Factors Affecting The Success of High School Principals of West Lombok Regency in Implementing Their Leadership Functions Based on The Ministerial National Education Regulation No. 13 of 2007

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ABSTRACT

With the coming of educational reform in Indonesia, school principals are required to have adequate competencies to meet the national standards. The setting of this standard is intended to reduce the achievement gap among principals and ensure that all schools run the government policies. Minister of National Education (MONE) Regulation Number No. 13 of 2007 has mandated that every principal's performance be evaluated on a regular basis. However, this evaluation has not revealed much the real condition in the field. For this reason, the current research attempts to evaluate success factors made by principals in performing 5 dimensions of leadership. The research was conducted in West Lombok Regency and employed a qualitative research design. Results of the study show that factors that determined principals' success in sustaining their leaderships, among other things, were their abilities to network, collaborate, develop partnerships, and meet teachers' welfares and students' achievements.

Keywords: MONE, Principal Leadership, success factors

Introduction

Over the past decade education reform in Indonesia has been rapidly devolving from the central to regional governments. Because of the demands of reform, the role of the principal is also inevitably changing. As a school manager, the principal is required to be more pro-active in improving and ensuring that the teaching and learning activities in his school run in accordance with national standards. As a leader, the principal is thus required to manage, use and mobilize the available resources more effectively and efficiently. The Ministerial Decree of Education and Culture No. 13 of 2007 had clearly stipulated that principals have five dimensions of basic competencies to manage schools, i.e. (1) managerial, (2) entrepreneurial, (3) supervisory, (4) personal and (5) social. By mastering these five competencies, it is expected that principals will mobilize school resources, develop professionalism, improve school performance and build a favorable and healthy school culture.

The Ministerial Decree of Education and Culture No. 28 Year 2010 has mandated that every principal's work be evaluated on a regular basis. However, up to the present time,

little is known about this performance evaluation because the existing evaluation tends to be used only for administrative purposes and the result does not reflect the principal's actual performance. Thus, how principals mobilize their leadership capacity to manage schools is still unidentified.

This research explores success factors particularly in relation to the application of five dimensions of leadership competence practiced by principals of junior and senior schools in West Lombok Regency; and to uncover teachers' and students' perceptions regarding the leadership style exercised by their principals. Results of this study were expected to provide an in-depth understanding of (a) leadership problems faced by principals and (b) factors that influence their success in managing schools. Data indicate that there are still many principals who have not performed their duties in accordance with their roles and functions as educational leaders. This phenomenon occurs here and there because there are no clear criteria as to whether a person is worthy or not for appointment to the role of principal. In response to the above condition, the government of Indonesia (GOI) has currently launched a Bureaucracy Reform Movement in education by issuing the State Minister of Administrative and Bureaucracy Reform No. 16 of 2009 to change the bureaucratic school administration and management into a more dynamic and flexible one.

As such, principals — as school managers and leaders — are encouraged to promote a healthy, standardized and transparent organizational culture. In his book "*School that learns*" Senge (2000) claims that in the future schools can progress and develop sustainably not through the imposition of rules or coercive orders, but through the implementation of a shared learning system.

A number of researchers (such as Bredeson, 2000, Louis & Robinson, 2012, Klar et.al, 2016), reported that principals' high achievements were closely related to their ability to build public accountability and shared commitment with all stakeholders through democratic, honest and transparent ways. If the principal focuses only on building up his/herown popularity and neglecting shared commitment, then a hostile and defensive relationship will tend to appear at school (Seashore &Mintrop, 2012). Similarly, Knapp & Feldman (2012) stated that principals with external accountability and high internal integrity succeeded in creating a positive school culture.

In the study of transformational leadership, MacNeil et al (2009) found that schools with high performance were characterized by a healthy institutional climate. He found that a healthy school culture could bring about a positive impact on interpersonal relationships among teachers, principals and school staff. Components identified as influencing a healthy school climate include (a) the school principal's concerns for staff welfare, (b) mutual respect, and (c) trust building among school stakeholders.

A number of other researchers (such as Bjork, 2003, 2004; Rhodes et al., 2009) found that principals were individuals who had a direct influence on the building of a school culture. They play a very important role in developing and transforming learning organization. However, Hargreaves (2005), cautioned that in exercising leadership capacity, principals may be confronted with teachers' resistance to change. A number of factors may prevent teachers from accepting new values and practices including age, experiences, length of services, and stage of career. Therefore, it can be inferred that the rate of change made by principals is largely dependent on their

abilities to influence teachers to change their professional practices.

From the above literature review, it can be concluded that principals' accountability and mutual commitment can potentially increase their capacities and capabilities to realise the school vision and mission.

Methodology

The present data were obtained from 5 sub-districts in West Lombok Regency, i.e. (1) Narmada, (2) Kuripan, (3) Gunung Sari, (4) Gerung and (5) Lembar.. From each, 2 schools, both junior and senior high schools, were chosen to represent the schools with the best leadership system. The criteria for the selection were based on schools' high performance and the attainment of national education standards.

To better understand the complexity of the school dynamics experienced by principals in managing and leading schools, qualitative methods with case study approaches were employed. According to Yin (1984), the case study approach is an empirical research approach that attempts to reveal the phenomenon that exists in a real-life context using various data sources. Thus, the results of this study can explain more deeply the real situation facing the principals in implementing leadership styles as mandated by the Ministerial Decree of Education and Culture No. 13 of 2007.

The data gathered for the study were based 5 predetermined categories of competencies derived from the insights underpinning the study, i.e. (1) managerial, (2) entrepreneurial, (3) supervisory, (4) personal and (5) social. Methods of data collection include interviews with school principals, teachers and students. Audio recordings were made during interviews to ease data transcriptions. In each

school data was collected from 1 principal, 4 teachers and 4 students. These data were then analyzed using qualitative analysis procedures which included data reduction process, data presentation, and conclusion drawing and verification.

Subsequently, the data were grouped and sorted according to predetermined categories or themes. The term 'predetermined categories' in this study is referred to as a typological coding system that classifies the data to be collected based on the insights from the relevant theories used for the study (Kelley, 1999; Hatch, 2002). To improve the trustworthiness and quality of data, this study used data triangulation to obtain or strengthen the degree of data reliability (Miles and Huberman, 2005).

Result and Discussion

Issues pertaining to the application of five dimensions of Leadership Competence practiced by principals of Junior High and Senior High Schools in West Lombok Regency

1. Managerial Competence. Results of this study reveal that all principals who participated in the study demonstrated a deep understanding of their duties and responsibilities as principals. Each school worked with parents collaboratively in planning school development. However, one principal acknowledged that he was not able to maximize the collaboration because his school was located in an area affected by poverty. "Most parents here worked as unskilled labor in the harbor", said the high school principal from Lembar. "When invited to a Parent-School meeting, only 3 or 4 parents showed up". With little or no community participation, this principal found it hard to involve parents in the school planning program.

A number of principals also showedtheir capacity to create a positive school culture for teachers and students. For example, some principals sent all senior teachers to attend IT training courses in order to utilise the components (such as e-learning, e-module, and e-curriculum) of the new computerized management system. The principals of junior high schoolsin the Kuripan and Lingsar sub-districts introduced a disciplined movement to students not to drive motorcycles and bring mobile phones to schools. Their policies were to prevent students from road accidents and abuse of mobile phone in schools.

The study revealed that principals, of both junior and senior high schools, had a broad vision in managing school resources. Despite having different personalities and leadership styles, all principals interviewed mentioned a number of similar key concepts pertaining to quality school management, i.e. honesty, openness, flexibility, commitment, teachers and students' welfare, tolerance and respect for others. In managing school facilities and infrastructure, all principals believed that responsibility should be shared equally with the school community. With this shared responsibility, every member of the school community felt obliged to maintain the school facilities together. This finding supports previous studies reported by Louis & Robinson (2012) and Klar et.al (2016).

2. Entrepreneurial Competence. From interviews with principals, it was found out that in general all involved parents' contribution to school financing. "In order to avoid gossips, we invite parents and members of community to carefully discuss the amount of tuition fees they can contribute to school", said the principal from Gunung Sari. To get extra funding, a number of school principals had initiatives to collaborate with alumni for fund raising. The result of fund raising was used to finance extra-curricular activities, such as international dance competition, Science Olympiad, scouting, and the like.

Unlike high school principals, the junior high school principals explained that their schools were no longer allowed to charge student tuition fees. As a result of strict anti-corruption measuresschools now have little opportunity to charge fees for any provided service or activity. Therefore schools sought funding for students' extracurricular activities from teacher union stores and/or school operational support funds (known as Dana BOS). This situation surely affects schools' abilities to finance some of the best programs.

3. Supervisory Competence. On average principals gave similar responses to the questions about their supervisory roles. As direct supervisors, the principals implemented a number of initiatives to improve teachers' professionalism. In addition, they carried out their duties using appropriate procedures and reliable instruments as advocated by the government. "Through classroom visits or principal-teacher conferences, I could help teachers find solutions to their problems" said the principal of a high school in Gerung.

Some of the principals explained that they used different techniques and approaches to supervision. The principal of a high school in Gerung, for example, provided tiered supervision by delegating the job of supervising junior teachers to his team of senior teachers. The principal followed up the findings reported by the team of senior teachers through a series of meetings and based on these meetings, visited the classes reported by the team. "If I find a problem with the teacher's teaching performance, I do not directly give feedback to him/her but rather encourage them to do self-appraisal and self-reflection" said the principal from Gerung. This kind of dialogue made teachers feel safe and secure to talk about their instructional problems.

4. Personal Competence. Although responses differed, the principals generally demonstrated similarly high integrity in managing the diversity of their staff. A number of principals, both junior and senior high schools, from Gerung, Gunung Sari, Narmada and Kuripan sub-districts acknowledged that although the composition of teachers in their schools was very heterogeneous — both on the basis of ethnicity and belief — they treated them justly and professionally. These principals maintained fairness and openness in giving job assignments to their staff. All participants of this study admitted that they prioritized their course of action based on "professionalism", not "favoritism".

Despite such positive responses, some principals asserted that they had difficulties dealing with a small number of senior teachers who showed resistance to their leadership styles. "I have involved all teachers and staff collaboratively in managing curricular and non-curricular activities in school" said Junior High School principal from Lembar, "but some of them still show their passive resistance to the school policy" This finding is consistent with previous research conducted by Hargraeves (2005), which says seniority, experience and stages of career indeed influence teachers' attitudes and beliefs in responding to school policies.

5. Social Competence. A number of principals have developed positive social competencies through various channels. The principal of a high school in Narmada, for example, had extended collaborative events with parents in the surrounding areas to attract community participation. Similarly, the principal of a junior high school in Gunung Sari raised funds through school art exhibitions to get financial support for orphan children who studied in his school. , Similarly, the principal of a junior high school in Kuripan asked

graduating students to donate their uniforms so that he could distribute those clothes to needy students. In addition, some principals admit that they started to introduce home visits and school SMS to parents to increase parents' participation. The collaborative actions exercised by these principals were in line with findings from studies conducted by Seashore &Mintrop (2012) and Knapp & Feldman (2012).

Teachers' and Students' Perceptions of Leadership Style Exercised by Their Principals

Findings from interviews with teachers show that the majority of participants perceived positively their principals' efforts to involve them in school management. Both teachers of junior and high schools indicated principals had appropriate managerial capacity to lead their schools. They considered shared responsibility distributed by their principals as a crucial component of school culture that empowered them to make new and constructive changes.

Interviews with students yielded similar responses In general, they commented that there were three things they liked about their schools, (1) principals acted as role models; (2) teachers developed positive learning climates;and (3) school programs were 'awesome'. A number of students from a high school in Gerung cited environmental conservation, international dance competition, and journalism, as examples of these great programs

A number of high school teachers considered their principals were industrious in seeking school funding through numerous initiatives such as handicraft exhibitions, alumni meetings, bazaars, in addition to levying school fees (not an option for junior high schools).Schools had teacher union stores that sold both teachers and students' daily needs. Most of the teachers of the junior high schools

of five sub-districts admitted that their principals did not maximize their entrepreneurial competence due to their fear of violating anti-corruption laws. To pay for expenses for students' extra-curricular activities, therefore, school principals sought extra funding only from teacher union stores and/or using school operational support funds (known as Dana BOS) from the government.

All teachers articulated their perceptions about their principals' supervisory roles differently. Some teachers stated that their principles carried out their duties professionally. They used appropriate ways of supervising their colleagues. Some other teachers, however, commented that their principals rarely supervised teachers through classroom visits. "Asour principal entrusts his job to our senior teachers, they are the ones who know the real problems in the classroom", said one teacher from a junior high school in Gerung. A number of teachers added that the present supervision models suggested by the government needed reviewing. "With only two visits per semester, how can a principal guarantee the effectiveness of his supervision?" asked one of the participants.

A number of junior and high school students perceived that their principals had done their jobs properly. They controlled students' attendance and went around the schools every morning to ensure that all teachers were present in classrooms.

Almost all participants from all schools commented positively about their principals. They mentioned a number of personal qualities possessed by their principals, i.e. charismatic, fair, open, trustworthy, impartial, just and professional. Teachers expressed that their principals were able to create working atmospheres that was acceptable for all. A number of students interviewed perceived similarly, seeing theirprincipal as charismatic figures in their schools. They described their

principals as having warm, caring, considerate and friendly qualities. In contrast, some senior high school teachers considered their current principals were not exemplary figures. "He lives far away from our school and always arrives late. How can he be a good role model if he always comes late?" said one of the teachers.

All teachers interviewed testified that their principals were charismatic figures who supported them in developing networks with people outside the school. These teachers acknowledged that their principal employed his social competence admirably. In the same vein, some students perceived that their schools received good recognition from the community because of their principal. "Our principal makes us work collaboratively with members of the community" said one student. Both teachers and students felt that their principals made them more sensitive to contributing to their social milieu.

Conclusion

The present study shows that thesuccess factors sustaining principals' leadership were identified in their abilities to network, collaborate, develop partnerships, and meet teachers' welfares and students' achievements. The discrepancy of principals' success in managing schools signifies that individual principals had unique capabilities to transform the five conceptual leadership competencies into their day-to-day practices.

Acknowledgement

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