

Moral as the Basis of Leadership Practices in Excellent Schools

1st Ibrahim Bafadal*
Department of Educational
Administration
Faculty of Education
Universitas Negeri Malang
Malang, Indonesia
ibrahim.bafadal.fip@um.ac.id

2nd Ahmad Nurabadi
Department of Educational
Administration
Faculty of Education
Universitas Negeri Malang
Malang, Indonesia
ahmad.nurabadi.fip@um.ac.id

3rd Imam Gunawan
Department of Educational
Administration
Faculty of Education
Universitas Negeri Malang
Malang, Indonesia
imam.gunawan.fip@um.ac.id

4th Juharyanto
Department of Educational
Administration
Faculty of Education
Universitas Negeri Malang
Malang, Indonesia
juharyanto.fip@um.ac.id

5th Maulana Amirul Adha
Department of Educational
Administration
Faculty of Education
Universitas Negeri Malang
Malang, Indonesia
amirulmaulana1013@gmail.com

6th Min-Ling Hung
Teacher Education Center
Ming Chuan University
Taoyuan City, Taiwan
mlhong@mail.mcu.edu.tw

7th Firda Dwi Pratiwi
Department of Educational Administration
Faculty of Education
Universitas Negeri Malang
Malang, Indonesia
pratiwifirda95@gmail.com

8th Ahmad Furqon Akhbar
Department of Educational Administration
Faculty of Education
Universitas Negeri Malang
Malang, Indonesia
furqona24.3@gmail.com

Abstract— The significance attached to the role of leadership in schools, then one of the important components in the study of leadership must be focus on morals as the basis of principal leadership. This study aims to determine the variety of morals that are the basis for the practice of instructional leadership in excellent schools. This study uses a qualitative approach with a multi-case design. The cross-case analysis in this study used the constant comparative method. Based on the results of the study, there are three morals that become the basis of instructional leadership in excellent schools, namely spirituality morals, nationality morals, and humanity morals. Moral-based leadership in schools is an important element in excellent schools.

Keywords—moral, instructional leadership, principal, excellent school

I. INTRODUCTION

Effective leadership practiced by school principals is the main prerequisite in achieving the school's vision, mission, goals, and in implementing quality learning [1], [2]. Quality learning and student achievement are the main responsibilities of a school principal. There is no school quality without the quality of learning, as a consequence effective principal leadership is

instructional leadership [3], [4]. The effectiveness of the principal's leadership as instructional leader is the key in realizing an effective school, because the principal always strives to improve the quality of learning.

Morals are expected to be the basis for principals in their leadership practices in schools [5], [6]. Seeing the significance attached to the role of leadership in schools, one of the important components in research about leadership must focus on morals as the basis for principal's leadership. In this context, moral leadership is defined as, leadership behavior that is consistent with personal and organizational values which in turn are derived from a coherent ethical system.

Moral as the basis of principal leadership is important for various interacting factors. *First*, education itself is a moral-based process [7], [8]. Decisions about the nature of the educational process is a morality-based decision and, looking at the various options and variables that are available are very complex, it seems appropriate to argue that educational leaders should use morals as the basis for carrying out their instructional leadership roles. *Second*, teaching and learning activities [9], [10]. If teaching is related to

community education, then of course the principal's leadership must be characterized as a professional instructional leader and therefore must have a moral dimension. *Third*, schools are social communities [11], [12]. One of the characteristics of a healthy community is that there is a consensus about the values that must be lived and one of the principal functions in the community is to articulate, and engage with, personal and organizational values that have been mutually agreed upon. Leadership in an organization involves agreeing to gain moral consensus, interpreting that consensus to respond new situations and ensuring that morality becomes the basis for behavior for all school members. *Fourth*, moral leadership is related to school culture [13], [14]. The principal in carrying out his leadership role there is the greatest opportunity to strengthen, expand, and implement moral-based values in schools and this is usually shown through habits and rituals in many schools. *Fifth*, the principal as a role model [15], [16]. Based on various previous studies, one of the hallmarks of leadership is that leadership is a real example for school members [17], [18]. Each leader must be an example and their actions must be based on ethics, driven by moral values and moral consistent.

In recent years, the literature on educational leadership has placed a greater focus on the moral aspects of principals [19], [20]. From a focus on what kinds of morals are the basis of leadership, how moral leadership can be practiced, to why make morals the basis for educational leadership practices [6], [21], [22]. The principal has a special responsibility for all members of the organization, to be an informed, ethical, and capable moral agent in leading the school [23]. Clearly, the demands of the work of educational leaders have changed so that new ways of developing appropriate moral-based principal leadership practices are needed to meet today's and future challenges. Several previous studies support the need to include morals in the study of educational leadership [18], [24].

Being a leader means being responsible for the success of others. One of the keys to success in any profession is to live morally as a basis for behavior [25], [26], both inside and outside of work. One way for a leader to show the importance of morals to others and the organization is by example. For instructional leaders, the goal is to promote fair and equitable access to educational resources for all, regardless of situation or background. Understanding the importance of moral-based leadership in education is the first step to being a model for all school members. In the study of principals' leadership conducted by previous researchers, it was shown the need for a program to develop the competence of principals in the practice of moral-based educational leadership [5], [27], [28]. Therefore, this study aims to explain the variety of morals that form the basis for the practice of learning

leadership in excellent schools, which will later be developed in a model and set of effective moral-based learning leadership training materials for school principals.

II. METHOD

This research was conducted using a qualitative approach, with the research design used in multiple cases, due to different research backgrounds [29]. This research was conducted at the *Peradaban Umat* Elementary School, *Pahlawan Bangsa* Senior High School, and *Nagari* Elementary School. Data collection techniques through interview techniques, observation and documentation studies. The key informants in this study were the principal of the *Peradaban Umat* Elementary School, *Pahlawan Bangsa* Senior High School, and *Nagari* Elementary School. Additional data for this study were sourced from the school development team, school expert staff, former principals, teachers, students, parents of students, observations of educational and learning activities in schools, as well as relevant school documents.. The cross-case analysis in this study used the constant comparative method [30], data analysis included data collection, data condensation, data exposure, and formulation of conclusions [31]. The analysis of cross-case data in this study was carried out by comparing the variety of morals that became the basis of instructional leadership in excellent schools. The activity of checking the validity of the data was carried out by the researcher to validate whether the data was accurate.

III. RESULTS

Based on data from the *Peradaban Umat* Elementary School, from the beginning the *Peradaban Umat* Elementary School was developed in order to realize the idea that the mosque is not only a place of worship for Muslims, but also as the center of people's civilization to form Islamic commitments, national commitments, and scholarship. Based on the results of an interview with the Education Development Team of the *Peradaban Umat* Elementary School, it was emphasized that the foundation of the *Peradaban Umat* Elementary School was initially very focused on worship, or like a mosque foundation. The foundation's activities are more centered on worshipping in large mosques established or owned by the Foundation. However, the Chairperson of the Foundation's Board of Trustees had the idea that the mosque would become the center of the civilization of the people, and the breakthrough that was taken was to build an *Peradaban Umat* Elementary School and the school began operating in 1996.

At first, the *Peradaban Umat* Elementary School was known as a multidimensional or three-dimensional school, because it had a very short vision, namely Islamic commitment, national commitment and scholarship. In fact, these three are not only the vision of the *Peradaban Umat* Elementary School, but also become values that are firmly held in the operational

process of the *Peradaban Umat* Elementary School, even into the three values that permeate the leadership of the Development Team of Education, school principals and vice-principals. Based on the results of an interview with the former principal of the *Peradaban Umat* Elementary School, it was confirmed that the *Peradaban Umat* Elementary School had undergone several changes in the formulation of the school's vision in accordance with the development of thinking that occurred at the *Peradaban* Education Institute. However, even though it has undergone several changes, three things that are always present in the formulation of the school's vision are Islamic commitment, national commitment, and scholarship. Therefore, leadership in schools is always imbued with spirituality, nationality, and humanity, which is to lead students to become intelligent human beings. These three become the moral foundation in leading the school.

Regarding the moral foundation in leadership at the *Peradaban Umat* Elementary School, the principal's leadership attitude and behavior actually imitated the leadership of the late *Romo Kyai*, the Development Team, and previous school principals. They lead and develop *Peradaban Umat* Elementary School with full sincerity. They often ask school principals to work sincerely for the pleasure of Allah SWT, solely to build the nation's civilization, and for the sake of humanity. Every success is the result of God's help. If you experience failure, the principal should always be patient and try even harder, and avoid the words "don't," and get used to the words "should," in reprimanding students. Based on the above phenomenon, there are three moral foundations for leadership in the *Peradaban Umat* Elementary School, namely (1) spirituality morals, (2) nationality morals, and (3) humanity morals. These three moral foundations really inspire the leadership process at the *Peradaban Umat* Elementary School.

The phenomenon of the three morals that inspire the school's leadership is also very evident at *Pahlawan Bangsa* High School, although it seems to be more loaded with nationality morals and humanity morals. Based on observations, the phenomenon of nationality morals is very much in the curriculum, learning, school culture, and especially seen in the artifacts displayed on the walls and corners of the school. Nationality values really inspire leadership at *Pahlawan Bangsa* High School.

Based on the results of interviews with the Expert Staff of *Pahlawan Bangsa* High School, it shows that character building requires leadership behavior that is imbued with character values that are instilled in students. Principals, vice principals, and other leaders at *Pahlawan Bangsa* High School are asked to behave that is imbued with nationality morals. So all leaders become models of nationality character for all students. Meanwhile, the phenomenon of humanity morals at *Pahlawan Bangsa* High School is imbued with the principles of multiculturalism in learning, considering

that the students at *Pahlawan Bangsa* High School come from many provinces throughout Indonesia.

Based on data obtained from *Nagari* Elementary School, the phenomenon of moral-based leadership also occurs in *Nagari* Elementary School. There are three morals as the basis for learning leadership at *Nagari* Elementary School, as follows, (1) Spirituality morals, spiritual moral leadership is the most effective leadership because this leadership involves 5 aspects which include: personality, managerial, supervision, entrepreneurship and social with the principles of divinity; (2) Nationality morals (*Pancasila* for example), with nationality morals a leader can integrate *Pancasila* moral values in the life of the nation and state, especially in the application of daily life; and (3) Humanity morals, in the moral leadership of humanity, the principal seeks actions related to human actions and behavior, good and bad a person based on his view of life and religion. These humanity values reflect the position of humans as the highest creatures among other creatures. Both moral and humanity values are very important in living social life, especially at school.

Based on the data from the three schools, there are three morals that become the basis of instructional leadership in excellent schools, namely spirituality morals, nationality morals, and humanity morals. Spirituality morals are religious values that are used as a spirit in developing learning. First, that good behavior is guidance, therefore students will not behave well even though they have gained knowledge through learning. Students will behave well or practice their knowledge if they get the guidance of Allah SWT. Second, because good behavior is guidance, the principal in his leadership always moves teachers and education staff to always get closer and pray to Allah SWT for the good of his students. The principal strongly emphasizes the power of prayer for the success of education. Third, the principal emphasizes the example of the teacher in educating all his students. Fourth, the principal always advises teachers in applying the values of *istiqomah*, patience, gratitude, and sincerity in teaching, guiding, and fostering all students. *Istiqomah* (consistent attitude) in carrying out learning innovations, patient in dealing with students, grateful if you see success in students by believing that everything is solely because of Allah's help, and sincerely facing failure in teaching, guiding, and fostering students.

Nationality morals are community values and unity that are used as a spirit in developing learning. In excellent schools there is a belief that education is not only the intellectual life of the nation, but also unites the life of the nation. Love for others, love for the environment, love for science and technology, love for excellence, and love for the nation and state are strategic targets for character education for students and are internalized in all learning segments.

Humanity morals are aspects of humanity that are always taken into consideration in the implementation of Education. For excellent school leaders, learning

essentially leads students to become educated human beings, useful in society, education is not a service business, tuition fees must return to students in the form of good learning services, students who have not paid tuition fees do not become an obstacle for students to get learning services, payment of tuition is the parents responsibility while the task of a child is study diligently.

IV. DISCUSSION

Leadership in any endeavor is a moral duty, but even more so for educational leaders. Educational leaders are not only responsible for the success of a particular institution, but the work of the principal can influence various other institutions now and in the future, because the members they lead can become future leaders [32], [33]. Educational leaders must pay attention to the moral values of actions and words in their activities with school members. Based on various research results, moral-based leadership was identified as a tool for successful learning and student achievement [34], [35]. The practice of morally based leadership is largely the result of the diverse contexts and needs of the school that successful leaders must address.

Based on the results of the study, there are three morals that become the foundation of instructional leadership in excellent schools, namely spirituality morals, nationality morals, and humanity morals. *First*, spirituality morals are religious values that are used as a spirit in developing learning. Spirituality values are clearly emphasized as one of the main components in the school's vision and mission. These spirituality values are believed by the principal and underlie his leadership practice. Spirituality values not only describe the values and beliefs that underlie change, but are a demand of the organization through its leadership process [36]–[38].

Second, nationality morals are community values and unity that are used as a spirit in developing learning. The school is the second home for every school member, because the school environment has an impact on the formation of attitudes and behavior of school member, especially students [16], [39]. Nationality morals as the basis for learning leadership practices is by applying democratic values, having an archipelago insight, realizing national resilience, and understanding the rights and obligations as citizens.

Third, humanity morals are aspects of humanity that are always taken into consideration in the implementation of education. Humanity morals can also be interpreted as how a school principal places others in his leadership practice [40], [41]. Values in humanity morals include recognizing equality with others, appreciating others, respect, empathy and caring for others. In essence, excellent school leaders learn to deliver students to become educated, and useful human beings in the community. One example of the principal's action in making humanity morals values the basis for leadership practices in schools is education is

not a service business, payments given by parents of students must return to students in the form of quality learning services, students who experience financial problems does not become an obstacle for students to get learning services, payment is the responsibility of parents while the task of a child is to learn.

The existence of moral values that form the basis of the principal's leadership practice is in line with the previous literature which states that morality is the main thing in the principal's leadership practice [22], [42], [43]. There are several strategies that can help to grow or strengthen morale as the basis for principal leadership practices, namely [18], [28], [44], [45]; (1) Engagement with meta-narratives; namely reading the holy books of major religions, literary works and works on morality, education and leadership.

The purpose of such reading is to deepen awareness and understanding, to expand personal vocabulary and mental models and to stimulate reflection; (2) Reflection-in-action is an important learning process in which individual knowledge is used to analyze actual practice so that knowledge and practice are reflected to inform future actions; (3) Coaching or training, can be a facilitating process to support the first two strategies. Coaching and training may be provided by a more experienced leader, someone who is a skilled facilitator or by a colleague who is in a similar situation; and (4) Networking, formal or informal, is a further powerful strategy by facilitating example giving, clarification, problem analysis, solution generation, advice and reassurance.

Various research results mention that morality is the key in realizing a superior school, so it must be the vision of the 21st century school [10], [46]. The school's moral goals have driven the moral principles that underlie education and leadership today. In the era of openness and the demands of accountable schools, it is expected that school leaders can demonstrate actions, words and decision making [28], [45], [47] which are based on moral values for the common good and that the principal's actions are driven by a commitment to moral excellence and academic.

V. CONCLUSION

Moral as the basis in leadership practice is very important for the success of educational institutions. Leaders demonstrate morally based leadership through efforts to act in a manner that reflects the best interests of quality learning and student success. Based on the results of the study, there are three morals that become the foundation of learning leadership in superior schools, namely spirituality morals, nationality morals, and humanity morals. Moral-based leadership in schools is an important element in superior schools. Therefore, further research is recommended in order to develop an effective model and set of moral-based instructional leadership training materials for school principals.

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