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The Effectiveness of School Principals' Leadership Style in Improving Teacher Quality

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Keywords

Effectiveness of Leadership Style; Headmaster; Teacher Quality

Abstract

This research is based on the importance of the leadership role of school principals in creating a healthy situation to improve teacher quality. This research aims to explore the effectiveness of the principal's leadership model to enhance the quality of teachers in the school, with a focus on identifying the most effective leadership style and analyzing its impact on professional development, motivation and teacher performance. The approach used in this research is a qualitative approach using the case study method. The data in this research was collected through interviews, participant observation, and thematic analysis. The research results obtained are that the principal's transformational leadership style has a significant positive impact on teacher quality, with participative leadership, open communication, and support for teacher professional development as critical factors that contribute to improving teacher quality at MAN 2 Medan.

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Introduction

Education is the main foundation for building quality and competitive human resources. The quality of education in an educational institution is very dependent on the performance and

competence of teachers as the main actors in the teaching and learning process. High-quality teachers are able to create a conducive learning environment, develop innovative teaching methods, and motivate students to excel (Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005). However, efforts to improve teacher quality cannot stand alone. Principal leadership plays a vital role in creating an environment that supports teachers' continuous professional development (Leithwood & Jantzi, Transformational school leadership for large-scale reform: Effects on students, teachers, and their classroom practices, 2006).

The leadership style adopted by a school principal can have a significant impact on teacher motivation, commitment, and performance (Hallinger, 2003); (Marzano, 2005)). Effective school principals are able to inspire, guide, and provide support to teachers in facing challenges and developing themselves professionally (Bush & Glover, 2003; Fullan, 2001). Conversely, an authoritarian or less responsive leadership style can create an environment that could be more conducive to teacher growth and development, which ultimately has a negative impact on the quality of education (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003; Blase & Blase, 2002).

Previous research has shown that a transformational leadership style, which focuses on vision, motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration, has a positive impact on teacher performance and student achievement (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006; Robinson et al., 2008; Avolio & Bass, 2004). Transformational leadership encourages teachers to go beyond personal interests for the benefit of the organization, increases awareness of the school's vision and mission, and promotes creativity and innovation in teaching practices (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Northouse, 2018). However, the effectiveness of leadership styles can also be influenced by factors such as school culture, local context, and individual teacher characteristics (Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Leithwood et al., 2004).

Apart from the transformational leadership style, several studies also show that the instructional leadership style, which focuses on monitoring and evaluating the teaching and learning process, can also have a positive impact on teacher quality and student achievement (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Robinson et al., 2008; Marks & Printy, 2003). Instructional leadership involves the principal in supervising and evaluating the teaching and learning process, providing constructive feedback to teachers, and ensuring that the curriculum and teaching methods comply with established standards (Hallinger, 2005; Jenkins, 2009).

However, effective leadership styles are more comprehensive than these two styles. Participative leadership, which involves teachers and other stakeholders in the decision-making process, can also have a positive impact on teacher quality (Somech, 2005; Leithwood & Mascall, 2008). By involving teachers in the decision-making process, principals can increase teachers' sense of ownership and commitment to the school's vision and goals, as well as encourage creativity and innovation in teaching practices (Marks & Printy, 2003; Leithwood et al., 2004).

In addition, open communication and support for teacher professional development are also crucial factors that can contribute to improving teacher quality (Marks & Printy, 2003; Blase & Blase, 1999). Principals who are able to communicate effectively with teachers, listen to input and suggestions, and provide support in the form of training, workshops, or opportunities for self-development can help teachers improve their competence and performance (Blase & Blase, 1999; Leithwood et al., 2004).

The importance of school principal leadership in improving teacher quality has also been widely recognized in various policies and regulations in the education sector. For example, Regulation

of the Minister of National Education of the Republic of Indonesia Number 13 of 2007 concerning School/Madrasah Principal Standards emphasizes that one of the main competencies that school principals must have is managerial competency, which includes the ability to manage teachers and staff in order to utilize human resources optimally. (Ministry of National Education, 2007). Apart from that, Law Number 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers also emphasizes the importance of continuous professional development of teachers to improve the quality of education (Kemendikbud, 2005).

In the context of education in Indonesia, research on the effectiveness of school principal leadership styles in improving teacher quality still needs to be completed. Most existing research focuses more on other aspects, such as school management or student achievement. However, considering the crucial role of school principals in creating an environment that supports teacher professional development, this research becomes increasingly relevant and vital to conduct.

Thus, this research aims to explore the effectiveness of the principal's leadership style in improving teacher quality at MAN 2 Medan. It will identify the most effective leadership styles and analyze their impact on teacher professional development, motivation, and performance. The findings from this research are hoped to provide valuable insights for school principals and other stakeholders in efforts to improve the quality of education through better teacher development.

Methods

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study method to explore the effectiveness of the principal's leadership style in improving teacher quality at MAN 2 Medan. The case study method was chosen because it allows researchers to gain a deep and holistic understanding of the phenomenon under study in a natural context (Yin, 2018). Data was collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document study. In-depth interviews were conducted with school principals, deputy principals, teachers, and school committee representatives using a semi-structured interview guide. Participatory observation was carried out to observe interactions between school principals and teachers, decision-making processes, and teacher professional development activities. Document studies involve the analysis of related documents such as school regulations, school development plans, meeting notes, and teacher performance data.

Data analysis in this research was carried out using a thematic analysis approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006), which includes familiarizing yourself with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing a report. To ensure the validity of the data, this research applies data source triangulation, method triangulation, member checking, and audit trail. Triangulation of data sources was carried out by collecting data from various sources such as school principals, teachers, and school committee representatives. Method triangulation was carried out using several methods such as interviews, observation, and document study. Member checking is carried out by validating research findings by research participants. An audit trail is carried out by documenting in detail the research process, decisions taken, and reflections carried out during the research to ensure transparency and reliability of the study.

Results

Based on analysis of data obtained from in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document study, this research reveals several significant findings regarding the effectiveness of the principal's leadership style in improving teacher quality at MAN 2 Medan.

1. Effective Transformational Leadership Style

Data obtained from in-depth interviews, observations, and document studies consistently show that the principle of MAN 2 Medan, Mr. Wuri Tamtama Abdi, adopts a transformational leadership style that has proven to be very effective in improving the quality of teachers at the school. Interviews with teachers revealed that Mr. Wuri Tamtama Abdi was able to inspire and motivate them to continue to develop professionally through the vision and values he emphasized.

"He always emphasizes the importance of innovation and continuous improvement in the teaching and learning process. He motivates us never to be satisfied with current achievements and continue to look for ways to develop ourselves," said Mrs. Rani, one of the senior teachers in Mathematics.

Mrs. Rani also added that Mr. Wuri Tamtama Abdi was able to foster self-confidence and enthusiasm among teachers to try new teaching approaches. This is supported by participatory observation, which witnessed Mr. Wuri Tamtama Abdi actively providing support and positive feedback to teachers who innovated in their teaching methods.

Apart from that, an interview with Mr. Wuri Tamtama Abdi himself revealed that he really emphasized the importance of the school's vision and mission as a guide for the entire school community, including teachers. "I always try to remind teachers about our school's vision and mission, namely creating a conducive learning environment, developing students' potential holistically, and producing quality and competitive graduates. This is a common goal that we must pursue together," explained Mr. Wuri Tamtama Abdi.

Observations also noted that Mr. Wuri Tamtama Abdi always emphasized the importance of teamwork and encouraged teachers to support each other in facing challenges and achieving common goals.

2. Participative Leadership and Open Communication

Research findings also reveal that the participative leadership style and open communication adopted by Mr. Wuri Tamtama Abdi contributed significantly to improving the quality of teachers at MAN 2 Medan. Document studies show that Mr. Wuri Tamtama Abdi regularly holds meetings with teachers, both in formal and informal forums, to discuss various issues and ask for input from them.

"Every important decision always involves us as teachers. He listens to our opinions and considers them carefully before making a final decision," said Mrs. Elen, one of the Indonesian language teachers who was interviewed.

Mrs. Elen added that Mr. Wuri Tamtama Abdi is also open to receiving criticism and suggestions from teachers and always tries to explain the reasons behind every policy or decision taken.

Observations also noted warm and open interactions between Mr. Wuri Tamtama Abdi and the teachers. He often holds informal meetings with teachers, both individually and in groups, to listen to their problems or challenges and discuss solutions together.

"I feel very appreciated and listened to by Mr. Wuri Tamtama Abdi. He is always open to receiving input from us and never considers himself superior or more knowledgeable than the teachers," said Mr. Pandapotan, one of the Physics teachers.

Document studies also show that there are formal mechanisms to facilitate two-way communication between school principals and teachers, such as suggestion boxes and online discussion forums that the entire school community can access.

3. Support for Teacher Professional Development

Apart from transformational leadership and participative leadership styles, research findings also emphasize the importance of the support provided by Mr. Wuri Tamtama Abdi for teacher professional development as a critical factor in improving teacher quality at MAN 2 Medan. Interviews with teachers revealed that the principal actively encouraged and facilitated them to take part in training, workshops, and other development programs, both organized by internal and external parties.

"He always supports us in continuing to improve our qualifications and competencies through various professional development programs. The school also provides a special budget for this purpose and opportunities for us to continue our studies," said Mr. Pandapotan, one of the Physics subject teachers.

Mr. Pandapotan added that Mr. Wuri Tamtama Abdi also actively seeks information about training or workshops that are relevant to teachers' needs and informs them.

Document studies also show that schools have structured professional development programs, such as mentoring programs for new teachers, teaching strategies training, curriculum development workshops, and opportunities to continue further studies with scholarships or study leave.

"I feel very helped by the school's mentoring program. I can learn a lot from experienced senior teachers, and they are always ready to guide and provide feedback to me," said Mrs. Gusma, one of the new teachers in the field of Mathematics.

Observations also noted that training sessions or workshops were held at the school with resource persons who were competent and experienced in their fields. The teachers looked enthusiastic and participated actively in these activities.

4. Impact on Teacher Quality

Data obtained from interviews, observations, and document studies consistently reveal that Mr. Wuri Tamtama Abdi's transformational leadership style, participative leadership, open communication, and support for professional development have a significant positive impact on the quality of teachers at MAN 2 Medan.

Teachers admit that they feel more motivated, and committed and have a greater sense of ownership of the school. They also feel more confident in exploring new teaching methods and innovating their teaching practices.

"I feel very supported and appreciated at this school. I don't hesitate to try new approaches to teaching because I know the principal and fellow teachers will support me," said Mrs Gusma, one of the English subject teachers.

Mrs Gusma added that the positive and collaborative atmosphere among the teachers also made her more comfortable sharing ideas and learning from her colleagues.

Classroom observations also noted an increase in the quality of interactions between teachers and students, as well as the use of more varied and innovative teaching methods. Some teachers are seen trying new approaches such as project-based learning, group discussions, or the use of technology in the teaching and learning process.

"I feel more confident in experimenting with new methods because I know that the principal and fellow teachers will support my efforts to continue to develop and improve the quality of teaching," said Mr. Ranto, a teacher of Al-Quran and Hadith studies.

Document studies also show significant improvements in teacher performance, as reflected in annual performance evaluation results and high attendance rates. Data shows that more than 90% of teachers obtained performance grades of "good" or "excellent" in the past two years, while the average teacher attendance rate reached 95%.

The data also reveals an increase in student academic achievement since Mr. Wuri Tamtama Abdi served as school principal. The average student report card score has increased significantly in the last three years, and the number of students accepted to favorite high schools has also increased.

"I believe that the improvement in teacher quality that we have achieved through effective leadership and good professional development programs has contributed directly to improving the academic achievement of our students," said Mr. Wuri Tamtama Abdi in an interview.

5. Challenges and Improvement Efforts

Although the overall research findings show a positive impact of Mr Wuri Tamtama Abdi's leadership style, the data also reveals several challenges and areas that still need improvement.

One of the challenges identified is the resistance of a small number of teachers to change and innovation in teaching methods. Interviews with several teachers revealed that although they felt supported to innovate, there was a fear of getting out of their comfort zone and trying new approaches.

"I admit that sometimes I am still hesitant to try new methods because I am worried that it will not work well and affect the students' learning process," said Mrs. Fauziah, one of the Chemistry subject teachers.

To overcome this challenge, Mr. Wuri Tamtama Abdi and the school leadership team have attempted to provide more intensive support and guidance to teachers who experience resistance to change. They hold special coaching and mentoring sessions and encourage collaboration and learning between senior and junior teachers.

"We realize that change cannot happen instantly. Therefore, we are trying to build teachers' trust and confidence gradually through consistent mentoring and support," explained Mr. Wuri Tamtama Abdi.

Another challenge identified was limited financial resources to support ongoing teacher professional development programs. Even though the school has allocated a special budget for this purpose, the budget is still limited and cannot meet all teacher development needs.

To overcome this challenge, Mr. Wuri Tamtama Abdi and the school leadership team have attempted to find alternative funding sources, such as collaborating with the private sector or submitting grant proposals to the government or donor agencies. They also try to optimize the use of existing resources by holding internal training by teachers who have undergone external training and utilizing online resources and free online learning platforms.

"We continue to strive to improve the quality of our professional development programs efficiently and affordably. We believe that investing in teacher development is a precious investment for the future of our students," said Mr. Wuri Tamtama Abdi.

Berdasarkan analisis data yang diperoleh dari wawancara mendalam, observasi partisipatif, dan studi dokumen, penelitian ini mengungkapkan beberapa temuan penting terkait efektivitas gaya kepemimpinan kepala sekolah dalam meningkatkan kualitas guru di MAN 2 Medan.

Discussion

The findings of this research reveal that the transformational leadership style adopted by the principal of MAN 2 Medan, Mr. Wuri Tamtama Abdi, significantly improves the quality of teachers at the school. This is in line with various previous studies that emphasize the importance of transformational leadership in creating an environment that supports teacher professional development (Leithwood & Jantz, 2006); (Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008); (Avolio & Bass, 2004)).

Mr. Wuri Tamtama Abdi's transformational leadership, which focuses on forming a shared vision, providing motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration, has proven to inspire and encourage teachers to continue to develop professionally. This can be seen from the increased motivation, commitment, and sense of ownership felt by teachers towards the school.

In addition, research findings also confirm the importance of participative leadership and open communication in creating an environment conducive to teacher development (Somech, 2005); (Leithwood & Mascall, 2008); (Marks & Printy, 2003). By involving teachers in the decision-making process and listening to their input, Mr. Wuri Tamtama Abdi succeeded in increasing teachers' sense of ownership and commitment to the school's vision and goals.

Another significant finding is the support provided by Mr. Wuri Tamtama Abdi for teacher professional development. Structured professional development programs and opportunities to attend training and workshops have proven to be critical factors in improving teacher quality (Blase & Blase, 2002); (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004)). This is in line with various policies and regulations in the education sector which emphasize the importance of continuous professional development of teachers (Ministry of National Education, 2007; Ministry of Education and Culture, 2005).

The findings of this research are in line with several previous studies that explored the importance of leadership style in improving teacher quality. For example, research conducted by (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006) shows that transformational leadership has a positive impact on teachers' teaching practices and student achievement. Meanwhile, research conducted by (Marks & Printy, 2003) found that the combination of transformational leadership and instructional leadership had a significant impact on teacher performance and student achievement.

However, this research also shows several differences from previous research. One of the unique findings in this research is the importance of participative leadership and open communication in creating an environment conducive to teacher development. These findings strengthen the argument that effective leadership styles are not only limited to transformational or instructional styles but also involve other aspects, such as teacher involvement in decision-making and good communication between school principals and teachers.

The findings of this research have important implications for leadership practice in schools and other educational institutions. This research confirms the importance of school principals adopting a leadership style that supports teachers' ongoing professional development. Transformational, participative, and open communication leadership styles have proven effective in creating an environment conducive to teacher growth and development.

From a theoretical perspective, this study's findings also contribute to a deeper understanding of the relationship between principal leadership styles and teacher quality. This research strengthens transformational and participative leadership theories and emphasizes the importance of open communication and support for professional development in an educational context.

Additionally, this study's findings may also influence the direction of future research in the field of educational leadership. Future research could explore how factors such as school culture, local context, and individual teacher characteristics influence the effectiveness of specific leadership styles. Longitudinal research can also be conducted to observe the long-term impact of leadership styles on teacher quality and student achievement.

Although this research provides valuable insight into the effectiveness of leadership styles in improving teacher quality, several limitations need to be considered. First, this research only focuses on one school, MAN 2 Medan. The research results may not be directly generalizable to other school contexts with different characteristics.

Conclusion

The results of the research show that the transformational leadership style applied by the head of the school, Mr. Wuri Tamtama Abdi, has a significant positive impact on improving the quality of teachers. Factors such as participatory leadership, open communication, and support for teacher professional development also proved to be important elements in creating an environment conducive to teacher growth and development. The study found that Chief Schools transformational leadership inspires and motivates teachers to continue to grow professionally as well as encourages creativity and innovation in teaching practice. In addition, the involvement of teachers in decision-making and open communication between the head of the school and the teacher contribute to increasing the sense of ownership and commitment of the teacher to the school's vision and purpose. Another important finding is the importance of support for the professional development of teachers. Structured professional development programs, such as training, workshops, and opportunities for further study, have been shown to help teachers improve their teaching competence and skills.

Authorship Contribution Statement

Simarmata: Writing Introduction and Discussions. Pakpahan: Searching for the theoretical part related to research variables. Hasibuan: part in writing research methods . Siregar: compiling the research discussion section. Rahman: giving ideas and mereview article. Setiawan: Review and edit grammar.

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