

Conference Paper

Can Strengthening Training for School Principals Improve Their Performance?

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore the impact of a principal strengthening training program. Data were collected using a survey, and the sample consisted of 380 school principals in Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta, who were training participants in 2019. The trends in the performance of the school principals were examined through descriptive statistics. The study found that the average principal's performance was moderate, which meant that the strengthening training had a positive impact on their performance, but this effect was not significant. This may be because individuals participated in the training to fulfill duty obligations, not because of an intrinsic motivation to increase their competence. In addition, it is suspected that the initial appointment as school principal was not an independent choice, but at the insistence of another party. Therefore, the credibility of the process of recruiting school principals needs to be improved so that personnel who have real motivation and enthusiasm to increase school quality are chosen.

Keywords: principal strengthening training, principal performance

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1. Introduction

Principals are important figures in achieving the success of education in a school because they play a key role in facilitating the learning process, fostering teachers, deploying various facilities, and forging cooperation with stakeholders. Therefore, a principal is required to have supervisory, managerial, entrepreneurial, personality and social competencies [1]. Furthermore, as a manager and supervisor, principals must develop their leadership capacity while keeping up with the advancement of technology, science, and arts to spur increased school performance towards improving the quality, relevance, and competitiveness of education in the current era globalization.

However, not all school principals have professional abilities as expected, as shown from the results of the principal competency test (UKKS) held by the Ministry of Education and Culture [2]. The UKKS found that the highest average score achieved was 55.90;

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while the lowest average value is 45.92. The average score for each dimension of UKKS is (1) instructional leadership = 43.96; (2) entrepreneurship = 48.52; (3) managerial = 48.87; (4) supervision = 36.45; and (5) school development planning = 47.67. If grouped based on the level of the school being led, then the average UKKS score achieved at the SMA level = 51.75; SMK = 50.67; 3, SMP = 50.26; and SD = 44.43. The school principal's competency test results were not satisfactory because the national average ability of school principals was still below 50.

Efforts to develop the capacity of school principals in Indonesia are essential to achieve successful education in schools [3]. One of the capacity building programs for school principals is School Principal Strengthening Education and Training (PPKS) as required in the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture Number 6 of 2018 concerning the Assignment of Teachers as Principals of Schools / Madrasahs [4]. By participating in PPKS, it is expected that there will be an increase in the competence of school principals who are able to think visionary in leading and managing their schools so that management and quality culture can be realized in highly competitive schools [5]. However, a study found a training program for prospective school principals was running effective and efficient [6] but did not reach the effect of the training on the performance of school principals in their workplace. For this reason, this study seeks to examine whether school principal strengthening training can improve the performance of school principals? This research is important to provide input for policy makers and for school principals to improve the quality of training delivery in the position of school principal.

2. Related Works/Literature Review

Professional school principals play a strategic role in developing a comfortable and conducive school atmosphere for the learning and teaching process through managerial processes, learning supervision, and entrepreneurship [3, 7], and developing school systems that encourage students and teachers to learn [8]. Therefore, investment in the leadership capacity of school principals is essential to achieve school success [9]. The forms of investment are in-service education and training, including pre-service education as preparation and provisioning before taking on the principal position.

As it is known that school principals in Indonesia are an additional task for teachers, and to become prospective candidate of school principals, a selection and training of prospective school principals is carried out [4]. In the previous period, the appointment of school principals was not preceded by the process of education and training for

prospective school principals. For this reason, these school principals are involved in education and training to strengthen school principals.

However, indeed, principals need the training to carry out roles and responsibilities to achieve school success [10]. Training is important to obtain an optimal level of competence, practice performance management, opportunities for professional development, and improve their leadership capacity quality [11]. The principals became more able to implement appropriate strategies to empower educational staff, give them opportunities to elevate their professions, and encourage them to engage in some school program activities effectively and efficiently [2, 12]. In other words, in-service training is needed to meet individual challenges, social and organizational changes, and courses to develop experienced principals [13].

A summary of studies from various countries shows that in-service training or professional development of school principals can significantly impact school success; on the contrary, there are also research findings that show insignificant effects [14]. Principal training can improve three principal practice areas such as instructional leadership, human resource management and organizational leadership [15], increasing self-confidence and collegiality [16], and supporting student achievement, teacher well-being, instructional practices, and school organizational health [9]. However, several studies have found that the principal training program did not significantly impact principal performance [15], or it has a moderate effect [7].

A successful school principal professionalization program concerns conformity to personal needs and structural (organizational) conditions and sources of initiative from external or personal [15]. Other predictors that significantly affect the performance of school principals are conducive social interaction, safety, human resources, employee autonomy, type of school management and funding [17], also internal factors (gender, experience, health, family and IT skills) and external factors (school location, school demographics and school facilities) [18]. This indicates that the success of training depends on individual intrinsic factors (such as expectations, motivation, experience, health, and IT skills), but is also influenced by extrinsic factors as the support of the school's bureaucratic structure.

3. Material & Methodology

This study is a survey research using a data collection instrument in the form of a questionnaire to measure school principals' performance after they participated in the

principal strengthening training a year ago. Measurement of school principal performance was developed from training materials for strengthening school principals [5], which include dimensions (a) the use of information and communication technology (ICT), (b) preparation of school development plans, (c) management of facilities and finance, (d) learning supervision, (e) student management, and (f) entrepreneurship. Therefore, the instrument used content validity, which was then tested for empirical reliability with the results of Cronbach's Alpha coefficient = 0.915 with a significance level of 0.05.

The population of this study was 2,589 school principals in the Yogyakarta Special Region, who had attended school principal strengthening training. For this reason, the sample of this study was selected by purposive random sampling technique with a degree of confidence of 95%, so that the total sample size = 380 school principals [19]. Data analysis used descriptive statistics in the form of means and standard deviation to determine the trend of principal performance.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Results

Based on the data collected, a trend description of school principals was found as shown below.

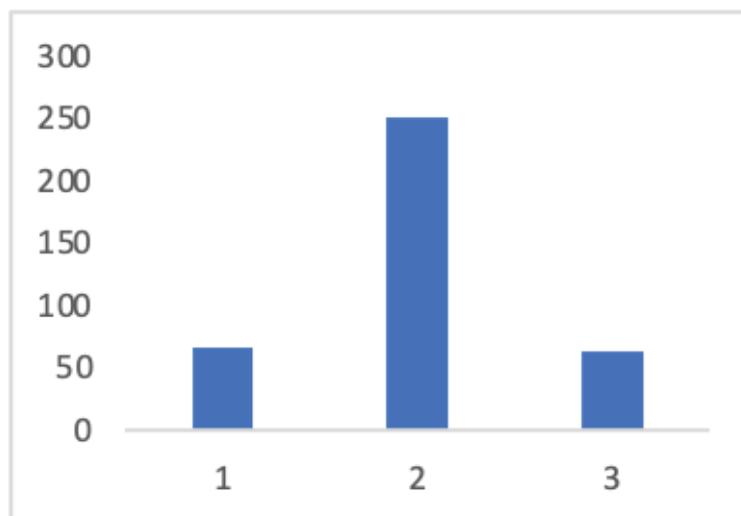


Figure 1: Principal Performance

The picture above shows that there are 67 school principals (17.63%) who have high performance, 250 school principals (65.79%) are medium performers, and 63 school principals (16.58%) are low performers. These findings indicate that the principal's

performance tends to be moderate, or just ordinary. In other words, the impact of school principal strengthening training on school principal performance is still unclear. So, this study supports the finding that school heads management style has a moderate impact on school performance [6]. Meanwhile, principals with high performance are relatively balanced with principals who are low performing.

Furthermore, if we look at the trends in each aspect of the principal's performance, the data can be described as follows.

TABLE 1: Principal Performance by aspect

Aspect	Frequencies					
	High		Moderate		Low	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Utilization of ICT	58	15,26	239	62,89	83	21,84
School Development Planning	76	20,00	256	67,37	48	12,63
Facilities and Financial	52	13,68	282	74,21	46	12,11
Supervision	47	12,37	273	71,84	60	15,79
Student management	130	34,21	198	52,11	52	13,68
Entrepreneurship	33	8,68	295	77,63	52	13,68

The data above shows that the performance of principals in the high category with the highest ranking is in student management, the next lower rank is in aspect of school development planning, and the last is entrepreneurship. This figure shows that there are still few school principals who have a prominent entrepreneurial spirit. Principals have generally been successful in managing entrepreneurship and performance in other areas at a moderate level. In the low performance category of school principals, what appears to be prominent is ICT and supervision. The findings above are certainly interesting to discuss and find solutions to problems with the performance of school principals that do not reflect the utilization of the results of school principal strengthening training.

4.2. Discussion

The overall performance of school principals does not seem to reflect the results of the principal strengthening training, where more than half of the respondents still perform in the moderate category. This sub-optimal performance can occur due to the negative image inherent in the principal's job, such as excessive workload, uncomfortable working conditions, lack of preparation and training, and less attractive incentives [10]. Symptoms of reluctance to become school principals appear to be occurring in various regions.

For this reason, it is necessary to revitalize the position, role, duties and responsibilities of the principal without neglecting the level of welfare and comfort of work and the career concerned.

Successful school principal professionalization programs involve conformity to personal needs and structural conditions of the bureaucracy, as well as sources of initiative from externals or from personal ones [15, 21]. In this context, participation in training should consider administrative requirements and take into account the background and motivation of the school principal. In accordance to the bureaucratic structure, the training of school principals needs to be accompanied by training of supervisors as their superior and training of teachers as their subordinates. So that there is a common vision to achieve quality education [20], harmonization of steps and directions in realizing educational goals.

However, training in the principal position is still needed to provide the knowledge, insights and skills needed to respond to the demands of development and advancement in the educational environment. So, in-service school principal training needs to focus on developing and strengthening skills related to contextual improvement of school quality [10] so that the training program is more sensitive to the school context.

5. Conclusion

Principal strengthening training has not provided optimal results in improving the performance of school principals. The principal's performance tends to be in the moderate category, with success in the aspects of student management, use of facilities and finances, and school development planning. Performance aspects that are classified as low are the utilization of information technology and entrepreneurship development. However, the training of school principals is still needed to respond and anticipate the development and progress of the educational environment. For this reason, participation in training needs to be studied further from the aspect of personal readiness for training, because this readiness is thought to determine enthusiasm in participating in training and commitment to apply it in achieving school success.

This survey research was originally to be complemented with interviews and observations, but due to the Covid-19 pandemic, interviews and observations could not be carried out so that the various factors that caused the suboptimum principal's performance were not yet revealed empirically; so that this research can be continued to explore the determinant factors of the principal's performance in implementing the results of the principal strengthening training.

This study confirms that in-service training does not necessarily have an impact on improving the performance of school principals. In this connection, policy makers for coaching school principals need to develop training programs that are more contextual according to school needs. The training program needs to be supported by motivation and facilitation so that school principals can apply the knowledge and skills gained from the training. In addition, it is necessary to build a mechanism for continuous guidance and monitoring to collect promises on the performance of school principals as a result of training.

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