The Role of Principal's Instructional Leadership in Improving Teacher Performance: A Case Study at SMPN 3 Baleendah

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Abstract*:* Instructional leadership plays a crucial role in improving educational quality in schools, particularly by enhancing teacher performance. This study, conducted at SMPN 3 Baleendah, aims to analyse the implementation of the principal's instructional leadership in supporting effective learning processes tailored to modern student needs. Using a qualitative approach and case study method, data were collected through in-depth interviews, direct observations, and documentation on the planning, implementation, and evaluation of instructional programs. Findings indicate that the principal applies strategies such as adaptive curriculum development, teacher competency programs through training and workshops, and regular evaluations of learning processes. Challenges, including limited facilities and technology adaptation, were addressed through collaboration with teachers and support from the school committee. The study underscores that the principal's participative and innovative approach positively impacts teacher performance and educational quality.

Keywords: Instructional Leadership, Teacher Performance, Competency.

Introduction

Leadership is an object and subject that is always interesting to study, research, and discuss. Whether for laypeople, academics, or practitioners, leadership is a topic that is not boring because it is dynamic and always relevant in various aspects of life. (Ismail, 2022). The various aspects of leadership, such as motivation, direction, and inspiration provided by a leader, make it something that can always be reflected upon and learned from. (Anwar & Umam, 2020). In practice, leadership involves everyone, as each individual has a role to play in influencing their surroundings. (Sanusi & Sutikno, 2009). Leadership is not only a matter of a formal leader but also involves every individual being able to direct and motivate themselves and others around them. Therefore, leadership is a universal topic and continues to be relevant for everyone (Supartilah & Pardimin, 2021).

Principal leadership can be done effectively and efficiently with regard to his skills in articulating his values, beliefs, and behaviors in the development of school culture. Thus, it can be understood that the development of school culture is highly dependent on the principal's skills in directing the activities of its citizens, both visible and invisible, to build a strong school culture. (Yunus Abidin, 2018). According to Mulyasa, principal leadership is one of the factors that can encourage schools to realize the vision, mission, goals and objectives of their schools through programs that are implemented in a planned and gradual manner. This opinion implies that school principals are required to have adequate management and leadership skills in order to be able to take the initiative to improve school quality.. (Mulyasa, 2013).

In research (Ismail, 2022) suggests that 1) Leadership is a person who has the ability, the power of art to influence, aspire, and direct the behavior of a person or organization in his work by means of obedience, trust, respect, and enthusiastic cooperation in achieving common educational goals. 2) In order to achieve educational goals optimally, effectively, and efficiently, it requires the leadership of school principals who are responsible and

understand their main duties and functions.. Meanwhile (Kadarsih et al., 2020) states that the principal is the keynote speaker or key person in leading and managing schools in order to achieve educational goals in schools. Principals as teachers who are given the task of managing and leading schools must know and understand and be able to apply what is the main task of a principal in the form of concrete actions in leading and advancing schools and education. Meanwhile, according to Robbins (2001) that "leadership as ability to influence a group toward the achievement of goals". Leadership is the ability to influence groups to be able to achieve goals so that leadership emphasizes more on the extent to which a leader has the ability to make subordinates together in achieving the specified goals. The ability of a leader cannot be separated from managerial skills (Hanan et al., 2023).

Meanwhile Overton (2002), Leadership is the ability to obtain work actions with full trust and cooperation. In carrying out his leadership a leader has his own styles. Overton's opinion emphasizes leadership's focus on one's ability to elicit action from others. Leadership is sometimes understood as the power to move and influence people. Leadership as a tool, means or process to persuade people to be willing to do something voluntarily / joyfully. There are several factors that can move people, namely threats, rewards, authority, and persuasion.(Rivai, 2003).

In relation to principal leadership, Gonton (1976) stated that there has been a lot of in-depth research and proved that principal leadership determines the effectiveness of the school (Seni, 2021; Sunardi et al., 2019) states that effective schools are always led by effective principals. This has the consequence that to occupy the position of principal, it is necessary to fulfill the requirements, both for work, administrative, academic and personality. Djafri (2020) stated that to obtain good student achievement results requires a dramatic role change from a principal who focuses on managerial issues to a principal who focuses on instructional issues. Swapp, (2014) in his research stated that effective principals are characterized by having strong learning leadership, which focuses on developing curriculum standards, monitoring student progress, and maximizing learning time. The instructional leadership model is a leadership model that can encourage increased student achievement. Instructional leadership is leadership that emphasizes on 5 aspects in school administration, namely: (1) focus on learning, (2) building cooperation, (3) analyzing student achievement results, (4) teacher development, and (5) adjusting curriculum, teaching, and assessment (Silins & Mulford, 2010; Sunardi et al., 2019).

SMPN 3 Baleendah is one of the public schools that continues to improve the quality of education amidst various challenges. As a school that is committed to improving teacher performance, SMPN 3 Baleendah has a principal who acts as an instructional leader in guiding and motivating teachers. This study aims to explore how the implementation of the principal's instructional leadership at SMPN 3 Baleendah contributes to improving teacher performance. Through this case study, it is hoped that a more in-depth picture of effective instructional leadership strategies as well as the factors that support and hinder the implementation of the principal's instructional leadership in a real context will be obtained. This research is expected to provide insights for education practitioners, especially in strengthening the role of principals as instructional leaders that have an impact on the quality of education in schools.

Methods

The subject of this research is SMPN 3 Baleendah. The research data to be collected in this study are data in the form of information about the principal's instructional silver in improving teacher performance. Based on the type of data needed in this study, the relevant data sources are from the teachers through observations, or the Principal's notes from observations of these activities, in the form of notes (Hamid Darmadi, 2013). This research data was collected and compiled through various data collection techniques, including observation techniques, interviews, document review or review, questionnaires. While the research instruments chosen are in line with the research objectives and to answer the problem formulation. The first analysis technique used is descriptive analysis technique. (Miles et al., 2014). This analysis technique is used to examine qualitative data, in the form of a description of the implementation process that is being and has taken place. The interactive analysis technique consists of four components, data reduction, data presentation, data triangulation, and conclusion drawing (Sugiyono, 2021).

Result and Discussion

Principal Leadership Instructional Planning

One of the main focuses in this planning is to ensure that the curriculum is aligned with the needs of the students and the times. The principal and a team of teachers regularly meet to review the existing curriculum and adjust it to national policies as well as the local needs of the school. In the context of instructional leadership, planning is one of the main components that help principals to set a vision and effective learning strategies. Based on the research at SMPN 3 Baleendah, the principal has an active role in developing the curriculum, developing teachers' competencies, and improving learning facilities that are relevant to students' needs and the times. This is in line with the view of Whitehead, Boschee, & Decker (2012), who stated that an instructional leader must be able to be a visionary leader, as well as acting as a problem solver and resource provider for the learning process. By making the school vision as the main guideline, the principal at SMPN 3 Baleendah has tried to create a learning environment that is humanistic, educative, and relevant for students' future, which is the essence of instructional leadership as a factor that supports the improvement of student learning outcomes (Bush, 2011).

Instructional Implementation of Principal Leadership

The implementation of instructional leadership at SMPN 3 Baleendah is done with a participatory and collaborative approach. The principal tries to create a mutually supportive working environment among teachers and school staff. At the implementation stage, the principal actively monitors and mentors the teaching and learning process. The principal is directly involved in classroom observations and provides constructive feedback to teachers. One teacher stated, "The principal is very open to the innovations we do in the classroom, but he still provides feedback to ensure that learning is effective." These observations aim to evaluate how teachers apply learning methods that suit students' needs and measure students' engagement in the classroom. At the implementation stage, the principal at SMPN 3 Baleendah conducts intensive monitoring, observation and mentoring of teachers. In

accordance with instructional leadership theory, principals function as agents of change who ensure that every learning activity runs according to the school's plans and goals. Whitehead et al. (2012) emphasized that an instructional leader also acts as a change agent who assists teachers in finding productive teaching methods.

By conducting classroom observations and providing constructive feedback, the principal at SMPN 3 Baleendah demonstrates a form of direct leadership practice that influences student learning outcomes, as suggested by Hammond et al. (2010). Through these interactions, principals not only provide direction but also build a collaborative work culture where teachers feel supported and motivated to improve their performance.

Instructional Evaluation of Principal Leadership

The instructional evaluation of the principal's leadership at SMPN 3 Baleendah is conducted regularly to ensure that the set educational goals can be achieved effectively and efficiently. Principals play an active role in supervising and assessing the implementation of instructional activities at school, including the learning process, teaching methods applied by teachers, and students' academic achievement. This evaluation is done through several means, such as direct observation in the classroom, review of academic reports, and open dialog with teachers and students. In this context, the principal seeks to build a culture of constructive evaluation where teachers are encouraged to be reflective of their approaches and open to feedback. This not only helps them to improve the quality of their teaching but also creates a supportive environment for each teacher's professional growth. In addition, evaluation results are used as a basis for training or mentoring for teachers who need improvement in teaching skills or understanding of new methods.

Instructional evaluation also involves non-academic aspects, such as character development and students' soft skills. The principal works closely with the counseling guidance teacher to monitor students' character development through extracurricular activities and self-development programs. Character education is one of the priorities at SMPN 3 Baleendah because students' success is not only measured by their academic grades, but also by how they develop morally and socially. Evaluation in instructional leadership aims to assess the extent to which educational programs run according to plan and have a positive impact on student learning outcomes. At SMPN 3 Baleendah, the principal conducts regular evaluations of the learning process, teaching methods and students' academic achievement. This includes monitoring the use of learning facilities and student learning outcomes, as well as discussions with teachers and students to improve the quality of education. In the view of Heck & Hallinger (2010), this evaluation is an important aspect of instructional leadership, where the principal acts as a "solution provider" aiming to ensure the effectiveness of educational operations. With this evaluation, principals can identify shortcomings and make necessary adjustments to improve the quality of learning and achieve the school's educational goals.

Constraints Faced in Principal Leadership Instruction

Although the principal has developed a well-thought-out plan and strategy, there are several obstacles faced in the implementation of instruction at SMPN 3 Baleendah. One of the obstacles expressed by the principal is the limited facilities and budget. "We want to provide the best facilities for students, but budget constraints are often an obstacle," said the principal.

Limited technological devices, such as computers and projectors, are a challenge in the technology-based learning process. In addition to limited facilities, there are also obstacles related to teachers' adaptation to technology. Some teachers, especially those who have been teaching for a long time, feel less confident in using technology as a learning medium. One teacher revealed, We still need to learn more about technology. Sometimes we have difficulty understanding some learning applications." This suggests a need to provide more in-depth technology training for teachers. In addition, resistance to change is also an obstacle that must be faced. Not all teachers welcome changes in teaching methods. Some of them are more comfortable with traditional methods.

The obstacles faced in instructional leadership at SMPN 3 Baleendah include limited facilities, resistance to change, and differences in student characteristics. In instructional leadership theory Harris (2013) mentioned that these constraints need to be overcome with flexible and adaptive leadership practices in order to continue to have an impact on student achievement. Principals at SMPN 3 Baleendah try to overcome these constraints through persuasive communication with teachers, improving technological competence through training, and adjusting teaching methods to suit students' needs. These constraints show that the principal's role as instructional leader is not only focused on academic outcomes, but also on building an inclusive learning environment that supports every student to thrive.

Strategies Implemented in Principal Leadership Instruction

To overcome various obstacles faced, the principal at SMPN 3 Baleendah implemented various innovative and adaptive strategies. One of the strategies implemented is optimizing existing resources. The principal encourages teachers to utilize available devices optimally and share resources between classes. In addition, the principal also involves the school committee and parents in an effort to gain support for improving facilities and infrastructure. The principal routinely holds meetings with the school committee to find the best solution to improve the quality of education. One form of support expected is fundraising or assistance for additional educational facilities. With these various strategies, the principal hopes to overcome existing obstacles and create a conducive learning environment at SMPN 3 Baleendah. These strategies are expected to strengthen the effectiveness of the principal's leadership instruction, improve the quality of learning, and prepare students to face future challenges. This participatory, innovative, and adaptive approach allows the school to continue to adapt to modern educational developments and make SMPN 3 Baleendah an institution that supports the holistic development of each student.

To overcome the existing obstacles, the principal at SMPN 3 Baleendah implemented various strategies that were in line with the principles of instructional leadership. The principal took a participatory approach by involving teachers in decision-making related to learning, and providing space for them to develop skills through training and mentoring programs. This strategy is in line with Bush's (2011) view of instructional leadership which emphasizes the importance of collaboration between the principal and teachers to improve the effectiveness of learning. In addition, this approach is also in line with the visionary leadership model proposed by Whitehead et al., (2012) where the principal plays a role in creating a learning environment that supports improving student and teacher performance.

Conclusion

Kepala sekolah menerapkan SMPN 3 Baleendah kepemimpinan instruksional yang komprehensif melalui perencanaan, pelaksanaan, dan evaluasi yang sejalan dengan visi sekolah HEBRING (Humanis, Edukatif, Berwawasan Lingkungan, Religius, Inovatif, Nasionalis, dan Global). Perencanaan mencakup penyusunan kurikulum, pelatihan guru, peningkatan fasilitas, dan dukungan bagi siswa berkebutuhan khusus untuk menciptakan lingkungan belajar yang inklusif. Pelaksanaan kepemimpinan ini dijalankan secara kolaboratif dengan melibatkan guru dan staf sekolah dalam memahami visi dan mendorong metode pembelajaran kreatif, dilengkapi dengan pemantauan rutin untuk menjamin efektivitas pengajaran. Evaluasi dilakukan melalui observasi, dialog, dan tinjauan terhadap kinerja akademik, membangun budaya evaluatif yang konstruktif bagi guru agar dapat merefleksikan metode pengajaran mereka. Meski menghadapi kendala seperti keterbatasan fasilitas, resistensi terhadap perubahan, dan keberagaman siswa, kepala sekolah mengatasinya melalui peningkatan kompetensi guru, pemanfaatan teknologi, dan komunikasi yang intensif dengan orang tua. Dengan strategi seperti optimalisasi sumber daya, program mentor-mentee, dan pendekatan partisipatif, kepala sekolah berhasil mendukung peningkatan kompetensi guru dan efektivitas pembelajaran secara holistik.

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