

Empowering Educational Leadership: The Role of Principal in Enhancing Learning Quality and Teacher Performance

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Abstract:

This study analyzes how principal leadership can manage their teaching staff to improve the quality of learning and their performance in schools. This study uses a qualitative approach to the case study type. Data collection techniques are carried out through interviews, observations, and documentation. Data analysis uses the Miles and Huberman interactive model, which consists of data reduction, presentation, and conclusion. The study results indicate that effective principal management involves several main stages, namely planning teacher performance development programs, developing clear strategies, and scheduling integrated with the school's academic calendar. Principals who successfully implement this management can consistently improve teacher performance, which improves the quality of learning in schools. In addition, the principal's provision of rewards and sanctions has proven to be an effective motivator for teachers to continue improving their performance. This study is expected to significantly contribute to the literature on educational management by highlighting the importance of the role of the principal in improving the quality of learning through effective management.

Keywords: *Principal Leadership, Motivation, Learning Quality, Teacher Performance*

Abstrak:

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis tentang bagaimana kepemimpinan kepala sekolah dapat mengelola tenaga pendidiknya agar dapat meningkatkan kualitas pembelajaran dan kinerjanya di sekolah. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif jenis studi kasus. Teknik pengumpulan datanya dilakukan melalui wawancara, observasi dan dokumentasi. Analisis datanya menggunakan model interaktif Miles dan Huberman yang terdiri dari reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa manajemen kepala sekolah yang efektif melibatkan beberapa tahapan utama, yaitu perencanaan program pembinaan kinerja guru, pengembangan strategi yang jelas, dan penjadwalan yang terintegrasi dengan kalender

akademik sekolah. Kepala sekolah yang berhasil menerapkan manajemen ini secara konsisten mampu meningkatkan kinerja guru, yang pada gilirannya meningkatkan kualitas pembelajaran di sekolah. Selain itu, pemberian penghargaan dan sanksi oleh kepala sekolah terbukti menjadi motivator yang efektif bagi guru untuk terus meningkatkan kinerjanya. Studi ini diharapkan dapat memberikan kontribusi yang signifikan terhadap literatur manajemen pendidikan dengan menyoroti pentingnya peran kepala sekolah dalam meningkatkan kualitas pembelajaran melalui manajemen yang efektif.

Kata Kunci: *Kepemimpinan Kepala Sekolah, Motivasi, Kualitas pembelajaran, Kinerja Guru*

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INTRODUCTION

The quality of learning in schools is one of the leading indicators of the education system's success. Effective learning is reflected not only in students' academic achievement but also in the development of their social and emotional skills (Faiz et al., 2023; Rahmah et al., 2022; Siregar, 2022; Usman & Pradipta, 2022). In achieving these goals, the principal plays a central role as an educational leader responsible for the school's overall management. The principal's managerial ability to manage various aspects of education, including teacher performance, dramatically affects the quality of learning that occurs in the classroom (Gunherani, 2023; Prilianti et al., 2022; Ridlo & Yanti, 2023; Zuhdi et al., 2024). However, not all schools can implement effective management. Research shows that principals who are not optimal in carrying out their managerial duties often face problems in improving teacher performance and learning quality (Wahyu et al., 2022; Wartoni et al., 2023; Sari et al., 2023; Aprianti et al., 2022; Rostini et al., 2022; Moulida et al., 2022). Therefore, it is essential to understand how principals can plan, organize, manage, and evaluate programs to improve teacher performance and enhance education quality.

The success of a principal depends mainly on his or her ability to lead and motivate the teaching staff (Akib & Salnawati, 2022; Pratiwi, 2022; Hasriani et al., 2023; Sartbaeva & Ashiraliyeva, 2023). Effective leadership involves not only wise decision-making (Abidin et al., 2022; Ujianto, 2022; Narisin et al., 2023; Hamengkubuwono, 2022) but also the ability to create a conducive learning environment where teachers are encouraged to improve their pedagogical skills continuously (Harry et al., 2023; Hartono et al., 2023; Zaini et al., 2023; Ardiansyah et al., 2023; Tono et al., 2022; Hasibuan, 2022; Rahmah et al., 2022; Rosmawati et al., 2022; Pardosi & Utari, 2022). In addition, applying innovative and creative approaches in school management has improved teacher performance and student learning outcomes (Islamiah & Maulidiah, 2024; Moulida et al., 2022; Rostini et al., 2022). The application of innovative and creative management approaches by school principals has been shown to improve teacher performance and student learning outcomes.

This research is essential because principals' management is crucial in determining the quality of learning and teacher performance in schools. Given that principals are not only responsible for administrative aspects but also for teachers' professional development and student learning outcomes, understanding how

effective management can be implemented is essential. Moreover, in the Indonesian education context, challenges such as variations in management quality and the implementation of different strategies in secondary schools require a more structured and innovative approach.

This study offers a new approach to understanding the role of principal management in improving learning quality and teacher performance. The main novelty of this study lies in the integrated approach that systematically plans, organizes, implements, and evaluates which are conducted by principals. In addition, this study also highlights the importance of innovation and creativity in school management, as well as the implementation of reward and punishment systems as tools to motivate teachers to improve their performance. The focus on the Indonesian secondary school context provides a unique local perspective, enriching the education management literature with relevant and applicable findings at the national level.

This study explores how principals can optimize their role in enhancing teacher performance and improving learning quality through effective management at SMA 2 Bengkulu City. By analyzing the various management strategies implemented by principals, this study seeks to provide deeper insights into how effective management can improve the quality of education in schools. This research will provide practical insights for principals and educational policymakers in developing more effective management strategies to support teacher performance and student learning outcomes.

RESEARCH METHODS

Descriptive and naturalistic qualitative methods were used in this study to explore and analyze leadership management patterns, as well as their impact on teacher learning outcomes and performance (Truman, 2023). This method was chosen to provide an in-depth understanding of how leadership practices affect the educational environment. This study uses descriptive analysis to capture detailed insights into how principals manage schools and their subsequent impacts on teaching and learning at SMA 2 Bengkulu City, Indonesia. The research subjects were chosen because they have distinctive leadership characteristics and organizational culture in school management.

Based on this method, this study aims to understand how teacher performance development management contributes to improving the quality of learning outcomes by focusing on the processes and strategies implemented by school leaders and analyzing how effective management practices can improve teacher performance. Through qualitative presentation and analysis, this study seeks to uncover key factors that influence the success of teacher development and how these factors, in turn, positively impact students' learning experiences. The planning stage of teacher performance development includes identifying program objectives, the timing of teacher performance improvement, and the teachers to be coached by Table 1. The informants involved in the interviews included the principal, deputy head of the division, teachers, and the head and administrative staff, ensuring a comprehensive perspective on the school's management processes.

Table 1. Interview Components

Questions	Informants
What are the expected results of making the plan (What)?	Principal, Deputy Head of Division, Teachers, Head and Administrative Staff
Why this action is necessary (Why)?	
Who will formulate the plan (Who)?	
When will the plan be completed?	
Where will the planning take place?	
How to achieve it and what resources are needed (How)?	

The data collection approach in this study is based on qualitative methodology, with interviews and observations as the main techniques (Köhler, 2024). The qualitative framework provides a theoretical basis for exploring leadership and teacher performance development dynamics. Data collection involved interviews with several high school teachers and principals, allowing for an in-depth understanding of their experiences and perspectives. Direct observation of principals' and teachers' activities was conducted to capture interactions and management practices, providing further insight into how leadership influences teacher performance and learning outcomes.

Data from interviews and observations will be analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model. This model consists of three main stages. First, data reduction is done by repeatedly reading interview transcripts and observation notes to gain a deep understanding. The data is then openly coded to identify the initial emerging categories and themes. The second stage is data presentation. The coded data will be presented in matrix form to facilitate category comparison. The final stage is drawing conclusions and verification. The findings from the data presentation stage will be analyzed in depth to identify significant patterns and relationships. Based on the patterns found, a conceptual framework will be built that explains the influence of leadership on teacher performance. The findings will be verified through data triangulation and rechecking the original data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Principal's Planning in Improving Learning and Teacher Performance

Each time, the principal makes a plan that includes what the purpose of coaching is, schedules a modified time to fit into the school's activity schedule and academic calendar, identifies indicators of teachers who will receive coaching, figures out the techniques used in coaching, and identifies funding sources for the coaching program (Agustina et al., 2021; DeMatthews et al., 2021; Purwanto & Wafa, 2023; Sanjani, 2024). As stated by the principal, this school has implemented a regular coaching and training system to ensure that teachers are ready to work.

The research findings are based on interviews with school principals who said, "I have the idea and dedication to help teachers improve their teaching skills, especially in online teaching. For example, if there are teachers who cannot use computers, I will train them and help them learn collaboratively with their colleagues so that they can use computers to teach".

This research emphasizes the importance of a structured and systematic management approach, which includes consistent planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating. For principals, implementing this strategy means creating a conducive learning environment and supporting teachers' continuous professional development. In addition, the findings on the importance of innovation, creativity, and implementing a fair reward and punishment system provide principals with additional tools to motivate teachers and encourage improvements in their performance. By understanding and adopting these findings, principals can be more effective in leading their schools, ensuring that every teacher contributes maximally towards achieving higher educational goals.

The principal's dedication to providing teacher training is an effort to improve the quality of teaching. As a result, highly qualified instructors will be developed—teachers who can innovate in the classroom and adapt to the environment. Teachers are even required to be more inventive and creative in today's school environment, and principals are expected to recognize and encourage this originality. Principals in this research sector have incorporated the concept of providing incentives and punishments into their managerial systems, based on statements made by some teachers. The study by Kraft and Papay (2014) showed that continuous professional development for teachers, including principal-led training, contributed significantly to improved teaching effectiveness. Teachers who regularly engaged in training and development showed more significant improvements in classroom performance than those who did not.

The teacher stated in the interview, "When the principal rewards teachers for their creativity, like my friend the math teacher who won the district level competition and got an award from the principal, it inspires me." This statement reinforces the finding that rewards from principals can increase teacher motivation. Another teacher also said, "Our principal is kind, but sometimes he is also strict. He rewards us when we succeed; when we disobey, we receive the consequences. Lack of opportunity to participate in public forums is an equal punishment". The interviews reveal that rewards and recognition from the principal play a significant role in motivating teachers. One teacher highlighted how the principal's acknowledgment of a colleague's achievement, specifically a math teacher who won a district-level competition, was a source of inspiration. This suggests that when principals reward creativity and success, it positively influences teacher motivation.

Based on research findings, principal tangent management plays a vital role in building a structured management framework and facilitating ongoing professional development in educational institutions. Effective principal tangent management in the context of the research conducted in high schools involves aligning leadership practices with the specific needs of teachers and the learning environment, as interpreted in Figure 1. By implementing a structured management approach, principals can establish clear guidelines and expectations for teacher performance, ensure that resources are allocated effectively, and that teachers receive the necessary support to improve their skills.

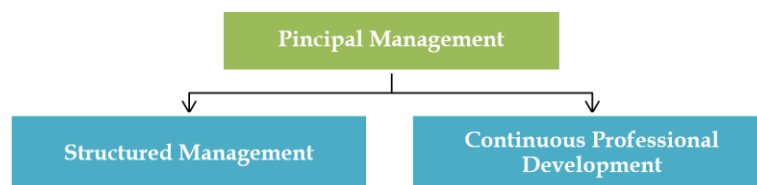


Figure 1. Principal Tangent Management

It is evident from the statement that the principal made additional efforts to reward and praise successful teachers. This idea aligns with the framework discussed by Jeon (2021) in their paper. They state that it is a valuable strategy to reward teachers who demonstrate excellence in the classroom. Teachers who receive rewards will be more motivated, inspiring other educators (Khotimah et al., 2024; Zhang et al., 2021). Nonetheless, teachers are subject to punishment just like children. The purpose of this is to warn adult employees when they violate commitments. This aligns with Shengnan and Hallinger's (2021) discussion of teacher appraisal in China. They both agree that assessing teachers' performance and evaluating their work is essential. As a result, this principle has a rather ambitious mission to improve the quality of education by seeing teacher performance as a significant factor in student achievement. This is a smart strategy to create a high-quality educational institution.

Improvement through School Administration

The effectiveness and quality of teaching are greatly influenced by good school administrative support. Efficient and responsive administration creates a supportive environment for teachers to focus on the teaching and learning process (Kilag et al., 2023; Liu et al., 2021). By providing adequate resources, such as instructional materials, professional training, and access to technology, school administration can help teachers improve their teaching skills. In addition, transparent and collaborative communication between the administration and teachers allows for identifying the needs and challenges faced in the classroom (Ariyani & Zuhaery, 2021; Zaini, 2023). With solid support from the administration, teachers feel more valued and motivated, which can improve the quality of teaching and student learning outcomes.

Good management at the administrative level not only supports teachers but also creates a positive and productive school atmosphere, which is essential for achieving higher educational goals. In this case, the principal is responsible for the grouping process in an effort to improve teacher performance. The principal's actions to improve instructor performance are detailed in Table 2. The information below was gathered from field observations conducted for this study.

Table 2. Findings from Observation

Clear organizational goals set by the principal.
Giving assignments to teachers with the principle of "the right person in the right place" and carrying out supervision
Coordinating the work of educators to ensure that everything runs smoothly so that goals can be achieved.
Giving control and authority to the vice-principal.
This principle is able to respond to the challenges of development in dynamic conditions, and shows flexibility in making decisions.

Based on interviews with principals, the study's findings stated that "our administration is focused on creating a supportive environment for our teachers. The school regularly holds training sessions and workshops to help them develop new teaching strategies. In addition, we ensure that resources are available to them when needed". The findings are also by an interview with the head of the administrative division, who stated, "We group teachers based on their subject areas and experience levels. This allows them to collaborate, share best practices, and provide feedback to each other. For example, our new teachers are paired with more experienced ones for guidance, which is very effective." The findings reveal that school administrations are committed to creating a supportive environment for teachers, which in turn contributes to improving the quality of teaching. The principal emphasized the importance of regularly held training sessions and workshops to help teachers develop more innovative and effective teaching strategies.

Some interpretable vital points are found in the Table 2. They were first assigning staff members to the management team. When assigning someone to a management job, the principal must make the right decision. This aims to allow qualified individuals to hold the appropriate role (Anglin et al., 2022). Doing this will give a greater chance of achieving the best results in collaborative efforts. The second important task that principals must do is to create harmonious coordination. Third, it is also essential to have confidence in those who have been authorized. Fourth, having a flexible leadership style will help the head effectively deal with any obstacles during the managerial process. The principal had implemented four concepts that had an impact on improving the quality of teaching. Another important element that contributed to the success was the principal's flexibility and adaptability (Thornton, 2021). Principals can have the most influence in these managerial situations, as they can direct all components to move simultaneously and harmoniously. As a result, principals are responsible for exercising good judgment when making decisions related to management.

The Principal's Role in Improvement

The principal plays a pivotal role in enhancing teacher effectiveness and improving learning quality within educational institutions. By providing strong leadership and a clear vision, principals can create an environment that fosters professional growth and encourages teacher innovation. This involves not only implementing structured management practices but also offering ongoing support through training and development opportunities (Jakavonytė-Staškuvienė & Ignatavičiūtė, 2022). Principals are responsible for identifying teachers' strengths and weaknesses, facilitating collaboration among staff, and creating mentorship programs that pair experienced educators with newer ones (Hayes & Burkett, 2021). Additionally, recognizing and rewarding outstanding teaching practices motivates educators and reinforces a culture of excellence. Ultimately, the principal's proactive involvement in these areas directly influences the overall educational experience, ensuring teachers have the necessary tools and resources to deliver high-quality instruction and enhance student learning outcomes.

The teacher performance improvement program can only be accomplished with the principal's guidance. After interviewing with one of the teachers,

information was obtained: "The teachers' efforts in gathering the procedures involved in creating educational resources. The development of the learning instruments created, which consist of the following parts: a) The programs are as follows: a) semester program; b) annual program; c) syllabus development; d) learning implementation plan (RPP) preparation; e) curriculum analysis; f) subject matter analysis; g) minimum completion criteria (KKM) determination; h) life skills analysis; and i) assessment design". Instructors carefully evaluate ways to raise the quality of their instruction and give students more learning opportunities, which can raise student achievement. Ultimately, the principals' and teachers' efforts resulted in excellent learning outcomes and improved their students' learning outcomes compared to the previous year.

The argument is also supported by the findings of the interview with the principal, who said, "The teacher performance improvement program is crucial for enhancing the quality of education we provide. My role is to guide and support our teachers throughout this process, ensuring they have the necessary resources and training to succeed." This concept is indeed important in improving the quality of education in teaching.

The improvement in learning quality results from various elements, including the principal's hard work, according to Nurtanto et al. (2021), which is also compatible with paper Marks & Thomas (2022) which reveals that the first step in implementing a program well is to prepare annual and semester schedules. Since the program documents will serve as the essential tools and benchmarks for enforcing regulations, it is essential to prepare them. In addition, since teachers will create lesson plans for the established school program, these documents will also be created as a tool to improve teacher quality.

The concept highlights the integral role of the principal in promoting teacher effectiveness and improving the quality of education in schools. As demonstrated, strong leadership is not just about administrative oversight; it involves creating a supportive environment in which teachers can grow professionally. The principal's responsibilities extend beyond traditional management practices, including fostering staff collaboration, identifying individual strengths and weaknesses, and facilitating mentoring programs. Such initiatives are critical in providing teachers with the skills and resources to improve their teaching methods. By aligning leadership strategies with teacher development initiatives, principals can significantly impact the educational landscape, ensuring that both educators and students benefit from a holistic, quality-focused learning environment.

Contribution of Performance Evaluation of Teachers

Overall, teacher performance development evaluations are conducted at the end of each semester and monthly at the end of the school year. The principal supervises and directs the evaluation to track the effectiveness of the agreed-upon coaching program. This means that the main purpose of the teacher performance development evaluation is to improve teachers' effectiveness and professionalism. Management function evaluation is a component of education management, a process that involves the principal supervising and encouraging teachers through

classroom visits and individual assessments and evaluations of each teacher.

Every semester, the principal conducts a routine evaluation. The evaluation is carried out on a one-to-one basis. In an interview with the teacher, the claim provides evidence by submitting, "The principal's evaluation every semester is a pleasant thing. Since we will be evaluated regularly, the teachers are motivated to give their best". Another teacher also argued that the principal received feedback as a form of joint evaluation; the teacher said, "I feel that the principal's evaluation is a positive experience. The evaluation motivates us to do our best throughout the semester. One-on-one evaluation allows for personalized feedback. This evaluation is not just a checklist; The principal took the time to discuss strengths and areas that needed improvement, which made it feel more constructive". The argument gives that the influence of the principal is enormous in the evaluation in general and the small scope of teachers.

The study found that the reward and sanction system implemented by the principal proved to be an effective motivator for teachers, significantly improving their performance. Previous studies, such as Fishbach & Woolley (2022), suggest that external reward systems can reduce intrinsic motivation, especially in education. The research argues that material rewards can make teachers more motivated by external factors than by the desire to teach well. This has led to discussions about the long-term effectiveness of reward and sanction systems in improving teacher performance. This finding emphasizes the importance of innovation and creativity in school management as critical factors in improving learning quality and teacher performance. Previous research, such as that conducted by David & Weinstein (2024), shows that innovations in education often face resistance and challenges in implementation, especially in established environments. Cuban argues that many innovations are not implemented effectively due to limited resources and adaptability by teachers and school staff.

This study found that principals who were actively involved in teachers' professional development through training and periodic evaluation were able to improve teachers' performance significantly. A study conducted by Dutta & Sahney (2022) and is also contained in Sirait (2021) showed that the influence of principals on teacher performance and student learning outcomes is indirect, depending more on school climate and organizational culture than on direct principal intervention. This study underscores that while principals play an important role, other factors, such as teacher collaboration and community support, are also crucial.

The results show that structured and systematic principal management significantly impacts teacher performance and learning quality. Some previous research, such as that conducted by Kilag et al. (2023), suggests that overly structured leadership can inhibit teachers' creativity and initiative, especially in environments that require high flexibility. They suggest that a balance between structure and flexibility is preferred in school management.

This study makes several contributions to Islamic education management. They strengthen principal management by providing insights into effective practices aligned with Islamic fairness, transparency, and accountability principles. Emphasizing the application of Islamic values such as integrity and

responsibility in teacher development, enhancing motivation and character alignment with Islamic teachings. They highlight the importance of innovation and creativity in educational management while adhering to Islamic values. Advocating for a fair reward and sanction system reflecting justice and wisdom motivates teachers to excel. Moreover, they offer practical guidance for policymakers and managers to develop effective strategies and training programs to improve teaching quality and student outcomes in Islamic education settings.

CONCLUSION

Effective management by school principals is essential for enhancing learning quality and teacher performance. The study reveals that principals who systematically implement management practices through planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating create a conducive learning environment that positively impacts student academic achievement. Furthermore, principals who promote innovation and creativity among teachers and establish a fair reward and sanction system are shown to motivate educators to continuously refine their pedagogical skills effectively. This approach strengthens individual teacher performance and improves overall student learning outcomes.

Despite these positive findings, the study also identifies weaknesses in the principals' management styles that may hinder achieving the desired results. Therefore, it highlights the need for further research considering additional factors, such as teachers' personalities, social skills, and students' motivation, which could also significantly influence learning quality. The insights gathered from this study offer practical guidance for principals and policymakers in developing more effective management strategies to support teacher performance and enhance student learning outcomes. Additionally, this research is a valuable reference for future studies in education management, mainly focusing on teacher performance development.

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