
State Elementary School Principals as Opinion Leaders in The Disruptive Era

Kamaludin¹

Abstract

Principals play an important role in the development and improvement of the performance of teachers and educational staff at the individual level and organizational levels. Principal leadership must be structurally integrated within the organization. This is to ensure the achievement of the vision and mission set by the school. In the current era of digitalization, school principals not only play a role in inclusive, distributive leadership, and encourage leadership capacity building within schools but also play a role as opinion leaders. This study uses a qualitative approach with exploratory research. The main focus of research is the principal of public elementary schools as opinion leaders in the disruptive era. Principals of 15 public primary schools with at least five years of experience were the subject of this study. This research was conducted between May and August 2022. The research location is in Brebes Regency, Central Java. The results of the study show that the principal as an opinion leader is tasked with introducing innovations and through persuasive or coercive actions taking policies to accelerate the use of innovations in education.

Keywords: Principal, Opinion Leader, Disruptive Era

A. Introduction

The issue of leadership in the management of the education system is complex. This is because the role of the principal in making policies will determine the strategic actions taken to win the competition. In this regard, the policies taken by the principal must be obeyed and implemented by all school members. The policies taken have the potential to cause conflict both horizontally and vertically. This horizontal conflict can occur between teachers and teachers as well as teachers and educational staff. Meanwhile, this vertical conflict can occur between school principals and teachers or between school principals and education staff. In formulating these strategic actions, school principals must be able to formulate a shared vision and mission with all school members with various considerations of capabilities internally and externally (Leden, 2014; Project Tomorrow, 2018). Making decisions related to strategic steps by considering input from school members will have an impact on objective decisions, no longer subjective according to the perspective held by the school principal. This will also minimize conflicts of interest that can arise from school members when implementing school strategic actions.

The role of the school principal is fundamental in the current disruptive era in the development and improvement of the performance of teachers and education staff, both at the individual level and at the organizational level. This is because the current conditions are full of uncertainty. Changes so quickly appear in every segment of people's lives. This condition

¹ Cirebon Maritime Academy, Cirebon, Indonesia, kamaludin.abahrizka@gmail.com

full of uncertainty is generally referred to as the Disruptive Era (Leavy & Sterling, 2010; Kumaraswamy et al., 2018). The Disruption Era is a period when innovations replace old innovations, where these innovations are seen as limited to the development of creativity, but these innovations can gradually replace old innovations due to technological developments and the dynamics of societal needs (Clayton et al., 2011). The role of the principal in leading schools in the current Disruptive Era is very important. Changes in the order of life-based on digitalization technology are currently also occurring in school management. These changes require school members to have an adaptive capacity to current developments in digitalization technology. Adaptive power does not only require school members to have adequate competency improvements but also must be able to maintain moral character as a hallmark of an educational process.

Adaptive power requires school members to learn about new things related to the use of digitalization technology in the process of managing education in schools. Existing innovations need to be introduced and diffused so that every school member understands the benefits of using digitalization technology in creating the effectiveness and efficiency of the educational process. In this case, the role of the principal as an agent of change in innovation is needed. Digitalization technology changes the paradigm of teachers and students in the learning process (Shaffer et al., 2015; Håkansson Lindqvist & Pettersson, 2019). This new paradigm illustrates that the learning process does not have to be carried out in the classroom. Through the use of digitalization technology, learning can be done online, where teachers and students are connected in one room virtually. The use of digitalization technology requires clear regulation in its implementation in schools. The role of the school principal in this case is very central so that the use of digitalization technology can not only increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the learning process but also in its implementation is followed by adequate abilities from both the teacher and students' side to provide maximum results. Besides that, the use of digitalization technology must uphold ethics and morals from both the teacher's and students' side so that the nature of education as an effort is carried out to prepare students not only to provide knowledge but also to provide strong character values for students.

In the context of principal leadership in the 21st century, leadership for the 21st century must be inclusive, distributive, and encourage the building of leadership capacity (Rahimah & Ghavifekr, 2014). Increasing the leadership capacity of school principals is important to guarantee school quality, gain competitive advantage, keep abreast of the times, and changes that occur in the Disruptive Era. Understanding this, the school principal is not only a leader with inclusive, distributive abilities and capacity building. But also has the competence as an opinion leader in education management in schools. Innovation that is always present to create a competitive advantage for schools must be accompanied by the ability to diffuse innovation for teachers and education personnel both innovation in aspects of curriculum, processes, infrastructure, and assessment.

Leadership in the 21st century must be structurally integrated. This is to ensure the achievement of the vision and mission set by the school. Structurally integrated into this case, namely the principal as a leader in the school must be able to integrate the entire vision and mission of each unit within the school. This leadership integration is intended so that the vision and mission of each school unit have synergy with the vision and mission of the school, this will have an impact on reducing conflicts of interest internally within the school. Through this

integrated leadership, the position of the school has internal strength in facing competition in the current very dynamic Disruptive Era.

B. Methods

This study uses a qualitative approach. Qualitative research aims to explore and understand meaning related to social problems that are owned by several individuals or groups of people (Creswell, 2016). Principals of public elementary schools as opinion leaders in the disruptive era are the main focus of this research. Principals of 15 public primary schools with at least five years of experience were the subject of this study. This research was conducted from May to April 2022. The location is in Brebes Regency, Central Java. Determination of informants using a purposive sampling strategy. Data collection was carried out through interviews, observation, and documentation in this study. Collecting data in this study through observation accompanied by in-depth interviews and also conducted literature studies to ensure the validity of the research data obtained by researchers. Qualitative research data were analyzed through the stages of data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion.

C. Findings and Discussion

The results of this study show that school principals in the current disruptive era have a role as opinion leaders. The principal as an opinion leader is tasked with introducing innovations and through persuasive or coercive actions taking policies to accelerate the use of innovations in education.

21st-century leadership requires school principals to have a type of leadership that is inclusive, distributive, and encourages the building of leadership capacity within schools. Inclusive leadership in this case means that the principal positions himself as a leader for every school member without exception by providing understanding and respect for the differences that exist within the school (Carmeli et al., 2010; Workman-Stark, 2017; Randel et al., 2018). Differences within the organization are things that happen, these differences are related to perspectives, policies, interests, and how to address a problem. Principals must be able to understand the differences that have the potential to cause this split to become a synergy that complements one another. Inclusive leaders present a shared understanding for school members, that the differences that exist within the organization are something that needs to be appreciated and become a characteristic that needs to be directed into something positive to achieve school goals.

Distributive leadership provides an understanding that leadership exists at all levels in schools and requires an integration of all levels to achieve the predetermined vision and mission of the school (Hatcher, 2005; Harris & Spillane, 2008; Lumby, 2013). The principal is the leader in the school, the teacher is the leader in the learning process, and the education staff is the leader in their respective units. The principal in carrying out his duties and functions in leading the school distributes leadership to the subordinates. This distribution of leadership is related to the implementation of the duties and functions of teachers and education staff in carrying out their job specifications so that they are following the direction of the principal and the goals to be achieved by the school. In this distributive leadership, the principal plays a role in supervising the implementation of every authority and responsibility possessed by teachers in carrying out their duties and functions as leaders in the learning

process and education staff in carrying out their duties and functions in leading their respective work units.

The principal encourages the building of leadership capacity within the school, meaning here that the principal supports all the potential of the school community to be able to develop and increase their capacity to carry out work through a learning process. In this regard, the school principal should facilitate every activity to increase the competency and capacity of teachers, students, and education staff. Increasing the competence of teachers and education staff will affect the improvement of the quality of learning and the quality of services provided to students so this will have an impact on increasing the competence of students.

In this regard, the concept of the principal as an effective leader has two basic thoughts, namely creating a competitive advantage for schools and creating effective schools. In creating a competitive advantage for schools, the principal puts forward a joint process and perspective for all school members in achieving the goals to be achieved by the school. The process in this case is not only related to improving the quality and services provided by teachers and education staff in the learning process for students. But also increasing competence through the learning process for all, namely for school principals, teachers, education staff, students, and school committees. This is important as a holistic form of integration in creating a competitive advantage for schools in providing bargaining power for users in today's intense competition. In creating an effective school, the principal ensures an increase in professional standards in dealing with changes and challenges that arise outside the school in the Disruptive Era. This is important because in the current Disruptive Era, the use of digitalization technology is fundamental in carrying out school governance so that it can be carried out effectively according to the changes and demands of the times (Sainger, 2018). The use of digitalization technology will make every process in school management easier, not only more effective but also more efficient, fast, accountable, and easy to control. However, the use of digitalization technology is carried out by balancing the impact of globalization with local wisdom so that ethics and morals are maintained.

Furthermore, the concept of the principal as a strategic thinker is a concept in which the principal thinks of ways to make the school be at the forefront but still preserve the culture they have. To make the school a leader, the principal must have good strategic management (Seong & Ho, 2012). This strategic management begins with establishing a shared vision and mission with all school members, then considering the weaknesses and strengths of the school internally as well as the opportunities and challenges from the school's external environment. These considerations are adjusted to the short and long-term goals of the school to formulate strategic steps to be taken. The strategic steps that have been taken will be evaluated as preparation for determining policies in the next period. Apart from that, to make schools at the forefront, school principals must have adaptive, collaborative, and innovative abilities in utilizing technological advances and in responding to changes that are very fast occurring in competition in the current Disruptive Era.

The role of the school principal in the decentralized education system in the current disruptive era is to become an opinion leader. In this opinion leader, the principal has the role of guiding to prepare school members to face the dynamic times and empower the potential of school members. In this regard, the principal is tasked with introducing innovations so that they can be implemented by all school members either through persuasive or coercive actions through the authority possessed by the principal in making policies to accelerate the use of

innovation. In other words, the school principal through his authority can create a school culture that is adaptive to current developments in educational innovation.

Besides that, the principal as an opinion leader carries out the empowerment process for all school members. Empowerment is an effort by school principals to improve and develop the potential of school members (Piotrowski, 2006; Bektas & Sohrabifard, 2013). This empowerment can be done in various ways. For teachers and education staff, empowerment can be carried out through education and training, training, pedagogic guidance, career guidance, as well as national and international seminars. Empowerment can be done through extracurricular activities, tutoring, training, and training for students. Empowerment for all school members is the duty and authority of the school principal in creating strength internally within the organization in facing challenges and seizing opportunities in the external environment that is experiencing rapid changes in the current Disruptive Era and to create school competitive advantages competition in the field of educational services.

D. Conclusion

The findings in this study indicate that school principals do not only play a role in inclusive and distributive leadership, and encourage leadership capacity building within schools but also play a role as opinion leaders. In this regard, the role of school principals is very important in the development and improvement of the performance of teachers and educational staff at the individual level and organizational levels in the current disruptive era. the principal as an opinion leader is tasked with introducing innovations and through persuasive or coercive actions taking policies to accelerate the use of innovations in education.

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