Hamzah et al., 2020).

However, implementing effective leadership strategies is not easy. Principals need to understand the various leadership approaches and styles, and how best to apply them in the specific context of their schools. Another challenge is adapting leadership strategies to changes in the curriculum, the demands of modern education, and socio-cultural conditions in the school environment (Zamroni, 2000; Listiningrum et al., 2020; Ivanova et al., 2020; Komalasari et al., 2020; Nugraha, 2019).

This study aims to analyze the principal's leadership strategy in improving teacher performance and learning quality in junior high schools (SMP). This study will discuss in depth the leadership model applied, factors that influence success, and challenges faced by principals in carrying out their leadership roles.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research is descriptive-analytical using a qualitative approach by Sugiyono (2018). The data sources in this study were the Principal and teachers at SMP Negeri 3 Ambarawa located in Semarang Regency, Central Java. The principal's leadership plays an important role in management to improve teacher performance and the quality of learning at SMP Negeri 3 Ambarawa. In this study, the principal was chosen as the main subject for several reasons: (1) The principal has a very central position and is responsible for implementing education in the school he leads, both directly and indirectly; (2) The principal has a strategic role in the organization of education in the school; (3) The principal understands the conditions and situations of the school in various aspects, including the challenges and developments faced; and (4) The principal has the ability to communicate and convey information regarding various activities that have been, are being, and will be carried out, in accordance with the goals to be achieved by the school.

This study is a qualitative study that aims to examine and describe the role of the principal at SMPN 3 Ambarawa. Based on the location of the study, this type of research is field research, where the researcher will go directly to the field to directly observe the research subjects. In qualitative research, there are three data collection techniques: interviews, documentation, and observation. In this study, primary data was collected through a structured interview method, by creating an interview

guideline containing several questions related to the implementation of MBS at SMPN 3 Ambarawa, involving the principal and class teachers.

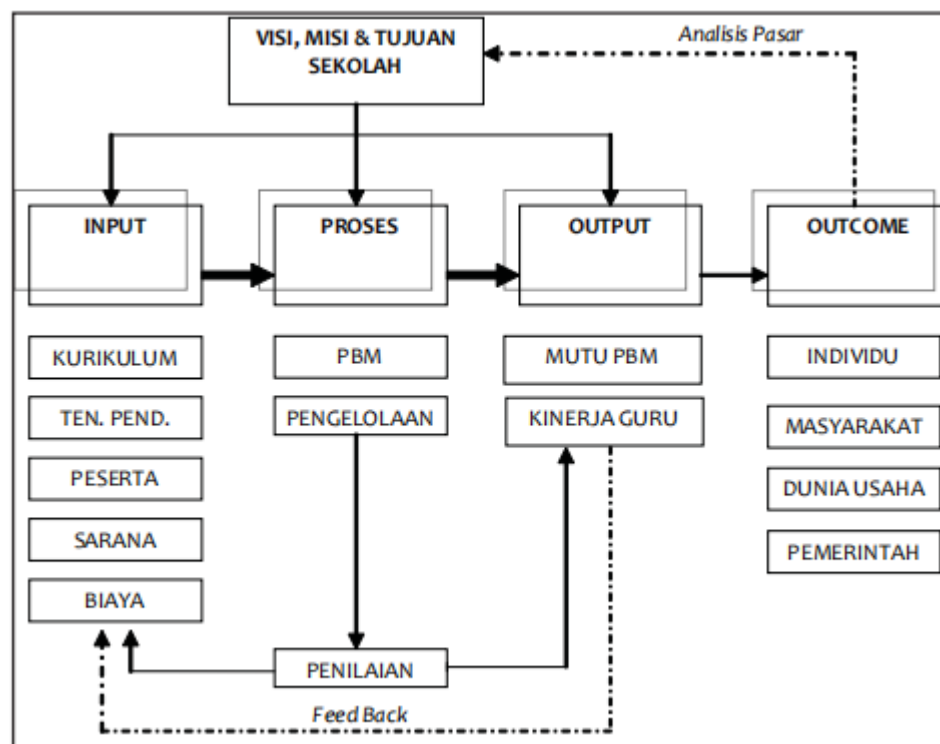
In-depth interview data collection techniques: Researchers conducted in-depth interviews to understand in detail the implementation of MBS in the school. Interviews were conducted openly with the principal and homeroom teacher, using voice recordings via mobile phones. The steps taken by the researcher include: 1) creating research instruments; 2) determining research subjects; 3) preparing several questions that provide an overview of the implementation of MBS; 4) opening the interview flow; 5) conducting interviews; 6) confirming the summary of the interview results and completing them; 7) writing down the interview results; and 8) identifying follow-up actions from the interview results.

Observation: Researchers participate directly in school activities that are relevant to the problem being researched and directly observe the MBS implementation process and who is involved in it. **Documentation:** To support the research results, the researcher also collected various documents from SMPN 3 Ambarawa. The documents are in the form of photos of school activities, archives of school facilities, interview transcripts, and various other documentation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

SMPN 3 Ambarawa is one of the public schools that is in great demand by the community to send their children to school. This is proven by the number of applicants that always exceeds the target. In the 2018/2019 academic year, there were 103 applicants, but only 56 students were accepted in 2 classes. In addition to its strategic location, this school has also experienced an increase in quality, both in academic and non-academic achievements, as well as in physical and non-physical aspects. The achievements of this school cannot be separated from the role of leadership, good management, and strong team support (Anees, 2018).

Leadership is an interesting topic to discuss, because the role of leadership greatly determines the success of an organization, in addition to the role of management. Leadership is a key element in management, in addition to other functions. Although there are many other factors that influence the success of an organization, leadership plays an important role in ensuring the running of the system within the organization. In addition, other factors such as the right organizational structure, adequate funding, and sufficient professional staff also influence the achievement of goals. Improving the quality of education will not occur without professional leadership and effective management, in addition to other important roles carried out by the principal (Asmani, 2012; Amalia, 2019; Apriani, 2020).



Picture 1 Research Paradigm

The changes and improvements in the quality of the school are largely influenced by the strong role of the principal in leading and managing. This was conveyed by Rokhim, M. Pd to the author. This strong principal is seen from his firmness in making decisions, consistent attitudes, and high commitment in implementing programs that have been agreed upon together, while still paying attention to various existing conditions.

Based on the analysis of data collected through interviews, observations, and documentation, several effective principal leadership strategies were found in improving teacher performance and the quality of learning in junior high schools (SMP).

1. Teacher Empowerment through Supervision and Training

The principal routinely supervises classes and provides feedback to teachers. This has a positive impact on improving teacher performance, especially in terms of lesson planning and classroom management.



Picture2Routine Supervision of Teacher Performance

The principal also initiated trainings related to innovative learning methods, which helped teachers improve their professional competence.

2. Creating a Conducive School Climate

The principal plays a role in creating a work environment that is conducive to the learning process. Through open and participatory communication, the principal ensures that all teachers feel supported and appreciated. This openness increases teachers' motivation to innovate in teaching.



Picture 3 Principal in improving the quality of learning

3. Implementation of Transformational Leadership

The principal applies a transformational leadership style by inspiring teachers through a clear school vision and mission. The principal motivates teachers to commit to professional development and encourages collaboration between teachers.



Picture 4 Inspiring teachers through vision and mission

This style has a significant influence in improving teacher performance and ultimately improving the quality of learning in schools.

4. Improving Evaluation and Monitoring of Learning

The principal implements a consistent evaluation system for ongoing learning. Teachers are given the opportunity to reflect on learning outcomes and improve their strategies based on the evaluation results. With effective monitoring, the principal is able to ensure continuous improvement in the quality of teaching.



Picture 5 Improvement of evaluation and monitoring of learning

The results of the study indicate that the principal's leadership strategy has a significant influence on improving teacher performance and learning quality. Principals who succeed in improving teacher performance tend to implement collaborative and participatory leadership. This is in line with the theory of transformational leadership which emphasizes empowering individuals to achieve organizational goals collectively.

Teacher empowerment through supervision and training is one of the most effective strategies. Routine supervision not only provides teachers with the opportunity to obtain feedback but also becomes a means of developing teacher competency. This strategy supports previous research which states that effective supervision contributes to improving the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom (Yusuf & Maliki, 2021).

In addition, the creation of a conducive school climate has also been proven to increase teacher motivation. Principals who successfully create open communication and encourage collaboration among teachers are able to build a work atmosphere that supports individual and collective performance improvement. This strategy strengthens the role of the principal as a leader who focuses not only on administrative aspects, but also on human resource development in the school environment.

The implementation of transformational leadership carried out by the principal, such as motivating teachers with a clear vision and mission, has succeeded in increasing teacher involvement and commitment in the educational process. Principals who implement this leadership are able to motivate teachers to be more proactive in improving learning methods and innovating in the classroom.

However, the challenges faced by principals in implementing this strategy are limited time and resources to conduct intensive supervision and training. Several principals also reported obstacles in building collaboration between teachers in schools that have an individualistic work culture. That effective principal leadership strategies play an important role in improving teacher performance and learning quality. The combination of good supervision, creating a conducive climate, implementing transformational leadership, and consistent learning evaluation are the keys to the success of principals in carrying out their duties.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this study shows that the principal's leadership strategy plays a crucial role in improving teacher performance and the quality of learning in junior high schools (SMP). This study uses a descriptive-analytic approach with qualitative methods, involving interviews, observations, and documentation at SMP Negeri 3 Ambara, Semarang Regency, Central Java. Data were collected from the principal and teachers as the main sources of information.

The research findings show that principals who implement transformational leadership tend to be more successful in motivating teachers to commit to their tasks and innovate in teaching. The strategy of empowering teachers through regular supervision and training is also very effective in improving teacher competence. This supervision allows teachers to get constructive feedback and improve classroom planning and management. In addition, principals who are able to create a conducive school climate through open and participatory communication, are successful in increasing teacher motivation and creating an environment that supports learning. This strategy is in line with the theory of transformational leadership which emphasizes the importance of individual empowerment in achieving organizational goals collectively.

However, this study also found several obstacles faced by principals in implementing leadership strategies, such as limited time to conduct intensive supervision and difficulties in building collaboration in an individualistic work environment. Nevertheless, the results of this study indicate that good leadership strategies, such as supervision, training, creating a conducive work climate, and implementing a clear vision, have a significant influence in improving teacher performance and the quality of learning in schools. Overall, this study confirms that the role of the principal in implementing effective leadership is the key to success in school management and improving the quality of education.

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