



School Principal Leadership in Improving Teacher Competence at Tembilahan 1 and Tembilahan 2 Vocational High School, Indragiri Hilir Regency

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ABSTRACT

This study examines teacher competence and principal leadership at Tembilahan 1 and Tembilahan 2 Vocational High School, Indragiri Hilir Regency. Using a qualitative, phenomenological approach, data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. Findings reveal that Tembilahan 1 emphasizes project-based learning and technology training, while Tembilahan 2 applies flipped classrooms and online platforms. The leadership style at Tembilahan 1 is instructional and visionary, whereas Tembilahan 2 follows a democratic and servant-oriented approach. Supporting factors include industry partnerships and community support, while obstacles include administrative workload, resistance to innovation, and limited resources. Both principals adopt adaptive strategies to address challenges, ensuring effective leadership in enhancing teacher competence.

INTRODUCTION

Education plays a crucial role in shaping a competent and competitive future generation in the era of globalization. Teachers serve as key figures in this process, influencing both the intellectual and character development of students. In Indonesia, teacher quality remains a focal point for the government, educational institutions, and society, as it significantly impacts the overall effectiveness of education. Teachers are not only responsible for delivering subject matter but also for shaping students' character, skills, and comprehension. Consequently, their quality directly affects learning outcomes and student development.

Teacher quality is defined as the ability of educators to fulfill their professional roles in accordance with established competency standards. This encompasses mastery of subject matter, pedagogical methods, classroom management, and the ability to provide constructive assessment and feedback. Effective teachers must demonstrate pedagogical, personal, social, and professional competencies, which collectively contribute to high-quality education.

Despite the importance of teacher competency, research indicates a gap between expected and actual teacher performance. Various efforts, such as training programs, certification, and continuous professional development, have been implemented to address this issue. However, challenges persist, including limited access to high-quality training and inadequate institutional support.

School leadership plays a vital role in enhancing teacher competency. Studies suggest that principals who actively provide guidance and support can positively influence teacher motivation and instructional quality. However, observational data indicate that many teachers feel excluded from decision-making processes and that their suggestions are not adequately accommodated. This lack of involvement can negatively impact their motivation and professional development.

Issues in school leadership affecting teacher competency include the limited participation of teachers in decision-making, insufficient stakeholder engagement, and inadequate professional development support. Additionally, autocratic or non-collaborative leadership styles create an uncondusive work environment, further hindering teacher growth. Research on transformational and instructional leadership emphasizes the need for school leaders to inspire and guide teachers effectively.

In conclusion, effective school leadership is essential for improving teacher competency and overall education quality. Principals must identify teacher needs, encourage professional growth, and foster an inclusive and supportive environment. Addressing teacher competency gaps requires a comprehensive

approach involving planning, funding, and efficient school management. This study aims to explore the role of school leadership in enhancing teacher competency at Tembilahan 1 and Tembilahan 2 Vocational High School, Indragiri Hilir.

LITERATURE REVIEW

School Principal Leadership

School principal leadership is crucial for effective education management, requiring coordination and responsibility for all school activities. It involves managing resources, guiding teachers and students, and fostering a positive learning environment.

Leadership is the ability to influence and direct an organization's members. Effective school leadership includes motivating, guiding, and empowering staff to achieve the school's vision and mission. Various leadership styles exist, including authoritarian, democratic, transactional, transformational, and visionary approaches, each impacting school operations differently.

A principal plays multiple roles, including director, motivator, communicator, decision-maker, and human resource developer. Key indicators of effective leadership include strong personality, knowledge, decision-making skills, and communication abilities.

Ultimately, school principals must integrate various leadership styles and roles to enhance teacher competence and student achievement, creating a structured and supportive educational environment.

Teacher Competence

Teacher competence is essential in education, encompassing knowledge, skills, and attitudes required for professional teaching. It is defined as an individual's ability to perform tasks proficiently, developed through education and training.

Teachers must adhere to regulations and play a crucial role in shaping future generations. Competence is legally outlined in **Law No. 14/2005 on Teachers and Lecturers**, which establishes four key competencies:

1. **Pedagogical Competence** – Managing student learning, designing lessons, and fostering student potential.
2. **Personality Competence** – Serving as a role model through ethical and responsible behavior.
3. **Social Competence** – Effectively interacting with students, colleagues, and the community.
4. **Professional Competence** – Mastering subject matter, curriculum, and instructional strategies.

Competent teachers enhance student learning, foster discipline, and contribute to societal development. Continuous professional growth and certification are vital for maintaining high educational standards.

The research questions are as follows:

- a. What is the teacher competence like at Tembilahan 1 and Tembilahan 2 Vocational High School in Indragiri Hilir Regency?
- b. How is the school principal's leadership at Tembilahan 1 and Tembilahan 2 Vocational High School in Indragiri Hilir Regency?
- c. What are the resources or external factors that support the principal's leadership?
- d. What role do stakeholders, such as the school committee, parents, and the community, play in supporting the principal's leadership?
- e. What challenges do the principals face in leading these two schools?
- f. How do internal or external obstacles affect the effectiveness of the principal's leadership?

METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with a phenomenological type, aimed at understanding individuals' subjective experiences related to specific phenomena. According to Moleong (2017), qualitative research produces descriptive data from words and observable behavior. Sugiyono (2019) emphasizes that the phenomenological approach focuses on understanding individual experiences, with data analysis in the form of narratives to describe the essence of those experiences.

The research was conducted at Tembilahan 1 and Tembilahan 2 Vocational High School in Indragiri Hilir Regency, from October to December 2024. The researcher obtained permission from the schools for data collection. The research sites serve as relevant data sources for the research goals and issues being investigated (Sutopo, 2017).

This study uses two categories of data sources: formal and informal, to describe the role of the principal's leadership and teacher competence in achieving educational goals at Tembilahan 1 and Tembilahan 2 Vocational High School. Formal data sources include school policy documents, teacher performance evaluation reports, and the school's strategic plan, which provide objective information about the school's condition. Informal data sources were obtained through interviews and observations with the principal, teachers, and students, offering deeper insights into their perceptions and experiences. By utilizing both types of data sources, the study aims to provide a comprehensive view of the factors influencing educational performance at the two schools.

This study uses three data collection techniques: observation, interviews, and document studies. Observation involves the researcher directly engaging in the situation, recording behaviors and interactions of the subjects in their natural environment. The steps include preparation, location selection, observation, interaction, and data analysis. In-depth interviews are conducted to understand the thoughts and feelings of informants, such as school principals and teachers, using structured interviews to guide the questions. Sugiyono (2019) explains that interviews are exchanges of information through questions and answers. The documentation method complements the data from interviews by investigating written documents like books, regulations, and meeting minutes. According to Suharsimi (2020), this method provides supporting evidence that strengthens findings from observations and interviews. The combination of these techniques aims to offer a comprehensive view of the principal's leadership and teachers' competence.

Instruments help researchers gather data in a systematic process and stage according to the appropriate type of data collection. Sugiyono (2019) mentions that research instruments are used to measure phenomena, and for this study, instruments include observation guides, interview guides, and document study guides.

The validity of the data in this research is determined through examination techniques based on criteria outlined by Sugiyono (2023), which include credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. One technique used is triangulation, which involves source and method triangulation. Source triangulation is conducted by comparing information from various parties, such as the school principal, teachers, and school documents. The principal provides data on leadership strategies and efforts to enhance teacher competence, while teachers provide insights on policy implementation and its impacts. School documents, such as policies and performance reports, are used to support the collected data. Method triangulation involves combining data collection techniques, including in-depth interviews with the principal and teachers, daily school activity observations, and analysis of relevant documents. By applying both types of triangulations, the data's validity can be ensured, making the results more credible and accountable. This approach aligns with qualitative research principles emphasizing the importance of data validity and reliability for accurate and meaningful findings.

Data analysis in qualitative research is a crucial stage to understand the meaning behind collected data, such as interviews, field notes, and documents. According to Creswell (2016), this analysis involves a systematic process, including data organization, coding, identifying themes, and interpreting findings. The process is iterative, where the researcher revisits the data to deepen the analysis. This approach is designed to explore participants' perspectives and understand emerging patterns, while linking findings to relevant theories or literature.

The analysis process begins with managing and preparing data through transcription and information organization. Next, the researcher reads the data as a whole to gain an overview and notes initial ideas. The data is then coded by identifying emerging categories or themes. Afterward, the main themes are identified from the coding results, reflecting patterns in the data. The analysis results are interpreted to explain the studied phenomena and relate them to theory or previous findings. Finally, the analysis results are presented in descriptive narratives, diagrams, or tables. Qualitative research aims to discover new theories and provide valuable insights into complex issues, with conclusions that address the research focus.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Teacher Competence at Tembilahan 1 and Tembilahan 2 Vocational High School, Indragiri Hilir Regency

The teacher competence at Tembilahan 1 and Tembilahan 2 Vocational High School aligns with national education standards, focusing on four key dimensions: pedagogical, professional, personality, and social competence.

- **Pedagogical competence** involves managing learning and understanding students. At Tembilahan 1, teachers design project-based learning relevant to students' lives, as highlighted by Euis Karwati (2018), who emphasizes the importance of effective lesson planning. Meanwhile, at Tembilahan 2, teachers apply a flipped classroom model, where students learn at home and engage in classroom discussions.
- **Professional competence** is about mastery of the subject matter and its application. Teachers at Tembilahan 1 attend educational technology training to update their teaching methods, while Tembilahan 2 teachers use online platforms like Google Classroom for real-time feedback and assignments. Oemar Hamalik (2019) stresses that professional competence is essential for educators.
- **Personality competence** includes emotional stability and the ability to serve as role models. At Tembilahan 1, teachers handle troubled students with a personal approach, while at Tembilahan 2, teachers mediate conflicts calmly, demonstrating wisdom and authority (Euis Karwati, 2018).
- **Social competence** refers to effective communication skills. At Tembilahan 1, teachers actively involve parents in discussions about students' learning progress, while at Tembilahan 2, teachers organize group discussions to foster respect among students from diverse backgrounds.

These four competencies complement each other, creating a quality learning environment that supports students' holistic development.

The leadership of the principals at Tembilahan 1 and Tembilahan 2 Vocational High School

The leadership of the principals at Tembilahan 1 and Tembilahan 2 Vocational High School reflects strategic approaches tailored to the unique needs of each school. At Tembilahan 1, the principal implements an instructional and visionary leadership model, focusing on developing practice-based learning relevant to the workforce. The principal oversees the implementation of a competency-based curriculum and collaborates with industries for internship programs, equipping students with practical skills. In contrast, the principal at Tembilahan 2 adopts a democratic and servant leadership model, emphasizing collaboration, service, and inclusivity. The principal involves all school elements in decision-making, supports the welfare of students and teachers, and fosters a harmonious school environment by providing financial subsidies for underprivileged students and organizing best practices sessions for teachers.

Both principals motivate and guide teachers with effective strategies, such as articulating a clear vision, offering professional support, and creating a conducive working environment. The instructional and visionary leadership at Tembilahan 1 strengthens partnerships with industries, ensuring that students are ready for the workforce. Meanwhile, the servant leadership at Tembilahan 2 builds a supportive academic and character development environment. These leadership approaches positively impact not only the teachers and students but also the school's reputation. Tembilahan 1 is recognized for preparing students for the workforce, while Tembilahan 2 is known for fostering an inclusive learning environment, gaining the trust of the community.

Supporting and Hindering Factors of School Leadership at Tembilahan 1 and Tembilahan 2 Vocational High School

The leadership at Tembilahan 1 and Tembilahan 2 Vocational High School is influenced by various supporting and hindering factors. At Tembilahan 1, supportive factors include modern facilities, strategic partnerships with industries, and competent teachers who participate in educational technology training, enabling the principal to develop technology-based learning. Tembilahan 2, on the other hand, benefits from community support, teacher unity, and the integration of local wisdom, which strengthens the school's connection to the community and supports character development. However, both schools face challenges. Tembilahan 1 struggles with high administrative burdens, competition among schools, resistance to technological changes from teachers, and a lack of connection with the local community, hindering the implementation of innovative programs. Tembilahan 2 faces challenges such as limited facilities, insufficient qualified teachers, low financial support, and

students' lack of motivation, restricting the school's ability to implement technology-based programs effectively.

Despite these challenges, both principals use strategies to leverage supporting factors and address obstacles. Effective leadership requires creativity, collaboration, and the use of local potential to support educational goals. Tembilahan 1 focuses on technology-based innovation, while Tembilahan 2 emphasizes community collaboration, reflecting adaptive leadership tailored to each school's context and conditions. The study acknowledges several limitations, including the study's focus on two schools and its reliance on certain theoretical perspectives. The research's limited timeframe may also affect the findings, suggesting the need for further research to explore dynamic changes over time.

Role of School Leadership in Improving Education Quality
The leadership at Tembilahan 1 and Tembilahan 2 Vocational High School reflects two complementary approaches aimed at improving education quality. At Tembilahan 1, the principal adopts an instructional and visionary leadership model, focusing on practical-based learning linked to the industrial world. This aligns with findings by Leithwood and Riehl (2003), emphasizing that effective instructional leadership enhances teaching quality. The principal also builds strategic partnerships with industries, offering students internship opportunities, in line with Bush's (2011) concept of visionary leadership. In contrast, the principal at Tembilahan 2 implements a democratic and servant leadership model, emphasizing collaboration among school elements and community welfare. This approach aligns with Day's (2012) view that servant leadership creates an inclusive environment. By involving teachers, students, and parents in decision-making, the principal at Tembilahan 2 fosters a harmonious learning atmosphere, enhancing shared responsibility and motivation, consistent with Robinson and Timperley's (2007) theory on the impact of democratic leadership on teacher motivation.

Both principals utilize strategies to motivate teachers, such as professional support and adequate facilities, which strengthens teacher performance, as supported by Leithwood and Riehl (2003). Overall, the principals show that leadership aligned with the school context and needs can significantly improve education quality and student character development. However, the study is limited by its focus on two schools and a small sample size, which may impact the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the study's qualitative nature may introduce researcher subjectivity, and external factors like changes in education policies may influence leadership and teaching practices in schools.

CONCLUSION

The leadership of the principals at Tembilahan 1 and Tembilahan 2 Vocational High School plays a significant role in enhancing teacher competence.

At SMKN 1, the instructional and visionary leadership style supports development through technology training, industry partnerships, and curriculum supervision. At SMKN 2, the democratic and servant leadership approach fosters collaboration and teacher well-being. Supporting factors such as modern facilities at SMKN 1 and local community support at SMKN 2 accelerate competence improvement, despite challenges in administration and resource limitations. Adaptive leadership at both schools has successfully improved teacher competence and overall educational quality.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- a. The principal of SMKN 1 is advised to delegate administrative tasks and strengthen ties with the local community through social activities. At SMKN 2, collaboration with local government and other educational institutions should be enhanced to improve facilities.
- b. Developing partnerships with industries and non-governmental organizations can strengthen external support.
- c. Teacher competence development should be encouraged through regular training and mentoring programs among teachers.
- d. Optimizing parental and community participation can be achieved by building active communication forums and involving the community in extracurricular programs.
- e. To increase student motivation, both schools can organize reward programs and mentoring between alumni and students. This approach aligns with educational leadership theories emphasizing collaboration and continuous development.

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