



The Role of Principal Leadership: Developing Reading Culture in Elementary School

Fadlilah*, Fransisko Chaniago, Suci Fitriani, Sri Ramdayeni Sakunti

Islamic Educational Management, UIN Sulthan Thaha Saifuddin Jambi

*Corresponding Author. Email: fadlilah@uinjambi.ac.id

Abstract: This study aims to explore the principal leadership role in developing the reading culture at the Public Elementary School No. 42 Pekan Gedang, Batang Asai District. This study employed qualitative method, where data collection was done through observation and interview with a number of informants such as; school principal, teachers, and students as well as the canteen community nearby the school. Triangulation was used as a method for qualitative data analysis and validating the data collected. Triangulation was used as a method for qualitative data analysis and validating the data collected. The results of this study revealed that in order to cultivate a reading culture among the kids, the principal implemented a program known as Jumpa Sinabu. This program was carried out on Friday mornings with the activities of reciting Al-Qur'an and reading books before the teaching and learning processes begin. In addition, the principal encourages other members of the school community, including teachers, employees, and even canteen residents who sell around the school building to involve and support to the program that the principal has developed. At the Public Elementary School No. 42 Pekan Gedang, the principal's leadership in developing a reading culture is as a policy maker, facilitator, and motivator. These all are part of the process of creating a reading culture.

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Introduction

The educational institutions aim to help students achieve a better future by providing a supportive environment. The significance of a student educational forum would undoubtedly bring about modifications and advancements in accordance with the institution's teachings (Gazali, 2013). As educational institutions, school must be controlled, regulated, organized, and empowered to generate the best results as much as possible in terms of improving the quality of human resources. Internally, the school has a set of staff of educators, students, a curriculum, facilities, and infrastructures. Externally, the school had both vertical and horizontal relationships with other organizations (Hamdan et al., 2021), since school was a place to create a better human life through the educational process (Lurah & Haryanto, 2014).

School as formal educational institutions plays a crucial and strategic role in the students learning process such as encouraging and fostering effective study habits. One example is increasing the student interest in reading (Ummami et al., 2020) as stated in Permendikbud No. 23 of 2015 regarding the Development of Character through establishing National Literacy Movement.

Reading was a crucial life skill since it allowed our knowledge to expand and never run out (Farida Rahim, 2006). Reading could also be seen as a process that links a particular stimulus or symbol, where the stimulus entered through the sense of sight and determined the



meaning or pronunciation of the text read (Agustiawan, 2013). Reading is essential in education, which seeks to acquire undiscovered knowledge. The reading proficiency of Indonesia ranks 60th out of 61 countries. Reading interest is determined by habits, motivation, the educational atmosphere, and library availability. Interest in reading that was carried out continuously would become a habit and a culture of reading (Astika Novindari & Dhiniaty Gularso, 2022).

Advances in science and information are presented in the form of reading that requires students to read them as much detail as possible. Reading abilities and skills were necessary and played an important and strategic role in absorbing current knowledge and information (Rosyadi et al., 2021). According to Law No. 20 of 2003 article 4 in the 5th paragraph, it is stated that the principle of providing education is to develop a culture of reading, writing, and arithmetic for all citizens.

According to a study by Central Connecticut State University in 2016, titled '*Most Literate Nations in The World*', Indonesia ranked 60th out of a total of 61 countries, which means that only 0.01 percent of Indonesians, or one in ten thousand, have an interest in reading. This information is consistent with the UNESCO findings in 2012 regarding the reading habits of the Indonesian population, which indicated that only one out of every thousand Indonesians had a good reading habit. The reading culture in Indonesia, particularly among elementary school students, still needs to be developed through the principal's motivation with teachers' collaboration (Azizah et al., 2018).

This reading culture was intended to foster a literacy culture in the educational ecosystem beginning with families, schools, and communities within the context of lifelong learning to improve the quality of life (Ministry of Education and Culture's School Literacy Movement Task Force, 2016). This effort is well-intentioned and a reflection of the government's concern for the poor state of national literacy; however, it would be very unfortunate if it were merely a formality and a work program that did no affect on students, teachers, or society.

Optimizing this reading culture program also necessitates the participation of stakeholders from all levels and types of education, encompassing the entire school ecosystem. In addition, a learning approach that prioritized all aspects of literacy must be utilized to facilitate the program because optimizing a program without involving all school components would not be effective (Mahfudh & Imron, 2020). As a result of his position as a policymaker and the leader of an educational institution's advancement, the principal's position is becoming increasingly significant.

The principal hold the highest authority and position in the school (Manora, 2018). In education, the principal's ability to influence, motivate, and direct individuals to achieve organizational objectives was the principal's primary responsibility (Rahmawaty & Karwanto, 2021). As a policymaker in schools, the role of the principal as a leader was necessary and capable of being a shrewd school director to achieve the highest quality of education possible (Mahfudh & Imron, 2020).

The principal was teacher with additional responsibilities as a leader, where his role was essential in coordinating, mobilizing, and harmonizing all educational resources available at his institution (Nasir, 2017). The development of work ethic, harmonious cooperation, an interest in the improvement of education quality, a pleasant working environment, and the improvement of the professional quality of teachers are significantly influenced by the leadership quality of the principal. The leadership style of the principal reflects the leader's qualities. According to Syarifudin (2011), principal leadership was the ability of leaders to



persuade and convince subordinates so that they are willing to follow their leaders sincerely and enthusiastically.

According to Fauzi (2021), school leadership was one of the components of the driving force and determinant of policy direction, and it played a very important role in achieving success with quality education in schools. In addition, a superior school will be produced as a result of the leadership of a principal who is able to exert their influence over the school community and who is skilled in the management of the school, because the results of a school's leadership can be seen in the school's overall quality. It will eventually become a positive culture in schools due to the development of the idea of increasing the amount of reading that students do in their free time.

As a leader, the principal must be attuned to the needs and emotions of his employees by constantly motivating his subordinates to ensure that teacher performance was always maintained. (Lisnawati, 2018). The word "motivation" derived from the Latin word *movere*, which means encouraging or moving (Hasibuan, 2016). Motivation or encouragement plays a significant role in determining the realization of a planned action; furthermore, motivation is carried out with the purpose of: stimulating someone to work well, encouraging someone to work more accomplished, encouraging someone to work responsibly, improving work quality, developing work productivity, obeying applicable regulations, deterrent in breaking the rules, directing behaviour to achieve goals, and competing with others. Work motivation was required in educational organizations for the implementation of the learning process and the operation of the education wheel (Jemani et al., 2020).

Based on the researchers' observations, the principal has committed in implementing a reading culture program for students at Public Elementary School No. 42, Pekan Gedang. This program is a collaboration of reciting Al-Qur'an and reading books and is held every Friday morning with the participation of teachers from Public Elementary School No. 42 Pekan Gedang. This activity was implemented in the field with a series of events, beginning with the reciting Surah Yasin, followed by prayer, Tahlil, and ending with the reading books to all school residents. Based on the supervision, some students still could not read proficiently due to lack of interest in reading at school and at home. Therefore, as school principal, he initiated a program known as the *Jumpa Sinabu* (Friday morning Surah Yasin and reading books).

This study aims to explore the principal leadership role in developing the reading culture at the Public Elementary School No. 42 Pekan Gedang, Batang Asai District. This research is crucial to encourage students to build a positive habit of reading as it has become less interesting than the amount of social media exposure. This research is also expected to help young generation to improve their literacy.

Research Method

This study used descriptive qualitative method. This qualitative study was conducted to comprehend and interpret the phenomena within it (Cohen et al., 2017). The social setting of this study was the Public Elementary School No. 42 in Pekan Gedang, Batang Asai District. Principal and teachers at Public Elementary School No. 42 in Pekan Gedang, Batang Asai District, was the informant for this study. Instruments used for collecting data were observation, interviews, and documentation studies followed by the triangulation techniques to ensure the data's validity to strengthen the data's validity. A data analysis technique is the process of collecting data for further study. The data analysis phase of this study was based on Lexy J. Moleong, (2014), qualitative data analysis model, which suggests that the



qualitative data analysis phase consists of three concurrent streams of activities: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing/verification.

Results and Discussion

The principal's job is to lead and manage educational units from the elementary to secondary levels. The principal must also be able to organize and oversee the implementation of teaching and learning programs at the school he supervises (Mukhtar, 2015). According to the Ministry of Education and Culture, a principal's leadership effectiveness was deemed high if he was able to fulfill his responsibilities as an educator, manager, administrator, and supervisor (EMAS) (Mohammad Ali Ridho, 2019). In addition to being able to act as a leader, innovator, and motivator in his school, the principal must also be able to act in accordance with the needs of the community and the times. Principals must function as educators, managers, administrators, supervisors, leaders, innovators, and motivators (EMASLIM) in the new paradigm of effective school management (Mulyasa, 2006).

As a leader, the principal of Public Elementary School No. 42 Pekan Gedang plays a crucial role in implementing a reading culture for students. The effort made by the principal to implement a reading culture is the creation of a program known as *Jumpa Sinabu* (Friday morning yasin and reading a book), which is also a trademark and brand for State Elementary School No. 42 Pekan Gedang.

Observing the condition of students who are still not reading proficiently, is undoubtedly concerning to the principal. As principal of Public Elementary School No. 42 Pekan Gedang, he implemented a reading culture by implementing the school's *Jumpa Sinabu* (Friday morning surah Yasin and reading books). This program is unquestionably the solution for students to develop a habit of increasing their interest in reading. Students would inevitably develop a reading culture if they engaged in continuous reading interest (Astika Novindari & Dhiniaty Gularso, 2022).

The principal was always actively involved in the programs and agendas carried out by schools, especially in efforts to develop a reading culture in schools. If this program is associated with a reading literacy program, then the school-based reading culture program is included in the managerial competence dimension. The principal actively participates by making every effort to be on time to serve as a role model for all aspects of the school environment. The principal also encouraged the participation of all school components in developing a reading culture program at the Public Elementary School No. 42 Pekan Gedang.

This Principal's effort is in line with Reynolds perception (as stated in Mulyasa, 2006), that in an effective school, special attention is paid to creating and maintaining a reading-friendly climate and culture for students. Principal need to prepare facilities and infrastructure for students in optimizing students' reading culture.

The leadership role of the principal of Public Elementary School No. 42 Pekan Gedang cannot be separated from his roles as a policymaker, a facilitator, and a motivator in implementing an effective reading culture in schools. In this particular case, he, as the head of the school was able to persuade his subordinates to follow his instructions and direction in carrying out the task of organizing a reading culture in schools in order to develop students' reading interests and advance the school, especially in implementing the *Jumpa Sinabu* program (Friday morning Yasin and reading books), which includes the entire school community.



1) Principal as Policymaker

As a policymaker in schools, the role of the principal as a leader necessitates and enabled him or her to be a shrewd school director in order to achieve the highest quality of education (Mahfudh & Imron, 2020). According to the principal, there were still students who were not proficient in reading due to a lack of interest in reading at school and at home. Naturally, in this instance, as the principal, he establishes a policy by establishing a program known as the Jumpa Sinabu (Friday morning reciting Surah Yasin and reading books) for students to increase their interest in reading culture. This program is implemented continuously so that students become accustomed to reading in elementary school.

Reading was vital part of life; through reading, our knowledge continued to expand and never runs out (Farida Rahim, 2006). In his policy as principal, he included all school residents and the canteen community, which sold food around the school area, in the Jumpa Sinabu program (Friday morning: reciting Surah Yasin and reading books). As stated by the principal, the Jumpa Sinabu program (Friday morning: reciting Surah Yasin and reading a book) is carried out weekly, 15 minutes before the teaching and learning process begins (PBM). This program was implemented on the school grounds with the participation of school residents such as teachers, staff, students, and vendors.

The researchers also conducted interviews with teachers who stated that in the Jumpa Sinabu program (Friday morning: reciting Surah Yasin and reading books), "We participated in this activity scheduled for Friday morning in an effort to improve the school's reading culture". The policies that the principal has established to implement this program are, of course, the best way to improve the school's reading culture, not only for students but also for teachers, staff, and even the community who sells goods near the school.

In addition, researchers conducted interviews with canteen residents who stated that "The principal's policy in the program he created by inviting us as residents who sell food at school to participate was unquestionably beneficial for us, as well as encouraging students at State Elementary School No. 42 Pekan Gedang Gedang to become more engaged in reading". Supporting the reading culture movement in schools required cooperation from all school members so that cooperation could run in accordance with the school's vision and mission; consequently, it required the principal's role as a policy maker to plan implementation efforts for success. reading was required in school (Asmawan, 2018).

2) Principal as Facilitator

Principal of Public Elementary School No. 42 Pekan Gedang not only provided students with access to a library, as it is also well-known that libraries play a crucial role in fostering a reading culture in schools by providing a collection of readings tailored to students' interests. In this instance, as the principal, he also created a reading corner that was as aesthetically pleasing as possible, so that students would be more enthusiastic about implementing a reading culture.

Article 4 of the Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 43 of 2007 regarding libraries explains that the library's purpose is to provide services to users, increase the love of reading, and broaden insight and knowledge in order to educate the nation's life. Reading is source of readers' inspiration, advantages, insight, and new knowledge. Reading was an important process in a student's academic life that leads to knowledge (Ögeyik & Akyay, 2009), so the habit of reading is the most crucial factor in creating an educated society (Palani, 2012). The existence of a library as the principal's initiative in creating a reading corner in each class for students is undoubtedly a contributing factor to the implementation of



the Jumpa Sinabu program (Friday morning: reciting Surah Yasin and reading books) at Public Elementary School No. 42 Pekan Gedang.

The Jumpa Sinabu program (Friday morning: reciting Surah Yasin and reading books) was directly led by students in grades 4, 5, and 6 on a rotating basis, under the supervision of the principal and teachers, according to a Friday schedule. Each student was required to select a title from a list of books provided by the officer. Each student selected a book of their interests, read in silence for approximately 30 minutes, and was then asked to raise his or her hand to discuss the book's title, content, characters, and themes.

3) Principal as Motivator

The principal must act as a motivator to realize an effective and efficient teaching and learning process, thereby achieving learning productivity and enhancing the quality of education. Leadership and management skills significantly impact school members' performance, particularly teachers and other education personnel (Mukhtar, 2015). In order to implement motivation effectively, it is necessary to understand the different types of motivation. Intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation are the forms of motivation. Intrinsic motivation is motivation that arises from within the individual himself, unaffected by external factors. Extrinsic motivation was motivation that existed because of external stimuli (Alfianis, 2014).

In order to implement a reading culture in schools, a principal's motivation can be viewed as a potential strength that is then transferred to students. Motivation, as defined by Kondalkar (2007) was passionate inner desire caused by needs, desires, and desires that encouraged an individual to use his physical and mental energy to attain his desired goals. The importance of the principal's motivation in implementing a reading culture in schools is undeniably crucial, as it can enhance the reading culture and increase students' comprehension. According to Sardiman A.M (2007)), a person's motivation characteristics were diligence in undertaking tasks, tenacity in overcoming obstacles, a preference for working independently, the ability to defend one's opinions, and a reluctance to give up easily on the results achieved.

Obviously, principals who lack motivation cannot perform their duties effectively. The principal hoped that by implementing the Jumpa Sinabu program (Friday morning: reciting Surah Yasin and reading books), the school he leads will be as competitive as other schools. According to the principal, the Jumpa Sinabu program is effectively acclimates students to active reading. Thus, the students were given the freedom to select the readings that they find most informative. Obviously, the expectation is that students at this school can compete with students from other schools.

In this case, the principal provided motivation to improve the quality of students. In addition to improving the teachers' in schools, the principal also incentivized students to be more active in reading. On the other hand, motivation is essential for the achievement of teacher performance or student learning achievement in order to reach a particular objective, which is school goals.

Conclusion

The conclusions obtained were that the leadership role of the principal of Public Elementary School No. 42 Pekan Gedang cannot be separated from his roles as a policymaker, a facilitator, and a motivator in implementing an effective reading culture in schools. To cultivate a reading culture among students, the principal created the Jumpa Sinabu program,



carried out every Friday morning before the start of school learning. In addition, the principal enlists the participation of teachers, staff, and even canteen residents who sell around the school to support the principal-designed program.

Recommendation

Based on the findings, although the students' reading proficiency have been improved by implementing the Jumba Sinabu program, it would be better if this program is implemented not only on Fridays but also blended in other days as well. The principal may also introduce this program to other schools to encourage students to develop a better reading habit and to encourage other principals to improve this issue.

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