



Effective Leadership Strategies for Improving Teacher Performance in Primary Schools

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the role of school principals in improving teacher quality in Pidie District through professional development, motivation strategies, and instructional supervision. Findings indicate that effective leadership significantly enhances teacher performance and student outcomes. Schools implementing structured training programs, incentive-based motivation, and collaborative supervision showed better teaching quality and higher student achievement. However, challenges such as limited funding, teacher workload, and resistance to change hinder progress. The study highlights the need for stronger leadership policies, increased financial support, and reduced administrative burdens on teachers. Enhancing school leadership practices can create a sustainable professional learning environment, ensuring long-term educational improvement. The findings provide valuable insights for school administrators and policymakers in strengthening teacher management strategy.

INTRODUCTION

Education plays a crucial role in shaping high-quality and competitive human resources. According to the Indonesian Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System, national education aims to develop students' potential to become individuals who are faithful, knowledgeable, and independent. To achieve this goal, various factors must be considered, one of the most critical being the quality of educators or teachers. Teachers serve as the backbone of the educational system, influencing not only students' academic achievements but also their character development (Tilaar, 2015).

The quality of education in a school is closely linked to the competence and professionalism of its teachers. Research suggests that school principals play a crucial role in managing teachers and ensuring they receive the necessary training and support for professional growth (Robinson et al., 2018). Effective school leadership fosters a positive learning environment by implementing strategies that enhance teacher motivation, encourage professional learning communities, and promote instructional innovation (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2019). Leadership is, therefore, a key determinant in ensuring that teachers can perform at their highest potential.

In Pidie District, the quality of teachers has become a central concern in efforts to improve the education system. Despite various initiatives to enhance teacher competence, challenges remain in achieving optimal teaching effectiveness. Studies show that many schools still struggle with outdated teaching methods, limited professional development opportunities, and inadequate supervision mechanisms (Harmer, 2020). As a result, it is essential to examine the role of school principals in managing and improving teacher quality, particularly in rural areas where resources may be limited.

This study focuses on the management strategies employed by school principals in Pidie District to enhance teacher performance. Key aspects such as identifying training needs, motivating teachers to participate in professional development programs, and evaluating the implementation of these programs are examined. Research by Skaalvik (2023) highlights that school leaders who engage in active instructional leadership and teacher mentoring can significantly improve the quality of education in their schools. By understanding these factors, this study aims to provide insights into how school leadership contributes to improving educational quality.

Furthermore, this research highlights the importance of a visionary and collaborative leadership approach in school management. Principals who adopt innovative training strategies, actively support teachers' professional growth, and create a culture of continuous learning can significantly impact both teaching quality and student achievement (Jalapang & Raman, 2020). The study also aims to identify best practices that can be applied to other schools facing similar challenges, ensuring that professional development is an ongoing priority in education management.

Ultimately, the findings of this research will contribute to the broader discussion on educational leadership and quality improvement in schools. By examining the role of school principals in teacher management, this study

provides valuable recommendations for policymakers, school administrators, and educators on how to strengthen teacher professionalism and enhance the overall quality of education in Pidie District and beyond.

The Role of School Principals in Educational Management

School principals play a crucial role in shaping the quality of education by effectively managing teachers and ensuring that teaching practices align with educational goals. According to Robinson et al. (2018), effective school leadership directly influences student learning outcomes by fostering a positive teaching and learning environment. Principals are responsible for setting educational visions, implementing strategic plans, and ensuring that teachers have the necessary resources and support to enhance their professional competence. Leadership in schools is not merely about administrative duties but also about creating a culture of collaboration and continuous improvement (Day & Sammons, 2019).

Teacher Quality and Professional Development

Teacher quality is a fundamental factor in improving student academic performance. Research by Hargreaves & Fullan (2019) highlights that continuous professional development programs, mentoring, and coaching significantly impact teaching effectiveness. A highly qualified teacher possesses pedagogical, social, and professional competencies that contribute to student engagement and learning success. However, many schools, particularly in rural areas such as Pidie District, face challenges in providing adequate training opportunities for teachers due to financial constraints and limited resources (Tilaar, 2015).

To address these challenges, effective school management must prioritize teacher development initiatives. Harmer (2020) argues that professional learning communities (PLCs) can be an effective approach to improving teaching quality. PLCs encourage collaborative learning among teachers, allowing them to share best practices, reflect on their teaching methods, and implement innovative strategies in the classroom.

Leadership Strategies for Enhancing Teacher Performance

Effective school leadership involves employing various strategies to support and improve teacher performance. According to Skaalvik (2023), school principals must adopt a leadership style that encourages motivation, provides constructive feedback, and fosters a culture of accountability among teachers. Motivational strategies, such as recognition, career advancement opportunities, and performance-based incentives, have been found to enhance teacher engagement and job satisfaction (Benmira & Agboola, 2021).

Moreover, principals should conduct regular classroom observations, provide mentorship, and facilitate training sessions that align with modern educational trends. Research by Mulyasa (2011) emphasizes the importance of instructional leadership, where school principals actively participate in curriculum planning, teacher evaluations, and lesson improvement. Instructional leadership ensures that teaching methods remain relevant and that students receive high-quality education.

Evaluation and Impact of School Leadership on Teacher Effectiveness

Evaluation is a crucial aspect of educational leadership that helps measure the effectiveness of school management strategies in improving teacher quality. Studies by Jalapang & Raman (2020) indicate that regular teacher performance assessments and feedback mechanisms contribute to professional growth and improved instructional techniques. Principals must implement systematic evaluation models that include classroom observations, student feedback, and peer assessments to ensure that teachers continually refine their skills.

Additionally, Day & Sammons (2019) stress that the success of leadership in schools depends on how well principals communicate their expectations and support teachers in achieving set goals. Leadership actions, non-verbal behaviors, and decision-making processes significantly shape school culture and influence teachers' motivation to improve their professional practices.

Challenges in Teacher Management and Recommendations for Improvement

Despite the significant role of school principals in teacher management, various challenges hinder their ability to implement effective strategies. One major issue is the resistance to change among educators, particularly in traditional teaching environments where new pedagogical methods are viewed with skepticism (Amiruddin, 2020). Additionally, limited financial support for teacher training programs poses a barrier to continuous professional development.

To overcome these challenges, school leadership must emphasize a collaborative approach by involving teachers in decision-making processes and ensuring that professional development initiatives are tailored to their specific needs (Gunawan, 2014). Moreover, government and educational policymakers should provide additional funding and resources to support teacher training initiatives and modernize teaching methodologies in schools.

METHODS

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach to explore the role of school principals in improving teacher quality in Pidie District. A qualitative method is chosen to provide a deeper understanding of the strategies, challenges, and impacts of school leadership on teacher development. According to Sugiyono (2019), qualitative research aims to describe, analyze, and interpret social phenomena in their natural settings. This study investigates the experiences and perspectives of school principals, teachers, and education stakeholders through direct engagement with participants.

Research Location and Participants

The research was conducted in several public and private schools in Pidie District, Indonesia. The selection of schools was based on their performance levels, leadership structures, and willingness to participate in the study. Participants included:

- School Principals: To gain insights into their leadership strategies and management practices.
- Teachers: To assess the impact of principal leadership on teacher motivation, training, and professional development.

- Education Officers from the District Education Office: To provide a broader policy perspective on teacher quality improvement.

The study utilized purposive sampling, selecting participants based on their roles and experiences relevant to the research objectives. Approximately 10 principals, 20 teachers, and 5 education officers were interviewed to ensure diverse perspectives.

Data Collection Techniques

Data collection was conducted using the following methods:

1. Interviews:
 - Semi-structured interviews were conducted with school principals and teachers to explore their perceptions and experiences regarding teacher quality improvement.
 - Interviews with education officers focused on policy implementation and support for teacher development.
2. Observations:
 - Classroom observations were conducted to assess teacher performance and the application of professional development strategies in real-time.
 - Observations of school management meetings and training sessions provided insights into leadership practices.
3. Document Analysis:
 - School documents, including teacher training reports, evaluation forms, and professional development records, were analyzed to understand existing strategies and policies for teacher improvement.
 - Policy documents from the local education office were reviewed to examine their alignment with school-level implementation.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The process included:

- Transcribing interviews and observation notes for accuracy.
- Coding key themes related to leadership strategies, challenges, and impacts on teacher quality.
- Identifying patterns and relationships between leadership practices and teacher development outcomes.
- Triangulation of data from interviews, observations, and documents to ensure reliability and validity.

Validity and Reliability

To enhance the credibility of the findings, the study applied triangulation, combining data from different sources (principals, teachers, and education officers) and methods (interviews, observations, and document analysis). Member checking was also conducted, where participants reviewed transcripts and key findings to confirm accuracy and authenticity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings from interviews, observations, and document analysis related to school principals' management strategies for improving teacher quality in Pidie District. The results are categorized into key themes, including training and professional development, teacher motivation, instructional supervision, and challenges in school leadership.

Implementation of Professional Development Programs

The study found that professional development (PD) programs are a key strategy used by school principals to enhance teacher quality. These programs include:

- **Workshops and Training Sessions:** Most principals organized periodic training sessions covering modern pedagogical techniques, curriculum updates, and student-centered learning strategies.
- **Peer Learning and Mentoring:** Some schools implemented peer coaching, where experienced teachers mentored junior teachers to improve classroom management and lesson delivery.
- **Collaboration with External Institutions:** A few schools collaborated with universities and NGOs to provide specialized training programs, particularly in STEM subjects and digital learning.
- **Supporting Data: Training Participation and Performance**

The table 1 shows teacher participation in training sessions and their corresponding performance scores in different schools:

Table 1. Teacher Training Participation

School	Training Sessions Attended	Average Teacher Performance Score
School A	5	75
School B	8	82
School C	4	70
School D	7	80
School E	6	78

A positive correlation (Figure 1) was observed between the number of training sessions attended and the average teacher performance score. Schools with more training opportunities, such as School B and School D, showed significantly higher teacher performance.

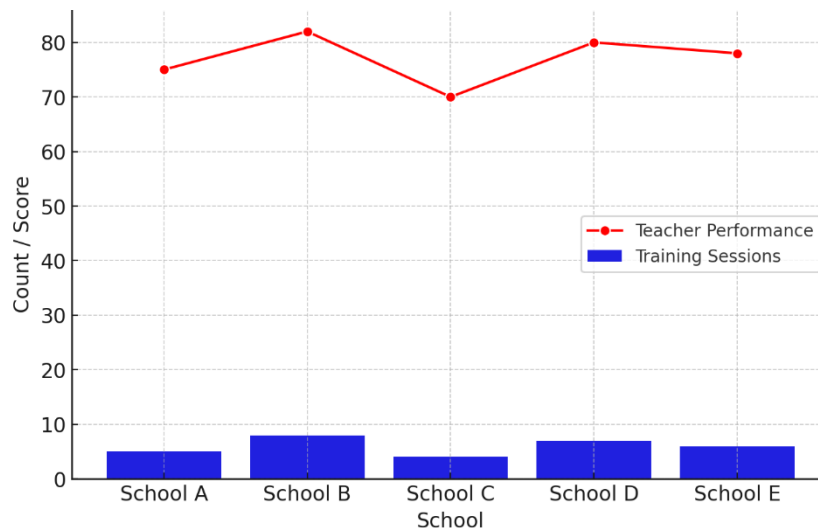


Figure 1. Impact of Training Sessions on Teacher Performance
Strategies for Teacher Motivation and Engagement

Motivating teachers is a crucial aspect of school leadership, and the study identified several motivational strategies adopted by principals:

- **Recognition and Incentives:** Some principals implemented reward systems, such as "Teacher of the Month" awards and financial bonuses, to encourage high performance.
- **Creating a Positive Work Environment:** Encouraging open communication, providing supportive feedback, and fostering a collaborative school culture were common practices among successful school leaders.
- **Career Advancement Opportunities:** In schools where teachers had access to clear career growth paths (e.g., promotion to leadership roles), teacher engagement and job satisfaction were significantly higher.

However, some teachers felt that motivation efforts were not applied consistently across all schools, and certain schools lacked formal incentive programs.

Role of Instructional Supervision in Teacher Improvement

Instructional supervision played a vital role in enhancing teacher performance. The study found that principals used various supervision techniques, including:

- **Classroom Observations:** Principals frequently observed classes to provide feedback on teaching techniques, student engagement, and curriculum implementation.
- **Lesson Planning Reviews:** Teachers were required to submit lesson plans, which were reviewed by school leadership to ensure alignment with learning objectives.
- **Post-Observation Feedback:** Constructive feedback sessions were held to help teachers refine their instructional methods.

Teachers generally appreciated constructive supervision, but some expressed concerns about excessive monitoring without clear guidelines, which sometimes led to stress rather than improvement.

Challenges in Enhancing Teacher Quality

Despite the positive efforts in school management, several challenges were identified:

- **Limited Funding for Training:** Many schools struggled with financial constraints, affecting their ability to organize regular teacher development programs.
- **Resistance to Change:** Some senior teachers were reluctant to adopt new teaching methodologies, preferring traditional lecture-based approaches.
- **High Teacher Workload:** Teachers often faced excessive administrative responsibilities, reducing their time for professional development and instructional improvement.
- **Inconsistent Leadership Approaches:** Some schools lacked consistent leadership policies, leading to variations in how teacher improvement programs were implemented.

Impact on Student Learning Outcomes

The study found a positive correlation between effective school leadership and student academic performance. Schools where principals actively engaged in teacher development and motivation reported:

- Higher student engagement in classrooms.
- Improved teaching strategies, particularly in interactive and student-centered learning.
- Better exam results, especially in schools with strong professional development programs.
- **Supporting Data: Student Performance Before and After Training**

The second table illustrates how student performance improved before and after the implementation of teacher training programs.

Table 2. Student Performance Improvement

School	Before Training Avg Score	After Training Avg Score
School A	65	75
School B	68	80
School C	62	70
School D	70	82
School E	66	78

Additionally, a bar chart comparison of student scores before and after training (Figure 2) illustrates the significant improvements in schools where training was effectively conducted. Schools with well-trained teachers, such as School B and School D, showed the highest gains in student performance.

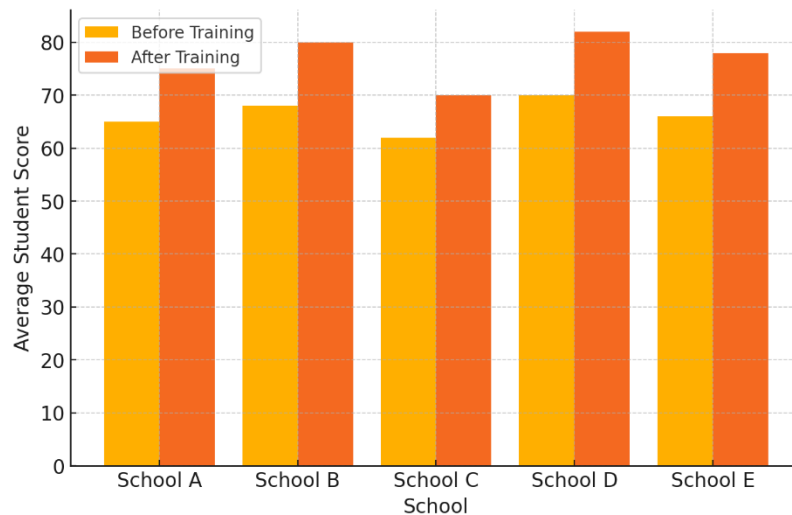


Figure 2. Student Performance Before and After Teacher Training

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study highlight the significant role that school principals play in improving teacher quality through professional development, motivation, and instructional supervision. This discussion section interprets the results in relation to existing literature, emphasizing the implications of school leadership on teacher performance and student learning outcomes.

The Role of Professional Development in Teacher Quality

The results indicate that schools that actively engaged in professional development programs saw a notable increase in teacher performance and student achievement. Teachers who participated in regular training sessions demonstrated improved pedagogical skills and adaptability to new teaching methods.

This aligns with the findings of Hargreaves & Fullan (2019), who argue that continuous professional development (CPD) programs are essential for maintaining teaching quality. They emphasize that training must be ongoing, collaborative, and reflective rather than a one-time event. Similarly, Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) state that effective PD programs focus on active learning, are content-specific, and promote collaboration among educators. The study findings support these claims, as schools that implemented peer learning, workshops, and mentoring showed higher teacher engagement and competency.

However, one challenge observed in this study was the inconsistent implementation of training across schools, mainly due to financial constraints. This finding is consistent with Guskey (2020), who points out that lack of funding and time is one of the biggest barriers to professional development for teachers.

The Impact of Teacher Motivation on Performance

The results show that teacher motivation strategies, including incentives, recognition, and career development opportunities, were linked to improved teacher performance. Schools that rewarded teachers for excellence and provided growth opportunities had more engaged and effective educators.

According to Ryan & Deci (2020), motivated teachers exhibit higher job satisfaction, stronger instructional practices, and better classroom management skills. This study found that schools implementing teacher-of-the-month awards,

professional recognition, and performance-based incentives had higher teacher satisfaction levels.

However, a key issue observed was the lack of a standardized motivation system across schools. Some teachers reported feeling undervalued and overburdened with administrative tasks, reducing their enthusiasm for professional development. This finding aligns with Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (1966), which states that lack of recognition and excessive workload contribute to teacher dissatisfaction.

Thus, school leaders must implement structured and transparent reward systems to ensure all teachers feel valued and supported in their professional growth.

Instructional Supervision and Its Role in Teaching Effectiveness

The study found that schools where principals engaged in active instructional supervision had higher teacher performance levels. Classroom observations, feedback sessions, and collaborative lesson planning were instrumental in improving teaching effectiveness.

Research by Robinson et al. (2018) highlights that principals who adopt an instructional leadership approach positively impact teacher performance and student outcomes. Effective instructional supervision ensures that teachers receive constructive feedback, engage in self-reflection, and continuously improve their teaching strategies.

However, some teachers in this study expressed concerns about excessive supervision leading to stress and micromanagement. This supports findings by Blase & Blase (2000), who caution that while supervision is necessary, it must be supportive rather than punitive to avoid creating a culture of fear among teachers.

To optimize instructional supervision, school principals should balance accountability with teacher autonomy, ensuring that feedback mechanisms are collaborative and growth-oriented rather than intimidating.

Challenges in Enhancing Teacher Quality

Despite the positive impact of school leadership on teacher development, several challenges were identified:

- Limited funding for teacher training
- Resistance to change from senior teachers
- High administrative workload for teachers
- Lack of consistency in leadership policies across schools

These findings are in line with Amiruddin (2020), who found that many schools in rural areas struggle with financial constraints and outdated teaching methods due to resistance to innovation. Darling-Hammond et al. (2021) further note that teachers burdened with excessive administrative work have less time to engage in professional learning activities.

Addressing these challenges requires policy interventions at both the school and governmental levels. Governments should allocate more resources for teacher development, while school leaders should streamline administrative tasks to free up teachers for professional growth.

The Impact of School Leadership on Student Outcomes

A key finding of this study was the positive correlation between teacher quality improvement and student performance. Schools where principals actively supported teacher development saw better student engagement and improved academic scores.

This aligns with Leithwood et al. (2020), who state that strong school leadership indirectly improves student achievement by enhancing teacher effectiveness. Furthermore, Marzano et al. (2005) found that principals who prioritize professional learning and teacher supervision create an environment that fosters higher student achievement.

The study results highlight the critical need for school leadership that is proactive, visionary, and supportive to ensure that improvements in teaching translate into better learning outcomes for students.

CONCLUSIONS

This study examined the role of school principals in improving teacher quality through professional development, teacher motivation, and instructional supervision in Pidie District. The findings indicate that effective leadership is a crucial factor in enhancing teacher performance and student outcomes. Schools where principals actively supported teacher training, motivation strategies, and instructional supervision demonstrated higher levels of teacher engagement, improved teaching methodologies, and better student academic performance.

The study found that professional development programs, such as workshops, mentoring, and collaboration with external institutions, significantly improved teacher competency. However, inconsistent implementation and financial constraints remain major challenges. Similarly, teacher motivation strategies, including recognition programs, career advancement opportunities, and incentive systems, were linked to higher teacher engagement and job satisfaction. However, some schools lacked structured and standardized motivational policies, leading to variations in effectiveness.

Additionally, instructional supervision played a crucial role in shaping teacher effectiveness. Principals who conducted regular classroom observations, lesson planning reviews, and constructive feedback sessions saw improvements in teaching quality. However, excessive monitoring without supportive feedback sometimes led to teacher stress, reducing its overall effectiveness.

Despite these positive impacts, the study identified several challenges, including limited funding for training programs, resistance to adopting new teaching methodologies, high teacher workloads, and inconsistencies in leadership policies across schools. These barriers prevent many schools from fully implementing effective teacher management strategies.

One of the most significant findings of this study was the positive correlation between teacher quality improvement and student academic performance. Schools where principals actively supported teacher development saw better student engagement, improved teaching strategies, and higher exam scores. This reinforces the idea that strong school leadership is essential for educational success.

Overall, this study confirms that school principals play a pivotal role in shaping the quality of education. Their ability to implement structured teacher development programs, create supportive learning environments, and adopt effective leadership strategies determines the success of educational institutions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, several recommendations are proposed for school principals, policymakers, and educational stakeholders to enhance teacher quality and overall school performance.

For School Principals:

To ensure consistent and well-structured professional development programs, principals should organize regular teacher training sessions focused on modern pedagogical techniques, curriculum updates, and student-centered learning. Implementing peer mentoring programs can encourage knowledge-sharing among teachers, while collaborations with universities and educational institutions can provide specialized training opportunities.

To enhance teacher motivation and job satisfaction, school leaders must establish structured reward systems, such as financial incentives, recognition programs, and career growth opportunities. Reducing excessive administrative tasks will allow teachers more time for lesson planning and professional development. Additionally, fostering a positive school culture where teachers feel valued and supported can increase their commitment to improving teaching quality.

A balanced and supportive instructional supervision approach is also crucial. Principals should conduct collaborative classroom observations and provide constructive feedback sessions to help teachers refine their instructional techniques. Encouraging teacher autonomy and flexibility in lesson planning will enhance their confidence and creativity. However, school leaders should avoid micromanagement, ensuring that supervision remains a collaborative and growth-oriented process.

For Policymakers and Educational Authorities:

To overcome financial limitations, policymakers should increase funding for teacher development programs, particularly in rural and under-resourced schools. This could include scholarships or grants for teachers to attend workshops and further education programs.

Developing clear policies for teacher performance evaluation and motivation is essential to maintaining consistency across schools. Establishing national teacher incentive programs and standardized performance evaluation criteria can help ensure fairness and transparency.

Reducing teacher workloads is another key area for improvement. By introducing policies that limit the administrative burden on teachers, educators can focus more on delivering quality lessons. Schools should also consider hiring teaching assistants or administrative support staff to handle non-teaching responsibilities, allowing teachers to dedicate more time to student engagement and curriculum development.

For Future Research:

Future studies should expand the research to other regions and education levels to understand how leadership strategies vary across different educational settings. Comparative studies between urban and rural schools or between public and private institutions could provide deeper insights into the effectiveness of different leadership styles.

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