

RESEARCH ARTICLE



The Role Of The Principal In Enhancing The Performance Of Teachers And Educational Staff at SMA Negeri 1 Bengkulu Selatan

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the role of the principal in improving the performance of teachers and educational staff at SMA Negeri 1 Bengkulu Selatan. The research employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive method. Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation involving six key informants, including the principal, administrative staff, teachers, school committee, and student representatives. The findings indicate that the principal exercised leadership through five performance improvement strategies as outlined by Schuler and Jackson, namely positive reinforcement, performance audits, performance standards, feedback mechanisms, and recognition of achievement. The principal's role extended beyond administrative functions to reflect a transformational leadership style that fostered a collaborative, disciplined, and quality-oriented work culture. Nonetheless, challenges such as low participation in training programs and weak discipline among some educators were identified. These findings highlight the need to strengthen internal coaching systems and promote more participatory governance strategies within the school.

Keyword: Principal, Teacher Performance, Educational Staff, Performance Improvement Strategy, Educational Leadership

Introduction

Education at the senior secondary level has a very strategic role in shaping the character and competence of students as prospective members of society who are competitive. In accordance with the mandate of Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, education is organized to develop the potential of students to become individuals who are faithful, pious, have noble character, are healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent, and socially and nationally responsible (Law on the National Education System No. 20, 2003, Article 3).

In the context of implementing education in schools, the leadership of the principal is one of the determinants in achieving educational goals. The principal not only functions as an administrator, but also as a visionary leader who plays a role in directing, fostering, and developing the potential of all school resources optimally (Umbara, 2009). Therefore, the success of implementing education at the educational unit level is largely determined by the quality of the principal's leadership.

SMA Negeri 1 Bengkulu Selatan is one of the educational institutions that shows positive dynamics in academic and non-academic fields. This development cannot be separated from the principal's contribution in managing the institution effectively. The principal is expected to be able to initiate various coaching and supervision strategies for educators and education personnel in order to realize professional and responsible performance (Raihani, 2010).

However, the results of initial observations showed that the implementation of the coaching strategy was not fully effective. There are still a number of problems such as low work discipline, irregularity in the preparation of learning devices, and lack of teacher participation in professional development activities. This is an indication that the role of the principal as a driving force has not been optimal in fostering a productive work culture in the school environment.

This phenomenon is important to study further, considering that the quality of education is highly dependent on the competence and dedication of educators and the support of transformative leadership. Improving the performance of teachers and administrative staff is an integral part of strengthening school governance that is oriented towards achieving the institutional vision and mission (Syafaruddin, 2010).

Starting from this background, the formulation of the problem in this study is: what is the role of the principal at SMA Negeri 1 Bengkulu Selatan in improving the performance of teachers and education personnel? This question is the basis for exploring the effectiveness of the principal's leadership in implementing the right managerial strategy. The purpose of this study is to identify and analyze the role of the principal in carrying out leadership tasks that include aspects of coaching, supervision, and providing motivation to educators and education personnel. The main focus is directed at the principal's efforts in forming a work ecosystem that supports the development of individual capacity in a sustainable manner. Theoretically, this study is expected to provide a significant contribution to the development of educational management studies, especially in the realm of principal leadership at the secondary education level. The findings of this study are expected to enrich the academic literature on strategies for improving the performance of educational staff through the application of an adaptive and contextual managerial approach (Schuler & Jackson, 1999).

From a practical perspective, the results of this study have the potential to be a reference for stakeholders in the school

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environment and related educational institutions in formulating human resource development policies that are more structured, effective, and relevant to the dynamics of change. In addition, this study can be used as a reflective instrument to evaluate and develop leadership strategies that have been implemented by principals.

The urgency of this study lies in the need to understand more deeply how principal leadership contributes to improving the quality of performance of educators and education staff. In the context of secondary education in Indonesia, this study is important to support the strengthening of institutional capacity and the development of superior human resources in the school environment.

Method

This study applies a qualitative approach with a descriptive method that aims to interpret the social meanings of the principal's leadership behavior and practices in a natural context. This approach is considered most appropriate for exploring complex and contextual social phenomena, as well as for understanding the role of the principal in improving the performance of teachers and education personnel at SMA Negeri 1 Bengkulu Selatan. According to Moleong (2017), qualitative research is used to understand the background, reasons, and dynamics of human behavior in their social environment. This type of research is descriptive because it focuses on the presentation of empirical data obtained from informants through methods that do not use statistical measuring instruments. This study aims to provide a detailed description of the principal's leadership strategy, both in the form of coaching, supervision, and motivation to education personnel. Researchers attempt to capture the social and operational realities of school leadership through direct interaction with research subjects. Data collection techniques include participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation studies. Observations are used to examine the principal's leadership practices in daily activities in the school environment. Interviews were conducted with semi-structured guidelines to be flexible in exploring the experiences, perceptions, and narratives of informants. Documentation is used as a supporting source to strengthen and confirm data obtained from observations and interviews. The selection of informants was carried out through purposive sampling techniques with the consideration that informants have the capacity for knowledge, direct experience, and active involvement in the process being studied. Informants consisted of the principal, head of administration, teachers, administrative staff, head of the school committee, and student representatives as representatives of the wider school community. Data analysis was carried out using the interactive model from Miles and Huberman (1994), which includes three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. Data reduction is carried out through the process of selecting, grouping, and simplifying information that is relevant to the focus of the research. Data presentation is in the form of descriptive narratives to show patterns of findings. Conclusions are drawn through an interpretive process based on the relationship between themes that emerge from field data. To ensure data validity, source and technique triangulation techniques are used. Source triangulation is carried out by comparing information obtained from various categories of informants, while technique triangulation is carried out by comparing the results of observations, interviews, and documentation. In addition, observations were extended and diligence in data verification was increased to ensure the credibility and validity of the information. The methodological design used in this study was designed to reveal the principal's leadership mechanism in carrying out managerial functions and fostering human resources in the school environment. The main focus lies on how leadership strategies are implemented in real practice in daily practice, and how they affect the performance of teachers and administrative staff.

Results and Discussion

This study aims to describe the role of the principal in improving the performance of teachers and education personnel at SMA Negeri 1 Bengkulu Selatan. Based on the results of in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation conducted on six informants, it was found that the principal plays a strategic role in implementing five main indicators of performance improvement strategies as stated by Schuler and Jackson (1999), namely: providing positive encouragement, implementing performance audits, setting work standards and objectives, providing feedback, and awards or reinforcement for employee performance. The first finding shows that the principal actively provides positive encouragement in the form of symbolic awards such as certificates, words of gratitude, and verbal motivation. Awards are given to teachers and staff who show superior performance, especially at special moments such as Teachers' Day and PGRI events. This practice has an impact on increasing work enthusiasm and a sense of belonging to the institution. This was confirmed by informants from the elements of teachers, administrative staff, to the chairman of OSIS who acknowledged an increase in motivation after receiving the award. Furthermore, the principal also carries out periodic performance audits, generally at the end of each semester. This audit not only includes administrative assessments, but also evaluations of the implementation of learning, discipline, and teacher involvement in school programs. The audit is conducted through direct observation, work program assessment, and collection of written reports. The audit results then become the basis for determining performance development recommendations for each individual.

In terms of setting standards and work objectives, the principal sets success indicators that refer to the main tasks and functions (tupoksi) of each school personnel. These standards are translated into annual work programs and socialized through internal meetings and forums. Teachers and staff are required to prepare work plans that are in line with these indicators, and report their achievements through a periodic reporting system. Regarding feedback, the principal provides periodic evaluations of the performance of teachers and education personnel, both verbally and in writing. This feedback is delivered through official forums such as staff meetings, or in direct personal communication. Several teachers said that the principal is open to dialogue and willing to provide constructive input on weaknesses found during the work process.

Finally, awards for employee performance are also given in the form of financial incentives sourced from the school committee budget. This incentive is given to teachers and staff who successfully achieve certain performance targets, such as involvement in academic competitions, development of learning innovations, or student achievement. The provision of incentives is selective and based on the results of the principal's evaluation together with the school's management team. In addition, awards in the form of administrative convenience in submitting promotions are also part of the retention strategy and strengthening employee loyalty. Field data shows that the strategy implemented by the principal has had a positive impact on improving the quality of work of most teachers and staff, although there are still obstacles such as the lack of full involvement of some teachers in training, weak work discipline in several units, and overlapping programs due to less than optimal coordination. However, in general, the role of the principal at SMA Negeri 1 Bengkulu Selatan has reflected a responsive, participatory, and progressive leadership approach in fostering and developing human resources in the school environment.

Discussion

The findings of this study confirm that the principal plays a crucial role in managing and directing the dynamics of work in the environment of SMA Negeri 1 Bengkulu Selatan. This role is not only limited to the implementation of administrative

functions, but also includes strategic responsibilities in fostering, supervising, and developing the potential of the school's human resources, especially teachers and education personnel. This role is in line with the concept of Soekanto (2006), which emphasizes that role is a dynamic dimension of a person's position, where the implementation of rights and obligations functionally becomes a concrete manifestation of the social and organizational status held. In the theoretical framework put forward by Schuler and Jackson (1999), improving employee performance can be optimized through five main pillars, namely positive encouragement, performance audits, setting work standards, providing feedback, and giving awards. This study shows that the principal has implemented these five pillars in his leadership practice. Positive encouragement is realized in the form of symbolic awards such as charters, verbal appreciation, and recognition of work achievements. This practice not only has a psychological impact on increasing work motivation, but also builds a sense of competence and self-esteem among employees. The implementation of periodic performance audits reflects the principal's efforts in building a monitoring system based on individual and collective performance evaluation. This audit includes document examination, direct observation of task implementation, and evaluation of teacher and administrative staff work programs. This kind of evaluative model is part of the essential academic supervision function within the framework of transformative leadership, where leaders act as mentors and facilitators of the professional growth of their subordinates (Mulyasa, 2007).

Furthermore, the determination of performance standards and objectives becomes an important instrument in directing employee activities towards measurable and accountable institutional targets. The principal sets performance indicators through annual work tools that are communicated formally in the school's internal forum. This strategy is consistent with the principle of goal-setting theory, which states that clear, specific, and challenging goals can significantly improve work performance because they provide structured direction and expectations.

Feedback is provided through a two-way communication mechanism, both in the form of official forums such as work meetings and in daily interpersonal interactions. This feedback not only reflects the evaluative function, but also contains motivational and coaching dimensions. In the literature on educational leadership, constructive feedback is one indicator of supportive and adaptive leadership towards the needs of professional development of educators (Wahjosumidjo, 2016). Rewards for employee performance are not only in symbolic form, but also material incentives sourced from school committee funds. This form of incentive includes additional honorariums, ease of promotion administration, and public recognition of contributions made. This practice shows the application of the principle of meritocracy, where performance-based awards are one of the instruments for strengthening organizational commitment.

Although the implementation of the principal's leadership strategy shows a positive direction, this study also reveals a number of challenges that still hinder its effectiveness. Among them are the low participation of some teachers in training programs, weak discipline in carrying out teaching duties, and the lack of integration in implementing work programs due to weak internal coordination. This finding indicates that the success of the performance improvement strategy is not only determined by the competence of the principal, but also by the readiness of the organizational culture and the collective commitment of all actors in the school education system.

In this context, the principal is required to not only carry out basic managerial functions, but also develop capacity as a change agent who is able to build a shared vision, strengthen organizational cohesion, and empower all elements of the school in a participatory manner. This approach is consistent with the paradigm of transformational leadership that positions

the principal as a catalyst for change in work culture and continuous improvement in the quality of education.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The results of this study indicate that the principal at SMA Negeri 1 Bengkulu Selatan carries out leadership functions that are oriented towards improving the performance of teachers and education personnel through a systematic and responsive managerial approach. The role of the principal is not only administrative, but also reflects a strategic dimension that includes professional development, performance monitoring, providing feedback, and formulating policies that support the creation of a conducive and productive work environment.

The implementation of performance improvement strategies that refer to the Schuler and Jackson (1999) model has been proven to be able to strengthen employee work motivation and commitment. This is reflected in the five main indicators that have been successfully implemented, namely: providing positive encouragement in the form of symbolic awards, implementing periodic performance audits, setting measurable work standards, providing constructive feedback, and providing material and non-material incentives based on performance achievements. This strategy forms an integrative framework between psychological, structural, and professional aspects in managing human resources in schools. The principal has been proven to have a role as a transformational leader who not only mobilizes resources, but also instills the values of performance and collective responsibility in the school ecosystem. This function is carried out through communicative interactions, proportional distribution of authority, and strengthening of goal-based work structures. This role indicates that the effectiveness of leadership in schools is not only determined by formal authority, but also by the relational capacity and moral integrity demonstrated by leaders in daily practice. However, this study also identified a number of obstacles that still need attention, including: low participation of some teachers in ongoing professional development, irregular work discipline, and suboptimal harmonization of internal programs. This condition suggests the need for a more inclusive engagement strategy and an adaptive leadership approach to structural and cultural dynamics in the school environment. Overall, these findings strengthen the understanding that principal leadership is the main instrument in shaping the quality of educational organizations, and has a determinant role in supporting the achievement of educational quality through improving the performance of school officials.

Based on the results of the research and analysis that have been conducted, there are several recommendations that can be put forward to support the optimization of the role of the principal in improving the performance of teachers and education personnel. First, the principal is advised to strengthen the mechanism of continuous professional development through structured training programs, workshops, and community learning forums. These activities should be directed at developing pedagogical, professional, social, and personality competencies, which are the main pillars in the educator competency standards. Second, it is necessary to improve the quality of the performance evaluation system by expanding the scope of performance audits to non-formal and affective aspects, such as discipline, work integrity, and participation in collective school activities. Performance evaluation should also be accompanied by constructive feedback instruments and measurable follow-up mechanisms. Third, the principal is expected to strengthen internal communication and participatory governance through the active involvement of teachers, administrative staff, and school committees in strategic planning and decision-making. This effort is important to create organizational cohesion based on collaboration and a sense of shared ownership. Fourth, the provision of incentives in both material and non-material forms should be carried out fairly, transparently, and based on objective performance. This practice can be an effective instrument to encourage a competitive and meritocratic work culture, while strengthening

employee loyalty and job satisfaction. Fifth, comprehensive internal consolidation steps are needed to address overlapping work programs and low discipline among some employees. Principals need to develop a data-based managerial approach to design more targeted policy interventions. Finally, it is recommended that local governments and local education offices provide adequate institutional support and resources to strengthen the leadership capacity of principals, including through leadership training programs based on best practices that are relevant to local needs.

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