

## ANALYSIS OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SCHOOL PRINCIPLES' DEMOCRATIC LEADERSHIP IN IMPROVING TEACHER PROFESSIONALISM

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**Abstrak:** Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui apakah kepemimpinan demokratis kepala sekolah meningkatkan profesionalisme guru. Dalam upaya meningkatkan kinerja guru, termasuk profesionalisme, kepala sekolah menerapkan kepemimpinan yang demokratis. Jenis penelitian ini bersifat kualitatif dan menggunakan teknik penelitian deskriptif kualitatif. Metode yang digunakan untuk mengumpulkan data penelitian adalah observasi, studi dokumentasi, dan wawancara dengan guru, wakil kepala sekolah, dan kepala sekolah. Data dideskripsikan, dilanjutkan dengan analisis, setelah penulis memperoleh informasi yang mereka butuhkan. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kepemimpinan demokratis kepala sekolah dalam membina profesionalisme guru berjalan cukup baik. Strategi yang dilakukan antara lain pemberian penghargaan, disiplin guru, pembinaan dan pelatihan, kepercayaan yang tinggi terhadap bawahan, perencanaan terjadwal untuk pengembangan profesional, intervensi dalam manajemen, dan proses pembelajaran.  
Kata kunci: kepemimpinan, kepala sekolah, guru, proses pembelajaran

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this study is to ascertain whether democratic leadership among school principals increases teacher professionalism. In an effort to enhance teacher performance, including professionalism, school principals employ democratic leadership. Research of this kind is qualitative and employs descriptive qualitative research techniques. The methods employed to gather research data were observation, documentation study, and interviews with teachers, vice principals, and school principals. The data is described, followed by analysis, after the author has obtained the information, they need. The findings of the study suggest that the democratic leadership of school principals in fostering teacher professionalism is working quite well. The strategies undertaken include giving rewards, teacher discipline, coaching and training, high trust in subordinates, scheduled planning for professional development, interventions in management, and the learning process.  
Keywords: leadership, principal, teacher, learning process

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### Introduction

Leaders are important for the existence and progress of an organization. A leader will not exist without subordinates as objects of direction, guidance, and motivation in achieving organizational goals. In other words, leadership is the willingness of others to follow the direction and will of a leader. The success of a school depends on how the principal carries out his leadership. Leadership requires someone who has more ability than others. Not only someone who can coordinate his subordinates but who is able to carry out various organizational wheels with any effort. This is in order to achieve the goals according to plan in an organization. The abilities that a leader must have include the ability to invite, direct, coerce, encourage, and influence each of his subordinates so as to create complete synergy. In educational institutions, ready and competent human resources are born for any situation through education. Therefore, an educational institution's management

must have the right educational leaders managing the organization, especially human resources. The educational leader in question is the school principal, who is the policyholder and determines the success of a school (Islami et al., 2021).

As important as a leader in an organization, the principal is an important leader in an educational institution. As a leader who is at the forefront, he is in charge of directing and motivating his subordinates, especially the teachers at school. These directing and motivational activities aim to improve teacher quality, increase creativity, and achieve other valuable achievements in learning. The principal is a person who holds responsibility and has authority over all activities in the school. In addition, school principals also have an important role in creating quality schools that are supported by human resources, namely qualified teachers, administrative staff, and other employees. One of the important roles of a school principal in educational leadership is to compile programmes for the learning process in schools and place teachers according to their respective duties and fields in educating and achieving school goals (Idris et al., 2023). Therefore, educational leaders must be able to establish communication with their employees, especially teachers as education implementers. In order for the duties and obligations of school personnel to run smoothly, strong cooperation, a harmonious working atmosphere, an interest in the development of education in schools, and the development of the quality of teacher professionalism are needed. The realization of the goals of a school is determined by the success or failure of the principal as a leader. Aside from being a leader and authority holder in the school, the principal must have the right and effective leadership style to manage, develop, and organize his subordinates in a professional manner. In addition, the principal must have the skills, intelligence, discipline, and wisdom necessary to improve educational progress (Iskandar, 2013).

In the leadership process, leadership style is one measure of success in the organization. Although there is no leader who always works perfectly, it is as if they are less effective and efficient in the work they do. Therefore, a leadership style is needed in order to increase effectiveness in the organization. With the existence of a leadership style by the principal, he is not only a learning leader but also tries to create an organizational environment that both carries out their duties and responsibilities well. Democratic leadership is a leadership style used by school principals in an effort to improve teacher performance. The essence of democratic leadership is respect for human beings as they are, developing the common good, and individual freedom to act according to one's direction (Idris & Mokodenseho, 2021). Democratic leadership is proposed to address the challenges facing educational institutions today. In a democratic approach, decision-making authority and influence are spread throughout the school, providing opportunities for all members to participate in important decisions. The phenomenon that occurs a lot in various educational institutions today is, in fact, still not quite right with regard to the democratic leadership of school principals. This is like the lack of attention of the principal to the potential and opportunities possessed by educators in schools, the lack of experience and knowledge about the leadership style of a leader, causing many misunderstandings between the principal and the teacher, and the unfavourable working atmosphere as the responsibility of a school principal (Kilicoglu, 2018).

As a good leader, the principal must be able to encourage his teachers to work seriously and professionally to achieve school goals. Efforts to realize these goals are closely related to the leadership style adopted by the principal. As a guiding figure and a carrier of effectiveness and success in learning, the professionalism of teachers can be a provision in managing innovation, be it changes in the form of learning methods or technological advances, all of which are intended for the benefit of the learning process. The importance of professionalism for teachers can be seen in the duties of a teacher as an educator in the teaching and learning process (Rahmat & Kadir, 2017). Professionalism is an intrinsic motivation for an educator. Which are what triggers and also drives him towards the realization of being a professional. Therefore, the realization of a professional teacher can never be separated from the important role of the principal (Yunus, 2016). Thus, in improving teacher professionalism, a leader must have a leadership style to motivate teachers and employees and be able to create other values, such as an emphasis on group performance, so that they will be happy in an effective work environment. Thus, apart from being a leader, the school principal must be able to become a good co-worker and partner for his employees at school.

## **Method**

The research method used is the descriptive-qualitative method conducted through field research. Sources of data in research on the leadership style of school principals are several documents and documentation (photos), as well as descriptive data, namely factual explanations related to the research title. In this study, the resulting data are in the form of words and actions that are described as what happened in the field what was thought, felt, or experienced by the source or participant of the data. Data sources were also obtained and supported by various sources, namely school principals, deputy principals, and teachers.

The data collection techniques used in this study are observation techniques, interviews, and documentation studies. To analyse the data, it starts with processing and researching the raw data. Data processing is the process of manipulating data into information. That is, at this stage, the researcher makes summary data based on the raw data resulting from the data and information that have been collected. The data analysis procedure in qualitative research includes the following steps: 1. Data reduction; 2. Presentation of data (data display); 3. Drawing conclusions. In order to test the validity of the data, in this study, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability tests were carried out.

### **Findings and Discussion**

Based on the interviews the author conducted with the school principal, being a democratic leader means being able to understand well what problems his subordinates are experiencing. The problems experienced by teachers sometimes affect their performance in schools. Therefore, it is important for leaders to maintain good communication and relationships so as to create effective collaboration. This is done to achieve common interests in achieving quality education. In addition, the school principal routinely conducts surveys in classes to ensure that the teaching and learning process is running smoothly. Examples include ensuring teachers attend according to schedule and students receive learning according to schedule, controlling teacher and student teaching and learning activities to find out if there are problems such as a lack of learning media, inappropriate learning methods, and so on. These activities are carried out directly or indirectly through the teacher concerned and the respective homeroom teacher. Based on these interviews, it can be seen that there are a series of activities as an effort by the school principal to be responsible for ensuring that teachers carry out the tasks assigned properly and solve various problems encountered; this is assisted by homeroom teachers, senior teachers, and other teaching staff. It can be concluded that the principal communicates openly and gives trust to all teachers to help each other in an effort to encourage their subordinates to deal with problems encountered while on duty.

The school principal routinely provides intensive training to teachers as well as subject training according to their respective fields. As with the achievement that was obtained by one of the teachers thanks to encouragement from the school principal to increase his creativity, namely the winner of the Kuansing Batik Photo Contest. In this case, it is not only the organisers who give awards, but the principal, to increase creativity, gives awards to the teachers at school. In teacher trainings held outside of school and teacher training invitations offered, the principal always supports discipline related to improving the teaching profession. This is an effort to increase work productivity so that it is optimal and in accordance with learning plans and school goals. In my observations, the school principal provides motivation and stimulation to his subordinates regarding productivity at work through awarding teachers. This was done by the principal as an expression of appreciation for the performance and enthusiasm of the teachers at school. Democratic leadership is certainly different from other leadership styles in terms of giving appreciation to subordinates, one of which is by giving rewards. Giving these awards can certainly make a deep impression on teachers so that they continue to improve the quality of their work at school. Prizes were given by the school principal after the flag ceremony was carried out to motivate other school members, including students.

In various activities at school, such as the acceptance of new students, farewell activities for grade 12 students, various competitions participated in by both national and international students, seminars, festivals, and other activities, full responsibility is given to the teacher who is tasked with being the activity coordinator. The principal provides training and coaching and trusts him to carry out school activities by continuing to control the course of these activities as a strategy for managing innovation owned by his subordinates in carrying out their respective duties. This is done with the aim of achieving the best teacher performance in the school. In an organisation, a good relationship is a guide and a benchmark for the success of joint planning. Without a good relationship, various goals, visions, and missions will not be achieved properly. As is the case in schools, communication and coordination are the basis for employees in carrying out programmes and activities at school so that they can run as they should. Relations between employees at school occur as a result of the principal setting a good example by communicating well with all teachers. For example, when there are teachers who experience problems in the teaching and learning process, the principal will help solve these obstacles and provide good direction. And for every activity at school that has been completed by the principal, the principal will ask for a report regarding the activity. Thus, the efforts made by the principal in creating and improving relationships with all of his subordinates are evident through the awards and approaches given. With this strategy, in addition to creating a comfortable working atmosphere, it can also improve the quality of the work of employees at school. The more someone is valued in a place, the closer the emotions, hearts, and minds will be to the place or the people concerned in that place.

In making decisions, of course, the principal will involve his subordinates, but this is not done directly. He prioritises the opinions and decisions of senior teachers first. Then in a structured manner, starting with the vice principal, so that it remains well coordinated, this is because many teachers lack confidence in conveying their aspirations, so what happens is that the principal seeks information from other teachers outside the meeting forum. This process is not known by the teacher, so over time, the opinions and suggestions of these subordinates are used in joint policies. What is often done by school principals in the practise of democratic leadership is that, in addition to their duties as educators, school principals are always effective in assigning tasks and responsibilities in certain situations or events. By using a democratic approach that involves all members in order to have great commitment and concern for the success of the various programmes planned. So, in education, the principal's function is to monitor and maintain harmony among fellow teachers, create a culture of cooperation, and encourage high teacher enthusiasm for the success of the responsibilities they carry. Based on the presentation of observational data and interviews about the Democratic Leadership of the Principal, it can be concluded that the principal's leadership style is going well even though there are several obstacles, such as misunderstandings between members.

In terms of increasing the professionalism of the principal, the school principal is very good in terms of giving awards, both small and large. As is the case with awards every semester when distributing student report cards at school for the most active or caring teachers. Thus, giving awards to teachers, apart from being a stimulus, is also a motivation for teachers to continue to improve their quality as teachers at school. Not only as an employee in an educational institution but also as an important figure in achieving the goal of education, which is to produce an intelligent generation of people. The concern of the school principal for his subordinates is important in improving teacher quality, one of which is teacher professionalism. Even though teachers are forced to carry out the rules and policies that have been made, these efforts have a major impact on the current quality of education. One of the concerns of the principal as an educational leader with his subordinates is improving and managing teacher discipline. Based on interviews conducted with teachers, there are still some who are forced to follow these rules. However, they still run well. Obstacles encountered by many elderly teachers leave them lagging behind in the implementation of learning and various methods. Usually, the teacher will consult with fellow teachers because it is faster and more practical. From this statement, it can be seen the positive impact of the democratic leadership of the school principal on the development of the teaching and learning process. Teachers will be more disciplined and focused on the tasks and responsibilities given, and as a result, students will get what is needed at school, namely complete knowledge.

Based on the observations made by researchers, some teachers and even school principals will change uniforms by returning to their homes as a form of discipline under the rules that have been made. The presence of teachers in the last 3 years has also experienced a significant increase. Besides that, the presence of teachers in class during the learning process is also continuously monitored by their respective coordinators, assisted by the school principal, so that the learning process is on schedule. Thus, the form of concern given by the principal is teacher discipline with intensive management and improvement involving the awareness of all school members. This strategy is in accordance with the democratic leadership style, namely directing subordinates to improve their quality in carrying out their duties with the aim of increasing teacher professionalism in schools, one of which is discipline. Teachers who still use old learning methods are required to be able to learn and adapt well with the help of other teachers. Based on the statements from some of the sources above, it can be seen that training and coaching are carried out as an effort by the school principal and the school to improve the teacher's ability to use learning methods that are in accordance with the curriculum so that the learning process is in accordance with the programmes prepared. The school principal's ability to carry out his strategy as a leader using a democratic leadership style can be seen in his efforts to mobilize subordinates regarding the tasks assigned with a good coordination system.

From observations made by the author, examples of giving trust to employees include certain activities, namely exam committees, school separation committees, competitions at school and outside school, and so on. Coordination is carried out by the principal in a structured manner according to their respective responsibilities. In learning in the classroom, the principal hands over responsibility to the organisation under him through the vice principal in their respective fields, including the deputy head of the curriculum, student affairs, public relations, facilities, and infrastructure sectors. Problems in each field will be coordinated by these representatives with the educators and education staff concerned. Teacher achievement is clear evidence that teacher professionalism can be increased through the democratic leadership of school principals. Teacher professionalism can be seen in academic qualifications, teacher certification, competence, and physical and mental health in accordance with Government Regulation Number 74 of 2008 concerning Teachers, Chapter II, Article 2. As professional teachers never stop learning to improve competence and certification, school

principals, in their efforts to increase teacher professionalism so that they are optimal, regularly attend trainings and workshops regarding the motion of school principals implementing good practises. This is one form of effort made by the principal to improve teacher professionalism.

Based on interviews with the homeroom teacher, the principal always monitors the course of the learning process remotely first. Then, in a structured manner, starting from the vice principal and going through that to the leadership. If the subject teacher is experiencing problems, then start sequentially, starting from the homeroom teacher to the vice principal and then to the leadership. To evaluate teacher performance, a coordination meeting is usually held at least once a month. Meanwhile, in the curriculum field, it provides a schedule of supervision visits involving the school principal once every semester. Each teacher will be assessed according to the RPP he has made, whether students experience problems with the teacher or not. From the observations that have been made, the principal takes direct action regarding the progress of the teacher in delivering lessons in class in stages. This is done to find out how well the teacher is able to properly implement the learning programme that has been prepared beforehand. The democratic leadership style applied by the school principal has a positive impact on increasing teacher professionalism, both in teacher professionalism activities and their development, as well as improving the learning process in class. Based on the observation and interview data disclosed above, the implementation of democratic leadership by the school principal in increasing teacher professionalism carried out by the school principal as a whole has been running smoothly and with good cooperation. The principal controls the development of teaching teachers and then provides suggestions for improvement in a better direction. Assisted by the vice principal of the school, namely, coordinating all school efforts and complementing the leadership of the principal, expanding teacher experience with training and coaching, and integrating school goals based on the vision and mission set.

Based on a document study conducted by researchers, the percentage of teachers' academic qualifications is 82.82%. Then, out of 87 teachers, 40 are civil servants with education starting from high school, D1/D3, and S1 to S3 levels. Then the number of honorary teachers in the PPPK (Government Employee with a Work Agreement) process is 47. From the results of a survey conducted by the authors above, it can be concluded that, in accordance with the competence possessed by the teacher, all teachers teach according to their respective fields and expertise, and the professional competence of the teacher is quite good. There are efforts made to study and deepen the professional competence of each teacher, either by asking for help from fellow subject teachers or senior teachers. In addition, teachers admit that they routinely conduct out-of-school training to increase their abilities and insights about the technology and learning they teach. 50% of the teachers who already hold certification with a total of 40 PNS teachers, 47 honorary teachers, and 36 certified teachers. The honorary teachers are currently seeking PPPK (Government Employees with Work Agreements). 36 teachers who have been certified according to government regulations regarding professional teachers. This still accounts for only 60% of all teaching staff who have been certified. In accordance with the problems currently faced by Indonesia related to the number of teacher certifications. Even though teacher competence is very good, teacher certification is very important to determine the eligibility of teachers to carry out their duties as learning agents in accordance with educational goals, namely educating the nation.

## Conclusion

The democratic leadership of the school principal is very good. This can be seen from the ability and expertise to encourage subordinates to face various problems by carrying out interventions and structured approaches; improving and managing innovations owned by teachers in carrying out all duties and responsibilities through various training and competency development; maintaining good relations with subordinates so as to create a comfortable working atmosphere; and involving subordinates in decision-making in a structured and indirect way. The implementation of the democratic leadership of school principals in increasing teacher professionalism has been going well. This can be seen from the principal's strategy, such as: Providing motivation and reward for academic and non-academic achievements of teachers; concern for the principal for teacher performance, one of which is teacher discipline; increasing teacher abilities with regular coaching and training; high trust in subordinates in certain activities and programmes; providing opportunities for teachers to develop their profession; and being responsible for management and the learning process in the classroom. Increasing teacher professionalism is still not optimal. This can be seen from the fact that there are still 40% of teachers who have not been certified as proof of their eligibility to carry out their duties as professional educators. Impacts that can be caused, such as less than optimal learning processes and outcomes.

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