
The Principal's Leadership Role in Creating a Student Literacy Culture

Kukuh Arif Prabowo^{1*}, Ine Kusuma Aryani²

Universitas Muhammadiyah Purwokerto, Purwokerto, Central Java, Indonesia^{1,2}

Email: kukuharifprabowo@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Literacy is essential for students to enhance knowledge, comprehend learning materials, and engage in school activities through reading. It plays a crucial role in providing learning experiences and developing skills, preparing students for higher education and the workforce. Improving student literacy quality requires cooperation from all school members, with principals playing a key leadership role. Principals must effectively lead and collaborate with school communities to foster a literacy culture, enhancing students' literacy skills. This paper aims to describe and analyze the principal's leadership role in creating a student literacy culture. The study employs a literature review methodology, critically examining previous research and ideas. The process involves selecting discussion topics, sourcing literature, organizing materials, and reviewing findings, followed by writing. Data analysis is conducted using qualitative descriptive content analysis. The findings indicate that the principal's role includes being a policymaker, motivator, role model, and person in charge.

Keywords: Leadership, Principal, Culture, Student Literacy.

INTRODUCTION

Reading activities for the people of Indonesia are less desirable and underestimated, even though reading material can provide various benefits to the reader. Based on an article from the Kompas.com website written by (Juliano et al., 2017), the benefits obtained from reading activities include adding insight and knowledge, practicing analytical thinking skills, increasing vocabulary, improving concentration, enhancing memory, improving writing skills, preventing Alzheimer's, providing entertainment, offering relaxation, and reducing stress. However, these benefits are less widely realized by the public due to a lack of knowledge and awareness of the benefits of reading. As a result, their interest in reading activities is very low, and they consider reading books to be boring activities.

Playing with gadgets is a community activity that is often used for things that are less useful and unproductive compared to reading books. So it cannot be said that they are illiterate or cannot read. In fact, most people have the ability to read obtained from attending school from an early age. However, they do not have the ability to read into their habit to do useful things in their daily lives. This reality is very different when compared to people in Japan or other countries that have a high level of literacy, in utilizing their free time to read books. In fact, reading books has become their need so that everywhere there are many such sights, especially in public places. The meaning

of literacy itself is a person's ability to read, write, speak, and listen with an emphasis on the ability to read and write, as explained by (Prabowo & Suyitno, 2023).

Based on the Education Report Card, the national average literacy ability is still less than 50% with a score of 1.71 from the highest point 3. The literacy ability consists of competence in reading informational texts, competence in reading literary texts, competence in accessing the findings of text content, competence in interpreting and understanding text content, competence in evaluating and reflecting on text content.

The existence of this reality makes the education process in Indonesia more aimed at increasing literacy as an effort to realize the goals of national education to the maximum (Abdullah et al., 2019). Efforts to achieve national education goals certainly have stages that must be carried out by schools that carry out the process of educational activities under the current policy of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia (Kemendikbudristek RI), which is carried out progressively and continuously to maintain or improve quality in the implementation of education. In the implementation process, it is necessary to have a leader, namely the principal, to carry out his leadership role in managing and coordinating his members in an effort to achieve the vision and mission of the school's goals. The purpose of national education is to cultivate literacy in schools.

The importance of the principal's leadership role in efforts to develop student literacy culture, especially in elementary schools, greatly affects the success of achieving the goals pursued (Fullan, 2023). Because this effort involves a lot of school resources, both material and non-material, if it is not directed and managed properly by the leader, of course, the performance becomes unstructured so that performance and results become not as effective and efficient as expected. Efforts to develop a well-structured school literacy culture will have an impact on improving the quality of learning; teachers and staff; maximum utilization of school resources; and better relations with society

This research aims to evaluate the headmaster's leadership role and its impact on developing a successful literacy culture within the school, identifying specific leadership attitudes and practices conducive to implementing and sustaining literacy programs, investigating collaborative effectiveness among the headmaster, teachers, staff, and parents/guardians in supporting literacy initiatives, and measuring resultant changes in school culture. The study seeks to develop best practices for headmasters to lead and support literacy culture programs effectively while assessing the impact of such cultures on students' academic performance and overall educational outcomes, alongside identifying challenges and proposing solutions for promoting literacy cultures. The research offers benefits such as enhancing educational leadership effectiveness, designing more impactful literacy programs, fostering positive school cultures, promoting stakeholder engagement, improving academic outcomes, facilitating knowledge replication, and informing educational policy and decision-making for better educational quality overall.

RESEARCH METHOD

The research was conducted using a literature study approach. Literature study is a method of reviewing and critically reviewing knowledge, ideas or discoveries from several written sources that have previously been made. Data on literacy results from several journals relevant to the topics raised within the scope of the Principal's Leadership Role in Creating a Student Literacy Culture and digital literacy skills became the source of data in the research conducted. Data collection is carried out by searching several journals digitally or manually. Data analysis is carried out by the content method through the process of selecting several journals that are relevant to the scope of research, comparison between several journals obtained from the selection process, and then the results of previous journal comparisons are combined so that relevant data is produced.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Role of The Principal In Determining the Policy

(Asmawan, 2018) revealed that supporting the school literacy movement requires cooperation from all school residents so that cooperation can run in accordance with the school's vision and mission, it requires the role of the principal, namely as a policy maker to plan the efforts to be made for the successful implementation of the literacy movement in schools. Furthermore, according to (Mahendrartha et al., 2020) the principal's support for the School Literacy Movement program is: 1) planning School Literacy Movement activities, 2) involving teachers, staff, and school committees and issuing task decrees; 3) Integrating literacy culture in the school curriculum.

(Dawa & Sunarto, 2019) revealed that school principals implement management functions (POAC) in the implementation of School literacy culture, namely: 1) Planning: formulating programs of activities to support school literacy programs, and all their needs; 2) Organizing: the principal creates a literacy team from the school community, and distributes tasks; 3) Actuating: Implementation of literacy programs according to plan, 4) Controlling: supervision of processes and money programs. (Mahfudh & Imron, 2020) in their research said that to improve reading literacy, school principals implement strategies from the results of deliberations with school residents, namely: 1) Forming structures and dividing tasks; 2) Implement a 15-minute book reading program, religious literacy program, form a literacy team, develop a literacy program, and the principal strengthen relationships with school residents to facilitate the achievement of goals.

The results of (Duncan, n.d.) stated that in the implementation of literacy, school principals need to make policies openly to members, provide trust and opportunities for them to develop professionalism, make initiatives to complete their tasks effectively and efficiently, and principals help to provide solutions if they encounter difficulties. Magnusson (2020) principals make school policies to support student literacy, including 1) The principal and his members set literacy goals, discuss efforts to improve literacy through learning activities, and plan activities to improve the quality of teacher teaching by assistant principals; 2) Provide quality books for teachers and students for higher quality learning; 3) Conducting teacher supervision, to evaluate and provide input on how to teach teachers so that the learning process becomes more qualified.

(Kelly, 2020) revealed that school principals have an important role in creating a positive school climate by improving the quality of literacy learning, namely, principals become leaders in developing learning strategies based on student achievement data to easily determine solutions, provide support to teachers to develop their teaching methods through supervision activities, implement management functions well for school progress, as well as monitoring student progress.

Furthermore, (Matsumura et al., 2009) revealed that the leadership role of the principal affects teacher participation in literacy development activities. Similarly, literacy trainers will help school principals to coach teachers. So what the principal must do to create effective coaching is to build trust between trainers and teachers so that they can work together to foster and be fostered to improve teacher professionalism in teaching and carrying out other tasks. Then (Merga et al., 2021) revealed that literacy development efforts require the principal's leadership role as a policymaker to make strategies based on the results of identifying student literacy problems so that it can make it easier to determine what needs to be done. In addition, the involvement of school residents is also necessary to realize effective literacy practices for students and improve the quality of teacher teaching by increasing teaching knowledge and skills through training.

Then (Kral, 2012) revealed that before implementing literacy in schools, school principals need to conduct literacy coaching for teachers so that literacy implementation can run effectively. Teachers need to be explained about the purpose and benefits of literacy coaching in order to foster enthusiasm. In addition, school principals need to know what teachers need to support school literacy, so that the material and motivation provided in coaching can be relevant and become a reference for teachers in supporting literacy in schools. Collaboration between the headmaster and teachers and staff helps them to learn many things, thus making literacy coaching efforts effective, and can improve the quality of their collegial relationships. (Merga et al., 2021) said that the role of librarians as literacy experts in schools makes it necessary to work together, collaborate, and support each other to improve student literacy with their colleagues. Promote and develop strategies to increase literacy interest in students, provide teacher and staff literacy training and provide parents with an understanding of the importance of literacy for children. This will have an impact on increasing student interest in literacy, increasing student motivation in learning, and will have an impact on the realization of reading culture in schools. (Ahmad et al., 2021) revealed that parents have a very important role in shaping reading habits in children, such as the importance of parents trying to teach behavior and communication to children. Reading is the basis of the formation of children's academic and analytical skills so that they can form an advanced society that starts from the family environment. Finally, (Murphy, 2003) revealed that one of the steps in creating good literacy is to improve the quality of learning in the classroom and explore effective reading program information from external parties who spend a lot of time reading, reading program development, and program follow-up efforts. Such efforts require the leadership, willingness, and dedication of principals and members to make literacy a school priority, ensure quality instruction, maximize time and performance, be able to assess performance and ensure accountability, support the professional development of teachers and staff, and establish

relationships with the community. The measures accompanied by the principal's policy make the implementation of strategies to realize quality literacy programs a reality so that students can achieve good literacy skills

The Role of The Principal as A Motivator

(Kanya et al., 2021) revealed that realizing the school literacy movement properly requires the role and leadership of school principals to empower school resources. One of them is to mobilize school residents by motivating them to improve the performance of members so that the implementation of literacy programs runs well and achieves maximum results. Revealed that for the smooth process of improving learning literacy, principals need to create a positive school climate to spur teachers' positive feelings at work and have an impact on students' enthusiasm for learning, such as motivating and establishing positive conversations. Furthermore, school principals need to develop literacy programs such as literacy competitions and rewarding students. It is made to maintain the spirit of literacy in students.

The Role of The Principal Is An Example

(Sharratt & Sharratt, 2006) that in realizing learning practices to improve student literacy achievement, there are things that school principals do, one of which is being a role model. This allows the headmaster to demonstrate it in performing his role at school. The principal's behavior as a leader must have exemplary values that can be exemplified by teachers and staff that may increase teacher confidence in expressing their abilities, such as enthusiasm for work, advising each other, helping each other, setting an example, and giving feedback, so that the abilities of teachers and staff will be awakened, and increase trust in their colleagues (Savandha et al., 2024).

The Role of The Principal As The Person In Charge

(Duncan, n.d.) that in implementing literacy, school principals need to ensure the availability of needs and support the smooth teaching and learning process in all classrooms. Its implementation involves the literacy team developing literacy programs, conducting money, monitoring literacy programs, evaluating strategies, and seeking external support for program success. (Kartini & Yuhana, 2019) stated that school principals have an important role in the success of the literacy culture program, namely: 1) socialization of School Literacy Movement policies to implementers in meeting activities, 2) always reminding the literacy program in the mandate of the Monday ceremony, 3) and from the entire literacy program, the principal acts as the person in charge

Based on the statement above, the principal's leadership role in developing school literacy culture is 1) the principal's role as a school policy maker, 2) the principal's role as a motivator, 3) the principal's role as an example, and 4) the principal's role as the person in charge. The first point is the principal as a policymaker. The principal makes policies that include plans that will be carried out to create a culture of student literacy in the school and combined with management functions, namely planning, organizing, actuating, and controlling (POAC), including strategies to be implemented, cuttingholders who will be involved in the realization and support of literacy programs, allocating school budgets for literacy programs, providing infrastructure which supports literacy culture. When policymaking requires the involvement of school residents to express their

opinions, deliberate for consensus so that later implementation can be carried out with enthusiasm and can achieve goals effectively (Kowalski, 2011).

Next, the role of the principal as a motivator. Principals need to have the ability to raise their spirits to complete tasks well. Establishing harmonious relationships, casual and positive chats, and giving compliments or rewards will make teachers and staff feel highly valued and trusted for their involvement in the realization of the school's literacy culture (Johnson et al., 2017). The same motivation also needs to be given to students, for example, by providing additional grades, prizes, and others, which can make students more eager to participate in school literacy programs actively. So efforts to implement a school literacy culture need to get together with enthusiasm to obtain the expected and achieved results.

Then, the role of the principal is an example. The headmaster, as a leader, has traits and attitudes that have the potential to be imitated by school residents, especially members, which can have an effect on the quality of service in the school. Members must assume that what the leader does must be good in terms of morale or performance so that they are used as role models. The principal needs to realize that he is in the spotlight of his members, and the principal should be able to control his nature and attitude in front of members or the entire school community and continue to share good things so that they are also affected by goodness, and can also have a good impact on efforts to realize school literacy culture.

Finally, the role of the principal as the person in charge. The principal has a role as the person in charge, including in the realization of student literacy culture in schools. The principal is responsible for everything done by both himself and the members and residents of the school, good or bad in terms of morals and performance, so the principal needs to continue to monitor, introspect, evaluate, and ensure all members and residents of the school to perform their roles well, the process of implementing literacy culture goes according to plan, there are no things or individuals who deviate from the rules or plans, which can harm the school or hinder the achievement of school goals. The most important point is that the principal is able to account for the policies that have been set, and if they encounter obstacles, the principal is able to overcome them well. Basically, the key to the quality and success of school literacy programs or school goals is how the principal can carry out his leadership role well.

CONCLUSION

Based on the previous discussion, the author can conclude that efforts to develop a school literacy culture through school programs require the leadership role of the principal. The role of leadership is none other than to manage all components of the school through the practice of management functions so that the principal can mobilize these components to maximize the implementation of new or developed programs to realize a better school literacy culture. In addition, the leadership role of the principal is also to mobilize members to work together in achieving school goals and efforts to transfer positive values to improve the quality of member performance. The principal's leadership role is 1) as a school policy maker, 2) as a motivator, 3) as an example, and 4) as the person in charge. The implementation of these roles will be maximized

if the principal establishes good relations with stakeholders and the community, including parents/guardians of students. This is done in addition to creating harmonious relationships inside and outside the school and also to make it easier for school principals to collaborate with them in efforts to achieve school goals, including the development of school literacy culture.

REFERENCES

- Abdullah, I., Hudayana, B., Kutaneegara, P. M., & Indiyanto, A. (2019). Beyond school reach: Character education in three schools in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. *Journal of Educational and Social Research*, 9.
- Ahmad, N., Ali, Z., & Sewani, R. (2021). Secondary school teachers' perceptions of their head teachers instructional leadership and its effect on teachers' professional development in Karachi Pakistan. *Journal of Development and Social Sciences*, 2(3), 362–377.
- Asmawan, M. C. (2018). Kepemimpinan transformasional kepala sekolah dalam mendukung gerakan literasi sekolah. *Jurnal Pendidikan Ilmu Sosial*, 28(1), 46–57.
- Dawa, W., & Sunarto, S. (2019). Kepemimpinan Kepala Sekolah dalam Mengimplementasikan Gerakan Literasi Sekolah. *Media Manajemen Pendidikan*, 2(1), 37.
- Duncan, W. (n.d.). T.(2019). The Influence of Principal Leadership on Literate Practices in a Middle School: An Investigation and Framework Into a Principals' Leadership in Middle School Literacy Instruction [University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill]. *Angewandte Chemie International Edition*. <https://doi.org/10.17615/0hsx-Xj08>.
- Fullan, M. (2023). *The principal 2.0: Three keys to maximizing impact*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Johnson, J., Leibowitz, S., & Perret, K. (2017). *The coach approach to school leadership: Leading teachers to higher levels of effectiveness*. ASCD.
- Juliano, P., Balczyk, F., Swiergon, P., Supriyatna, M. I. M., Guillaume, C., Ravetti, L., Canamasas, P., Cravotto, G., & Xu, X.-Q. (2017). Extraction of olive oil assisted by high-frequency ultrasound standing waves. *Ultrasonics Sonochemistry*, 38, 104–114.
- Kanya, N., Fathoni, A. B., & Ramdani, Z. (2021). Factors Affecting Teacher Performance. *International Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education*, 10(4), 1462–1468.
- Kartini, D., & Yuhana, Y. (2019). Peran kepala sekolah dalam mensukseskan program literasi. *JMKSP (Jurnal Manajemen, Kepemimpinan, Dan Supervisi Pendidikan)*, 4(2), 137–144.
- Kelly, K. J. P. (2020). *Principal Instructional Leadership Effect On High School Students' Literacy Achievement*.
- Kowalski, T. J. (2011). *Public relations in schools*.
- Kral, C. C. (2012). Principal Support for Literacy Coaching. *Literacy Coaching Clearinghouse*.
- Mahendrartha, A., Tobari, T., Tohirin, T., & Harnadi, H. (2020). PROGRAM GERAKAN LITERASI SEKOLAH (GLS) PERLU DUKUNGAN KEPALA SEKOLAH. *PROSIDING SEMINAR NASIONAL PROGRAM PASCASARJANA UNIVERSITAS PGRI PALEMBANG*.
- Mahfudh, M. R., & Imron, A. (2020). Strategi kepala sekolah dalam meningkatkan literasi membaca siswa di SMA negeri 1 kota kediri. *Indonesian Journal of Islamic Education Studies (IJIES)*, 3(1), 16–30.

- Matsumura, L. C., Sartoris, M., Bickel, D. D., & Garnier, H. E. (2009). Leadership for literacy coaching: The principal's role in launching a new coaching program. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 45(5), 655–693.
- Merga, M. K., Roni, S. M., & Malpique, A. (2021). School leadership and whole-school support of struggling literacy learners in secondary schools. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 49(3), 534–550.
- Murphy, J. (2003). *Leadership for literacy: Research-based practice, PreK-3*. Corwin Press.
- Prabowo, K. A., & Suyitno, Y. (2023). The Principal's Leadership Role in Creating a Student Literacy Culture. *Proceedings Series on Social Sciences & Humanities*, 12, 515–520.
- Savandha, S. D., Azzahra, A., & Purbasari, N. K. (2024). Task Ambiguity: The Effects of Missing Standard Operating Procedures and Inter-Leadership Harmony in Organizations. *American Journal of Economic and Management Business (AJEMB)*, 3(1), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.58631/ajemb.v3i1.80>
- Sharratt, L., & Sharratt, M. (2006). The Impact of Teachers' Learning on Students' Literacy Achievement. *College Quarterly*, 9(4), n4.

Prosiding-ICSS: *The International Conference on Social Science (ICSS)* is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution International \(CC BY-SA 4.0\)](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/)

