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# School Principal as Curriculum Manager: An Approach to The Improvement of Primary School Teacher Performance in Indonesia

Dinn Wahyudin  
*Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia (UPI), Indonesia*

## ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini difokuskan pada peran kepala sekolah dalam konteks persekolahan di Indonesia. Sejalan dengan semangat desentralisasi pendidikan, para kepala sekolah memperoleh kesempatan lebih luas untuk menjalankan berbagai fungsi dalam dua peran utama mereka. Peran pertama adalah menjadi pimpinan instruksional bagi para guru. Untuk memainkan peran ini, mereka harus memiliki kemampuan teknis. Peran kedua adalah kepemimpinan manajerial. Dalam hal ini, mereka harus mampu menerapkan manajemen berbasis sekolah. Kepala sekolah dan guru harus bekerjasama dalam mengembangkan sekolah. Iklim yang dapat mendorong pembaruan dan perubahan di tingkat sekolah perlu didukung oleh Kantor Dinas Kabupaten dan Kecamatan. Kantor Dinas harus memberikan dukungan aktif dan terbuka untuk perubahan sekolah, dan Kepala Sekolah harus lebih sering melakukan supervisi penganggaran dan manajemen.

**Kata kunci:** desentralisasi, pimpinan instruksional, pimpinan manajerial, manajemen berbasis sekolah, supervisi

In general, school principals in primary school as well as secondary school in Indonesia have two major roles. The first major role is that they provide instructional and curriculum leadership to their teachers in school. To play out this role successfully, they have to be first, technically and conceptually having curriculum capability, in this case : having knowledge of "KTSP" curriculum developed by school. It means that they are not only familiar with subject contents of their school's major educational programmes in primary schools but also they need to be familiar with progressive teaching methods, new curriculum to be implemented, new approach in directing pupils, including active learning approach and contextual learning as strategies for successful teaching. They should also recognize and support their teachers to use them. Their other function within this role is being able to conduct formative and summative evaluation of their teachers, and so support them in their professional development as a part of their instructional and curriculum leadership in school setting.

The second main role is to provide managerial and administrative leadership. In this context, applying school-based management in various way as reflected of school otonomy and decentralization in school setting. The school principals have several main functions, such as : to lead the school's self assessment, collect and use the data for planning the school development plan, implement and then monitor it, working collaboratively with teachers staffs and school committee. Being able to delegate to others to implement various school activities is an important responsibility of school principals . That is one of the main features of a more successful manager and administrative leadership that can work cooperatively with teachers, parents, and school communities in school committee forum in school setting.

In Indonesia, in line with the spirit of decentralization in education, specifically school-based management (SBM) and school committees, school principals have been given greater opportunities to implement the various functions of

their two roles. In line with this this, school school principals are also being spend their time to various trainings and role models which introduce and encourage them to implement instructional and curriculum change in their own schools. The SBM programme in particular, encourages school principals and also collaboratively with school committee to implement changes and seek innovative managerial as well as instructional solutions to identify problems faced by their school .

## Findings

Under the spirit of school based management and the era of decentralization in school setting, primary school school principals are now expected to become more democratic, collaorative, user friendly and progressive attitude in handling problems, affairs inside and external to the benefit of their school. It seemed, the personal qualities thought by some to be required for the position of school head include:- being a good communicator, the teacher's partner; collaborator, able to inspire teacher trust; be supportive of teachers activities; be a vision setter; team building, share leadership with others.

It is found, the range of personal qualities identified by sample of headteachers in the study showed a general understanding of the new roles and functions expected of them. Previously, the school head received directions and instructions from various government quarters (MONE) and may or may not have relayed them on to all his/her school staff.

With decentralization and the wider implementation of SBM, the school is expected to be more independent of official authority but also more open and cooperative with the community. Many school heads recognize that they need to be friendly and be able to work together with people and most important, to be a colleague with their teachers rather than a closed boss or autocratic boss that often issuing orders without allowing discussion to other. Being cooperative was also mentioned as important, so that they could collaborate and work in a group or team within and outside the school.

They are willing to discuss solutions to problems, and to accept suggestions and inputs, along with the capacity to accept criticism from colleagues/teachers or parents/ community. It is found, they tend to be more open to adopt innovation and change in schools.

Based on this study, some good practices are as the following : Firstly, headteachers were able to draw on their experiences to identify good practices of the school head. Most of these focused on their role as a manager, whether internally of the school staff for external collaboration with parents and the community. Only four were mentioned in relation to instructional leadership role. Perhaps the former is more in need of change and recognized as such.

Secondly, good practice related to the role of instructional leader covered being able to show good teaching in the classroom – for which most school heads would first need to see and implement PAKEM teaching methods, being able to help teachers when they have a problem, and being able to motivate and give professional support. None explicitly mentioned good school head practice related to the formative monitoring of teachers, although it was implicit in “understand teachers’ condition, their weaknesses and strengths, knowing when to guide and encourage and helping them when they face difficulties.

Thirdly, management good practices could be divided into three according to the main target. Generic management practices included implementing open management, defined as being transparent and open by providing access to whoever wanted to know about “the school’s financial management, students’ learning progress, and students’ learning strengths and weaknesses”. Transparency in making and implementing the school development programme (RAPBS), involving teachers, school committee, parents, and the community, and in fact being able to make, implement, evaluate that programme.

Fourthly, specific good practices for internal management of the school included creating and managing a positive/ good learning atmosphere – “a good condition for studying and teaching”. Or in other words, “making a conducive environment for the teaching staff to work in and give them motivation”. Some of the more forward looking headteachers mentioned such practices as giving “freedom for creativity to teachers”, “allowing them to manage their class based on their own creativity”, “trusting teachers.”

The third element of the school heads management role related to external relations with school committee and the community. The good practices mentioned all stressed this point. “Have a good relationship with School

committee and community; “increase collaboration between the school and the community, village officials, community leaders”; and “creating good relationship between the school and the parents/school committee for instance by expressing condolences” – the human side of the school head and the school.

It can also be noted, how far school heads can and do actually implement these identified good practices remains to be seen. Nevertheless, recognizing them is a necessary and encouraging first step to incorporating them into their daily behaviour as a lead in his/her own school.

One part of the study requested an assessment by 3 groups of respondents (school head, senior and junior teachers) on the behaviours exhibited by the school head, teachers and pupils since SBM and PAKEM training and implementation. Most of the behaviours for the respective groups are those targeted by SBM and PAKEM.

As a leader of SBM, school principal rated high in the several behaviours concerning school development plan and budget (RAPBS), such as involving others in its production and basing it on school needs and problems. However, only half of school head feel able at present to delegate responsibility for RAPBS activities to others. Almost 20% more senior teachers (59%) than junior ones felt that their school head delegated, possibly to them. Junior teachers would clearly like to become more involved in RAPBS activities. Meanwhile school head understandably feel more confident delegating to their more senior rather than to junior teachers.

These focused on change and innovation in the classroom. Of note is the discrepancy in perceptions of teachers’ innovative behaviour. All school head felt that their teachers were very innovative. Teachers, on the other hand, were more restrained their assessing themselves. They may have reached that stage in innovating where, after the initial rapid progress in implementing changes, a plateau is reached. It seemed that these teachers had been able to replicate what they had seen and learnt but were unable to actually create innovations for themselves.

The daily use of active learning or contextual learning or PAKEM teaching methods was reportedly high, although 25% of junior teachers admitted that they did not use them each day. Finally, there was common agreement about teachers “making their

own aids and materials” at roughly 2/3rd. While showing that school head do know the situation of their teachers, it also reveals that few funds are laid aside in the RAPBS for the purchase of consumable materials to enable such production.

School heads were more conservative than teachers on the improved performance of their pupils or were they less optimistic, or just further from the situation.

The lowest assessments were for “pupils talk more in class” (66% - 69%). This could be an area where teachers were finding it more difficult to set up meaningful activities to encourage pupil discussion and exchange of ideas. Children were also probably still too shy to ask questions in this oral culture which does not attach importance to such conduct.

There were mixed opinions about whether children were reading more. Senior teachers felt they were (88%) while school head and junior teachers were more reserved. Possibly senior teachers give their pupils more reading time. The school head needs to be encouraged to set up a weekly library schedule so that all classes can visit and read quietly in the library. Alternatively, they need to establish a daily silent reading session for all classes.

Other behaviours by pupils scored high and there was general agreement between the respondents about them. Of note was the perception that pupils like group work (scoring 94% -100%). Grouped seating agreements in many MBE classrooms at least allow pupils to interact informally (ie. chat) even when the lesson does not require pupils to work together or discuss.

### Other additional findings

In facts, headteachers spend longer time observing classes and do it more frequently. Only half observe on a weekly basis while another third make monthly visits . In this way they would perhaps be more realistic in their assessment of teachers’ innovations first, and second, they would be able to see where the need lay for teacher-made materials.

They could then promote the allocation of some funds in the RAPBS for this and encourage their use for self-made, low cost teaching aids and materials by teachers, higher grade pupils or parents.

They also give more knowledge which could be used to include and promote education programmes in the RAPBS which address main stream teaching needs, rather than extra-curricular activities such as competitions. Finally, they would be more able to follow pupil progress and come to appreciate that they are achieving higher results.

School heads in those schools identified as having reached a sustainable state (take-off) implement the substance of their role as instructional leader: observing classes, evaluating teachers and monitoring pupil results, on a weekly basis. Other school heads carried out these functions on a monthly basis. One third monitor teachers and pupils every 3 or 6 months which considerably reduces their effectiveness .

The frequency of formal meetings also needs increasing for the majority of school heads. Although many school head meet informally with individuals, meetings with all teachers together, formal or otherwise, are a means of sharing problems and ideas. They also provide an opportunity for progress or innovations to be praised while fostering the collegial spirit of the school. These internal meetings have probably increased in frequency - one third meet their teachers weekly and 2/3rd on a monthly basis. However, meetings with the community – parents and school committee - were much less often. Parents were still being sidelined..

In fact, outside sources were the major source of innovations identified by school heads, or their teachers. As one school head put it “we implement directly what is obtained from the trainings, e.g. asking parents to fill out the home-observation form”. And as a member of the research team noted “schools have no experience to implement educational innovation except PAKEM”. This comment would appear to also include those schools which have been involved in ‘change programmes’ over a number of years. KKG and KKKS , MGMP meetings were other, regular venues used by schools to obtain and share ideas. The use of these methods to obtain and share innovations is the first, vital step towards change.

Some schools have progressed on to the next stage and have made small changes to the suggestions provided through example. For instance:

1. Extending the clocking-in system so that the boxes where a child’s name is placed as they enter the classroom are filled in sequence.
2. Pupils having individual display boards on which their best work is displayed. These are regularly changed by the pupils themselves.
3. Analyzing pupil reflections on their school day as a source of inspiration for needed changes

Schools were naturally at different stages in the change process. There were some exceptional ones where either teachers or the school head have reached the third stage of being able to develop their own innovations. Some examples seen:

Many people visit one school which now asks for a voluntary donation to the school funds, listing the incoming and outgoing amounts on a prominent board in the office. In addition to being a good fund raiser, this will probably decrease the number of visitors disturbing the school.

1. One school stimulates change by having “different learning themes every week eg. discipline week, health week”.
2. Asking all class 1 pupils to read 2-3 sentences in turn at the close of every school day. This also enabled the teacher to track the progress of individual pupils.

### **Support and Dissemination of curriculum**

The fact that most schools show desired changes, especially in some if not all of their classrooms, reveals that school heads are generally creating a school climate which encourages and supports changed behaviour in teachers. Not least, many are changing their attitudes towards what constitutes a good classroom and this is being reflected in their behaviour. School heads actively encourage their teachers to attend trainings and to try out what they learn, even on a small scale, in their lessons. They give teachers the opportunity and encouragement to implement changes in the classroom. Some directly help by giving ideas and needed funds when requested.

Dissemination of home-grown innovations within the school and cluster is one means of both supporting/ rewarding the innovator and spreading their ideas. One strategy reported was to encourage

teachers to visit and observe each other's classes so that they could see innovations at first hand, and in practice. Another strategy was for others to watch a demonstration lesson, in situ. Yet another means was for the innovator to disseminate the idea through informal meetings and daily discussions or chats with colleagues.

In addition to these direct methods, ideas were shared and discussed on a more formal basis in regular meetings. These were either at the school or cluster level (KKG). One head's strategy was for the best innovation seen during the week to be presented to colleagues during the school meeting. Many encourage their teachers to take part actively in KKG meetings.

A variety of other formal meetings were conducted too, to include a wider number of interested parties. For example, all teachers being invited to attend monthly meetings for "programme evaluation, discussion, sharing - take and give, and (as a result) building school cohesiveness". At some stage in the process, schools will also hold the much more widely attended socialization meeting to which "teachers, school committee, leading community figures are invited to discuss innovations together". Such meetings, in what ever venue, give all involved the chance to reflect on the worth of any proposed change and suggest refinements.

### **Constraints and curriculum management**

In any change process, there are always constraints to progress. One of the most commonly reported constraints was resistance to change - things were considered to be running well and change thought to be unnecessary. This was usually attributed by school heads to some of their teachers or to some of their parents. Resistance can come from a variety of sources, and be either open or covert. Some school heads themselves could not be cleared from resisting changes or ignoring some important functions within their new role, through passive covert resistance. The most common omission on the part of many school head was observing teachers lessons, discussed above.

Some school heads seemed to be dismissive of their teachers, reluctant to see that they too have valid constraints which could explain their point of view and hence their behaviour. Negative comments included "teachers' motivation is not stable"; "teachers' creativity is limited"; "teachers do not easily understand the basic concept of PAKEM.

Other school principals were more understanding and actually recognized that teachers also face constraints. Their comments were more positive. "Not all teachers gave positive responses" and there were "psychological barriers (to change) from senior teachers". These heads reported holding informal meetings and the importance of "being a friend rather a boss or evaluator" as the strategies used to manage these situations.

### **Conclusions**

1. Under the spirit of school based management, mostly school principals are now expected to become more democratic and progressive in handling affairs inside and external to their school. The personal qualities thought by some to be required for the position of school head include:- being a good communicator, the teacher's partner; able to inspire teacher trust; be supportive of teachers activities; be a vision setter; share leadership with others.
2. In general, school principals are keeping their new roles although they would appear to be more comfortable in the role of manager than as instructional leaders. In this context, they are showing a greater awareness than before of the characteristics displayed by good teachers. However, many school heads still need to visit their teachers at work in the classroom more often and for longer so that their open support for innovations in the classroom becomes more noticeable.
3. Neither school principals nor their teachers work alone in improving their school. The enabling climate for innovations and change at school level do need a supportive Dinas office, at both district and sub-district levels. Dinas for their part also need to show active

and open support for school changes and progressive school heads by visiting their schools more often.

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