

## INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP: THE ROLE OF SCHOOL PRINCIPALS IN ELEVATING TEACHER PERFORMANCE IN SMAN 13 BANJARMASIN

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### ABSTRACT

This research investigates the role of instructional leadership in enhancing teacher professionalism at SMAN 13 Banjarmasin, a prominent high school in Indonesia. Amid significant educational transformations driven by the Ministry of Education and Culture's Strategic Plan (2015-2019), the study emphasizes the necessity of effective leadership in improving academic standards and student outcomes. Utilizing a descriptive qualitative approach, data were collected through interviews, observations, and document reviews to explore the dynamics between instructional leadership and teacher development. Findings reveal that the principal's proactive strategies, including fostering collaboration among teachers, implementing professional development programs, and adapting to challenges such as the shift to online learning during the pandemic, significantly contribute to enhancing educational quality. However, challenges persist, including issues related to teacher discipline and administrative documentation. The study concludes that effective instructional leadership is crucial for continuous improvement in educational quality, advocating for ongoing research and development in this area to meet the demands of the 21st century. By focusing on both teacher professionalism and student achievement, the principal at SMAN 13 Banjarmasin exemplifies the vital role of leadership in fostering a supportive and effective learning environment.

**Keywords:** instructional leadership, school improvement, principal leadership, teacher professionalism.

### INTRODUCTION

Indonesian education has gone through some critical transformations, especially during the implementation of the Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Education and Culture for 2015-2019, which intended to ensure that educational systems in Indonesia treat, facilitate, and encourage learners to become responsible, creative, and innovative independent learners. It aims to create an individual who loves to learn and has a highly developed capacity for learning to make them adaptable and responsive towards new challenges (Kemendikbud, 2015). These ambitious educational objectives cannot be realized without defining some academic standards on which to base the management of education, more so in elementary schools, as many are the times students achieve very low levels in the national examinations and international tests such as PISA and TIMSS as reported by Pritchett (2015).

In the light of these challenges, the concept of instructional leadership has emerged as a critical factor in improving academic standards in schools. Schools are formal educational institutions where teaching and learning activities are conducted to achieve educational goals (Murtiningsih et al., 2019). While there may be conflicting views regarding the exact nature of the responsibilities attributed to instructional leadership, one view shared is that there exist specific management functions of principals of schools that greatly contribute to teaching and learning (Christie in Toprakçı et al., 2016). To begin with, leadership itself involves the process of directing and influencing subordinates to undertake certain objectives (Rahmadoni, 2018). Research by Lunenburg (2010) emphasizes that the instructional leadership of school principals



significantly influences school improvement processes and the effectiveness of schools in general.

Today, school principals must deal with more challenges in carrying out their daily activities compared to any other period in history (Komalasari et al., 2020). Improvement in the quality of learning within a school is the shared responsibility of teachers and school leaders. This good practice promotes learning and success of all students, and has therefore become the major responsibility of any principal. This is achieved through attention to learning, collaboration, use of data to further improve learning, support, and alignment of curriculum, assessment, and instruction. Effective school management is highly supported by strong leadership (Shofwani et al., 2017). Hence, instructional leadership should be appropriately implemented in the Indonesian context. Studies have shown that a principal's use of instructional leadership can make a significant difference in students' learning outcomes. Hallinger and Leithwood, as cited by Kusmintardjo, (2014) confirm the long-recognized potential of instructional leadership in influencing the enhancement of teacher professionalism regarding one's responsibility for school improvement towards increasing the quality of learning.

Professionalism is quite an urgent necessity, especially amid great competition in the globalized era. It is expected that teachers increase their professionalism so that educational institutions are able to produce a generation that can compete in the workforce. Human resources need to be equipped with skills in information technology to become professional educators (Rahmadoni, 2018). According to Barber and Wallace (2010), school leadership has become increasingly critical in the light of international trends toward devolving school management to the school level in the 21st century. This in learning, the school principals have a very important role to play in enhancing the learning effectiveness for the success of all students.

Principals must be able to implement innovations, guide their staff, and lead the school as an educational organization through a shift in mindset, enhancing the vision and mission by leveraging the talents, skills, and abilities of their members (Andriani et al., 2018). As leaders, principals possess the authority and policy-making power to improve the quality of education. Bossert et al. (2013) defined instructional leadership as the actions and strategies principals take to influence the instructional organization of the school and the learning climate to improve student learning outcomes. It is termed "instructional" because the principal's role revolves around managerial functions related to coordinating and controlling the curriculum and instruction.

The components of instructional leadership are framing school goals, communicating those goals, supervising and evaluating instruction, coordinating the curriculum, monitoring student progress, promoting professional development, and providing incentives for learning. By considering the above framework, the researcher has conducted the study on transformational and instructional leadership at SMAN 13 Banjarmasin. It is an accredited A school with a total of a thousand students. It is a popular school in the community because it is one of the favored schools with a great history of quality education.

From the observations made by the researcher, the leadership and management by the principal in enhancing quality have been commendable, though challenges remain to make the overall quality of graduates meet the established targets. Effective leadership and quality management can be understood by how the school adapted to the pandemic by changing its face-to-face learning to online instruction. The principal also guided the teachers in using new media, mainly for older teachers, while keeping the quality of teaching intact even on online learning. Extracurricular programs include band and vocal training, basketball, nature lovers' clubs, journalism, photography, and scientific research for youth, among others. The purpose



of these programs is to facilitate an all-round education system that does not end at academic achievement but helps students involve themselves in activities that enrich their skills and personalities.

In the final analysis, instructional leadership for Indonesian high schools, therefore, and more specifically that of SMAN 13 Banjarmasin, is key to improving academic achievement and student performance. The principal's adapting to challenges, promoting collaboration amongst teachers, and maintaining a learning focus on students are prerequisites for continuous improvement in educational quality. As the educational landscape continues to change, effective instructional leadership will continue to become more important, which means that research and development in this area must be continuous to help schools meet the demands of the 21st century and provide students with the preparation needed for success.

In the context of instructional leadership, school principals act directly to enhance teacher professionalism through their managerial functions, particularly academic supervision. Improvement in learning quality is a direct product of the mechanisms through which principals enact their instructional leadership roles in influencing teacher professionalism by way of guidance, oversight, and development of teaching activities. Professional teachers bear social responsibilities that are manifested through their competencies within the social environment, as well as their effective interactive abilities (Fitria et al., 2019). Hence, instructional leadership quality of the principal is significant in the move to improve teacher professionalism if only the principal is able to effectively carry out curriculum implementation, function as designer of academic standards, and formulate educational programs, including school curricula adjusted to students' needs.

According to the National Department of Education and Culture, a professional teacher has to be in possession of ten competencies. These include the following competencies: (1) the ability to plan lessons; (2) the ability to manage the teaching and learning process; (3) the ability to manage the classroom; (4) mastery of educational foundations; (5) the ability to manage learning interactions; (6) the ability to assess student learning achievements; (7) the ability to provide guidance services; (8) the ability to perform classroom and school administration; and (9) the ability to understand and interpret research results for teaching purposes.

Furthermore, the Ministerial Regulation No. 16 of 2007 regarding Academic Qualification Standards and Teacher Competencies explains that professional competencies for teachers encompass: (1) mastery of the material, structure, concepts, and scientific thinking patterns that support the subjects taught; (2) mastery of competency standards and basic competencies of the subjects or fields of development taught; (3) the ability to creatively develop the teaching material; (4) the ability to continuously develop professionalism through reflective actions; and (5) the ability to utilize information and communication technology for communication and self-development.

To improve the quality of learning, a primary school teacher should have professional competencies. According to Isjoni (2013), in order to improve the quality of education in primary schools, the presence of professional teachers is needed. A professional teacher is defined as one who can generate high-quality outputs from students, even those who have low input. Thus, strategies for improving the quality of learning should be conducted by the teachers because these strategies will play a big role in educational quality. Competencies held by teachers in their fields of specialization will positively influence students' understanding of the subject matter. Lian (2020) explained that when motivated by supportive factors, the teacher is interested in participating in tasks or activities and then implementing them well.

According to Prestiadi et al (2019), the meaning of quality is something made perfectly without exception. Products with high quality have value and prestige in the eyes of their owners. The term quality is similar in meaning to high standard or peak quality. Therefore, Copyright (c) 2024 MANAJERIAL: Jurnal Inovasi Manajemen dan Supervisi Pendidikan



qualified human resources can only be realized if produced by quality education. Quality education is one that can develop the positive potentials that are still hidden in students.

Based on the above understanding, it is quite reasonable to say that the instructional leadership of school principals contributes to the improvement of learning quality through teacher professionalism. The quality of learning desired shall not be confined to the quantitative improvement of academic achievements alone but also should be regarded as a state, condition, performance, or behavior depicted by educators within educational units in the pursuit of attaining established learning objectives, interaction with the environment, and satisfaction of students. This holistic approach to instructional leadership emphasizes the importance of fostering an environment where both teachers and students can thrive, ultimately leading to improved educational outcomes.

## **METHOD**

This research is conducted to study and analyze the instructional leadership role of the principal in developing teacher professionalism at SMA 13 Banjarmasin. The research is particularly relevant in the context of the evolving educational landscape in Indonesia, where the quality of teaching is paramount to achieving educational goals and improving student outcomes. The study has adopted a descriptive qualitative approach that will enable the researcher to explore the dynamics between instructional leadership and teacher professionalism in great depth. This methodology is appropriate for educational research as it offers rich, contextual insights into the practices and perceptions of educators and school leaders.

The methods of data gathering in this research encompass interviews, documentation, observation, and review of the literature. In this regard, a series of interviews will be made to the principal, teachers, and all other relevant stakeholders to obtain information relative to the impact that such instructional leadership has caused towards teaching practices and professional enhancement (Kang and Hwang, 2021). Such interviews will yield qualitative statements representative of the views expressed by active participants in this regard.

These would include documentation of school records and related programs on professional development, with any existing policies on instructional leadership and teacher professionalism serving as a backdrop to contextualize these findings within the broader framework of the school's operational practices in response to goals of education. Observations will be conducted in the classroom in order to assess the implementations of instructional strategies and how the teachers interact with their students, thereby providing an applied view of how the leadership influences teaching effectiveness.

The literature review will provide support for the research by offering theoretical frameworks and past research on instructional leadership and teacher professionalism. This will set the basis for understanding the significance of the principal's role in fostering a professional learning environment.

The analysis of data will be done in different stages, which include data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing and verification. Data will first be collected using the above-mentioned methods. It will then be reduced through filtering out irrelevant and redundant information. The data is then organized and presented coherently, showing key themes and patterns emerging from the research. Conclusions will then be drawn from the analyzed data, and verification of reliability and validity will be performed. This will be done by cross-checking information from different sources and going back to the participants to verify whether the interpretations are accurate.

The expected outcomes of the present research are to gain an insight into how the instructional leadership practices in SMAN 13 Banjarmasin support or hinder the professional



development of its teachers. It is expected that the findings will provide clear strategies that the principal at the school has used to promote teacher professionalism, such as in-service training, collaborative school culture, and effective supervision.

Eventually, it aims to provide useful insights into the informing of educational policy and practice with particular reference to enhancing the quality of teachers in Indonesian schools. In general, the research will aim at underlining the important contribution of instructional leadership, so it will add to the debate about school improvement and the professionalization of teaching in Indonesia.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Principal Instructional Leadership Analysis**

Instructional leadership is a model of school leadership that emphasizes improving student achievement and academic quality rather than merely managing administrative tasks (Heaven and Bourne, 2016). At SMAN 13 Banjarmasin, the principal plays a crucial role in fostering an environment that prioritizes learning and teaching excellence. This leadership style requires the principal to effectively manage school resources, ensuring that every aspect of the educational process is geared towards enhancing student outcomes.

The principal of SMAN 13 Banjarmasin knows very well that to implement any instructional strategy smoothly, there must be effective communication and coordination among the facilitators or teachers themselves. By prioritizing all teaching staff in understanding the development of school objectives, he aligns school goals in conformity with present-day needs of education. Indeed, making all teachers participatory agents ensures not only the ownership of their vision for the school but also creates an opportunity to make productive inputs towards realizing the very vision and mission.

Regular meetings are an integral part of the principal's strategy in terms of maintaining open lines of communication. These meetings, conducted on a weekly or bi-weekly basis, provide a platform for reviewing school activities and discussing the progress of different educational initiatives. The principal encourages and solicits the views of the teachers regarding every important decision, as their opinion is considered an integral part of the decision-making process. This approach not only guarantees better quality in educational programs but also builds up the professional community within the school.

The principal uses an array of assessment tools in monitoring the progress of students, including tests and performance evaluations, which provide valuable data about student learning outcomes and further point out areas of needed improvement. Through analysis of these data, the principal makes decisions about instructional practices and the apportionment of resources to keep the school ever-changing and geared toward meeting the needs of its students.

One of the most important aspects of instructional leadership at SMAN 13 Banjarmasin is the commitment to the development of teacher professionalism. The principal provides a number of professional development activities to equip teachers with the skills and knowledge needed to perform their duties effectively. These include workshops, training sessions, and collaborative planning meetings that are intended to develop a culture of continuous improvement among the teaching staff.

Recognition and appreciation of teachers' contributions are also part and parcel of the principal's style of leadership. The recognition of hard work and commitment to work by educators propels them to strive for excellence in their teaching practices. This is further extended to the students through the offering of awards and scholarships to those who perform exemplarily and show great commitment to their studies. Such initiatives not only raise morale but also foster a positive learning environment that motivates all stakeholders to pursue academic success.



According to Logho in his journal, instructional leadership plays a very important role in developing a school environment that maximizes student achievement. The principal has set up programs in SMAN 13 Banjarmasin such as monthly motivational sessions conducted by class teachers to help inspire the students and give them whatever help they may need. Other programs involve the development of special needs students through specific activities, ensuring that no learner is left behind in terms of attention and resource allocation. The quality of education at SMAN 13 Banjarmasin is closely linked to the effectiveness of the principal's leadership and the teaching practices employed by educators. The principal's ability to lead and inspire teachers directly impacts the overall educational outcomes of the school (Day et al, 2016). Therefore, the principal has to continuously evaluate and improve the professional development of teachers by updating their growth according to the changing needs of the school and the educational landscape as a whole.

It therefore calls for the principal to be proactive in professional development planning, identifying the needs of the teachers and the school as a whole, besides being updated on current trends and best practices in education. The principal can only develop a strategic plan for professional growth if he ensures that the teachers are equipped with the relevant skills that will enhance instructional practice for the betterment of student learning. In addition, the principal should consider individual teacher development. The principal will be able to understand the needs and aspirations of each educator and provide professional development opportunities that match personal and school goals. This will create an enabling environment where teachers feel supported and empowered to pursue their professional development. As stated by Lunenburg and Ornstein (2021), human resource management in education involves planning, recruitment, selection, professional development, performance evaluation, and compensation. Professional development is necessary because it upgrades the level of knowledge and skills both for the present and future jobs. The three major steps in professional development include development needs assessment, training, and evaluations as stated by Day et al (2016).

At SMAN 13 Banjarmasin, the principal also views professional development as a continuous process. For this reason, training needs are assessed frequently and the provided training is further updated toward teachers' and students' interests. In doing so, a culture of ongoing learning enables the principal not only to achieve better quality within education but also prepares the teachers for an increasingly competitive future in education.

In summary, instructional leadership at SMAN 13 Banjarmasin is characterized by an important emphasis on the improvement of academic quality and student achievement. The commitment of the principal to effective communication, collaboration, and professional development supports a very enabling environment where both teachers and students have an opportunity to be empowered. The principal ensures that the school remains committed to fostering a culture of excellence in education by focusing on instructional practices rather than administrative tasks. This holistic approach increases learners' satisfaction with learning and professional communities, which in turn develops professionalism, leading to improved education quality.

### Challenges and Strategies

The pursuit of improving teacher quality at SMAN 13 Banjarmasin is multifaceted and presents various challenges to navigate. The principal himself, the leader of this educational institution, finds several obstacles from different perspectives that stand in the way of effective, quality-enhancing programs. In addition, there are obstacles with teacher discipline, commitments toward the quality improvement activity, punctuality in lessons, and preparedness before performing instructional duties. Specifically, only about 70% of the 35 teachers in the



school have full administrative documentation, which is critical to effective teaching and learning.

In this context, the role of the principal becomes pivotal. Being an educational leader, he must integrate the various elements of the school with the cultural environment in a way to create conditions that facilitate an effective school. An effective school is marked by high-quality education, and the principal plays a significant role in the improvement of educational quality. As noted by Wahjosumidjo (2010), the principal is responsible for everything that is done by staff, students, and parents, which underlines the accountability dimension of educational leadership.

In order to carry out these leadership functions, the principal has to efficiently manage and develop the school through administrative activities, management practices, and leadership skills. It is based on a deep knowledge of the work and the art of overcoming obstacles in this particular environment. The principal becomes the supervisor who oversees, constructs, corrects, and initiates the educational work within the institution. What is more, the principal needs to develop good human relationships that create coexistence among his team to make all staff members work as one to achieve better educational performance in less time.

Data from interviews with the principal of SMAN 13 Banjarmasin show that the principal has proactively organized all components of the school in preparation for the implementation of work programs, such as granting authority to vice principals and providing teachers with teaching tools to support student learning. For example, educators have introduced projects that incorporate technology in the teaching and learning processes of activities for school. Laptops, projectors, among others are used as audiovisuals to help attract and modernize the educational aspects.

During the start of every academic year, certain vital activities are introduced, to facilitate the process of smooth learning. These are planning the needs of teachers in each subject, distributing teaching assignments, developing programs of teaching and school calendars, judging the adequacy of teaching materials, holding a meeting of teachers, reviewing school finances, and supervising activities in the classroom. Nevertheless, with all these activities set aside, challenges are still apparent in developing the professional competencies of teachers regarding administrative tasks. Complete support and facilities have not allowed the realization of activities as planned.

A number of barriers hinder the principal's efforts to enhance teacher professionalism in SMAN 13 Banjarmasin: the lack of full support with regard to facilities and infrastructure, low accountability among teachers, and a school committee without a clear understanding of its role in supporting professional development. Therefore, this annual development of school programs must be prepared to plan all enhancements in teachers' professional capabilities, including further training and supervision, so that their staff is fully prepared for modern education.

The principal has initiated several initiatives that aim to enhance teacher professionalism through the training of teachers on syllabus and lesson plan development, involvement in the teacher working group, and workshop and seminar attendance. Continuous professional development is also important as it enables educators to be updated with changing times in education and be competent in their profession.

According to Libriyanti (2018), some factors that determine the success of a leader in organizational management include intellectual capacity, social relationships, emotional intelligence, physical condition, imagination, resilience, patience, readiness for sacrifice, and work ethic. These are all the characteristics necessary for good leadership. Success and failure of the principal as an individual depend not just on that single individual capability but rather



on the combined dynamics within the school setting: in characteristics of staff, in situational factors, and within the organizational context.

In the case of SMAN 13 Banjarmasin, the principal has to confront increasing teacher quality in myriad respects. The difference in competency, knowledge of technology, and educational background further creates complexity in the situation. Besides, some teachers have low discipline, partly because many of them need to travel a long distance to get to school. All these factors collectively affect the quality of education at SMAN 13 Banjarmasin. This situation calls for the principal to focus on a comprehensive approach that encapsulates creating a culture of accountability, providing adequate resources, and aligning all staff towards the vision and goals set forth by the school. This may call for in-service training sessions, workshops, and collaborative planning to keep the teachers prepared and motivated in ensuring quality education. Additionally, the principal should work closely with the school committee and parents to create a supportive community that respects education and values teacher professionalism. By doing so, through strong relationships with all parties, the principal will be able to establish an environment of collaboration and shared responsibility toward student success.

In short, improving the quality of teachers at SMAN 13 Banjarmasin is not without its challenges; however, with good leadership and a commitment to continuous improvement, these challenges can be overcome. The principal is at the center of such efforts, as he has to navigate the complexities of the educational environment, build collaboration among his staff, and engage the community in support of educational initiatives. It is expected that SMAN 13 Banjarmasin will achieve its goal in professional development by focusing on the quality and professionalism of education, building a technological advantage, and nurturing a positive school culture.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study underlines the importance of instructional leadership in improving teacher professionalism to enhance the quality of education in SMAN 13 Banjarmasin. In such a context, the principal's proactive approach has been highly instrumental in promoting effective communication, collaboration, and continuous professional development among teachers to negotiate the challenges of the evolving educational landscape. The principal has implemented new strategies, such as utilizing technology in teaching and a culture of accountability that allows the school to align with the current needs of educational reforms. The findings highlight good leadership that provides an atmosphere enabling teachers to grow in their profession and students to be successful, hence making a positive contribution toward the school in general in meeting its educative goals. All improvements need to be sustained and researched continuously in an ever-changing educational context for further development in instructional leadership to prepare students for their future challenges.

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