

## School Principal Leadership at SMK Negeri 3 Amuntai, Hulu Sungai Utara Regency

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### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** This study aims to analyze the leadership practices of the principal at SMK Negeri 3 Amuntai, Hulu Sungai Utara District, particularly in relation to organizational effectiveness, teacher discipline, motivation, and the achievement of school goals. **Method:** The research employed a qualitative approach, with data collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Informants were selected using snowball sampling, involving 12 participants consisting of school leaders and teachers. Data analysis followed three stages: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification to ensure analytical rigor and credibility. **Results:** The findings indicate that the principal's leadership is generally adequate across nine key indicators, including the ability to mobilize subordinates, decision-making, material considerations, participatory decision-making, implementation of decisions, delegation of authority, briefing, guidance, and supervision. However, weaknesses were identified in communication and coordination between the principal and subordinates, largely due to the principal's limited presence at school and external commitments. Constraining factors include insufficient discipline and limited funding, while supporting factors involve the principal's ability to direct, guide, and implement decisions effectively. **Novelty:** This study contributes by highlighting the critical role of communication and coordination as determining factors in the effectiveness of school leadership within vocational education contexts, offering practical insights for leadership improvement.

## INTRODUCTION

Background A. Background Law Number 20 of the Republic of Indonesia concerning the National Education System of 2003 explains that the goals and functions of national education are to enlighten the life of the nation, aiming to develop the potential of students and make them faithful and contribute to God Almighty, have noble morals, be healthy, and knowledgeable. In order to realize an advanced nation and state, high-quality human resources are needed to build that country. As a place for developing students, the school is led by the principal and teachers, who as employees are members of the school organization, must be able to improve human resources and other resources, and are essentially an elaboration of the leadership function. The leadership function itself is one of the roles of a leader in mobilizing all subordinates to provide service in achieving organizational goals according to their respective abilities. This is found in Asnawati Matondang's theory in Siti Hajar [1], [2], [3], [4].

SMK Negeri 3 Amuntai is one of the vocational education units at the SMK level located in Sungai Malang, Amuntai Tengah District, North Hulu Sungai Regency. In carrying out its activities, SMKN 3 Amuntai is under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and Culture. SMKN 3 Amuntai School provides various educational support facilities for its students. There are teachers of the highest quality who are competent in

their fields, as well as learning support activities such as extracurriculars, student organizations, learning communities, sports teams, and a library, allowing for maximum learning. With complete facilities, this school should be able to attract new students to continue their education here, but based on initial observations, the number of students attending SMK Negeri 3 Amuntai is small. This school is located near the city, which should allow it to compete with schools far from the city center. With the road conditions being good for getting to school, teachers and the principal should be able to arrive on time. However, the principal's lack of discipline and supervision over teachers and other educators makes the principal's leadership less than optimal [5], [6], [7], [8].

Based on the author's initial observations, it was found that, firstly, the school principal still does not follow up on subordinates who do not obey school rules, such as being late or absent during class hours. As a leader, you have the right and obligation to impose strict sanctions or reprimands on teachers who violate the rules in order to improve fair teacher work discipline. (Source: Interview with Mr. Ikhwan Dakhliyanto, S.Sn. MM) Second, it is less effective in achieving the school organization's goals accurately. Every organization has goals and achievements it wants to reach, and SMK 3 Amuntai is no different. One of the targets of SMK 3 Amuntai is to improve the school's physical facilities, such as renovating the student practice building, but this has not been fully realized to date (Attached on page 44: List of Infrastructure Development/Renovation at SMK Negeri 3 Amuntai). Additionally, the school also needs to equip itself with supporting tools for practice to facilitate student learning in conducting laboratory activities. (Source: Interview with Mr. Erwin Ardiansyah, S.Pd.) Third, the lack of motivation provided by the Principal to teachers, such as giving praise and recognition to teachers and staff, resulting in a lack of work spirit, disharmonious cooperation, and a lack of interest in educational development, which leads to a lack of professional quality development among teachers. (Source: Interview with Mr. Ahmad Luthfi, S.Pd.I.) Based on the above description and application of the problems, the researcher is interested in conducting research on "SCHOOL PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP AT SMK NEGERI 3 AMUNTAI, NORTH HULU SUNGAI DISTRICT". Research Focus In this study, the researcher focuses on the Principal's Leadership in Improving Teacher Work Discipline at SMK Negeri 3 Amuntai. Based on the various existing problems and referring to the theory put forward by Prof. Dr. Veitzhal Riva'i, S.E., M.M. (2014:34), the discussion is as follows: a. Instruction b. Consultation c. Participation d. Delegation e. Control C. Problem Formulation In this study, the problem being discussed is limited to the Principal's Leadership at SMK Negeri 3 Amuntai, therefore the researcher is based on the following problems: 1. How is the Principal's Leadership at SMK Negeri 3 Amuntai, Hulu Sungai Utara Regency? 2. What are the inhibiting factors for the Principal in their leadership at SMK Negeri 3 Amuntai, Hulu Sungai Utara Regency? 3. What are the supporting factors for the Principal's leadership at SMK Negeri 3 Amuntai, Hulu Sungai Utara Regency?

**THEORETICAL BASIS** Definition of Leadership Leadership, according to grammar, is derived from the word "to lead," which means leadership. A leader is a

leader, and leadership is a leader, often translated as leadership. The word "leader" appeared in the 1300s, while the word "leadership" appeared later, around the 1700s. Leadership is the process of influencing the activities of an organized group in its efforts to determine and achieve its goals. The theory of Veitzhal Rivai (2017:34) in the book *Leadership and Organizational Behavior* states that the functions and types of leadership are as follows:

- a. **Instructional Function** This function is one-way communication. Leaders as a component are the party that determines what, how, when, and from where the order is carried out so that decisions can be implemented effectively. Leadership requires the ability to motivate others to be willing to carry out the order.
- b. **Consultation function** This function is two-way communication. In the first stage of decision-making, leaders often need materials for consideration, which requires consulting with their subordinates who are considered to have various information needed for making decisions. The next stage of consultation by the leader with the subordinates can be done after the decision has been made and is being implemented. This consultation is intended to obtain feedback to improve the decisions that have been made and implemented. By performing a consultative function, it is hoped that leadership decisions will gain support and be easier to instruct, thus making leadership effective.
- c. **Participation Function** In performing this function, the leader strives to activate the people they lead, both in participating in decision-making and in implementing them. Participation does not mean doing whatever you want, but is done in a controlled and directed manner thru cooperation without interfering with or taking over the core duties of others.
- d. **Delegation Function** This function is carried out by delegating the authority to make or establish decisions, either with or without the approval of the leadership. The function of delegation is essentially trust. The people receiving the delegation must be believed to be the leader's assistants who share the same principles, perceptions, and aspirations [9], [10], [11].

- e. **Controlling Function** The controlling function means that successful and effective leadership is able to direct and coordinate its members' activities effectively, enabling the maximum achievement of common goals. The controlling function can be realized thru guidance, direction, coordination, and supervision. Leadership is a behavior with a specific purpose to influence the activities of group members to achieve common goals designed to benefit individuals and organizations. Therefore, in an organization, leadership is a very important factor in determining the achievement of goals set by the organization. Leadership is also sometimes defined as the exercise of authority and decision-making. Some also define it as an initiative to act that results in a consistent pattern in order to find a solution to a common problem.

2. **The Role of Leadership** Leadership is defined as a person's ability and skill to hold a position as the leader of a work unit in order to influence the behavior of others, especially subordinates, to think and act in such a way that thru positive behavior, they make a real contribution to its achievement. The role of leadership according to Veitzhal Rivai (2014:394) in the book *"Leaders and Leadership in Organizations"* is clearly seen in the following aspects:

- a. **Decision Making** A person's leadership plays a very important role in every decision-

making process, making decisions and taking responsibility for the results one of the leader's tasks. In addition, decision-making is one of the systematic approaches to a problem, gathering facts and data, making a mature determination from the alternatives faced, and taking action that is calculated to be the most appropriate. b. Conflict Management The effectiveness of a person's leadership can be seen in how well they are able to control and manage conflict. A leader's failure to control and manage will lead to something unproductive and destructive. Conflict is a complex issue that needs immediate resolution. Conflict is also beneficial, especially in: a) Fostering creativity b) Constructive social change c) Building group cohesion skills Team Building The main goal of team building is to create a solid work unit with a strong sense of membership and cooperation.

## RESEARCH METHOD

**Research Approach** The type of research used in this study is a qualitative research method. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2009) in Juliansyah Noor (2015:33-34), 'The qualitative approach is a process and understanding based on a methodology that investigates social phenomena and human problems. This qualitative approach can be interpreted as data obtained will be arranged based on field research results by examining or collecting data and information obtained to gain a clear picture of the research object determined by the author. Therefore, this approach is an alternative approach intended to provide real and valid conclusions.' **Research Type** In this study, the author uses a descriptive qualitative research type with the intention of generating data in the form of written or spoken words from the people and behaviors observed.

According to Sugiyono (2016:9), "Qualitative descriptive method is a research method based on postpositivism philosophy, used to study natural object conditions (as opposed to experiments), where the researcher is the key instrument for data collection techniques carried out thru triangulation (combination), data analysis is inductive/qualitative, and qualitative research results emphasize meaning rather than generalization [8], [12], [13]."

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. The principal's leadership at SMK Negeri 3 Amuntai is quite good, as evidenced by the following: First, the leadership communication indicator is quite good because communication between the principal and the teachers doesn't happen too often. The two indicators of leadership ability are quite good, as the principal always gives direct task orders to be carried out by each teacher when motivating their subordinates. The third indicator of the principal's considerations in making decisions for the school is quite good; the principal also discusses and receives input from their staff in making decisions. The four indicators of the principal's decision-making are already quite good because the principal usually makes decisions in accordance with their job description as principal, and the decisions they make are quite appropriate and good. The fifth indicator of the principal's participation in decision-making is already good, such as decisions about

tasks and work at school being made thru meetings or direct discussions. However, when making decisions, the principal should also include the teachers to participate in providing input on the decisions being made. The sixth indicator, Implementing the Principal's Decisions, is indeed well-executed because if an agreed-upon decision is a mandatory task, the author's observation is that the principal always implements these decisions, which include policy decisions and responsibilities as the school leader. Seventh, based on the indicator of delegation of authority from the principal to teachers, it is considered quite good. Indeed, the principal has delegated authority to the vice-principal when the principal is not present to handle school tasks. Eighth, based on the indicator of principal's guidance, it is already good as a leader in providing guidance to teachers in the school, such as guidance on completing assignments and teacher attendance, which needs to be improved. Direct guidance to teachers is also needed to help them deliver better lessons. Ninth, based on the indicator of principal's guidance to teachers. The principal provides guidance thru direct communication and brainstorming sessions held at specific times. Tenth, based on the indicator of the principal's coordination with teachers, it is quite good, because the principal's coordination is carried out but not well established. Eleventh, based on the principal's supervision indicators, it is quite good. Because in supervising the discipline, performance, and tasks of their teachers, they use monitoring and direct face-to-face meetings.

2. Factors influencing school principal leadership include:

a. Situational and Conditional Factors (lack of discipline between the school principal and teachers at SMK Negeri 3 Amuntai) In terms of discipline between the school principal and teachers at SMK Negeri 3 Amuntai, the discipline is not good. This is due to the school principal's frequent absence from school, making it easy for teachers not to comply with regulations regarding discipline. Additionally, the principal does not provide firm warnings or sanctions, so some teachers still dare to come late.

b. Task Needs Factor (Lack of Funds at SMK Negeri 3 Amuntai) In terms of task needs, where the school's needs have not been met, this is due to a lack of funds. This is evident from the unfinished buildings, as well as the damaged and incomplete facilities and infrastructure needed to support the comfort of the school. Furthermore, the existing buildings are still unmaintained and not yet operational.

3. Factors supporting school principal leadership include:

j. Ability to motivate subordinates The school principal's ability to motivate subordinates is quite good. In motivating subordinates, the school principal always provides instructions to subordinates to improve further in terms of learning or other aspects.

k. Implementing Decisions In implementing decisions, a leader must carry out what has been agreed upon together. The decisions implemented must be accountable.

l. Direction and Guidance Providing direction and guidance to the teachers, such as performing tasks efficiently and effectively, and also, in the direction given by the Principal, it is necessary to instruct them to do it well. Additionally, providing guidance to the teachers, such as direct communication and exchanging ideas with them effectively [16] ,[15] ,[14] ,[13].

## CONCLUSION

**Fundamental Findings :** This study concludes that the principal's leadership at SMK Negeri 3 Amuntai, Hulu Sungai Utara Regency, is generally effective across key leadership indicators, including mobilization ability, decision-making, participatory practices, delegation, guidance, and supervision; however, notable weaknesses persist in communication and coordination due to the principal's limited presence and external commitments. **Implications :** These findings imply that strengthening leadership effectiveness in vocational schools requires not only managerial competence but also consistent interpersonal engagement, disciplined role modeling, and structured coordination mechanisms to support school development and teacher performance. **Limitations :** This research is limited by its qualitative scope, single-site focus, and reliance on a relatively small number of informants, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings to other educational contexts. **Future Research :** Future studies are recommended to employ comparative or mixed-method approaches across multiple schools, examine the relationship between principal presence and organizational culture, and explore strategic leadership models that enhance communication, coordination, and sustainable school improvement.

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