THE LEADERSHIP STYLE OF PRINCIPALS THAT PLAYS THE ROLE AS A SALIENT FACTOR FOR HIGH PERFORMING AND LOW-PERFORMING SCHOOLS IN INDONESIA

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Abstract

The published report of 2012 of educational department of South Sulawesi Province examination for Makassar secondary schools showed that the performance level of senior high schools was at unsatisfactory level. However, there were some schools that achieved high-performance level. The plausible reason for the varying performance of senior high schools has prompted the researcher to conduct a multi-site case study whether leadership styles of principals has any relationship with high-performing and low-performing schools in Makassar. In order to achieve this study, a qualitative approach, using multi-case study research design was utilized. Semi-structured interviews, observations, and document analysis were used to collect data. The sample consisted of two high performing and two low-performing secondary schools in the city of Makassar. Four school principals and 12 teachers of the schools were chosen, using purposive sampling technique to select the respondents of the study. Data were analysed using theme analysis technique. This study found the salient factor that differentiated high-performing schools from low-performing schools was that the leadership style of principals who emphasized on teaching and learning, controlling students’ discipline, ensuring teachers’ understanding the school’s vision, and conducting teachers development programs achieved high-performance level than their counterparts. Thus, this study has contributed to the development of knowledge in the field of high-performing schools in Indonesia. This study suggests that if a school wants to achieve high-performing level, principals must exercise leadership style.

Keywords: High-performing schools, low-performing schools, leadership of school principals.

1. Background of the Study

The superiority of a country is determined by highly educated human resources (Pidarta, 2010). Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which are parts of Japan, were once destroyed by atomic bombs. Later, Hiroshima and Nagasaki have emerged as a major hub of world economy due to education (Rorty, 1998). In addition, England has emerged as a developed country because of education (Wandr & Brown, 1987).

For the Republic of Indonesia, the promotion of the education sector has been given due attention since achieving its independence in 1945. However, considering the progress in the educational sector, the quality of Indonesian education is still at a low level (Pidarta, 2010). UNESCO (2011) has reported that Indonesia's education position is at the 69th place out of 127 countries. In addition, the PISA (2012) report shows that Indonesia's education is lagging behind Malaysia, Thailand, and Vietnam (OECD, 2012).

The cause of the problem of education in Indonesia is due to the head schools that do not play the role of school leaders (Usman, Syaiiku, Akhmadi & Suryadarma, 2007; Weston, 2008; OECD/Asian Development Bank, 2015). In addition, teachers are not committed (Sutarto Hadi, 2002; The World Bank, 2010; Suryadarma, Suryahadi, Sumarto & Rogers, 2006, Guruvala, 2011; McKenzie, Nugroho, Ozolins, McMillan, Sumarto, Toyama, Febriany, Sodo,
Bima, & Sim, 2014; OECD / Asian Development Bank, 2015). Sukarmin (2010) in his study has found that the commitment of teachers in Indonesia is only at a modest stage; on the other hand, according to Jazzar and Algozzine (2006), high commitment is important for the progress of an educational organization.

To overcome the low quality of education in Indonesia, the government passed the educational law that was recognized under the National Education System Act Number 20 in the year of 2003. In this law, it is stated that education in Indonesia should be based on the Pancasila Philosophy, which aims to develop the potential of students to become people who believe and have piety to God Almighty and are knowledgeable as propounded in the law of the national education system that is: "... the development of potential learners to be a human being who believes and cautious to God Almighty, noble, healthy, qualified, creative, independent, and democratic citizens and responsible citizens" (Republic of Indonesia, SISDIKNAS Act, 2003: 43). To achieve this statement, the Indonesian Ministry of National Education stipulates that every national education development program should emphasize on the quality of education and educational management (Anwar Arifin, 2005).

Although Indonesia's education level is still at the lowest ebb compared to neighbouring countries, namely Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam (OECD, 2012), there are also some excellent schools that can be categorized as high achieving schools. A recent National Exam Result Report shows that there are some high schools that have achieved 49-60 scores, and that are subject scores, which are categorized as high achieving schools (Ministry of National Education, 2012). This decision suggests that there are as many as five schools that achieve a score between 49-60. Table 1.1 shows the achievement of some secondary schools in Makassar in the year of 2011 and 2012.

Table 1.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Name of School</th>
<th>Subject Position</th>
<th>Subject Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>SMA – 1</td>
<td>51.08</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>SMA – 2</td>
<td>48.01</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>SMA - 3</td>
<td>50.52</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>SMA - 4</td>
<td>49.93</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>SMA - 5</td>
<td>52.20</td>
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<tr>
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<td>44.53</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>SMA -10</td>
<td>42.38</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Departemen Pendidikan Nasional (2012)

Data of the above Table 1.1 shows the difference between the high achieving school category and the low achieving school category, so the core issue is the achievement. This problem
related to achievement arises because initially, the facilities provided by the government, including the provision of teachers, training and salaries of teachers as well as the subject matter are the same between one school and the other school. Following the input-output theory, if the input were the same, the output would be the same (Hoy & Miskell, 2011). However, the output shown in Table 1.1 shows the distinction between one school and one school. This different result achievement was valid five years ago.

2. Aim of Research

Based on the statement of the above problem, this study aims to:

1. Analyse the characteristics of the principals’ leadership in secondary school.
2. Analyse attitudes and behaviour of teachers in high school.
3. Make a comparison of the physical state and convenience between schools.

3. Method

This study attempts to identify the leadership style of principals, attitudes and behaviours of teachers as well as the culture of the school that are practiced in the secondary schools in Makassar. This study was conducted at four state schools, two high school performance schools and two schools categorized as low achievement schools in Makassar City. This study used a causal study approach. Methods of observation, interviews, and document analysis were used as data collector tools by researchers. The participants underinvestigation encompassed the principals and teachers of the schools. Data validity was done by extending observation time, continuous observation, triangulation, peer debriefing and peer review. At the time of analysing the data of the present study, the researchers analysed the data manually making conclusions and verification. In addition, the researchers presented the data.

4. Analysis of the Data

High performing schools are defined as schools that achieve or exceed the target set. This definition is in line with the definition of effective school provided by Mortimore (1991) as well as Hoy and Miskel (2005). In parallel with this definition, in this paper, researchers made an in-depth review of the concept of high-performance schools, high school performance studies, principals’ leadership in high-performance schools, teachers’ attitudes and behaviours in high-performance schools, and school culture at school High performance.

The basic theory, which was employed as a reference in this study related the school as a social system (School as a Social System). School is a formal education organization system, and a social organization that is set up to achieve educational goals. School is a unique social system that consists of different individuals and cultures. Therefore, the school can not be separated from the beliefs and values of the surrounding community (Hoy & Miskel, 2008). In addition, effective school studies, leadership theories, attitude theory and behaviour of teachers and school culture theory were also referred to as additional theories to support the findings of this study.

High-performance school concepts are similar to the concept of effective school (Shannon & Bylsma, 2007). From the various definitions presented by educational experts, such as Edmonds (1979), Lezotte (1985), Mortimore (1991) and Hoy and Miskel (2005), it is concluded that effective schools are schools with a system that encompasses many aspects, covering inputs, processes, outputs or outcomes as well as existing arrangements within the school, where various aspects exist supporting each other to achieve school vision and mission. In an effective school, all students can have a high level of ability and develop themselves even though the students of an effective school have the common basic ability, but
they are still able to develop themselves in comparison with the initial conditions when they are just entering effective school. In short, effective schools are schools that are able to optimize all inputs and processes to achieve education output, which is considered as a school performance, especially student performance.

The discussions on the development of high-performance schools in this study are based on reports from researchers, such as Weber (1971), Austin (1978), Brookeover and Lezotte (1979), Edmonds and Frederickson (1979), Rutter (1979) Mortimore et al. (1988). Teddlie and Stringfield (1993) made a study to deny Coleman et al. (1966) and Jencks et al. (1972) and identified school factors that could contribute to improve student performance. Most of their studies chose low education samples, and their findings did not support Coleman et al. (1966) and Jencks et al (1972).

The results of the current study show that school factors are important to the development of students, considering the characteristics of the school, and the researchers, namely MacBeath and Mortimore (2001), Rutter at al. (1979) Hallinger and Murphy (1986) Sammons et al. (1995), Reynolds (1995), Abdul Karim (1989), Levine and Lezotte (1990), Teddlie and Reynolds, (2000), Townsend (1997). In addition, according to Nor Asikin (2008), Milam et al. (2010), Hofman and Hofman (2011), Shannon and Bylsma (2007), Wang, Walters & Thum (2013), Yurdagul and Nukhet (2016), Wang et al. (2013), all formulate effective school features vary widely so that they could be more specific by looking at the three aspects, namely the principals' leadership styles, attitude and behaviour of teachers and school culture.

The first aspect relates to the leadership style of principals, practiced by high-performance school principals, researchers outlining leadership theories, such as Ohio State University's behavioural theories (Halpin, 1966), transactional and transformational leadership theories (Bass, 1985 ), instructional leadership theory (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985), and leadership theory for learning (Hallinger, 2011).

The second aspect is the effectiveness of school teacher behaviour, that has been employed in this study, and the aspect relates the commitment, motivation and efficacy of the teachers. One of the concepts that determines the importance of employees towards objects in the working environment is the level of organizational commitment. According to Mowday et al. (1982), commitments are given special attention as these factors are said to be responsible for various acts within the organization, and they are absenteeism, staff turnover, and their adherence to the organization; committed employees will stay long in the organization and always strive towards achieving the goal of the organization. Likewise, motivation and efficacy factors have considerable influence on making a school categorized as high achievers (Bandura, 1994).

The third aspect, i.e. the physical condition of the school and the classroom equipment are said to have effect on the attainment and attitudes of students (Fraser, 1998). This is because conducive physical conditions will promote intellectual activity, promote friendship, cooperation and support as well as promote learning, growth and development of students. The fourth aspect of parental involvement in learning at school is closely related to the student's academic achievement. Studies by Chris and Rosemary (2004) show that participation, and parental support help in improving learning ability among students. The fifth aspect, the school culture is believed to provide a significant role to the performance of a school as it affects the students' academic performance as that is seen in various studies. In the current study, researchers refer to Schoen and Teddlie (2008) theory, by describing the four dimensions of school culture: (1) Professional orientation, (2) Organizational structure, (3) Learning environment, and (4) Student as Focus.

However, the general features found in this study are leadership principals, teacher behaviour and school culture. However, specifically, the actions that the principals undertake are not so clear and consistent. In addition, these studies do not relate specifically regarding
developing the characteristics of effective teachers based on psychological theories. Apart from that, although there are many school culture studies that are effective, but the findings vary. This suggests that there is not one superior factor ingredient that determines a successful school; thus, this aspect of factor encourages researchers to identify effective and ineffective school factors in the city of Makassar.

The data was collected through qualitative method at schools, and the sample of this study can be summarized as follows: in the aspect of leadership style of school principals in Schools A and B, the principals adopt a force that emphasizes on the task: (1) ensuring that teachers help students to learn by monitoring, (2) controlling student discipline. In this regard, principals in these schools have tried to ensure that teachers teach and help the students to learn through regular monitoring in the classrooms. They also ensure that all teachers and students are disciplined in the areas of teaching and learning through disciplinary enforcement. The results of the study shows that in terms of School C and D, the principals did not practice the leadership style that emphasized on the task. Therefore, the principals at School C and D did not regularly monitor and did not emphasize the enforcement of teaching discipline and learning. Additionally, school principals at School A and B ensure the vision and mission that are practised by teachers; on the other hand, School C and D did not manifest the vision and mission of teachers that they were supposed to practise. In the aspect of the teaching and learning process, the principals at School A and B focused on how the academic process should take place, the teaching and learning activities that would be implemented, and the student activities that would lead to self-development. On the other hand, in School C and D, it was found that principals did not emphasize on the due diligence of teaching and learning process rather they focused more on the development of school physics. In terms of human resource management, the researchers of the current study found that in School A and B, teachers’ skill upgrading programmes were done frequently while C and D schools, the skill upgrading programmes lacked.

The results of the study suggests that in terms of attitudes and behaviour of teachers, out of all four sample schools, in Schools A and B, teachers in those schools had a high commitment when they entered in the classrooms to teach. They were on time and were committed to all assignments provided. On the other hand, in Schools C and D, it was found that the teachers were not professional in carrying out their duties, and not all teachers followed the predetermined learning guidelines. In addition, they did not comply with the schedule. Similarly, the results of the current study show that the desire to serve in the schools of teachers in schools A and B was higher than in Schools C and D as they were willing to move to better schools if any opportunity was given to them. Besides that, teachers in Schools A and B had high motivation because they had high motivation to carry out their duties due to their awareness and responsibility compared to the teachers of School C and D. Apart from that, the study also have found that teachers at School A and B had high teaching skills despite they dealt problematic students. However, teachers at School C and D did not have high skills and often they blamed the students. Regarding the opinions, the findings of the current study shows that teacher teaching at School A and B was delightful to students while teacher teaching at School C and D was boring to the pupils.

The findings of the current study demonstrate that in terms of school culture in all four sample schools, it was found that generally School A and School B focused on education and continuous assessment as a day-to-day practice either to teachers or pupils. On the other hand, School C and D did not have that practice as such. In terms of learning environments, it was found that Schools A and B had achieved special education standards in terms of facilities and infrastructure as well as in terms of sanitation quality compared to School C and D.
5. Discussion

This section discusses the findings obtained from the theories of previous studies and results. Principal Leadership Styles In High-Performing Schools and Low-Performing Schools:

The current study found that high-performance school principals adopted a leadership style that emphasized on the task of the concept of “teaching teachers to learn”, and strict discipline control of students should be emphasized as daily practice. Therefore, principals in high-performance schools always strived to ensure the perspectives of the teachers and learners. The results suggest that proper action was taken by monitoring teachers 'teaching and pupils' learning in the classroom while principals in lower-performing schools did not emphasize on the task. Thus, principals at the low-cost Schools did not regularly monitor and emphasize on the control of teaching and learning disciplines.

The findings of this study support the organizational control theory, which states that monitoring is one of the elements in the control aspect that should be done by the head of the organization (Mintzberg, 1973). Studies have found that lack of control has high relevance with the failure of an organization to achieve its stated goals (Mintzberg, 1973). This findings of the study supports the Ohio State University leadership behavioural theory, which states that if the organization wishes to achieve the desired performance, the leader should emphasize on to ensure that the task is carried out as efficiently as possible (Halpin, 1966). In addition, the results of the study support the instructional leadership theory that encourages principals to monitor the teaching of pupils and learners and to control teaching time so as not to be used for matters other than the academic process (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985).

The findings of the current research are also in line with the supervisory theory in education stating, i.e supervision by principals or by their representatives will cause teachers to carry out tasks efficiently according to the specified and planned daily lesson plan books, which will enable pupils to focus on the goals that are to be achieved. As a result, students would focus more on the learning process in the classroom. This greater focus will affect their academic performance (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Blasé & Blasé, 1998). Similarly, Jahanian and Ebrahimi (2013) stated that the supervision of education was one of the educational activities that would lead to the growth and development of teachers’ professionalism, and ultimately could increase the quality of education.

In addition, the findings of the current research supports the study conducted by Glickman et al. (1995), who stated that supervision would provide an opportunity to promote teacher competence, abstract thinking, and reflection on the teacher's own teaching methodology, which subsequently improved the efficacy of teachers. Other studies that were conducted by Glatthorn (1990), Sergiovanni and Starratt (1998), Beach and Reinhardt (2000), Nor Asikin (2008) found that supervision by principals on teacher teaching had an indirect effect on student achievement. This situation occurs because frequent monitoring will cause teachers to be more prepared to teach (Davis & Thomas, 1989). Preparatory preparation by teachers will cause pupils to focus more on learning and not wasting time. As a result, pupils' learning would be more effective, and that would in turn enhance the academic performance of the students.

In addition, neat preparation by the teachers before conducting teaching will make teachers more efficient in their teaching, and the lessons would eventually not be boring to pupils because of varying teaching (Blasé & Blasé, 1998). When teachers 'teaching varies, pupils' interest increases, that would further increase the interest that affects pupil’s academic performance and improve school performance (Glickman et al., 2001). Day et al. (2011) reported that effective school principals could enhance student learning through frequent monitoring strategies in the classrooms. Previously, Robinson et al. (2009) and Green (2010) stated that in the context of effective schools, school principals did not play the role of an
organizational leader, but the school principal was expected to serve as a teaching leader. One of the principals’ responsibilities as a teaching leader includes monitoring and evaluating teachers to ensure achievement in the core business of the school, namely the teaching and learning in the classroom (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Robinson et al., 2009). In addition, Zepeda (2007) stated that the school principals’ role in monitoring teaching was an important part because teaching and learning were the main function of the school. Lee et al. (2012) found that teaching leadership that had an impact on student performance improvement was due to the involvement of students with learning activities in school. Sergiovanni and Starratt (1989) stressed that the supervision of teacher teaching was one of the functions of the educational institution aimed at improving teaching and learning, and professional development of teachers. Supervision of teachers would increase the ability and degree of professionalism of teachers. This was increased in capability and professionalism, which was due to monitoring that was one form of formative evaluation aimed at maximizing the growth of teacher and teacher professional value (Weisberg et al., 2010). Formative monitoring is linked to the role of school principals as instructional leaders (Robinson, 2007). According to Zapeda (2006), continuous supervision is essential to transform the school into a learning community.

In conducting monitoring, school principals should devise lessons on teaching supervision, and the lessons would include assessment on the aspects of knowledge, teaching methods, beliefs and humanitarian values, which could serve as guidelines to principals when they would provide feedback to teachers after supervision of teaching (Neville & Garman 1999; Zepeda 2007). In addition, discussion activities after supervising the teaching of principals with supervised teachers are important so that teachers can reflect on and consider the suggestions made by principals, and consequently the results of this supervisory activity can improve the ability and competence of teachers (MacBeath, 2004).

In addition, past studies have found that monitoring is one of the effective interventions for improving teacher competence, which in turn would benefit students and eventually help to improve student academic performance (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 1989). This has been pointed out by earlier researchers, such as Purkey and Smith (1983), Hallinger and Murphy (1985), Tedlie and Stringfield (1993), Sammons et al. (1995) and Townsend (1997) Wang, et al. (2013), Yurdagul and Nukhet (2016) who summarized that teacher’s teaching supervision indirectly affected the school performance regarding improvement. Therefore, it is not surprising that the principals of the schools, who hold the principles of teaching maintain that a student’s learning takes place due to the regular supervision of teacher teaching as a mechanism to improve performance whether student achievement or school performance goes up or not. In that regard, if a school wants to double the performance of its pupils and schools, the school principals should ensure that teachers teach the students, and simultaneously conduct frequent monitoring of teacher teaching to ensure that the teachers teach the learners.

**Conclusion**

Regarding monitoring in the classroom as a mechanism to ensure teachers that they help pupils to learn, the findings of the current study also found that principals in high-performing schools, the High-performance Schools B adhered to the principle of disciplinary control in teaching and learning that produced academic excellence. Thus, the principals of these schools strived to ensure that all teachers and students were disciplined in the implementation of their respective duties through disciplinary control mechanisms. Contrary to practice by high school principals, it was found that principals in low performing schools did not practice this principle. In addition, principals at the Low-cost Schools did not emphasize on disciplinary controls in the implementation of their respective duties, which eventually led to teaching and learning to occur randomly and unmanageably.
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