



Implications of School Leadership and Policy: Principals' Perspectives

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Abstract. *This research is to determine the leadership experience and knowledge of school principals, the influence of principal leadership, and also the principal's policies. Semi-structured interviews are designed based on theoretical studies to find the data needed. Interview data was transcribed and reviewed using a thematic content analysis system. This research uses a qualitative research type of phenomenological method. The indicators in this research are, providing rewards, evaluating decisions, and teacher performance. This study emphasizes the importance of principal leadership, the influence of school leadership, and principal policies in achieving the school vision. The results of this research are that the principal as the main leader of the school plays a role in directing, compiling, planning, organizing and supervising in accordance with the school's goals. By knowing and carrying out this leadership role correctly, the school principal will be able to lead the institution he leads well. Effective leadership must possess qualities that positively influence the progress of the school, and policies implemented by the principal should contribute to achieving academic excellence and advancing the school's mission.*

Keywords: *leadership, principal, principal policy.*

Abstrak. penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui pengalaman dan pengetahuan kepemimpinan kepala sekolah, pengaruh kepemimpinan kepala sekolah, dan juga kebijakan kepala sekolah. Wawancara semi terstruktur dirancang berdasarkan kajian teori untuk menemukan data yang di perlukan. Data wawancara ditranskripsikan dan ditelaah dengan menggunakan sistem analisis konten tematik. Penelitian ini menggunakan jenis penelitian kualitatif metode fenomenologi. Adapun indikator dalam penelitian ini yaitu, memberikan memberikan reward, mengevaluasi Keputusan, dan kinerja guru. studi ini menekankan pentingnya kepemimpinan kepala sekolah, pengaruh kepemimpinan sekolah, dan kebijakan kepala sekolah dalam mencapai visi sekolah. Hasil penelitian ini adalah Kepala sekolah sebagai pemimpin utama sekolah berperan mengarahkan, menyusun, merencanakan, pengorganisasian dan pengawasan sesuai dengan tujuan sekolah. Dengan mengetahui dan menjalankan dengan benar peran kepemimpinan tersebut, maka kepala sekolah akan mampu memimpin lembaga yang dipimpinnya dengan baik. Kepemimpinan yang efektif harus memiliki kualitas yang berdampak positif terhadap kemajuan sekolah, dan kebijakan yang diterapkan oleh kepala sekolah harus berkontribusi terhadap pencapaian keunggulan akademik dan memajukan misi sekolah.

Kata Kunci: kepala sekolah, kepemimpinan, kebijakan kepala sekolah

INTRODUCTION

The school principal acts as a decision-maker and leader within the management team. As a manager, the principal is responsible for communication and has the authority to determine policy direction, including issuing orders and instructions to teachers and staff (Harmendi et al., 2021). Clear and specific orders and instructions are essential to ensure everyone

knows what to do, how to report results, and where tasks need to be completed so that solutions can be effectively implemented. A leader's ability to make decisions is only effective if accompanied by the skill to provide direction and motivate others. This means the decisions made by the principal must be implementable efficiently and effectively through clear orders and instructions (Wati et al., 2019).

According to the behavioral theory of leadership, the principal is a manager whose primary responsibilities are to prepare, plan, organize, supervise, and guide each existing program to ensure its successful implementation. Therefore, the principal is fully responsible for the operational efficiency of the school (Melysa et al., 2021). School supervisors play a crucial role in supporting the quality of education in the schools they oversee. The way they apply their skills and talents can significantly impact various aspects, including analytical abilities, educational knowledge, leadership patience, and the capacity to consider various options and perspectives.

Effective supervisors also provide information and support to schools to help them improve learning services, thereby strengthening public trust in schools (Harmendi et al., 2021). On the other hand, principals are not only responsible as teachers for students but also as leaders capable of initiating and executing projects designed to enhance the quality of education. Successful principals must be able to motivate, direct, and inspire the school community to achieve educational goals and create quality learning experiences (Kosim, 2017). Good policies are those developed based on values, providing the best service to the community, and considering all relevant interests, weaknesses, and situational realities (Amrul et al., 2023).

When making decisions, most people want to consider their options and become stronger by taking into account the opinions and advice of those close to them or those in leadership positions (Surmilasari et al., 2022). When a leader needs to decide on something that requires careful consideration, it is essential to at least seek input from the group being led (Iskandar, 2019). The goal of leadership is to improve communication and maintain positive relationships between the leader and those they lead to remain objective in decision-making.

The authority to make decisions requires a leader to have confidence in their subordinates to fulfill their responsibilities ethically (Sya'roni & C, 2019). The control function refers to a set of rules applicable to specific situations. Control can be used to determine whether a particular function is

effective and to coordinate group activities relevant to a given context (Kaiman et al., 2020).

Despite numerous studies conducted, there is still limited research discussing the implications of the influence of leadership and school principal policies. Therefore, the author aims to describe the implications of the influence of leadership and the policies of school principals, with the objective of understanding how and what impact these factors have on school operations (Iskandar, 2019). The implications of this research are to measure the extent of the influence of school leadership and policies from the perspective of the principal (Wati et al., 2019). From the principal's perspective, the impact of leadership and policies can be highly significant in determining the success and direction of educational institutions. The researcher will use a qualitative research method with a phenomenological approach.

To enhance the professionalism of teachers in their schools, principals must effectively supervise classrooms. It is the principal's personal responsibility to enforce any rules or guidelines expected to be followed by instructors and students (Hadromi, 2017). In addition to performing routine responsibilities, principals play a strategic role in the overall implementation of the education system, functioning as administrators, supervisors, instructors, leaders, and managers (Wati et al., 2019) An organizational leader must be able to address both primary and supporting interests, with a broader scope, as education is utilized by all segments of society.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study was conducted at MTsN 2 Medan, located at Jalan Peratun, Kecamatan Medan Estate, North Sumatra. The primary aim of this research is to understand and describe the influence and policies of the school principal from the perspectives of several teachers and school staff.

This research employs a qualitative phenomenological method. According to Harmendi (2021) phenomenology is a qualitative research methodology that encourages researchers to consider and apply their subjectivity and interpersonal skills in exploratory research. As stated by Putri et al., (2023) qualitative research is useful for understanding phenomena related to the actions, motivations, and behaviors of research subjects in a holistic manner, using descriptive words and language within a natural context by employing various natural methods. Wijaya (2019) describes qualitative research as a naturalistic research process aimed at finding a clear understanding of social phenomena

The study involved interviews with teachers and the school principal. The researcher recruited participants by seeking permission from them to be interviewed. This permission was sought during home visits to participants living near the researcher's residence. Subsequently, the researcher delivered the interview and research consent forms to the relevant school, which then provided approval (Iskandar, 2019). There were three participants in this study, identified by the initials SO, NH, and AM.

Before conducting the interviews, the researcher asked for permission from the participants to record the conversations and explained the purpose of the interviews. The researcher also provided a questionnaire containing the interview questions to the participants. Once the participants understood the questions, the interviews were conducted using a voice recording application. Each interview lasted between 15 to 30 minutes per participant. The collected data were then transcribed by repeatedly listening to the recordings while writing them down.

Table 1. Partiispant Data

No	Teacher	Position	Field of study	Years of service	Gender	Age
1	NH	Teacher	Fiqh	21 years	Man	53 years
2	SO	Teacher	Alquran hadith	19 years	Man	51 years
3	AM	Teacher	Fiqh	21 years	Man	57 years

The participants in this study and interviews were selected based on recommendations from the school authorities. They also resided in areas not far from the researcher's domicile. The three participants involved were the vice principal (WKM) and former vice principal (WKM) at the school.

The data collection process in this study was conducted through oral and face-to-face interviews between the researcher and the participants, aiming to obtain in-depth information regarding the influence of leadership and the principal's policies at MTsN 2 Medan (Minsih et al., 2019).

The method used for data collection was semi-structured interviews accompanied by voice recordings of the information provided by the participants. The researcher then transcribed these voice recordings and selected relevant parts of the interview data for processing and drawing important conclusions (Putri et al., 2023).

The researcher analyzed the data by understanding the existing data using a thematic content analysis approach. At the end of the interviews, the participants were given the opportunity to clarify the information they had provided, including ensuring the confidentiality of their identities in the

research report (Baharuddin, 2020). The analysis process began with listening to the interview recordings, then transcribing them into an understandable format. The researcher then comprehended each piece of information conveyed by the participants and finally extracted the necessary data according to the interview results (Qiftiyah & Kusuma, 2023).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the conducted research, three themes were identified: (1) school principal leadership, (2) the influence of school principal leadership, and (3) school principal policies.

1. School Principal Leadership

The leadership of a school principal can have various meanings. On one hand, it signifies the ability to influence others to carry out tasks according to instructions to achieve organizational goals. This type of leadership involves the ability to direct, organize, and inspire individuals within the school environment to work together towards the established goals. Leadership aimed at achieving organizational objectives can be considered a form of leadership (Fridani et al., 2020). Another definition states that leadership is a specific ability possessed by an individual to apply, influence, motivate, lead, direct, guide, manage, and even enforce laws and morality to motivate others to work towards desired goals (Azhar, 2019).

As expressed by participants in the interview data:

"... If we talk about Mrs. Pesta Berampu, in my opinion, she focuses more on developing students' talents, abilities, and skills, including in dance, Quran memorization, academics, and others. That's the leadership style of Mrs. Pesta Berampu as the principal," said NH in an interview on February 1, 2024.

SO added, "During Mrs. Pesta Berampu's leadership, the approach prioritized was the development of students' character, especially in terms of discipline."

Based on the interview data above, it is known that the principal of MTsN 2 Medan, Mrs. Pesta Berampu, places more emphasis on aspects of discipline, personality, and building students' talents. According to Syafi'i, two main factors influence an individual's academic success: internal factors and external factors. Internal factors are reflected in the students themselves, such as physical (physiological) factors, psychological factors, and physical and psychological maturity or growth factors. External factors include those that come from outside the student, such as the family environment, the

school environment, and the community environment where the student communicates daily (Andrizal et al., 2023).

2. The Influence of School Principal Leadership

The success of a school is also determined by the principal, as the effectiveness of the school is influenced by the principal's management (Siregar, 2019). This is reflected in the following interview excerpts:

"With a principal policy focusing on character building and student skill development, MTsN 2 has gained recognition for frequently participating in regional, provincial, and even national events. This madrasah is considered competitive and can compete with other top schools. In junior high school level competitions, students from MTsN 2 often win and bring prestige to the school. For example, in a recent event in East Aceh, MTsN 2 won overall champion in various categories such as tahfiz, syarhil, qori, and quiz contests. Additionally, the paskibra team from MTsN 2 often receives awards. Moreover, the madrasah has many talents in other fields such as pencak silat, fencing, and more," said NH in an interview on February 1, 2024.

SO added, "A major influence we have observed is that many of our students successfully enter top high schools in Medan City and North Sumatra, and, alhamdulillah, MTsN 2 Medan has become more well-known among the community," SO said in a Zoom interview on February 20, 2024.

AM added, "Regarding the physical development of the school, it's not just the current principal who plays a role, as there have been developments since the leadership of Mrs. Nursalimi. The current principal focuses more on character development and student achievements." (AM #3, Zoom Interview, February 20, 2024).

The interview data above indicate that the more impactful the principal's influence on their school, the more and better achievements the school will attain (Hanim et al., 2020). This is evidenced by the conversation with participant NH, who mentioned the numerous achievements of MTsN 2 Medan's students in various fields such as religious activities (tahfiz, syarhil, qori), academics (quiz contests), and sports (fencing), which have produced many promising athletes.

The influence of a school principal's leadership is extensive and encompasses various operational and educational aspects of the school. An effective principal can improve the quality of education, create a positive learning environment, and ensure the academic success and well-being of the entire school community. Therefore, developing the leadership skills of school principals is crucial for the overall success of the school.

3. School Principal's Policy

The principal, as the highest leader in the school, must have policies that can be used to influence their subordinates. Policy refers to a set of concepts and principles that serve as guidelines and foundations for work plans,

management, and operational methods (Qiftiyah & Kusuma, 2023). The following interview excerpts highlight this:

"For teachers, the vice principal of academics supervises teacher attendance daily, ensuring that teachers are present in class according to their scheduled entry and exit times. If there are violations or indiscipline, actions are taken starting with a verbal warning, followed by written warnings in the form of SP 1, SP 2, and SP 3. The principal is responsible for this process. As for disciplining students, it is more the responsibility of the concerned teacher. The principal does not directly handle student discipline issues. So, if there is a student who misbehaves or is absent, the primary responsibility lies with their teacher." (NH #1, Interview, February 1, 2024)

"For policies related to teachers, the principal always checks each class every morning. So, if a teacher is not in class during lesson time, they are immediately called to the principal's office. As for student discipline, the responsibility falls back on the teacher present in the class," said SO in a Zoom interview on February 20, 2024.

AM added, "Regarding student discipline, as Mr. SO mentioned, this duty mainly lies with the subject teachers because they are always close to the students. So, if there is a student who misbehaves in class, the teacher will report it to the student affairs department or usually to the Guidance Counseling." (AM #3, Zoom Interview, February 20, 2024).

The interview data above indicate that a good principal not only provides a positive influence on the school community they lead but also implements fair and effective policies for the entire school. As the highest leader in a school, the principal must have policies to influence their subordinates effectively.

The policy from the principal is as follows:

- a. Curriculum Policy
- b. Teacher Development Policy
- c. Evaluation and Assessment Policy
- d. Discipline and Code of Conduct Policy
- e. Financial and Resource Management Policy
- f. Parental and Community Engagement Policy
- g. Innovation and Technology Policy
- h. Student and Staff Welfare Policy
- i. Environmental and Sustainability Policy

The policies set by the school principal play a crucial role in determining the direction and quality of education in the school. Good and appropriate policies can create a positive learning environment, improve students' academic achievements, and ensure the well-being of the entire school community. Therefore, the school principal needs to formulate

comprehensive policies that are focused on enhancing the quality of education.

CONCLUSION

As the primary leader of the school, the principal plays a crucial role in directing, organizing, planning, coordinating, and overseeing activities aligned with the school's objectives. By understanding and effectively fulfilling this leadership role, the principal can lead the institution well. The influence exerted by the principal serves as a benchmark for the school's success in achieving its vision. This research highlights that school leadership and key policies have a significant impact on changes and the academic success of students and the school as a whole. The success of a school is also determined by the principal, as the effectiveness of a school is influenced by their leadership. This study also contributes theoretically by emphasizing that the success of a principal in realizing the school's vision depends not only on their own efforts but also on collaboration with all teachers and school stakeholders, fostering an environment where principals and teachers can engage and communicate effectively with everyone. Based on the findings of this research, effective leadership must possess qualities that positively influence the progress of the school, and policies implemented by the principal should contribute to achieving academic excellence and advancing the school's mission.

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