

# Leadership in Excellent School: A Qualitative Study

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## ABSTRACT

The main school activities are learning activities. Learning is a reflection of school performance. For the learning activities carried out by the teacher to achieve the goals, it requires a school commitment to support learning activities. Learning leadership is leadership behavior that seeks to develop better learning over time. Therefore, the principal's learning leadership is the key to the success of excellent schools. This research aims to describe learning leadership in excellent schools. This research was conducted with a qualitative approach. The informants for data collection were school principals, teachers, and staff. The data were analyzed using the following processes: (1) data reduction; (2) presenting data; and (3) verification. The conclusion of this study is that the leadership of the principal has an important role in the process of developing excellent schools.

**Keywords:** learning leadership, principal, excellent school

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The changes that have occurred in the last decade have been extraordinary in Indonesia. One of the resulting impacts is the multidimensional crisis that plunges Indonesia into all sectors of life, be it politics, economy, social, culture, technology, including in the world of education [1]. Not only humanitarian, political, health, and education issues become national polemics, but also national calamities in cases of natural disasters. However, during this multidimensional crisis, positive things emerged from this flow of change. Centralistic government patterns become decentralized [2]. Democratization builds transparency in state administration.

Likewise, in the case of education which gave birth to Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System and Law Number 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers, all of these regulations were owned after half a century of Indonesian independence. The realm of openness has changed the delivery of education [3]. The last issue that arises is the equal distribution of quality improvement. This issue is accompanied by government policies to improve quality standards, ranging from minimum service standards to national school standards, to international school standards [4].

In schools, the quality improvement movement is also known as school-based management innovation, which essentially encourages schools to be self-managing schools [5], [6]. School administration is intended to

produce students or graduates who have good knowledge, skills, and character as well as emotion and spirituality, so that they can continue to a higher level and can fill jobs or have an entrepreneurial spirit, especially being able to live in a higher level. amidst society as good and devoted citizens [4].

Thus, the goal between schools is to create effective schools or excellent schools that ultimately improve student learning and learning outcomes. Therefore, excellent school management should ideally orientate toward present and future needs (school basic needs in the future). Education is an effort to educate the nation's life as stated in the 1945 Constitution. The implementation of this education cannot be separated from the national and international context because education is an effort to prepare students to anticipate global changes that occur. Therefore, education must be in line with global developments or changes that are and will continue. Thus, the education system must always be updated following the demands of the times.

To achieve the educational goals as mentioned above, it is necessary to pay attention to four educational goals: (1) quality; (2) equalization; (3) efficiency and effectiveness; and (4) relevance. Quality, commitment to getting the best results in teaching services for students, in other words, quality-oriented education. Equitable, equitable service provision for students, while still paying attention to individual potentials (individual differences). Efficiency and effectiveness, efficient use of funds with available resources to achieve the best

effectiveness or quality of service and evenly for students, without discrimination in all aspects.

Relevance refers to the conformity of educational outcomes with the needs, both student needs, family needs, and development needs covering various sectors and sub-sectors [7], [8]. Examples of relevance planning are vocational, entrepreneurial, and small business skills programs for students who are not continuing, local content curricula, life skills education, and increasing the number of students absorbed in the world of work. The purpose of this study was to describe learning leadership in excellent schools.

## 2. METHOD

The approach used in this study is qualitative. This research was conducted at Junior High School 3 Malang City, Indonesia. The informants of this study were the principal, teachers, and staff. To determine the learning leadership behavior in excellent schools, researchers conducted interviews with all these informants. The processes used for data analysis were: (1) data reduction; (2) presenting data; and (3) verification. The results of the interview are then summarized in the form of descriptions that explain three important aspects of learning leadership, namely: vision formulation, learning culture, and learning environment.

## 3. RESULTS

The formulation of the school's vision is the realization of graduates who are excellent in science, technology, and arts, skilled and independent based on faith and piety, have high character and have an environmental culture. The expectations of the school are all graduates have competencies as written in the school's vision. The process of formulating the school's vision is: (1) formulation by a team; (2) deliberations of all school members regarding the results of the vision formulation by the team; (3) endorsement of the school's vision by stakeholders; and (4) socializing the school's vision to school members and the community [9], [10]. The principal's way of making all school members feel that they have the vision of the school is to integrate the vision of the school into learning activities and school activities. The principal's way of getting all school members to strive to realize the vision of the school is to control activities based on relevant instruments.

Learning activities developed by schools to realize the vision of the school are planning, implementation, and evaluation that support the school's vision in extracurricular, co-curricular, and extracurricular activities. The quality of learning culture developed by schools is learning based on good program planning, controlled implementation, and evaluation that meets more than 8 minimum education standards. The formulation of the quality of learning culture is the preparation of school programs by a team of 8 standards,

implementation of programs in each standard, and evaluation of program implementation. The school principal moves the school community to implement a quality culture by involving all school members in the implementation of the 8 standard programs.

The learning environment in the form of school facilities and infrastructure that supports the quality of learning culture is outdoor or indoor learning, laboratories, libraries, school health units, gazebos, fish ponds, mosques, halls, and so on. The learning environment in the form of the ability and commitment of educators and education personnel in implementing a quality culture of learning is the commitment of all school members to utilize and maintain school facilities and infrastructure properly. The learning environment in the form of school financial support to create a quality culture of learning is budgeting which is contained in the School Activity Plan and Budget and accountable implementation.

Supporting factors in developing the school's vision are the school culture and commitment of all school members. Inhibiting factors in developing a school vision are: there are still several programs that have not been implemented due to time constraints and budgeting rules. The supporting factors in the development of a learning culture are the formation of a conducive learning culture. Inhibiting factors in the development of a learning culture are: there are still some school members who do not understand and implement it well. Supporting factors in developing a learning environment are the formation of good infrastructure. Inhibiting factors in the development of the learning environment are limited land area, limited construction costs, and limited renovation costs.

## 4. DISCUSSION

The school of the future must be supported by adequate infrastructure and the implementation of education is based on the achievement of quality, equity, effectiveness-efficiency, and relevance. Therefore, schools must have the following characteristics: (1) a clear vision and mission; (2) clear and definite goals; (3) students have high expectations; (4) give recognition and appreciation to members of the school ranks who have performed well; and (5) all members of the school ranks show dedication, commitment and high discipline [11].

Also, the future school must have measurable success parameters of academic achievement, create school stability as a prestigious learning environment, make full and effective use of existing resources in schools and communities, improve the quality of educators and administrative staff continuously, and involve the community, especially parents of students, to take responsibility for increasing students' insight into the future [12]. UNESCO initiated the future schools to have independent management and self-management professionally, positive-participatory community

involvement, curriculum, and learning accompanied by a conducive teaching-learning environment that allows empowered school members to grow positively [5].

Schools must be an integrated part of human resources as a whole [6]. For this reason, efforts must be made to collaborate with government, social, research, scientific, and legal institutions. The use of professionals as a learning resource shows students that knowledge can be extracted from various sources. On the other hand, the success of education efforts cannot be separated from efforts to prevent problems arising from students such as health, psychology, behavioral deviations, and vandalism. Of course, prevention efforts must be carried out synergistically by schools, government, and the community [11].

Efforts to improve school quality cannot be separated from efforts to run schools effectively. The research results indicate that a school that has certain characteristics will be able to achieve school goals effectively. One of the government's efforts to improve the quality of schools is carried out by disseminating the School-Based Management program which is packaged as School-Based Quality Improvement Management. In the School-Based Quality Improvement Management program, the planning, implementation, and evaluation are clearly explained. It's just that the components of School-Based Management are less detailed in describing the aspects that must be achieved. To perfect the government program, it seems necessary to enrich references so that School-Based Quality Improvement Management can be implemented more easily.

Among management experts, some experts state the characteristics that make schools excellent. These experts are [13], [14], who suggest nine characteristics that must be considered to manage a school excellently, namely: (1) clear vision and mission; (2) professional school principals; (3) professional teachers; (4) conducive learning environment; (5) student-friendly based education; (6) strong management; (7) a broad but balanced curriculum accompanied by effective learning strategies; (8) meaningful assessment and reporting of student achievement; and (9) positive participatory community involvement. The implementation of excellent schools should refer to these nine things with some adjustments in terms of planning.

Effective schools are schools that can achieve the targets they have set themselves. Excellent and effective schools are schools that can achieve targets by setting high targets. The national education system emphasizes the importance of developing a school atmosphere and a learning process that is based on clear targets and high results. The meaning is specific and measurable. High quality means better than before or more than what other schools have achieved [15]. Because the school is always part of the community, in deciding quality targets, one should pay attention to the progress of other schools of a

similar kind. Schools here determine referrals so that they know the position of the quality target in comparison with the results realized by other schools.

Effective schools can arouse the enthusiasm of teachers and students to collaborate in an internal and global environment by utilizing all available resources. One sign of an effective school is celebrating the achievement of quality by giving awards to students or the school concerned. School intelligence is developed based on the ability to think in open systems. Schools that are currently effective show performance indicators that can optimally empower their internal and external environments. This concept is outlined firmly in the strategic management system. Supporting analysis is the SWOT analysis model that places schools on a map of their relationship to the inner and outer environment of the school [16].

As a consequence of the above indicators, schools need to determine indicators of the success of the learning process that utilize all internal and external resources to increase students' potential. The underlying assumption is that students can achieve certain achievements as targeted by the school if students can take advantage of all learning opportunities, both inside and outside the school environment. Limitations in ownership are not a barrier because they can be overcome by the virtual organization. Optimism is needed in developing the belief that they can achieve achievement by studying and striving hard. The belief that students can achieve a certain level of achievement is the initial capital for progress. A high target is an indicator of an effective school.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This study based on data analysis concludes that the principal's leadership is a major factor in developing excellent schools. An excellent school is a school that can lead its students to become students who have excellent competencies. School achievement, student achievement, and graduate achievement are the manifestations of an excellent school. To achieve this, schools need principals who have strong leadership behaviors.

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