

An Analysis of the Principal's Role in Managing Teacher Performance at SDN 1 Gelumbang in the Implementation of the Independent Curriculum

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis pengaruh peran kepala sekolah sebagai supervisor instruksional, manajer administratif, motivator, dan pemimpin transformasional terhadap kinerja guru di SDN 1 Gelumbang, Muara Enim. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif deskriptif yang didukung oleh data kuantitatif melalui angket dan wawancara terhadap 10 guru yang dipilih secara purposif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa seluruh peran kepala sekolah berpengaruh positif terhadap peningkatan kinerja guru, dengan pengaruh paling dominan berasal dari peran sebagai pemimpin transformasional dan supervisor instruksional. Kepala sekolah terbukti mampu meningkatkan profesionalisme, kolaborasi, dan inovasi guru melalui supervisi akademik, pembinaan reflektif, dan pembentukan komunitas belajar profesional. Kebaruan penelitian ini terletak pada analisis terpisah setiap dimensi kepemimpinan serta pada konteks implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka pascapandemi. Secara praktis, hasil penelitian ini memberikan implikasi agar kepala sekolah memprioritaskan kepemimpinan instruksional dan transformasional dibandingkan fungsi administratif, khususnya di sekolah dengan keterbatasan sumber daya. Secara teoretis, penelitian ini memperkuat model hubungan antara peran kepemimpinan kepala sekolah dan peningkatan kinerja guru dalam konteks pendidikan Indonesia saat ini.

Kata kunci: Sebutkan beberapa (3-5) kata kunci di sini

Abstract

This research aims to analyze the influence of the principal's role as an instructional supervisor, administrative manager, motivator, and transformational leader on teacher performance at SDN 1 Gelumbang, Muara Enim. The study employed a descriptive qualitative method supported by quantitative data collected through questionnaires and interviews with 10 purposively selected teachers. The results show that all principal roles positively influence the improvement of teacher performance, with the most dominant influence originating from the transformational leadership and instructional supervision roles. The principal is proven capable of increasing professionalism, collaboration, and teacher innovation through academic supervision, reflective coaching, and the establishment of professional learning communities. The novelty of this study lies in the separate analysis of each leadership dimension as well as in the context of the post-pandemic Independent Curriculum implementation. Practically, the results of this study provide implications for principals to prioritize instructional and transformational leadership compared to administrative functions, especially in schools with limited resources. The theoretical contribution of this study strengthens the relationship model between the principal's leadership roles and the improvement of teacher performance in the current Indonesian educational context.

Keywords: leadership head school, supervision instructional, leadership transformational, teacher performance, Independent Curriculum.

1. INTRODUCTION

The role of the principal has been recognized as a major factor influencing teacher performance through instructional leadership, academic supervision, and effective school resource management (Hallinger, 2018; Grissom et al., 2021; Liu & Hallinger, 2021; Liebowitz & Porter, 2019; Urick, 2016). Leadership at the school level is not limited to administrative coordination; rather, it encompasses strategic actions that directly shape

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instructional quality and professional growth. Principals who consistently implement instructional leadership practices are able to enhance the quality of teaching practices and strengthen the learning culture within schools (Bush, 2020; Leithwood et al., 2020; OECD, 2023; Ma & Marion, 2021; Klar & Brewer, 2018). Through systematic supervision, constructive feedback, and structured professional development, principals create conditions that support continuous instructional improvement.

In addition, principals' support in the form of training, mentoring, and professional feedback contributes to teachers' work motivation and commitment to improving instructional quality (Luthans, 2020; Day et al., 2020; Suharsaputra, 2021; Tan et al., 2020). When teachers perceive leadership as supportive and development-oriented, they are more likely to demonstrate higher levels of engagement, collaboration, and instructional innovation. Therefore, school leadership is widely regarded as a key lever in improving educational effectiveness and sustaining school improvement efforts (Leithwood et al., 2020; Grissom et al., 2021; Heck & Hallinger, 2018).

Although many studies have concluded that school leadership positively influences teacher performance, there is still limited clarity regarding the specific contribution of each principal role—whether as supervisor, manager, motivator, or transformational leader—to particular teacher performance indicators (Sani, 2021; Pietsch & Tulowitzki, 2017; Nguyen et al., 2022). Much of the existing research tends to examine leadership in general terms, without distinguishing how different leadership dimensions operate in specific school contexts. Contextual variations among schools indicate that leadership effectiveness is strongly influenced by teachers' perceptions and the organizational culture of the school (Mulyasa, 2019; Sebastian & Allensworth, 2019; Shaked & Schechter, 2017). This suggests that leadership cannot be separated from the social and cultural dynamics that shape everyday teaching practices.

Post-pandemic educational conditions have also created the need for more flexible and technology-integrated learning systems, increasing expectations for principals to adopt adaptive and responsive leadership approaches (Harris, 2021; UNESCO, 2022). In this situation, principals are required not only to manage resources efficiently but also to guide teachers in integrating digital tools and innovative pedagogical strategies into classroom instruction.

Recent studies have shifted from merely measuring leadership styles to examining actual leadership practices implemented by principals, such as sustainable academic supervision and the establishment of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) (Leithwood & Sun, 2022; Printy, 2020; Ng et al., 2019). This shift reflects a growing recognition that concrete leadership actions, rather than abstract leadership labels, are more closely associated with teacher development and school improvement. Data-driven leadership has also become an emerging trend in teacher performance management, where principals use learning outcome data to inform coaching and instructional decisions (Bush & Glover, 2022; Datnow & Hubbard, 2016; Supovitz et al., 2016). Moreover, research indicates that leadership effectiveness contributes to reduced teacher turnover, increased job satisfaction, and stronger professional commitment (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2021; Grissom et al., 2021; Gumus et al., 2018).

Taken together, these findings highlight the importance of examining principal leadership in a more differentiated and context-specific manner, particularly at the primary school level where instructional foundations are established.

This study offers novelty in three aspects:

1. Analysis every dimensions role head school in a way separate and measurable (Bass & Avolio, 2017; Hallinger, 2020).
2. Use teacher perception as source main evaluation effectiveness leadership (Harris, 2021).
3. Context study customized with post-pandemic and implementation Independent Curriculum , so that produce a management model relevant performance moment this (Haryati, 2023).

Thus, this research fills a gap that has not been widely examined at the primary school level in the Indonesian context.

Practically, this research is expected to assist principals in prioritizing leadership practices that have the greatest influence on teacher performance indicators (Suharsaputra, 2021). It may also provide policy recommendations for school supervisors and educational stakeholders in designing principal training programs based on instructional coaching approaches (Bush, 2020). Theoretically, this study contributes to strengthening the relational model between principal leadership roles and teacher performance development, which can be applied in various primary school contexts (Leithwood et al., 2020).

There are still teachers who face challenges in classroom management, instructional creativity, and the integration of learning technology (Sani, 2021). These inconsistencies may be related to differences in the quality of school leadership in implementing instructional supervision and professional coaching (Hallinger, 2020). Therefore, this study aims to map the relative influence of each principal leadership role on teacher performance, providing a reference for teacher development policies at the primary school level (Haryati, 2023).

Research Questions & Hypotheses

RQ1: How do the roles of the principal as supervisor, manager, motivator, and transformational leader influence teacher performance at SDN 1 Gelumbang?

RQ2: Which principal role supervisor, manager, motivator, or transformational leader has the most dominant effect on improving indicators of teacher performance?

Hypothesis

H1: The principal's roles as supervisor, manager, motivator, and transformational leader have a positive and significant effect on teacher performance.

H2: The principal's roles as instructional supervisor and transformational leader have a stronger positive influence on teacher performance compared to managerial and administrative roles.

2. METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach supported by quantitative data collected through a questionnaire. The approach aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of teachers' perceptions of the principal's role in managing teacher performance and to interpret the meaning behind the leadership practices implemented at the school.

The study was conducted at SDN 1 Gelumbang, Muara Enim Regency, South Sumatra Province. The school was selected because of its characteristics that were relevant to the research objectives, including the implementation of the Independent Curriculum, the consistent practice of academic supervision, and ongoing efforts to improve teacher performance in the post-pandemic period. The research was carried out during the first semester of the 2025/2026 academic year, from September to November 2025.

The subjects of the study were the school principal and teachers of SDN 1 Gelumbang. The main respondents consisted of ten teachers selected through purposive sampling. These participants were active teachers who had direct experience with the principal's leadership practices, including coaching, supervision, and training activities.

The research instruments included the researcher as the key instrument, a Likert-scale questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. The qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis through the stages of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Meanwhile, the questionnaire data were analyzed descriptively to support the qualitative findings. Data validity was ensured through triangulation, member checking, and peer debriefing, while adhering to research ethics principles.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on data collected through questionnaires and interviews with 10 teachers at SDN 1 Gelumbang, it was found that the principal performs four main roles in managing teacher performance: instructional supervisor, administrative manager, motivator, and transformational leader. The data analysis shows that all these roles positively contribute to improving teacher performance, although with varying degrees of influence. The role of the principal as a transformational leader received the highest perception score from teachers, followed by instructional supervisor, motivator, and administrative manager.

As an instructional supervisor, the principal actively conducts classroom observations, reflective discussions, and constructive feedback. Teachers acknowledged that this supervision contributes significantly to improving their teaching quality. One teacher stated:

"The principal regularly observes our classes and provides constructive feedback. This helps me improve my teaching methods and classroom management."
(Teacher 3)

Another teacher added:

"After supervision, the principal discusses our strengths and weaknesses and provides practical suggestions. It motivates me to prepare lessons more carefully." (Teacher 7)

These findings are consistent with Hallinger (2018) and Bush (2020), who emphasized that instructional leadership directly influences teaching effectiveness. Hattie (2015) also noted that instructional supervision enhances teacher professionalism and student learning outcomes. Similarly, Suharsaputra (2021) highlighted that coaching-based supervision is more effective in improving teacher motivation.

In the administrative managerial role, the principal organizes school infrastructure, prepares schedules, and distributes teaching assignments. While this role ensures operational efficiency, its direct impact on improving instructional creativity is relatively limited. One teacher explained:

“The principal manages schedules and administrative matters very well, so we can focus on teaching without worrying about technical issues.” (Teacher 1)

These findings align with Leithwood et al. (2020) and Uno (2020), who stated that managerial leadership provides administrative stability but has less direct influence on instructional improvement compared to instructional leadership.

As a motivator, the principal provides encouragement, recognition, and moral support to teachers. This motivational role contributes to improving teachers' confidence and work enthusiasm. One teacher stated:

“The principal always appreciates our efforts, even small achievements. This makes us feel valued and motivated to perform better.” (Teacher 5)

Another teacher noted:

“The principal encourages us to attend training and try new teaching methods. This support increases our confidence.” (Teacher 9)

This finding supports Luthans' (2020) motivation theory, which highlights recognition and social support as key factors in improving performance. Haryati (2023) also confirmed that motivational leadership strengthens teacher confidence and work engagement.

The transformational leadership role emerged as the most influential dimension. The principal successfully builds a shared vision, promotes innovation, and fosters collaboration among teachers. One teacher explained:

“The principal inspires us to continuously improve and supports innovation in teaching. We feel part of a shared mission.” (Teacher 2)

Another teacher stated:

“The principal encourages collaboration among teachers through discussions and sharing sessions. This helps us learn from each other.” (Teacher 8)

These findings support Bass and Avolio (2017), who emphasized that transformational leadership inspires behavioral change and professional growth. Leithwood and Sun (2022) also found that transformational leadership strengthens collective learning culture, while Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2021) confirmed its positive impact on teacher commitment and job satisfaction.

However, several challenges were identified, including limited learning facilities and differences in teacher motivation levels. One teacher stated:

“Sometimes limited facilities make it difficult to implement innovative learning methods.” (Teacher 4)

This indicates that while leadership plays a critical role, contextual factors also influence teacher performance.

Teachers perceived that the principal plays a crucial role in providing direction, professional guidance, and inspiration, particularly through academic supervision, the establishment of a Professional Learning Community (PLC), and the provision of constructive and open feedback. Additionally, the principal actively encourages instructional innovation, including the integration of learning technology, and promotes a collaborative and supportive work environment. However, several contextual challenges were identified, including limitations in

learning facilities and variations in teachers' motivation levels, indicating that while leadership plays a significant role, environmental and institutional factors also influence its overall effectiveness.

As an instructional supervisor, the principal actively conducts academic supervision through classroom observations, reflective discussions, and structured feedback sessions. These supervisory practices help teachers improve lesson planning, instructional delivery, and assessment strategies. This finding aligns with Hallinger (2018) and Bush (2020), who emphasize that instructional leadership directly contributes to improving teaching effectiveness and learning quality. Furthermore, Hattie (2015) highlights that principals who prioritize instructional supervision significantly enhance teacher professionalism and student learning outcomes. Similarly, Suharsaputra (2021) notes that supervision focused on professional coaching rather than evaluation is more effective in strengthening teacher motivation and instructional improvement.

In the role of administrative manager, the principal is responsible for organizing school infrastructure, scheduling instructional activities, and allocating teacher responsibilities. This managerial role ensures operational stability and organizational efficiency within the school. However, the findings suggest that while administrative management is essential for maintaining institutional order, its direct influence on enhancing teacher creativity and instructional innovation is relatively limited. This observation supports the findings of Leithwood et al. (2020) and Uno (2020), who argue that managerial leadership provides an important structural foundation but does not necessarily produce direct improvements in instructional quality unless integrated with professional development initiatives.

The principal's role as a motivator also contributes positively to teacher performance. Teachers reported receiving moral support, recognition, and encouragement, which foster increased work motivation and professional commitment. Motivation was expressed through appreciation, trust, and opportunities for teachers to assume professional responsibilities. This finding is consistent with Luthans' (2020) motivation theory, which identifies recognition and social support as key factors in improving employee performance. In addition, Haryati (2023) found that principals who actively motivate teachers help create a positive work climate, enhance self-confidence, and reduce occupational stress, thereby improving overall performance.

Among the four leadership roles, the principal's role as a transformational leader emerged as the most influential dimension. The principal demonstrated strong leadership by building a shared vision, promoting innovation in instructional practices, and fostering a collaborative and reflective professional culture. The principal also facilitated internal training programs and encouraged continuous professional development to enhance teachers' pedagogical competence. These findings are consistent with Bass and Avolio (2017), who emphasize that transformational leaders influence organizational performance by inspiring, empowering, and guiding followers toward shared goals. Similarly, Leithwood and Sun (2022) highlight that transformational leadership strengthens both individual teacher performance and collective organizational learning. Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2021) further confirm that transformational leadership positively influences teacher job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and professional engagement.

Overall, the results of this study confirm that the principal's leadership plays a critical role in improving teacher performance, with transformational leadership and instructional

supervision emerging as the most influential factors. These leadership approaches not only enhance teachers' instructional competence but also strengthen motivation, collaboration, and professional commitment. Therefore, the findings support Hypothesis (H2), which states that the principal's role as a transformational leader and instructional supervisor has the strongest influence on improving teacher performance.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the role of the school principal has a significant and positive influence on teacher performance through four interrelated dimensions, namely academic supervision, managerial, motivational, and transformational leadership. Of these four roles, the roles as instructional supervisor and transformational leader show the strongest impact because they directly improve learning quality, professional commitment, and teacher collaboration at SDN 1 Gelumbang. Principals who consistently apply instructional leadership through classroom supervision activities, reflective feedback, and professional mentoring are able to enhance teachers' pedagogical competence and student learning outcomes.

Practically, principals need to prioritize coaching and transformational roles rather than focusing solely on administrative functions. Building a culture of mutual trust, establishing Professional Learning Communities (PLC), and promoting continuous reflection have been shown to strengthen teacher motivation and creativity in implementing the Independent Curriculum. However, this study also found limitations such as inadequate facilities and varying levels of teacher motivation, which may influence leadership effectiveness.

Therefore, future principal development programs need to emphasize data-based instructional and transformational leadership training to optimize teacher performance improvement, particularly in schools with limited resources. From a theoretical perspective, the results of this study strengthen the model that effective school leadership acts as a catalyst for sustainable teacher performance improvement, especially within the context of post-pandemic educational reform. Future research is recommended to involve more schools and to use mixed-method or longitudinal approaches to analyze how contextual variables such as school culture, digital readiness, and teacher self-efficacy mediate the relationship between leadership practices and teacher performance.

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