

## IMPROVING TEACHER PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE: THE PRINCIPAL'S LEADERSHIP ROLE AT SDN KOTA BARU IV

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### *Abstract*

*This research aims to determine the leadership role of school principals in improving teachers' professional competence at SDN Kota Baru IV. Using a qualitative case study approach, this study involved key stakeholders, including the principal and teachers from various grade levels. The subjects used in this research were the Principal and Class VI A Teachers, Class II B Teachers, Class C- D Teachers, Class III B Teachers, Class VI C Teachers, Class VI B Teachers. Data collection techniques were carried out by observation, interviews, and accompanied by documentation. The methods used in data analysis were data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The triangulations used were source triangulation and method triangulation. Results reveal that the principal effectively embodies multiple leadership roles educator, manager, administrator, leader, and motivator to foster teacher competence. For instance, as an educator, the principal cultivates a positive learning culture and encourages professional development through workshops and seminars. As a manager, the principal ensures systematic planning and optimal utilization of resources. Furthermore, as a motivator, the principal inspires teachers to embrace innovation and continuous improvement. This research underscores the pivotal influence of leadership in achieving educational excellence, emphasizing the integration of strategic management and professional development to overcome challenges and enhance teacher performance.*

**Keywords:** Role, Principal, Professional competence, Leadership

### INTRODUCTION

Education as a means of developing human resources is an indispensable need and cannot be separated from human life in order to educate the nation's life and qualified humans in various fields. Based on Law Number 20 of 2003 article 1 paragraph 1 concerning the National Education System (SISDIKNAS), "Education is a conscious and planned effort to create a learning atmosphere and learning process so that students actively develop their potential to have religious spiritual strength, self-control, personality, intelligence, noble character, and skills needed by themselves, society, nation and state".

Based on Government Regulation Number 4 in 2022, there are 8 National Education Standards, namely content, process, assessment, graduate competencies, education personnel, facilities and infrastructure, management, and financing. These eight components must be improved in a planned and periodic manner so that fundamental changes can occur. Therefore, to achieve these eight components of national education, the quality of education is determined in the learning process at educational institutions such as schools. Then, the principal and teachers are the main actors who have a very large influence on the learning process of students in the school environment.

Although teachers have a great moral responsibility for the success of their students, success is also influenced by other factors, such as curriculum, facilities and infrastructure,

community support, and school committees. In an effort to improve the quality of education, the competence of the teacher plays an important role so that the learning process can run effectively and efficiently. The competence of a teacher is closely related to professionalism, which means that a professional teacher is a competent teacher.

Principals must also always strive to foster and develop good working relationships between schools and communities to achieve effective and efficient schools. If there is a harmonious relationship, it will form a mutual understanding among schools, parents, communities and related institutions. The mutual assistance between schools and communities will arise because they know the benefits and importance of their respective roles. It also establishes a close relationship among schools and various levels of society because they feel the responsibility for the success of education in schools. Government Regulation (PP) No 19 in 2017 in article 54 states that the main task of the school principal is to carry out managerial duties, entrepreneurial development, and supervise teachers and education personnel. Managerial competence itself is an ability that must be owned by a principal in applying school administration activities which include planning, organizing, implementing and evaluating abilities.

The current problem regarding teacher competence is that the job of a teacher is increasingly difficult and complex. In the past, the job of being a teacher could be done by anyone as long as they are able to understand the contents of the textbook, explain the contents of the textbook to students, ask students to take notes according to the teacher's explanation, and give additional assignments for students to do at home (Barokah, 2022). Today, it is not adequate only to have academic qualifications or hold a bachelor degree in education, master certain disciplines or various disciplines, and transfer their knowledge to students. Teacher is required to have the ability or competence and educator certificate in accordance with the requirements for each type and level of education. These requirements require a teacher to carry out their duties and work as a teacher professionally and responsibly.

Another problem found during the observation is that there are still teachers who did not do their profession professionally. There are teachers who, despite being certified and receiving certification benefits, have not really prepared and carried out their duties as teachers professionally. Judging from teaching and learning activity, there are still teachers who are unprepared in making good lesson plan. On the other hand, there are teachers who lack mastery of technology due to age factors, for example do not master making power points slides so that learning is monotonous that students become bored and lazy. Next, some of them also unable to choose suitable methods and use monotonous learning models that finally cause them to fail in delivering the learning material attractively.

The impact that occurs if the teacher does not have professional skills is that it will have a big impact on the learning process, especially on students. Another consequence is that the teachers who lack professional competence will give low quality of learning that, so that in the long term the quality of education will also decrease. Not only the teacher's performance, but the good role of the principal in school management is also important to the quality of education or meet the National Education Standards. One of the factors that determine good teaching and teacher quality is principal leadership. One of the tasks of the principal is to improve teacher performance that will also improve the quality of graduates. The way to improve teacher performance can be done in many ways, such as through workshops or training, so that it will also improve the quality of teachers at work. The improvement program is expected to bring positive changes in the system and learning methods, in addition to the improvement of teacher abilities for themselves and the surrounding.

Facing these problems, the solution offered is the strategy carried out by the principal in improving teacher competence, namely by fostering discipline, being a role model for

teachers and students, holding seminars and training, collaborating with other educational institutions, bringing in experts, providing opportunities for teachers to supervise each other, providing and optimizing educational facilities and equipment, and including teachers in the program of *Guru Penggerak*. Other than that, the principal also providing motivation to teachers, create harmonious cooperation, involve teachers in every academic activity, try to fulfill the wants and needs of teachers in carrying out their duties, give awards to teachers to improve performance, provide a sense of security in schools, and applying family principles based on worship intentions.

Based on previous research, it is showed that the principal as a leader in managing educational institutions certainly has an extremely important role because he is the organizer, implementer, manager of education personnel, supervisor, evaluator of education and teaching programs at the institution he leads. Muspawi (2020) said in his research that improving the professional competence of teachers can be done by attending seminars or workshops of teacher competence improvement, also taking part in the Teacher Working Group (KKG), and mastering technology. It was also said by Jaelani Yusuf in his research that there are still teachers who are unable to use IT, so that it hinders the completion of school tasks. (Jaelani Yusuf, 2019; Latifah, 2018; Muspawi, Setiyadi, & Gunawan, 2020).

The novelty is what distinguishes this research and the previous research. The novelty of this study is the strategy used by the principal in improving teacher professionalism to improve the quality of education. Based on the above background, the researcher chose a research location at SDN Kota Baru IV. By raising the title of "The Role of Principal Leadership in Improving Teacher Professional Competence at SDN Kota Baru IV", it is expected that schools are able to improve the competence of human resources, especially teachers. Based on preliminary observations, this school is suitable for research because it is in accordance with the conditions of the research problem, where the obstacle found in this school is the cooperation between the principal and teachers in the implementing of Merdeka curriculum as *Sekolah Penggerak*.

Leadership in an organization is very important because the leader will motivate and guide the group to achieve the set goals. Leaders are always at the front to make sacrifices for the school, which is not an easy task to be done. Leaders must realize how each subordinate behaves differently. Subordinates are influenced in such a way that they can effectively and efficiently contribute and participate. In other words, the ability of a leader determines whether organizational goals are successfully achieved or not. Prawiroharjo said that a person can be entitled as a leader if he succeeds in influencing his subordinates. (Harahap, 2016). Behavioral Theory stated that leadership is not only determined by the traits or qualities that a leader must have, but focuses on how the actual leader behaves in influencing others, and this is influenced by their respective leadership styles (Supriono & A'yun, 2020). This theory considers that the success of a leader is determined by his behavior in carrying out leadership functions, and these behaviors can be learned and trained.

The school principal is a leadership position that cannot be filled by random people or people who are just chosen, but it is based on careful consideration. The principal is a source of motivation for teachers, staff and students. Principals have competency standards to develop strategic planning, manage education personnel, manage students, manage facilities, manage information systems, manage education regulations or regulations, manage education quality, manage institutions, manage teamwork, and make decisions. (Sholihin et.,al 2023). Therefore, principals must always increase the enthusiasm and confidence of teachers, staff and students, so that they enthusiastically accept and understand school goals, and also work responsibly to achieve school goals.

Based on Law No. 13/2003 concerning manpower, article 1 (10), competence is defined as “the work ability of each individual which includes aspects of knowledge, skills and work attitudes in accordance with established standards”. Meanwhile, according to the Ministry of Education, competence is knowledge, skills, and basic values that are reflected in habits of thought and action. Thus, it can be concluded that competence is a whole, and must be possessed by everyone. It reflects the knowledge, skills, and attitudes which are related to a particular profession, and as a form of action or performance to carry out a particular profession. Meanwhile, according to Law No. 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers, “Competence is a set of knowledge, skills, and behaviors that must be owned, lived and mastered by teachers and lecturers in carrying out their professional duties”.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

This research employed a qualitative approach in which the research only explains what is found or occurred in a particular field or situation. The data obtained were classified after the data was complete, and then conclusions were made. This research aims to gain an understanding of the phenomena experienced by the object of research, by describing in the form of words and by utilizing various natural methods (Moleong, 2012). This research emphasized more on the description of the phenomenon or the actual situation related to the Principal's Leadership Role in Improving Teacher Professional Competence at SDN Kota Baru IV.

The method used in this qualitative research was a case study, in which this method was used to examine the problem and find in-depth information about the Principal's Leadership Role in Improving Teacher Professional Competence at SDN Kota Baru IV. (Creswell, 2016; Sugiono, 2018). Case Study research method itself is a process of investigation or examination in detail or in depth on a case. This research is designed to answer the research question regarding “The Leadership Role of Principals in Improving Teacher's Professional Competence at SDN Kota Baru IV”..

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Based on the results of observations, interviews, and documentation, the principal's leadership role in improving teacher professional competence at SDN Kota Baru IV is described in the following. The achievement of educational goals is highly dependent on the wisdom of a leader, namely the principal, where the principal is one of the leaders in an educational institution. The principal is a professional official and is responsible for the school organization. Principals are also responsible for developing school plans, managing learning programs, managing school personnel and organizing all organizational resources, and working with teachers in educating students to achieve educational goals. A successful principal understands the existence of the school as a complex organization, and is able to carry out the role of the principal as someone who is given the responsibility to lead (Wahjosumidjo, 2021) . Principals also have an important role in improving teacher performance, which is an inseparable from the responsibility of the principal as a leader of an educational institution (Hermawan, 2017). As a leader it is necessary to have leadership skills to the subordinates, that are the teachers. The principal also must give attention to the teachers, since it is important for the teachers must have continuous professional competence for the improvement of the learning quality (Yohamintin et al., 2021).

Leadership is a way to direct and influence subordinates to achieve certain goals. As has been said, the success of a school in improving the quality of learning is a joint task between teachers and principals. In giving direction, a leader must provide clear direction and guidance

to make it easier for subordinates to carry out their duties and achieve the goals set. As said by (Fred C. Lunenburg, 2010), principals' instructional leadership is critical to the success of school improvement programs and overall school performance. Robert L. Katz said that the skills of effective administrators have three skills, namely technical skills, human relation skills, and conceptual skills (Danim, 2015). Based on the findings at SDN Kota Baru IV, the principal has implemented the role of a leader, as for the following visualization. The following figure shows the role of a leader with five roles, namely: educator, manager, administrator, leader, and motivator.



Figure 1: The Principal's Leadership Role

The principal as an educator at SDN Kota Baru IV has a very large role. Although the principal does not teach directly in the classroom like a teacher, the principal is responsible for leading and managing the educational process at school as well as playing a significant role in helping students' academic success and development. It can be seen from two facts portrayed in this study. First, the principal at SDN Kota Baru IV plays a role in creating and maintaining a positive learning culture at school, such as introducing the values of perseverance, responsibility, collaboration, and providing examples of the behavior and attitudes expected of all school members, as well as guiding students to participate in extracurricular activities and competitions both within the school and outside the school. This is relevant to what was said by (Hamirul, 2019). Second, the principal at SDN Kota Baru IV plays an important role in building relationships with parents, communities and other external parties by communicating openly with all stakeholders to ensure strong support for school education. The principal is required to always try to foster and improve good and harmonious working relationships. Through this harmonious relationship, it is expected that the objectives of school relations with the community can be achieved, namely the implementation of the education process in schools productively, effectively and efficiently so as to produce productive and high-quality school graduates. This is also stated by (Maduratna, 2013), that a school principal must be able to build good communication. In line with that, (Mulyasa, 2015) stated that the role of educator is needed for the progress of school development.



Secondly, the principal functions as manager, which has an important role in managing school management. Similarly, Sabirin said that this role does many things, such as planning, supervising making decisions, evaluating activities and managing various operational aspects with the aim of creating a conducive and controlled learning environment (Muflihah & Haqiqi, 2019). It can be seen from the principals at SDN Kota Baru IV who plan and organize all school programs and activities, including lesson schedules, extracurricular activities and other special events, and ensure that all activities can run according to plan and are well coordinated. Similarly, what was conveyed by (Azharuddin, 2020) states that the principal as a manager is responsible for preparing school plans, developing the organization according to needs. Then, the principal of SDN Kota Baru IV is responsible for managing school resources or facilities and infrastructure properly, for example, such as buildings, libraries. Likewise what is said by (Mulyasa, 2015) that the role of a principal as a *manager* is needed to create a better learning environment for all parties involved.

The Principal as an administrator has played an important role in managing various administrative and organizational aspects of the school. As an administrator, the principal has the responsibility to ensure that all school activities and operations run well such as developing each school facility and also in accordance with applicable regulations. (Muflihah & Haqiqi, 2019). It can be seen from the principal of SDN Kota Baru IV that it plays a role as general administrative management, namely all parts of the school administration are supervised by the principal including maintaining archives, documents, correspondence and other administrative procedures. The principal is also responsible for ensuring that all school documents and records are stored properly, neatly and are easy to access. It is similar to the statement of (Sari, 2015). The principal of SDN Kota Baru IV also plays a role as infrastructure management, which is responsible for maintaining school infrastructure and ensuring that school facilities such as the state of buildings, classrooms, sports halls, libraries are well maintained and safe to use. This is also relevant to what was said by (Hamizah, 2021). As also said by (Mulyasa, 2015) that the role of administrators is needed to improve the quality of schools, including for the advancement of human resources (HR) (Widiansyah, 2018; Yohamintin, Permana, Wulansari, Mulyani, & Sabban, 2020)

Next, the principal is a leader that has fulfilled his role well. He must have a broad understanding of what leadership in education is. The principal is the highest leader in an educational institution and is responsible for all matters related to the sustainability of the school and the achievement of school goals (Baihaqi, 2020). The principal of SDN Kota Baru IV acts as a leader who aims to influence the people around him to work together to achieve learning goals. The same thing that was said by (Hamirul, 2019), that the principal as a leader must have the ability to influence or mobilize all the resources in the school. The principal of SDN Kota Baru IV also acts as a source of inspiration and motivation for teachers, staff, as well as providing clear direction and building the enthusiasm of his subordinates to achieve common goals. The same thing that was said by (Kurniawan, 2020). Then, the principal at SDN Kota Baru IV plays a role in formulating the vision and mission. He also leads the process of developing the vision and mission together with staff and involving various other stakeholders. This is also relevant to (Kompri, 2015) statement that the role of the principal as a leader is to be able to direct his subordinates in achieving the vision and mission that has been set. In this role, the principal is responsible for the implementation of all educational processes at school carried out by all school members and is required to always be able to encourage creativity and increase teacher competence. As well as what is said (Wahjosumidjo, 2021), the principal as a leader is responsible to move, direct, guide, protect, foster, set a good example, provide encouragement and provide assistance if you feel difficulties.

Last, principal as a motivator. This also needs to be considered and is needed because as a principal must be able to create a comfortable and relaxed work environment so as to make the work atmosphere comfortable and calm, especially for teaching and education personnel, and can also encourage students to be more creative and innovative (Imron, 2023). Someone makes an effort because of motivation; with good motivation it will produce good results. The evidence can be seen from the principal of SDN Kota Baru IV who always motivates each teacher not to give up if they experience failures related to the teaching and learning process. It is the same as what was conveyed (Emron, 2023). The principal of SDN Kota Baru IV also motivates teachers to always improve their knowledge and always want to learn related to the development of technology. The principal at this elementary school has played the role of motivator well, as well as what was conveyed by (Uno, 2013). Motivation can arise because of a strong desire to work well or the ideals he wants to achieve which determines the performance of a teacher is the motivation of teacher performance but each teacher has different work motivation.

### **CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS**

From the results of research conducted by researchers at SDN Kota Baru IV with the focus on the principal leadership role in improving teacher professional competence at SDN Kota Baru IV through observation, interviews and documentation, it can be concluded that the role of the principal in improving the professional competence of teachers at SDN Kota Baru IV has been running quite well, namely: 1) The principal acts as an educator to guide teachers in terms of implementing teaching programs such as preparing lesson plans, syllabi, annual programs, work programs, evaluating learning outcomes; 2) The principal acts as a manager to plan and organize all school programs and activities; 3) The principal acts as an administrator to manage the administration of learning activities, infrastructure management; 4) The principal acts as a leader able to make good decisions, able to influence the people around him to work together for the achievement of learning goals; and 5) The principal acts as a motivator able to provide motivation to always improve his knowledge.

Based on the conclusions, the authors can provide suggestions as input that might improve the world of education, especially in improving the professional competence of teachers as follows: 1) It is expected that principals and teachers can continue to establish good communication by supporting each other; 2) Principal can facilitate teachers in terms of developing themselves, especially in terms of technology, such as providing special training to teachers on the use of technology related to education so that teachers can adapt themselves to the situation at school and keep up with the times; and 3) principals must continue to evaluate any obstacles to improving teachers' professional competence, including regulation, attitudes, and qualifications.

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