Professional Competence in School Leadership: Reflections on Implementation in *Penggerak* School

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Abstrak

Kepala sekolah adalah seorang guru yang bertanggung jawab memimpin dan mengelola sekolah untuk meningkatkan kualitas pendidikan. Dalam implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka, kepala sekolah harus memiliki kompetensi profesional dalam kepemimpinan, karena hal ini akan mempengaruhi pengambilan keputusan dalam kepemimpinan sekolah, sehingga memfasilitasi transformasi pembelajaran yang berpusat pada siswa. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi refleksi diri mengenai kompetensi profesional kepala sekolah dalam kepemimpinan sekolah pada Program Gerakan Sekolah di Kota Surakarta dan Kabupaten Klaten. Model kompetensi profesional kepala sekolah merupakan unsur penting dalam implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka, sebagaimana diatur dalam Peraturan Direktur Jenderal (Perjen) Nomor 7327 Tahun 2023 tentang Model Kompetensi Kepala Sekolah. Desain penelitian yang digunakan adalah model penelitian kualitatif untuk menggambarkan pencapaian kompetensi profesional kepala sekolah dalam memimpin sekolah. Sampel ditentukan menggunakan sampling purposif, yaitu kepala sekolah di sekolah-sekolah yang berpartisipasi dalam Program Gerakan Sekolah, terdiri dari tiga sekolah di Kota Surakarta dan tujuh sekolah di Kabupaten Klaten. Teknik analisis data yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah analisis tematik, yang mengidentifikasi tema atau pola dalam data yang diperoleh melalui wawancara dan jurnal reflektif. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa dalam implementasi kompetensi profesional, kepala sekolah mampu mencapai tingkat ahli dan kompeten.

Kata kunci: *kompetensi profesional kepala sekolah, kepala sekolah, kepemimpinan sekolah, penggerak sekolah.*

Abstract

The principal is a teacher with the responsibility of leading and managing a school to improve the quality of education. In the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, principals must possess professional competencies in leadership, as this will influence decision-making in school leadership, thereby facilitating a student-centered learning transformation. This study aims to explore self-reflections on the professional competencies of school principals in school leadership at the School Movement Program in Surakarta City and Klaten Regency. The professional competency model for school principals is an essential element in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, as outlined in the Perdirjen Regulation No. 7327 of 2023 on the Model of School Principal Competencies. The research design used is a qualitative research model to describe the achievement of professional competencies of school principals in leading schools. The sample was determined using purposive sampling, namely school principals in schools participating in the School Movement Program, consisting of three schools in Surakarta City and seven schools in Klaten Regency. The data analysis technique used in this study employs thematic analysis, which identifies themes or patterns in the data obtained through interviews and reflective journals. The results of this study indicate that in the implementation of professional competencies, school principals are able to achieve expert, competent level.

Keywords: the principal's professional competencies, school principal, school leadership, penggerak school.

Introduction

The 2025-2045 National Long-Term Development Plan (RPJPN) contains the vision of Indonesia Emas 2045, which focuses on realizing Indonesia as a sovereign, advanced, and sustainable archipelagic county (RPJPN, n.d.) . One of the missions is social transformation through improving the quality and equity of education. One element of education to achieve this goal is the successful implementation of the MERDEKA Curriculum. One intervention in the MERDEKA curriculum is the strengthening of school human resources. The strengthening of school human resources is carried out for school members, including principals, supervisors, school inspectors, and teachers, through intensive mentoring by expert trainers facilitated by the government (Directorate General of Early Childhood Education, Primary and Secondary Education, 2021) -

Leadership transformation in schools plays a crucial role in the implementation of the MERDEKA curriculum. The success of the implementation of the MERDEKA curriculum cannot be separated from the ability of school leaders to inspire, motivate, and empower the entire school community. Leadership transformation can be seen when superiors and subordinates develop their level of morality and motivation (Burns, 2004) - School principals must recognize the needs and potential of each teacher and provide opportunities for them to develop according to their uniqueness.

Fred (Korthagen, 2005) states that teacher education is shifting towards a more realistic approach by linking it to new perspectives on the intrapersonal sources of teacher behavior, including the irrational and unconscious aspects of a teacher's role. This clarifies' the important role of reflection. A teacher who serves as a principal can reflect on previous experiences. The experiences and situations that a leader has gone through will influence how decisions are made in leadership.

School leadership encompasses various dimensions that reflect the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and practices necessary for effective leadership in an academic environment at school Based on the Regulation of the Director General of Teachers and Educational Personnel of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Rewarch, and Technology Number 7327 of 2023 concerning the Competency Model for School Principals. There are three competency models for school principals, one of which is professional competency. The professional competency of school principals includes three main indicators, namely (1) Development of the Vision and Learning Culture of the Education Unit, (2) Student-Centered Learning Leadership, and (3) Effective, Transparent, and Accountable Management of Education Unit Resources.

However, in carrying out their roles as school principals, the principals participating in the 2nd Batch of the 2022-2025 School Activator Program, consisting of 4 schools in Surakarta City and 3 schools in Klaten Regency, have not yet conducted a reflective assessment of their professional competency achievements. There are five levels of master of Principal Professional Competencies in school leadership for each competency indicator, namely level 1 (Understanding Competency Mastery Level), level 2 (Basic Competency Mastery Level), level 3 (Intermediate Competency Mastery Level), level 4 (Proficient Competency Mastery Level), and level 5 (Expert). This reflective assessment aims to explore the extent to which a principal has implemented professional competency

so that the principal can develop and improve their professional competency to realize the transformation of educational quality in schools.

Many relevant studies on the professional competencies of school principals have been conducted by previous researchers. For example, Rahayuningsh et al conducted a study on efforts to improve the competencies of school principals at Sekolah Penggerak in Nganjul Regency. Harumurti et al also conducted a study on academic supervision in efforts to develop the professional competencies of early childhood teachers, and Novitasari et al. conducted a study on the professional competencies of early childhood teachers in Ciledug City. However, no research has been found on the reflection of the professional competency achievements of school principals in schools that are members of the Penggeral School in PAUD institutions, particularly in Surakarta City and Klaten Regency.

The development of a school's vision cannot be separated from the influence of the transformative learning theory initiated by Jack Mezirow. Mezirow argues that adults will experience a catalyst that causes them to question their worldview, leading to fundamental changes in the way they view the world (Kitchenham, 2012) . A principal must be able to become a learning leader who can encourage innovation and creativity development in schools, organize teachers in implementing learning in accordance with the principles of independent curriculum learning. In addition, principals must be proactive in developing their professional competencies independently as a learning culture in schools. This will encourage principals and teachers to develop themselves. Principals also have an important role in leading student-centered learning.

Methodology

This research was conducted using qualitative methods. Qualitative methods aim to collect and analyze descriptive data to obtain data about the social reality of individuals. including understanding their attitudes, beliefs, and motivations. Key informants in this study were selected using purposive sampling, namely people who understand the situation and topics relevant to the study, namely pancipals at Penggerak Schools. Principals at Penggeral Schools are required to have professional competencies in carrying out their duties. Data collection was carried out using interviews and reflective journals at four schools in Surakarta City and three schools in Klaten Regency, which currently have the status of Penggerak Schools. Thematic analysis is the basis of the qualitative analysis

method (Nowell et al., 2017) used in this study. Thematic analysis is applied to texts, such as interviews and transcripts (Caulfield, 2023) . The data analysis technique, was carried out using an inductive process, starting with transcribing the data, selecting keywords, coding, developing themes, conceptualizing based on the interpretation of keywords, codes, and themes, and developing a conceptual model (Naeem et al., 2023). The researcher assigned code A to the first school, B to the second school, C to the third school, D to the fourth school, E to the fifth school, F to the sixth school, and G to the seventh school.

Result and Discussion

The findings in this study can be categorized into three themes aligned with the indicators of professional competence for school principals in school leadership. These indicators include the Development of Vision and Learning Culture in Educational Units, Student-Centered Learning Leadership, and Effective, Transparent, and Accountable Management of Educational Unit Resources. The participants in this study were principals at pilot schools that had implemented the independent curriculum. The principals were required to have professional competence in their leadership.

Development of the Vision and Learning Culture of the Educational Unit

Vision and learning culture refer to the goals of the institution itself. Principals need to build a shared vision, which is to create a common understanding of the goals and aspirations of the institution (Senge, 2006). Schools play an important role as organizations that continuously develop through collective experience and knowledge. Table 1 shows data from principals' statements regarding indicators of the development of the vision and learning culture of educational units.

Tabel 1. Analysis of indicators for vision and learning culture development in education institutions.

Statements	Kata Kunci
Analyzing factors that influence the implementation of vision and learning culture development [A1]	Identification
Able to analyze the needs of the institution and the factors that influence the learning culture in schools [B1]	Identification
The principal invites colleagues to evaluate the implementation of KOSP that has-been carned out and plan for future KOSP based on the evaluation findings [C1]	KOSP Evaluation
Conduct an evaluation of the implementation of KOSP from planning to	KOSP Evaluation

Statements	Kata Kunci
completion so that the characteristics of the institution with its specific features are apparent D1	
Evaluate the revised vision and mission in line with the updated KOSP that has been developed.	KOSP Evaluation
Encourage the sharing of best practices through PMM and evaluate [E1]	
Sharing and coaching with classroom teachers regarding ongoing teaching and learning activities F11	Sharing & Coaching KBM
Development of the vision and learning culture of the educational unit [G1]	Development of learning vision and culture

Developing a shared vision involves all parties and requires commitment Organizational learning theory states that in developing an educational vision, there needs to be joint development, collaboration between school members, and viewing the school as an interconnected system (Senge, 2006) . Efforts to develop a vision and learning culture in educational units are carried out by the principal by identifying factors that can strengthen the learning culture in educational units. The principal also evaluates the KOSP that has been compiled in the curriculum document so that development can be carried out and KBM sharing and coaching can be conducted at the school. Thus, in terms of the indicator of vision and learning culture development in the educational unit, the principal has been able to evaluate his/her leadership by involving the members of the educational unit so as to achieve level 4 or the competent level.

Learner-Centered Learning Leadership

Willing to develop, reflect on, and improve learning in pilot schools are facilitated through the Learning Community program. A learning community is a group of educators and educational staff in a school who learn together and collaborate regularly with clear and measurable goals to improve the quality of learning so that it has an impact on student learning outcomes (Director General of Teachers and Educational Personnel, Ministry of Education and Culture, 2022). The school principal plays a role in initiating, regulating, and facilitating the needs of the learning community. Table 2 presents an analysis of student-centered learning indicators.

Table 2. Analysis of learner-centered learning indicators

Statement	Keyword
Guiding peers by identifying teachers' needs through training and	Identifying teachers'

Statement	Keyword
professional development [A2]	needs
Evaluating student learning outcomes after completing classroom activities [B2]	Learning evaluation
Able to evaluate teacher performance related to student-centered learning in the classroom [C2]	Teacher performance evaluation
The principal conducts monitoring of both teaching and learning and institutional aspects [D2.1]	Teaching and Learning Monitoring
Recording the shortcomings and strengths of the learning process that has been carried out, then improving areas that are not yet optimal so that learning is truly student-centered [D2.2]	
The principal provides scheduled guidance to teachers [E2]	Teacher Guidance
Student-centered leadership [F2]	Leadership
Learning leadership cultivates child-centered design, planning, implementation and assessment [G2.1]	Leadership, peer guidance
Guiding internal and external colleagues to create child-centered learning though collaboration [G2.2]	

The principal identifies teachers' needs, evaluates their performance, and monitors teaching and learning activities. This is followed by coaching [F1] [G2.2] for teachers with the aim of helping them explore the problems they face. Teachers often find it difficult to express their feelings and explore the root causes of problems encountered in learning. Coaching activities provide teachers with the opportunity to find the root causes of problems through questions posed by the principal. Thus, the principal, in student-centered learning leadership, has reached level 5 (Expert, which is the ability to mentor peers in the application of student-centered learning leadership.

Effective, Transparent, and Accountable Management of Educational Unit Resources

Collaboration in learning is included in the social constructivism paradigm, which emphasizes the importance of social interaction in cognitive development. According to Lev Vygostsky, utilizing the surrounding environment, such as people, culture, and experiences in that environment, is very important in learning (Tamrin et al., 2011) - Table 3 presents an analysis of indicators of educational unit resource management.

Table 3. Analysis of indicators for managing educational unit resources

Statement	Keyword
Evaluate educational unit resources effectively, transparently, and	Resource evaluation

accountably by conducting guided selection [A3]	
The principal evaluates the use of existing infrastructure [B3]	Evaluation facilities and infrastructure
The principal conducts evaluations at specific times/ at the end of each semester for each PIC [C3]	PIC evaluation
At the end of the month, will be held special meeting for the principal, vice principal, and finance department, and at the end of the semester is also will be reported [D3]	Monthly meetings
Effective, transparent, and accountable management of educational unit resources [E3]	Resource Management
Evaluating the implementation and management of educational unit resources by jointly reviewing the budget, PBD, and incorporating them into transparent, effective, and accountable ARKAS & RKKS planning [F3]	Resource evaluation
Able to utilize existing resources in schools and the surrounding environment effectively [G3]	Resource utilization

As a manager, the principal must be able to explore the potential, manage, and utilize the resources available in the educational unit. The principal evaluates the resources, facilities and infrastructure, and the persons in charge at the school through monthly meetings. The principal's reflection on resource management in the educational unit shows a competent level (level 4).

Interpretations

The PENGGERAK schools in Surakarta City and Klaten Regency developechheir vision and learning culture by first conducting an initial analysis of the institution's needs [A1]. The analysis of the school's condition at the beginning of the implementation of the independent curriculum included an analysis of the characteristics of the school, the environment, human resources [A2], SDK, and other contextual elements. This analysis is outlined in a curriculum document called the School Driver Operational Curriculum (KOSP). The principal periodically evaluates the KOSP. The evaluation covers the relevance of the vision and mission [E1] and their development [G1]

The KOSP document contains an overview of classroom learning implementation, which is then translated into operational terms in the learning planning document. The principal identifies the competency development needed for teachers [A2] in an effort to support and improve the quality of learning. The principal supports the implementation of a program for sharing [F1] learning problems [B2][D2.1][D2.2], which is currently

facilitated through a learning community. The learning community is participated in by the entire school community, each of whom can coach each other to find the root causes of problems in learning [F1][E2]. In addition to the learning community, there is also a regularly held school Program Management Office (PMO) activity [D3]. Figure 1 shows an overview of school community activities in the PMO.

Figure: PMO implementation at one of the Penggerak Schools in April

PMO activities are carried out regularly, covering discussion materials on school planning issues, implementation and evaluation of the MERDEKA curriculum. Figure 2 presents examples of discussions topics in PMO

Figure 2. Sample of PMO discussion materials

Closing

Based on the results of the reflection, the principal has professional competence in carrying out his leadership at various levels. The principal has achieved a high level of competence (level 4) in developing the vision and learning culture of the educational unit and managing educational unit resources effectively, transparently, and accountably. In their ability to provide learner-centered leadership, school principals have achieved an expert level of competency. Thus, the results of the school principals' reflection can be used to develop their professional competencies in school leadership and to support the *SEKOLAH PENGGERAK* programs.

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