

## The Role of Principal Leadership in Improving Teacher Performance at SMP Negeri 2 Kolaka

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### Abstract

*The principal plays a strategic role in improving the quality of education, particularly through leadership that impacts teacher performance. Teacher performance is an important indicator of the success of the learning process in schools and is greatly influenced by the principal's ability to carry out his/her duties and functions effectively. This study aims to describe the implementation of the principal's duties and functions, the condition of teacher performance, and the principal's role in improving teacher performance at SMP Negeri 2 Kolaka. This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive research type. The research subjects included the principal, vice principal, and several teachers. Data collection techniques were carried out through observation, interviews, and documentation. Data analysis was carried out through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions using triangulation techniques to ensure data validity. The results of the study indicate that the principal of SMP Negeri 2 Kolaka has carried out his/her duties and functions well, particularly in the aspects of leadership, coaching, supervision, and motivating teachers. Teacher performance is demonstrated through discipline, implementation of learning, and active participation in professional development activities. The principal's role in improving teacher performance is realized through the implementation of work discipline, continuous coaching, providing opportunities to participate in professional development activities, and creating a conducive work climate. This study concludes that principal leadership has an important contribution in improving teacher performance and supporting the achievement of educational goals in schools.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Education is a process of liberation and the formation of critical human awareness in life. Education is not only interpreted as a process of transferring knowledge, but also as a systematic effort to humanize humans and develop their full human potential. Therefore, education and all its elements cannot be ignored, as the quality of education significantly determines the quality of social life and the future of a nation (Naim, 2011). Education that is not managed properly and responsibly has the potential to give rise to various complex social problems.

Education also serves as the primary capital for national development. The experience of developed countries in the East Asian region shows that successful development is largely determined by the quality of the education system. In the Indonesian context, the direction and objectives of national education have been legally affirmed in Article 3 of Law Number 20 of 2003 on the National

Education System, which states that national education functions to develop abilities, shape character, and foster a dignified national civilization. This educational objective places the development of students' overall potential as the primary orientation of national education implementation (Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 20 of 2003).

Based on this legal basis, national education carries the strategic mission of developing the Indonesian people as a whole, encompassing intellectual, moral, social, and spiritual aspects. To achieve this goal, a holistic and integrated education system is required, supported by professional, effective, and accountable educational management. Education, as a normative process, must be consciously designed, have a clear foundation, focused goals, and be implemented effectively and efficiently (Machali, 2014).

However, one of the fundamental problems in Indonesian education is weak educational management, both in institutional management, educational leadership, and learning management. Weak educational management directly impacts the low effectiveness of educational delivery and the quality of student learning outcomes (Darma, 2019). Schools, as formal educational institutions, have a significant responsibility to provide learning in a systematic, planned manner, and oriented toward achieving national education goals.

Schools are not only responsible for transferring academic knowledge but also for transforming noble values in students to build character and human resource quality. Therefore, the quality of school management significantly determines the direction and orientation of future national development. In this context, the principal plays a strategic role as a leader and educational manager, determining the effectiveness of school administration (Machali, 2014; Divayana et al., 2022).

The principal is the driving force and determinant of school policy direction, directly influencing the work climate, teacher performance, and learning quality. The principal is responsible for teaching, curriculum development, student administration, personnel administration, public relations, and the management of school facilities and infrastructure. Various studies have shown that the effectiveness of principal leadership is significantly related to improvements in teacher professionalism and overall educational quality (Darma, 2019; Divayana et al., 2022).

Teacher performance is one of the main indicators of the success of education delivery in schools. Teachers are professional educators whose duties include educating, teaching, guiding, directing, training, and evaluating students, as stipulated in Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers. Teachers not only act as transmitters of subject matter, but also as agents of change who play a role in shaping the character and behavior of students in accordance with national education goals (Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 14 of 2005).

In line with this view, Naim (2011) emphasized that educating and teaching are professional jobs that must be carried out with full responsibility, sincerity, perseverance, and awareness. Teachers are required to possess competence and moral integrity because they are dealing with students who are in the process of growth and development. Therefore, improving teacher performance and competence is a necessity that cannot be postponed in facing the challenges of education in the era of developments in science and information technology.

The development of teacher competency and performance is inextricably linked to the principal's role as an educational leader. The principal is responsible for fostering, motivating, and facilitating teachers to develop their professionalism sustainably. Machali (2014) emphasized that the

principal, as an educational administrator, is responsible for the quality of human resources in the school and has an obligation to develop the performance of teaching staff toward the desired professionalism.

The relationship between principal leadership and teacher performance is dynamic and mutually influential. Teacher performance tends to improve when the principal effectively carries out their leadership role, but conversely, teacher performance can decline if school leadership is not optimal (Darma, 2019; Divayana et al., 2022). Therefore, principal leadership is a key factor in efforts to improve teacher performance and the quality of education in schools.

Based on initial observations at SMP Negeri 2 Kolaka, the principal demonstrated effective leadership through discipline, teacher attendance monitoring, and persuasive coaching. The principal also provided teachers with opportunities to participate in professional development activities such as Subject Teacher Conferences (MGMP), Teacher Working Groups (KKG), seminars, workshops, and education and training. These efforts align with the view that teacher professional development is an integral part of the principal's leadership role (Machali, 2014).

Based on this description, this research focuses on the role of the principal in improving teacher performance at SMP Negeri 2 Kolaka. This research aims to describe the implementation of the principal's duties and functions, the condition of teacher performance, and the principal's leadership role in improving teacher performance as part of efforts to improve the quality of education.

## **2. METHOD**

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive approach. This approach was chosen because the study aims to deeply understand social phenomena related to the principal's role in improving teacher performance, as they occur naturally in the school environment. Descriptive research is used to systematically describe the implementation of the principal's duties and functions, the state of teacher performance, and the forms of the principal's leadership role without manipulating the variables studied.

This research was conducted at SMP Negeri 2 Kolaka. The research location was selected based on the consideration that the school has implemented various teacher coaching and development programs and demonstrated active principal leadership practices in improving teacher performance. The research timeframe was adjusted to accommodate field data collection needs until sufficient data were obtained to address the research focus.

The research subjects were determined purposively, based on considerations of relevance and direct involvement with the research focus. The subjects included the principal, vice principal, and several teachers deemed to have relevant information regarding the implementation of principal leadership and teacher performance at SMP Negeri 2 Kolaka. This subject selection was intended to obtain comprehensive data from various complementary perspectives.

The data sources in this study consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained directly from the research subjects through interviews and observations conducted by the researcher. Secondary data were obtained from various relevant supporting documents, such as school documents, activity archives, and administrative records related to teacher performance and principal policies. The use of these two types of data sources aims to strengthen the accuracy and completeness of the information obtained.

The data collection techniques used in this study included observation, interviews, and documentation. Observations were conducted to directly observe the principal's leadership behavior, teacher discipline, and the implementation of learning activities at the school. In-depth interviews were conducted with the research subjects to gather information regarding their experiences, views, and assessments of the principal's role in improving teacher performance. Documentation was used to collect written data to support the observations and interviews.

Data analysis in this study was conducted continuously from the beginning of data collection to the end of the study. The data analysis technique involved three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction was performed by selecting, focusing, and simplifying data relevant to the research focus. Data presentation was done in the form of narrative descriptions to facilitate understanding of the research findings. Conclusions were drawn by systematically interpreting the meaning of the analyzed data.

To ensure data validity, this study employed triangulation techniques. Triangulation was conducted by comparing data obtained from various sources and data collection techniques, such as interviews, observations, and documentation. Thus, the data obtained is expected to have a high level of reliability and accurately describe the principal's role in improving teacher performance at SMP Negeri 2 Kolaka.

### **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **a. Implementation of Duties and Functions of the Principal**

The research results show that the principal comprehensively carries out his duties and functions as an educational leader, administrator, and academic supervisor. In carrying out his role as a leader, the principal strives to direct all school activities to align with established educational goals. The principal's leadership is demonstrated not only through decision-making but also through the ability to build effective communication with teachers and educational staff. This finding aligns with the view that the principal holds a strategic position in determining the direction and quality of educational delivery in schools (Wahjosumidjo, 2002; Rivai, 2006; Albaroris, 2012).

In administrative roles, the principal is responsible for managing human resources and learning support facilities. The principal actively manages teacher assignments, monitors attendance, and ensures the completeness of learning administration. This practice aligns with the concept of educational administration, which positions the principal as the primary manager of all school resources to achieve effective and efficient education delivery (Daryanto, 1998; Usman, 2010; Sobri et al., 2009).

The principal carries out ongoing academic supervision as a form of teacher professional development to improve the quality of learning. This finding aligns with research showing that supervision has a significant influence on improving the quality of learning and student learning outcomes through improved teacher performance (Azizah et al., 2024). Supervision is conducted through direct observation of classroom learning, reviewing learning materials, and providing feedback to teachers. The supervisory approach used is persuasive and constructive, so teachers feel mentored, not supervised repressively. This supervision pattern aligns with the principles of

educational supervision, which emphasize ongoing teacher professional development (Machali, 2012; Mulyadi, 2010; Munir, 2008).

#### **b. Teacher Performance in Implementing Learning**

Research shows a positive trend in teacher performance, particularly in discipline, lesson planning, and teaching and learning implementation. Teachers demonstrate high attendance rates and adherence to school rules, which are important indicators of professionalism. Teacher discipline is a key prerequisite for creating an effective and sustainable learning process (Uno & Lamatenggo, 2016; Payong, 2011).

In terms of lesson planning, teachers have systematically developed learning materials in accordance with educational process standards. These materials serve as guidelines for implementing teaching and learning activities, ensuring a more focused and structured learning environment. This finding aligns with the notion that lesson planning is an integral part of teachers' pedagogical competence and directly impacts the quality of learning (Sanjaya, 2013; Sudjana, 2002; Satori et al., 2009).

The implementation of learning also demonstrates that teachers are able to effectively manage their classrooms and create a conducive learning environment. Teachers employ various learning strategies tailored to student characteristics and the subject matter. Effective classroom management reflects a teacher's ability to fulfill their professional role as an educator (Karwati & Priansa, 2015; Wahab, 2015).

Furthermore, teachers are beginning to utilize information and communication technology in the learning process, although their level of technological mastery varies. This use of technology demonstrates teachers' efforts to adapt to changing times and the demands of modern learning. This aligns with the view that professional teachers are required to continuously develop their competencies in line with advances in science and technology (Aziz, 2016; Danim, 2002).

#### **c. The Principal's Role in Improving Teacher Performance**

The research results show that the principal's role in improving teacher performance is realized through the implementation of work discipline, professional development, motivation, and the creation of a conducive work climate. The principal consistently enforces disciplinary rules while prioritizing a humanistic approach. This approach encourages teachers to have an internal awareness in carrying out their duties and responsibilities professionally. These findings reinforce the view that effective leadership is leadership that combines assertiveness and empathy (Basri, 2014; Wahjosumidjo, 2002).

Teacher professional development is carried out through academic supervision and opportunities to participate in professional development activities, such as Subject Teacher Conferences (MGMP), Teacher Working Groups (KKG), seminars, and education and training. These activities aim to improve teacher competency so they can deliver quality learning. This effort aligns with the concept of teacher professional development, which emphasizes the importance of continuous learning for teachers (Ma'rif, 2011; Inayati, 2014; Pramudia, 2017).

Teacher work motivation is also a primary concern for principals. Principals provide non-material rewards to teachers who demonstrate good performance, such as recognition and appreciation in official school forums. This form of motivation has been shown to increase teacher

morale and strengthen their professional commitment. This finding supports the view that motivation is closely related to teacher performance and productivity (Naim, 2012; Syafaruddin, 2002).

In addition, the principal creates a participatory work climate by involving teachers in certain decisions related to school activities. Teacher involvement in the decision-making process fosters a sense of ownership and shared responsibility for achieving school goals. This participatory leadership approach is considered effective in improving teacher performance and the quality of learning (Rivai, 2006; Usman, 2010).

Overall, the findings of this study confirm that principal leadership plays a crucial role in improving teacher performance. Principals function not only as administrative managers but also as professional coaches, motivators, and drivers of change within the school environment. This finding is consistent with various studies that place principal leadership as a key factor in improving educational quality (Machali, 2012; Wahjosumidjo, 2002; Mulyadi, 2010).

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This research shows that principals play a crucial role in improving teacher performance. Principals effectively carry out their duties and functions through leadership that emphasizes discipline, coaching, supervision, and teacher motivation. The leadership they implement is humanistic and participatory, thus creating a conducive work climate within the school environment.

Teacher performance at SMP Negeri 2 Kolaka is generally considered good, as reflected in their work discipline, readiness in lesson planning, and focused implementation of the learning process. This improvement in teacher performance is inseparable from the principal's support in providing professional development opportunities and providing ongoing coaching.

Overall, the findings of this study confirm that effective principal leadership significantly contributes to improved teacher performance. These findings can serve as a practical reference for principals in developing leadership strategies oriented toward improving teacher professionalism and the quality of education in their schools.

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