

From Rotation to Growth: Understanding the Psychological and Competence Benefits for School Principals

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Abstract:

Principals, as leaders and managers, often undergo rotation and transfer to maintain organizational efficiency. Although the impact of principal turnover on teachers and education staff has been extensively researched, the effect of rotation and transfer on principals remains largely unknown. This study aims to investigate the direct and indirect impacts experienced by principals, particularly in terms of their psychological aspects and leadership competencies. This study used a qualitative case study approach. Data collection methods included in-depth interviews and documentation studies. Data analysis was conducted through the stages of data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The results indicate that principal rotation and transfer have a positive impact on the principal's psychological well-being and competency. Psychological impacts include increased motivation and work enthusiasm, which in turn improve work quality. Meanwhile, competency impacts include improvements and positive developments in four principal competencies: personality, managerial, supervisory, and social competencies. The implications of this study suggest that principal rotation and transfer can be an effective leadership development strategy to improve the quality of education in schools. Furthermore, it is important to consider psychological aspects and competencies in every decision regarding principal turnover.

Keywords: *Principal Rotation, Transfer, Psychological Impact, Competence*

Abstrak:

Kepala sekolah sebagai pemimpin dan manajer sering mengalami rotasi dan mutasi untuk menjaga efisiensi organisasi. Meskipun dampak pergantian kepala sekolah terhadap guru dan tenaga kependidikan telah banyak diteliti, dampak rotasi dan mutasi terhadap kepala sekolah masih belum banyak terungkap. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengungkap dampak langsung dan tidak langsung yang dialami kepala sekolah, terutama dari aspek psikologis dan kompetensi kepemimpinan. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan jenis studi kasus. Metode pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui wawancara mendalam dan studi dokumentasi. Analisis data dilakukan melalui tahap pengumpulan data, reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa rotasi dan mutasi kepala sekolah memberikan dampak positif terhadap psikologis dan kompetensi kepala sekolah. Dampak psikologis meliputi peningkatan motivasi dan semangat kerja, yang berdampak

pada peningkatan kualitas kerja. Sementara itu, dampak kompetensi mencakup peningkatan dan perkembangan positif pada empat kompetensi kepala sekolah, yaitu kompetensi kepribadian, manajerial, supervisi, dan sosial. Implikasi dari penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa rotasi dan mutasi kepala sekolah dapat dijadikan strategi pengembangan kepemimpinan yang efektif untuk meningkatkan kualitas pendidikan di sekolah. Selain itu, penting untuk mempertimbangkan aspek psikologis dan kompetensi dalam setiap keputusan pergantian jabatan kepala sekolah.

Kata Kunci: *Rotasi Kepala Sekolah, Mutasi, Dampak Psikologis, Kompetensi*

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INTRODUCTION

The principal has a central role at school. The existence of a school principal becomes a vital figure academically and socially in the school environment. The principal's abilities, both in managerial aspects and leadership dimensions, are crucial to maintaining the stability of educational quality in the school. The school principal is the individual who determines the direction and goals, manages the processes, and evaluates the achievement of the school's objectives.

In the leadership dimension within a school organization, the principal serves as both a leader and a manager. As the supreme leader, the principal has a significant responsibility to promote educational advancement. Thus, the performance of the school principal becomes one of the most significant factors influencing the improvement of school quality (Kilag et al., 2023; Timotheou et al., 2023; Kumar, 2023). The higher the leadership abilities of the school principal in managing the school, the greater the impact on the quality of the school's standards.

In the learning dimension, the success of teaching and learning is highly dependent on the principal's ability to manage the school's educational staff. Optimizing the performance of teachers and educational personnel in schools has a significant impact on school productivity and achievement. The principals can increase teacher motivation through their leadership communication style. Furthermore, motivation influences the improvement of teacher performance, both in teaching and outside of teaching activities (Taryana et al., 2023).

To conduct these various central roles, a competent principal is needed. A school principal must possess five key competencies: personal competence, managerial competence, entrepreneurial competence, supervisory competence, and social competence. These five competencies play a significant role in influencing the principal's success in performance. Notably, the principal's role requires dedication, initiative, and innovation (Solihah & Iskandar, 2023).

The high demands for competence and the central role of the position often lead to dynamics, such as rotation and transfer, in the principalship. Rotation and transfer are implemented to ensure the organization continues to operate efficiently and effectively. The dynamics of human resources in educational institutions have been shown to significantly impact careers and performance, particularly for teachers (Diprata et al., 2023). Teachers are direct subordinates and serve as the driving force of all school principal policies. The accuracy of the rotation and transfer of school principals has a positive impact on improving

teacher performance, leading to higher performance.

Reflecting on fields outside of education, such as the industrial sector, it has been proven that policies of rotation and transfer have a positive impact on employee performance. The effect is not only on employees who are rotated, but also on their colleagues. Work rotation is one of the most significant factors affecting employee performance, compared to other variables such as employee competence, education level, leadership style, vision, and mission (Nasirnateri et al., 2023; Nyallu et al., 2024). The same holds in the education sector, including within school organizations.

Although the industrial sector is characterized differently from the education sector, in human resource management, the impact of rotation and transfer can be categorized as having similar affected aspects. Therefore, the rotation and transfer of school principals, who are the highest leaders of the institution, have a significant impact on the sustainability of the educational organization.

Based on the central role of the principal, central and regional governments develop policies to regulate the principal's position. One of these policies is to limit the tenure of the principal and to implement rotation and transfer upon the term's expiration. The expectation is that this policy will improve the quality of school principals. The policy of principal placement, carried out through the correct mechanisms and regulations, can influence organizational changes within educational institutions. Correct recruitment patterns result in competent and well-performing principals (Zainuri, 2022; Zohriah & Nasrudin, 2023).

However, in reality, the practice of principal placement does not follow a proper recruitment process. In some instances, political interests drive the rotation and transfer of school principals. For example, there have been cases where a teacher was promoted to a principal despite lacking sufficient management knowledge to effectively run a school. One of the reasons is that career development has not been optimally implemented, leading to arbitrary candidate selection (Wilk, 2023; Graser et al., 2024). Ideally, the proper recruitment process for school principals should include the nomination of candidates by the school principal and/or school supervisor, followed by administrative and academic selection. This ensures that the selected candidate is the best fit based on the required competencies. Similarly, the policy of rotation and transfer should be based on a clear and measurable recruitment process.

The employee rotation and transfer system has various models that are broadly based on three systems. First, the merit system is based on scientific principles, objectivity, and work performance results. The system can enhance employee morale and discipline, leading to increased work productivity. Second, the seniority system is based on tenure, age, and work experience in the relevant position. This system is not objective because the competence of the transferred individual is determined by seniority and may not necessarily align with the ability to hold the new position. Third, the spoil system, which is based on familial considerations, is less effective because personal preferences rather than objective criteria drive it (Ni et al., 2023; Al-Zoubi et al., 2025).

The Magelang City Government carried out the rotation, transfer, and promotion of school principals at the end of 2022 and the middle of 2023. The rotation and transfer of school principals are conducted at the elementary and junior high school levels. 13 principals were replaced and or transferred. The basis of the rotation and transfer implemented is the meritocracy system (merit system). The performance evaluation process is carried out based on clear and measurable performance criteria and indicators.

In the case that occurred in Magelang City, Central Java, the change of principal in 2023 can be categorized as large and massive. The change of school principals inevitably impacts the performance of the involved principal, as well as the performance of human resources within the environment, including teachers, educational staff, and students. These impacts need to be analysed so that the negative impacts can be minimized and the positive impacts can be enhanced.

Various studies have found that the performance of principals has a significant effect on other school variables and vice versa. Research has shown that school culture and the principal's competence or work ability influence their performance (Widodo et al., 2024; Lijun et al., 2024). Additionally, work experience also influences the principal's performance (Demozie et al., 2023; Rivaldo, 2023). Furthermore, the organizational culture of the placement candidate's school will also be very influential when there is a change in the principal (Lee, 2023; Ahmad et al., 2023).

In addition to the impact on the school organization, the change of principal also affects the employees and the principal concerned. Several cases have shown that school principals feel their dedication during their tenure is not appreciated. Additionally, some school principals have requested early retirement due to feeling ashamed of returning to a teaching role after being replaced.

Additionally, it is possible that the climate in schools is not conducive, as the new principal may be reluctant or have uncomfortable feelings about directing and reprimanding teachers, especially if a former principal is still at the school. In another case, there was a school principal who served for two terms without performing well, yet was not dismissed but instead transferred to another location with the same position (Sukari, 2022).

These various examples of principal rotation and transfer cases prove that the change of school principals through rotation and transfer does not always have a positive impact. Principals do have a central role in schools; however, they are not individuals who are universally capable and easily adaptable. Even if a principal is only transferred or rotated to a different school location, they still require education and training to enhance their competencies (Puerta et al., 2024). Regarding competencies, it has been demonstrated that the education and training of prospective school principals can have a significant impact on improving one of their key competencies, specifically the supervisory competency of the school principal (Korompot, 2023; Nisa, 2024).

Therefore, it is necessary to conduct an in-depth exploration of the impact of personnel change policies through rotation and transfer on the psychological and competence aspects of the principal. The purpose of this study is to examine the direct and indirect impacts experienced by principals as a result of personnel

turnover. The actual impact of principal rotation and transfer is expected to offer insight into the experiences of principals undergoing such changes, especially in public schools in Magelang City.

From a human resource management perspective, the research implications suggest that it can provide a theoretical basis for developing personnel replacement policies. The cultural climate of schools is distinctly different from that of private institutions or industries. Thus, it is essential to uncover the actual impact of principal transfers and rotations, as this can provide valuable input for policymakers in enhancing the quality of education. From a practical perspective, this research can serve as a reference for policy considerations regarding transfers and rotations, ensuring more accurate policy formulation.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research employed a qualitative method with a case study approach. The case study was conducted because the research location was limited to the Magelang City area in Central Java, with an explicit focus on the condition of principal turnover, including transfers and rotations, in public elementary and junior high schools in 2023. The case study method is also suitable for uncovering in-depth data required for the research. The research subjects were selected using purposive sampling. In line with the study's purpose, the research subjects consisted of 13 principals, comprising nine principals from the state primary school level and four principals from the state junior high school level in Magelang City. These 13 principals were divided into two categories: principals whose tenure as a school leader has ended but who were reappointed to another school, or principals who were newly appointed from a teaching position.

Data were collected using in-depth interviews and document studies. The interview consisted of five indicators: the impact on psychological well-being, the impact on personality competence, the impact on managerial competence, the impact on supervisory competence, and the impact on social competence. To support data collection, research instruments were used in the form of interview guidelines and documentation study guidelines. Data validity used in this research was source triangulation. Source triangulation was conducted through in-depth interviews with all school principals who have changed their roles. The data from one principal's interview was then compared with the data from another principal's interview. Additionally, the interview data were cross-checked with data from document studies.

The data analysis of the research employed the qualitative data analysis technique developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014), which involves data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. At the data collection stage, data were collected from research subjects using interviews and related document studies. After collecting the data, it was cross-checked and compared between respondents. In the reduction process, the results of data collection were grouped and sorted according to the research topic's indicators. The results of the data reduction were then displayed according to the study's purpose and the relationship between the collected data. The final result involves assessing the impact of principal rotation and transfer, including its effects on the

principal's psychology, personality competence, managerial competence, supervisory competence, and social competence. The four data analysis processes were carried out simultaneously until the conclusion of the study.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

The aim of changing the principal at a public school in Magelang City is to improve the quality of education, particularly in public schools in Magelang City. The change includes transfers and rotations based on two considerations: first, the performance evaluation was conducted by the local government of Magelang City. Secondly, the performance evaluation analysis results highlight the need to improve the principals' knowledge and skills. The transfer includes the appointment of new school principals at three schools. In comparison, the rotation involves the movement of principals at ten schools, both at the elementary and junior high school levels. The mutation and transfer carried out have the following impact.

Impact on Psychology

Psychologically, the policy of rotating and transferring school principals has a positive impact. The rotation of ten school principals was carried out by transferring them to new schools. The majority of school principals feel increasingly challenged to work better due to the change in work environment, which involves a new school location. The principal feels more motivated and has increased enthusiasm to undertake various new work challenges – the challenges referred to involve different problems and solutions at the new school.

The school principals did not experience excessive negative psychological pressure as a result of the rotation and transfer. The policy of principal rotation is perceived to make principals realize that improving their skills and leadership is a necessity for any position. Through the change of school location, the principals feel the demands, challenges, and a new work environment that help maintain high motivation and enthusiasm for work. A new work environment opens up opportunities for personal growth and self-development. The new environment with new work challenges motivates the principals to continually improve their competencies as school leaders. Additionally, it serves as a means of expanding social relations. A new environment brings new people with different characteristics who will work together.

Principals who experience rotation and transfer consider these policies as professional dynamics. Rotation and transfer are not a punishment for the principal's inability to achieve performance targets. The position of principal must be undertaken with a professional attitude, which involves a sense of responsibility as part of the teacher's noble duty. The principal considers rotation and transfer as a natural process and a necessity for enhancing educational quality.

Impact on Personality Competences

The policy of rotating and transferring school principals impacts personal competence, particularly in the dimensions of motivation and self-efficacy. The

direct impact experienced by school principals who undergo rotation and transfer policies is an increased motivation to further enhance their self-efficacy. School principals are driven by a strong desire to demonstrate greater commitment and integrity in their role as school leaders, particularly those who have recently been appointed from teaching positions. The principal felt the need to work harder to prove the trust that has been placed in them.

The basis for implementing rotation and transfer through performance evaluations leads the principal to believe that this position is purely based on performance results. This inspires the school principals to prove to those who entrusted them with the role that their appointment as principal will not be disappointing. The principal also believes that being transferred to another school will improve the experience and enable the best contribution to the education of Magelang city.

Impact on Managerial Competence

The replacement of the principal as the highest leader in the school certainly has a significant impact on the school management. The principal's managerial competence has a significant effect on school quality. In the case of principal changes in Magelang City, the majority of new principals bring fresh perspectives and new leadership methods. This innovation may involve efforts to refine or adjust existing plans to align with the school's current circumstances. The new perspective brought changes to the vision, mission, and implementation strategies. Changes in task and responsibility distribution are inevitable when a new principal with a different leadership style is appointed.

The new principal continually re-evaluates the organizational structure and makes the necessary adjustments to align with the expected strategic plan. From the school management perspective, transfers also impact various school management programs, including facility and infrastructure management, curriculum development, and public relations. The perspective of a new principal in a school will drive efforts to enhance all existing systems, including facilities, public relations mechanisms, and curriculum improvements or updates, incorporating more impactful innovations.

Impact on Supervisory Competence

New principals with fresh managerial styles and methods will undoubtedly influence the supervisory approaches and techniques implemented. Moreover, teachers are the primary target of managerial improvement for almost all new principals. The quality of teachers determines the quality of school learning. The change of principal brought a change in the management of supervision.

At the beginning of their tenure, the school principal will intensify supervision. The goal is to address the problems that occurred in the school. Increasing the intensity of supervision will yield numerous findings related to the problems faced by teachers in their learning. From the problem emerged, the principal can formulate appropriate solutions and follow-up alternatives. For principals newly appointed from teaching positions, they are likely to have a better understanding of the technical aspects that require immediate attention to ensure the effective implementation of supervision.

Changing locations can also enrich the principal by sharing new information and knowledge related to learning and teaching. Teachers in one school face different issues compared to those in another school, which certainly requires different guidance and support. As a result, the principal becomes more experienced in implementing various strategies to improve quality and teacher development at the school.

Impact on Social Competence

The change in school principal will undoubtedly bring about changes in the style and model of social relationships with teachers, parents or guardians, students, school staff, and other community members. The new principal mainly strives to build and strengthen relationships with school residents, committees, and students' parents. Although there may be changes in approach, social relationships are generally maintained well, and efforts are made to reinforce and renew cooperation with the surrounding community and school partners.

Programs that have been successful in the previous school can be applied to the new school. Additionally, the principal must identify a new program of activities that align with the social conditions of the new school. The most noticeable improvement resulting from the change in principal is the enhanced relationship with the school committee. Moreover, teachers and education staff feel more motivated when led by a new principal. This condition requires the principal to foster social relationships more effectively.

Discussion

The rotation implemented by transferring ten principals to other schools has a positive impact on the psychological well-being of those principals. The majority of school principals feel challenged by changes in the work environment. The principals who were replaced feel more motivated and enthusiastic to face the work challenges at their new schools. The principal did not experience psychological pressure during the transition.

Al-Zoubi et al. (2025) stated that job rotation within an organization is necessary for employees to acquire different job skills from other parts of the organization. It helps employees overcome boredom and fatigue from their previous tasks. The challenge of acquiring new skills can motivate individuals to become more enthusiastic and enhance their work morale in the workplace. New schools with different problem conditions become a challenge for the principal. The demand to address and find solutions to the problems at the new school can increase the principal's motivation and enthusiasm for work.

Toro et al. (2023) demonstrated that employee rotation into the correct position can enhance morale and work productivity. From this enthusiasm and productivity, it then increases the efficiency and effectiveness of work in an organization. Based on the reactions and responses of the school principals, the policy of principal rotation has been successful in increasing motivation and productivity. This policy helps principals recognize that developing leadership skills is essential for the role. Through the school transfer, principals face new challenges and a different working environment. The new work environment presents opportunities for self-development and the expansion of social

relationships. The new environment with new work challenges motivates the principals to continually improve their competencies as school leaders. Moreover, the new environment introduces new individuals, who will work together using different methods and approaches.

Rotation can stimulate principals to achieve better performance because it involves the process of acquiring new knowledge and skills, reducing work monotony, assisting with accurate placement, and providing greater challenges to achieve higher achievements or performance. In Magelang City, principal rotation is already viewed as a professional dynamic. Rotation and transfer are not a punishment for the principal's inability to achieve performance targets. The position of principal must be undertaken with a professional attitude, which involves a sense of responsibility as part of the noble duty of a teacher. The principal considers rotation and transfer as a natural process and a necessity for enhancing educational quality.

The motivation to work hard and improve competencies serves as a solid foundation for the development of school principals. Principals with good competence will positively impact their performance. Therefore, the development and enhancement of principals' human resources is one of the most crucial components. Competency development can encourage the improvement of the principal's empowerment and responsibility for implementing their primary duties and functions (Muhajir, 2022).

In addition to the psychological dimension, the impact of rotation and transfer also extends to the competency dimension of school principals. The new principal influences teacher performance. In the aspect of personal competence, the principal must be able to adjust to the differences in the new school. The principal should serve as a role model and leader for both teachers and educational staff. Discussion and collaboration between principals and teachers can enhance communication and mutual understanding, which in turn can positively impact primary school performance (Fatimah et al., 2024).

The principal's existing personality competencies need to be continuously improved and developed. Related parties, such as the Education Office, need to provide facilities to enhance the principal's competence after the rotation and transfer policy. School principals can facilitate self-development through both academic and non-academic activities, such as attending seminars, participating in training sessions, exchanging ideas with other principals, or engaging in individual self-development activities like reading and learning from the internet (Iqbal, 2025).

The replacement of the principal as the highest leader in the school certainly has a significant impact on the school management. The principal's managerial competence has a significant effect on school quality. If the principal's managerial competence is good, then the quality of the school can improve. Conversely, if the principal's managerial competence is inadequate, the quality of the school can decline (Solihah & Iskandar, 2023). The change of principal will significantly affect all managerial aspects, starting from the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the school.

At the change of principal in Magelang City, the majority of new principals brought new perspectives and new leadership methods. This innovation may involve efforts to refine or adjust existing plans to align with the school's current circumstances. The new principal continually re-evaluates the organizational structure and makes the necessary adjustments to align with the expected strategic plan. These changes bring about changes in the working style and culture of all school residents. Through changes in the structure of human resources, an effort is made to optimize the education personnel in schools. These changes are expected to enable optimal performance and achieve the school's vision, mission, and goals (Dirahman et al., 2023). When a principal possesses good managerial competence and can enhance the performance of teachers in their school, the curriculum's objectives will be achieved in education (Mulyono et al., 2023).

In terms of managerial competence, rotation and transfer have an impact on school management programs, including the management of facilities and infrastructure, curriculum development, and public relations. The principal's perspective as a new person in a school will lead to efforts to improve all systems that operate within schools, including existing facilities, public relations mechanisms, and curriculum improvements or updates that incorporate innovations with a greater impact.

Furthermore, the implementation of education supervision is also significantly affected. The new principal certainly brings various innovative ideas and creative approaches to managing educational supervision activities. Effective principal leadership, including academic supervision, will improve teacher performance. Ultimately, it will contribute to improving the quality of a school (Nurhayati et al., 2022; Suharyanti, 2018).

The school principal can begin supervision by reviewing teaching materials, overseeing the implementation of teaching and learning activities, and discussing the results of the supervision with the respective teachers. The new principal will renew social relations both internally and externally. The principal can achieve renewal of social relations through the implementation of activities that are routinely held annually for both internal and external parties of the school (Yakavets et al., 2023). One of the activities that serves as a medium for improving social relations is educational supervision activities.

The step of renewing social relationships by the new school principal is crucial, especially for the members of the school community at the newly assigned school. The principal must be able to minimize the differences among teachers in the school. Good social interaction often leads to a healthy emotional relationship as well. A good emotional relationship with teachers can make it easier for principals to provide direction and guidance on teacher performance (Baharuddin et al., 2024).

The rotation and transfer of school principals that have been implemented have proven to bring about changes, both large and small, in the competencies of the principals involved. The new work environment indirectly requires the school principal to continuously develop their competencies. This condition is undoubtedly beneficial for the improvement of both the principal's quality and the quality of the assigned school. However, the implementation of transfers and

rotations of school principals does not end merely with reassignment or the appointment of a new principal. Related institutions, such as the Education Office, need to provide regular assessments and evaluations, as well as ongoing support, so that the positive impacts that emerge can be consistently maintained.

CONCLUSION

The rotation and transfer of school principals implemented have a positive impact on the psychological well-being and competencies of the principals. The psychological impact reveals that the majority of principals experience increased motivation and enthusiasm in response to changes in the work environment. The impact on the competencies of school principals suggests that a change in position can enhance the quality and performance of the principal, as reflected in the four competencies of a school principal: personal, managerial, supervisory, and social competencies. Enhancing the competence of principals has a positive impact on the quality of teachers, learning outcomes, and social dynamics within schools. The change of principal requires follow-up from related parties such as the local Education Office. The psychological and professional competence of the principal requires consistent renewal and strengthening to continuously support the improvement of school quality.

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