

Principal's Transformational Leadership on The Implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Elementary Schools

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ABSTRACT

In building the growth of a nation, education is very important. As a school principal, it is the principal's responsibility to ensure that students learn well so that the country can achieve its goals and advance its culture. Principals do not only function as administrative officials who sign off on policies, but also play an important role in building the ethos of the institution and planning its future direction. The purpose of this study is to provide school principals with some ideas and insights into the different types of leadership and communication patterns they can use to achieve their set learning goals in order to adapt to the current state of education, taking into account all the points from the description given above. This investigation utilized a literature review methodology, which falls under the category of qualitative research. Based on the discussion given, it can be concluded that a principal's social communication skills have a significant effect on leadership effectiveness and problem solving in the classroom.

INTRODUCTION

In building the growth of a nation, education is very important. As a school principal, it is the principal's responsibility to ensure that students learn well so that the country can achieve its goals and advance its culture. The principal does not only function as an administrative official who signs off on policies, but also plays an important role in building the ethos of the institution and planning its future direction. At its best, the principal's duties in today's schools should cover a number of areas says Ramadina [10]. Being a supervisor and leader who ensures that educational institutions are transformed is first and foremost an important responsibility.

Second, assisting with curriculum development; and third, preparing extensively for educational programs that put students at the center or encourage self-directed learning. According to (Sigit & Kusrahmadi, 2011) that the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology (MoECristek) runs the autonomous learning curriculum as a program to provide a new atmosphere and environment for schools to learn. "Different" in this context means creating an environment where students can relax and focus on their studies without feeling rushed or pressured, and where professors and students can work together to solve problems and share ideas.

Continuing the conversation, (Sigit & Kusrahmadi, 2011) explains that the background of the autonomous learning program is to address the many concerns raised by parents and students themselves towards the current national education system.

Everyone knows that every level and grade in the Indonesian education system has a minimum standard that students must meet every semester in order to get a passing grade. Therefore, most students view educational activities with fear and disgust. Thus, the creation of differentiated learning is one of the goals of the school autonomous learning program, according to Wahyuningsari (Wahyuningsari et al., 2022). In the context of education, "differentiated learning" means tailoring students' learning plans and assignments to each individual's strengths, weaknesses, interests, and talents, rather than focusing solely on test scores. More broadly, when they are in the classroom, teachers basically have four things to keep in mind: the classroom subject, the process, the outcome, and the classroom atmosphere. Therefore, students will not feel or perceive learning activities as burdensome, discouraging, or even accompanied by prolonged emotions of failure if their grades do not reach the minimum standards for graduation. Learning activities that are fun and make students feel free make all these impressions easier to implement. Some important conclusions about the Principal's function, his/her ability to direct the school, and the implementation of autonomous learning can be drawn from the foregoing. Principals have a responsibility to guide current learning patterns towards greater adaptability and creativity, which of course brings us to the first point. For the simple reason that it enables the most effective achievement of learning objectives. This is in line with what Nurwatin revealed in her latest research which emphasizes the importance of updating educational programs and rethinking the curriculum [8]. The field of education is always evolving to meet the demands of technology and society in general, and this is a direct result of these changes. Consequently, in their role as educational designers, school administrators, teachers, and other educational staff members must have the ability to think strategically, have a clear vision of the future, and communicate their ideas effectively to students, both orally and in writing.

A second equally important quality is the principal's ability to communicate vocally and administratively. Principals and the workers they supervise are known to communicate and engage in unique ways depending on the organization or school. Given the close relationship between effective communication and productive interactions and performance, it is important for all stakeholders to work together to adopt the most appropriate approach and style [1]. In order for school employees to remain enthusiastic in working and directing their actions to achieve learning outcomes, the leadership and communication patterns shown by the principal can have an impact, according to Inah and Trihapsari (Yakin, 2020). Research (Yakin, 2020) supports this claim, detailing how increased performance motivation among educational institution staff and teachers can result from effective communication management on the part of the principal. In order to communicate effectively as the key person in the school, the principal must first consider the character of his or her audience or

teachers, then formulate a well-thought-out message, choose the most appropriate medium, and finally, set the style in which he or she is allowed to engage in conversation [6].

With the implementation of the 2013 Curriculum, especially as a replacement for the 2006 Curriculum, also known as the Education Unit Level Curriculum (KTSP), which is considered less than ideal in achieving the goals and objectives of national education, the education sector is undergoing continuous changes and improvements to its curriculum [13]. A new approach to education known as autonomous curriculum has recently developed. In this view, the autonomous curriculum is best understood as an educational tool that gives students more leeway to explore topics of their interest while still maintaining a strong emphasis on developing their innate abilities and skills [2].

Under the leadership of Nadiem Anwar Makarim, the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia (Kemendikbud RI) introduced a new program policy: freedom of learning. Independent learning, in his view, is about thinking, which is essentially something that teachers do and then pass on to their students. In the Minister of Education and Culture Regulation Number 22 of 2020 issued by the Minister of Education and Culture, "the curriculum formed through the Merdeka Belajar Policy will have characteristics that are flexible, competency-based, focus on character development and soft skills, and accommodate the needs of the world."

Every part of the education system needs to change in response to changes in the curricular framework. Why? Because changes to the curriculum will affect the way students learn and the people who have a stake in the process. Changes to the curriculum may have both positive and adverse effects. One of the main reasons why educational institutions work hard to achieve their mission is because of the important role that teachers play in the learning process. Also important is the capacity of schools in these educational institutions to react to these policies. Therefore, by improving human resources and teacher effectiveness, we must be prepared to witness changes in the curriculum. The principal's management style may have an effect on this.

Therefore, the Principal's leadership and communication style will have a significant impact on the school environment in which he or she works. The success of learning outcomes, the introduction of new educational innovations such as autonomous learning programs, and the passion and drive of current faculty and staff all contribute to this. Therefore, in order to prevent the emergence of inhibiting elements in the future educational revolution, it is important for principals to choose acceptable and effective leadership and communication styles.

The purpose of this study is to provide school principals with some ideas and insights into the different types of leadership and communication patterns they can use to achieve the learning goals that have been set to adapt to the current state of education, taking into account all the points from the description given above. Such as the current trend of Indonesian education, one of which is the adjustment to self-

study programs. A qualitative research strategy based on literature review will be used in this investigation. Books, scientific journals, thesis and dissertation papers, and other materials related to the main research themes of principals, leadership and communication styles, and self-directed learning programs are cited as sources of information.

RESEARCH METHOD

This investigation utilized a literature review methodology, which falls under the category of qualitative research. Books, scientific journals, theses, dissertations and other publications containing additional material related to the research subject were combed through as part of the data collection process (Triandini et al., 2019). Principals' leadership and communication styles, the implementation of autonomous learning programs and related topics are the main focus of this research. The findings and discussion points will provide a detailed explanation of all the materials collected after careful analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

The principal's approach in leading the school with more discipline; in particular, the principal tries to set a good example by being on time and arriving late. Based on the interview findings, it is clear that the school manager uses a leadership style of meeting directly with teachers to improve teacher discipline. At every teachers' council meeting, the principal uses this kind of storytelling leadership. This corresponds to his morning practice of sitting in the teachers' council office, where he keeps an eye on all the teachers who arrive and makes sure to remember their names when it is time to teach. One aspect of the principal's leadership style that has been shown to increase teachers' motivation to work hard is the emphasis on quality improvement in setting strict performance expectations (Setyanignsih et al., 2018). To build high-quality schools, school administrators pay great attention to teachers' concerns and demands, and they are aware of the fact that teachers are, by nature, only human. The principal's approach to leadership in developing more teacher institutions, particularly the fact that the principal offers benefits beyond the nationally defined certification benefits, such as rewards and incentives. Other needs are also increasing, and various rewards, incentives and welfare programs are meant to help with that. In terms of assigning more tasks to teachers, principals take a democratic approach. School administrators aim to encourage and motivate teachers to work in both extracurricular and non-extracurricular activities by expanding their duties in the classroom.

School administrators face challenges when trying to improve teacher effectiveness, such as coordinating classroom administration and enforcing rules about punctuality (in terms of attendance and correctness of lesson plans). In addition, school administrators have challenges when trying to motivate teachers to work, especially with

regard to their physical and mental readiness for class. The principal repeatedly conveyed the message to teachers that they and their families should prioritize health. The aim of the principal's efforts is to increase teachers' motivation by providing support, advising and ensuring they stay healthy, especially in terms of excitement in the classroom.

School administrators face challenges when trying to improve teachers' responsibilities; some educators still have difficulty communicating the subject outline and syllabus effectively, so they just teach without thorough preparation. School principals often ask for help from supervisors or related agencies to socialize teachers and improve teacher administration in an effort to address the issue of teacher responsibility. They also organize training for teachers who have not been consistent in explaining lesson plans and syllabus.

Research shows that after about four years of implementation at various levels of education in Indonesia, the self-directed learning curriculum or program has now reached a turning point in its future progress [12]. Despite initial resistance and concerns, autonomous learning models are gradually gaining traction, and by 2023, at least 85 percent of Indonesian schools will have adopted them. One of the cities that provided comprehensive information on the implementation results of the autonomous learning program is Bandung.

There are already several educational institutions that are enthusiastic about implementing all programs in the autonomous learning program, according to Mr. Hikmat Ginanjar, Head of the Bandung City Education Office. According to his information, there are already 27 kindergartens, 442 elementary schools, and 188 junior high schools (SMP) in Bandung City that are participating in the IKM 2023 program. However, PSP consists of 27 elementary schools, 31 junior high schools, and 11 junior high schools. In addition, he said, Bandung is home to 106 driving instructors who have all successfully completed the program. Starting from Batch 4 (17 people) and continuing to Batch 7 (28 people). Therefore, Bandung has consistently adapted and actively involved in Indonesia's revolutionary education plan (Fatonah 2023).

The study also found that there are different patterns in the procedures used to implement autonomous learning programs at different grade levels.

Some argue that the best way to implement free learning is to improve the communication pattern between students and instructors. They also argue that management and leadership roles are important to involve everyone in the creation of the free learning curriculum [14].

Researchers have identified a number of leadership styles that, when combined, should be used to ensure autonomous learning programs are fully implemented. Democratic, transformational, participative and managerial leadership styles all fall into this category [7]. At the same time, when looking at the suggested communication patterns, researchers found that there is a wide array of communication styles that can be used to implement the autonomous learning curriculum. This diversity is triggered by the fact that the culture of each educational

institution plays an important role. Interpersonal communication pattern, administrative communication pattern and interpersonal communication are the three optimal communication types that the research generally suggests school administrators to adopt. In order to develop more effective autonomous learning programs in the future, the researcher will elaborate on some of these leadership and communication patterns below.

Discussion

Following the previous explanation, this section will discuss various leadership styles and communication patterns that principals might use to create and optimize the implementation of autonomous learning programs. Principal Transformational Leadership in Implementing Merdeka Belajar Program Based on the research findings, a number of primary and secondary schools have effectively implemented programs that allow students to learn independently. The principal's leadership style is one of the reasons why these initiatives have worked well. According to research conducted by Aunga and Masare, there is a strong relationship between leadership and the success of educational initiatives and the efficiency of instructors in implementing them (Aunga and Masare 2017). In addition to Aunga, Lahagu in his research confirmed (Lahagu and Hidayat 2023) that the principal's leadership role in achieving freedom of learning is to provide full support to all program stakeholders, including teachers and students. All school resources, according to A. Y. Saputra and Ramadan (2023), should be planned, coordinated and harmonized by the principal.

Both studies provide an explanation of the principal's leadership style that is consistent with the characteristics of transformational leadership. In the transformational leadership style as described by Sa'adah et al. (Sa'adah, Ainol, and Izzah 2023), managers are responsible for inspiring their subordinates, evaluating their performance on the job, and helping them grow professionally.

True to form, transformational leadership emphasizes motivating human resources in the organization to make positive changes and achieve its goals. The transformative leadership style will be very suitable for introducing self-directed learning programs. This is due to the fact that the entire human resources of educational institutions in Indonesia are initially unprepared for the constant and rapid changes in policies and curricula. So, leaders-here, principals- should be able to mobilize their human resources to keep up with the latest pedagogical innovations. With this strategy, their schools will remain pioneers or catalysts of change in the Indonesian education landscape. According to Jani's research (Jani 2023), principals can open collaborative discussion spaces and involve all teachers and students to explore, appreciate and evaluate failures in all cases transparently. This will help establish a culture of curriculum self- learning as described above.

Transformative leadership according to Sriyanto et al. (Sriyanto, Kartono, and Sembiring 2022), is a key component in utilizing the curriculum not limited to the current industrial education system. This is because principals who respond to modern educational trends with a visionary attitude show their idealistic and receptive nature.

Ultimately, this will inspire all educators and teachers in their respective institutions to do the same. They will work together to achieve common goals and take an active role in shaping the educational landscape.

Research by Yuneti et al. (Yuneti, Hamdan, and Pranansa 2019) added that all human resources in an organization must be willing and actively involved so that the learning independence program can be implemented or implemented optimally. This is beyond the encouragement and motivation of the leadership of higher education institutions. This plays a very important role, because it is useless if top-level management is always eager to implement an educational revolution, but employees at the lower levels do not have the willingness to do the same. Therefore, under these circumstances, participative leadership style can be a good substitute.

The premise of alternative leadership styles is that school personnel, including teachers, are not commodities whose value can be exploited. Quite the opposite is true; principals should be able to make them feel like friends and colleagues while inspiring them to work together in an objective atmosphere to innovate and oversee academic work. A proactive and impartial attitude from the principal can pave the way for the most effective self-directed learning programs.

Angga and Iskandar's research (Angga and Iskandar 2022) shows that principals play an important role in achieving an ideal learning environment in

schools. Therefore, democratic management and leadership are required. A leadership style that emphasizes the principal's role in providing effective direction to school resources is known as management leadership (Sihaloho, 2022). The development of learning that fosters achievement, creativity and discovery makes full use of and capitalizes on all available resources. Therefore, taking into account the above, the idea of transformational, participatory, democratic and managerial leadership styles can be applied, with the caveat that each of these styles must be adapted to the specific circumstances and culture of the institution concerned. If this does not happen, it is likely that the implementation of the autonomous learning program will be haphazard and marked by miscommunication.

Ismail et al. (2020) found that a principal's social communication skills, among other necessary soft skills, have a significant effect on leadership effectiveness. In addition, research conducted by Nugroho (Nugroho 2019) showed that leaders, especially school administrators, who have strong communication skills are better able to handle disputes that arise in the classroom. In terms of classroom problem solving, the principal's communication accounted for 80.6% of the total. Correspondingly, if administrators can assist teachers in resolving problems, it is likely that their performance will improve. When all factors are considered, this ability accounts for 64.9% of the total. Research by Amrullah et al. (Amrullah, Sa'diyah, and Kattani 2022) supports the claims made in the aforementioned article; the authors state that effective supervision and gradual communication management are key factors in increasing teachers' intrinsic motivation to perform in the classroom. Therefore, these issues should be addressed by school principals.

Based on the research findings and explanations in the field and the results section, it is clear that principals can improve the implementation of the independent learning program by applying three communication patterns: interpersonal, administrative, and cross-functional. Interpersonal communication patterns are defined as two individuals engaging in a two-way flow of information while responding to and building relationships with each other. According to Murtiningsih, Kristiawan, and Lian (2019), when two people are involved in a discussion, intrapersonal communication patterns emphasize closeness and ease in understanding each other. Leaders and members of an institution, such as a school, can strengthen their bond through interpersonal communication.

In interpersonal communication, Inah (Inah 2016) argues that both parties are able to freely express, get mutual input, and convey aspirations. The desire of both principals and teachers/educational personnel to equally provide

space for aspirations and create harmonious communication as colleagues and friends outside the school environment is characterized by the style or application of interpersonal communication patterns, according to research by I Saputra et al. (I. Saputra, Asrori, and Linda 2023) as stated in the study. The ability to work together with colleagues, superiors to subordinates, and everyone in the educational environment is another skill that must be possessed by the principal. Formal packaging is possible while still prioritizing closeness (Mukhlisin 2017).

The next type of communication is interpersonal communication, which, according to Yohanas (Yohanas 2018), prioritizes the intimacy and ease of the two people involved. Another aspect of this mode of expression is the use of diverse media to convey arguments in a more intimate setting. When viewed from the angle of a typical principal's interaction with various parties in the school, this kind of discourse is both formal and casual. When the Principal gives instructions, details or recommendations, it is more than a letter or an invitation. In addition, principals take the time to talk one-on-one with their colleagues. As a result, this communication pattern includes several perspectives and viewpoints. While this type of communication may seem more comfortable at first glance, it actually presents certain difficulties, the most significant of which is the principal's constant need to learn the unique quirks and preferred methods of expressing ideas of each employee in his or her workplace.

At the same time, the administrative communication style came next. Administrative communication, like management leadership, is about conveying ideas from one person to another in a way that everyone can understand and work towards a common goal. All parts of the school community are encouraged to participate in this communication pattern by expressing their views in a formal, tactful and ethical manner. The communication style implies the coordination of messages or discussions between the principal and all educators and instructors in each school while creating or implementing an autonomous curriculum. It is the responsibility of the principal to ensure that the human and material resources of the

school are utilized to the fullest (Wati 2019).

CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion, it can be concluded that a principal's social communication skills have a significant effect on leadership effectiveness and problem solving in the classroom. In addition, transformational, participatory, democratic and managerial leadership can be applied to create and optimize the implementation of autonomous learning programs. Interpersonal, administrative and cross-functional communication patterns are also suggested to be adopted by school administrators. The autonomous learning program in Indonesia has reached a turning point in its future progress, and appropriate leadership styles and communication patterns can help increase teachers' intrinsic motivation to excel in the classroom.

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