
The Role of the School Principal in Setting the Direction and Developing Resilience of School

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ABSTRACT

This research was motivated by the school's situation in developing school resilience by setting the direction of school practice. The purpose of this study was to analyze and describe the leadership practices of principals in *setting the direction* extensively to improve school resilience.

This study used qualitative research through data collection, such as observation and interview techniques with four informants, and documentation with data analysis techniques employing description, analysis, and interpretation.

The findings of this study suggest that by performing the principal leadership role, namely *setting the direction*, a school could develop resilience adequately.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 20 of 2003 on the National Education System mandates that education is a conscious and planned effort to achieve the learning atmosphere and process so that students actively develop their potential to possess religious and spiritual strength, self-control, personality, intelligence, noble character, and skills possessed by themselves, society, nation, and state. Based on those considerations, the most crucial thing for principals is conducting good leadership practices. The principal has a significant role because he manages the school and directs the entire educational process, from the initial setting and implementation to the final result (Julaiha, 2019). School leadership has become a priority in education policy (Jambo, 2020). It plays a vital role in improving the school environment by shaping the motivation and capacity of teachers (Pont et al., 2008). Principals should also be able to develop skills to lead and monitor learning progress and have the self-knowledge to reflect on themselves (DeMatthews, 2020), including setting the direction of the school's purposes.

According to Leithwood (2003), one of the core leadership practices that principals always succeed in carrying out is setting the direction. Setting the direction is carried out to develop goals that encourage shared purpose. To set an apparent direction, a leader should be able to articulate a shared vision, create high-performance expectations, and communicate those visions and expectations effectively (Arokiasamy et al., 2016), (Sun & Leithwood, 2015), (Leithwood, K., 2003). Oedjoe (2004) suggests that the principal's leadership

is one of the factors that encourages schools to achieve effective and efficient goals that emerge from the vision, mission, goals, and target of the school he aims and disseminates to the school. The principal who implements setting the direction properly should be able to develop a level of resilience in the school.

Resilience is the nature, process, and results (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2013). The Oxford English Dictionary Nurs et al. (2020) defines resilience as the ability to rise after challenges or the resistance of an object or material to return to its original form. Synonyms include flexibility, strength, adaptability, endurance, toughness, and recoverability, while antonyms include rigidity, fragility, vulnerability, and weakness. School resilience is the ability of a dynamic education system to successfully adapt to disruptions that threaten its performance, sustainability, or development (Irene et al., 2021). School resilience manifests strength, resilience, ability, courage, and determined effort to maintain the implementation of its vision, mission, or function (Harris & Gilbert, 2023).

However, some schools can set the direction in their schools well (Mukhtar, 2015). Facts show that private schools experience obstacles from the number of students who are difficult to attract to the need for decisiveness in making policies and commands on specific conditions. Therefore, the principal should be able to set the direction to articulate a shared vision, create high-performance expectations, and effectively communicate those visions and expectations (Iskandar, 2013). This study is essential so schools can adequately develop their resilience through principal leadership, namely setting the direction. By examining the leadership experiences of school principals, particularly in private high schools in the Toboali Subdistrict, the researchers hope to uncover information that has never been discovered. This research focuses on the school principal's approach to facing challenges to strengthen school resilience, making it an interesting study and the basis for "The Role of School Leadership in Setting the Direction to Develop School Resilience."

2. METHOD

This research is qualitative (P. D. Sugiyono, 2019) (Lestari, 2021) (Felix, 2021) with a descriptive approach (Sugiyono, 2016). Qualitative research is a naturalistic investigation that deals with non-numerical data (Nassaji, 2020). Qualitative research must develop a descriptive framework to explain alternative solutions to problems (Louis, 2020). Berends (2021) explains that the challenge in qualitative research is maintaining the temporal coherence of empirical data, which cannot be fully depicted in abstract presentations or isolated pieces of data. The research was conducted at two private schools in Toboali: SMA Muhammadiyah Toboali and SMA YPK Toboali. There are two data sources, i.e., primary data sources (Suryabrata, 1987), consisting of principals, vice principals of student affairs, vice principals of curriculum, and teachers. The secondary data sources (Sugiyono, 2010) are in the form of documentation. This

study collected data through observations, interviews, and documentation methods that resulted in transcripts of data via photo documentation of critical activities and interview recordings. This was accomplished by describing the data results of transcripts, offering analysis of the transcript results, and applying data analysis techniques of description, analysis, and interpretation.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the data collection and data analysis, the principal implemented setting the direction, as shown in Figure 1.

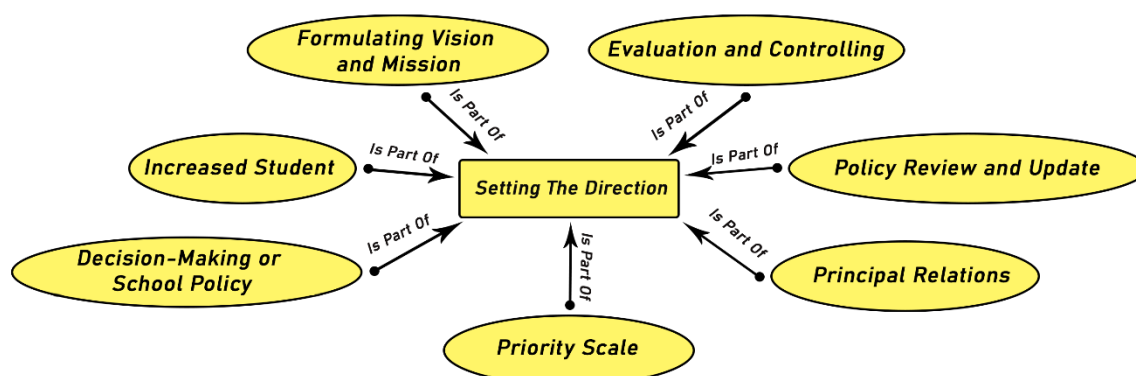


Figure 1. Setting The Direction

Sources: Atlas. ti 8 Software

In setting the direction of the school, the principal should be able to formulate the vision and mission of the school. This corresponds with research conducted by Patmawati et al. (2023) that preparing visions is fundamental to inspiring and motivating schools to provide the desired services, underline the values they want to instill, and set school goals for the future. Meanwhile, the mission is a concrete step to realize the vision; it serves as a guideline in designing short-, medium---, and long-term programs. The principal of SMAS, Muhammadiyah Toboali, has formulated and implemented the vision and mission of the school as the school's foundation. This was delivered by the principal of SMAS, Muhammadiyah Toboali, who asserted.

"We initially discussed vision and mission with school stakeholders, principals, teachers, the school committee, parents, students, and community leaders in this area. We (have) formulated yesterday what vision and mission are" (Principal of SMAS Muhammadiyah Toboali, 2023).

SMA Muhammadiyah Toboali has one vision and six missions by performing a 7-sunnah program daily. Through this excellent 7-sunnah program daily, SMA Muhammadiyah is growing and becoming well-known to the public. His opinion is also reinforced by the vice principal of curriculum, who explained it as follows:

"Finally, it appears that our characteristic is the 7-sunnah program daily. Alhamdulillah, through this program, SMA Muhammadiyah is known by the public to have characteristics because no other school has the same program. To this day, alhamdulillah, it used to have two classes in 2014, sir." (Vice Principal of Student Affairs of SMAS Muhammadiyah Toboali, 2023).

The principal's strategy is different in SMA YPK TOBOALI. He put more of an emphasis on attracting the community to the school than on developing a clear vision and mission statement. The research shows that the principal always works hard and focuses on increasing the number of students. This is reflected in the explanation of the principal of SMA YPK Toboali, who states that.

"I was (recently) assigned and new here, but I have not done the vision and mission. The first thing I do is to pursue students now. It is my mission to pursue students first." (Principal of SMA YPK Toboali 2023).

Even without referring to the formulation of vision and mission, the principal implemented school programs for the school's vision and mission to run.

A school principal can make decisions and school policies. This aligns with Surmilasari et al. (2022), who state that the principal should take appropriate policy measures to maintain school activities efficiently. In SMAS Muhammadiyah Toboali, the principal has implemented school policies based on the results of deliberations. However, on some occasions, some policies are considered necessary, so the principal should make their own decisions at their discretion.

"Oh, if it is policy, we negotiate first with our team, called the senior team. The senior team consists of the Elementary and High School Council of Regency, the vice principal of curriculum, the vice principal of student affairs, curriculum staff, student affairs staff, and two senior teachers. From the senior team, I show it to the group first, and they will give feedback later. After that, I will propose a policy that should be addressed." (Principal of SMAS Muhammadiyah Toboali, 2023).

Similar to the situation at SMA YPK TOBOALI, the principal practiced two decision-making methods, namely discretion and deliberation. Through research observations, it can be inferred that the principal of SMA YPK Toboali consistently makes decisions after discussions with teachers and school committees. This has been shown since the beginning of the study, in which the principal has always deliberated in official or unofficial settings. The statement from the vice chairman of student affairs of SMA YPK TOBOALI also reinforces this by stating.

"Oh, he is just like our previous principal, but yesterday, the principal was more private and usually immediately made his policy later. However, there is always a discussion with us. The difference from Mr. Sapta is that he would always ask first, for example, to the vice principal of curriculum, the vice principal of student affairs, the treasurer, and the head of the institution. Suppose he has an idea of how this should be done; he will always ask. So we will always go with deliberation, find common ground, not because he wants or likes it." (Vice principal of student affairs of SMA YPK Toboali, 2023)

The excerpt from the vice principal of student affairs indicates a difference in decision-making style between the principal of SMA YPK Toboali and the previous principal. It is firmly explained that the principal at SMA YPK Toboali appears to be more deliberative in making decisions and can make his own decisions (discretion) in situations that require speed of action. A statement from the teacher of SMA YPK Toboali also confirms this explanation.

"We must have deliberations first with relevant parties in attendance. We should negotiate first. Our principal is a good person, sir. How should I put this? I cannot describe it anyway, and he is worthy as a leader." (Teacher of SMA YPK Toboali, 2023)

The next one is reviewing and updating the decision or policy taken. In this case, SMAS Muhammadiyah has updated and reviewed the school policy. This change was delivered through the statement of the vice principal of student affairs, SMAS Muhammadiyah Toboali.

"So, he just came back from Singapore a few months ago. Singapore is a developed country, where he did a comparative study. He applied a sanction system for students and teachers who came late. I need to remember the name of the Singaporean school. No one came late to the school he visited, so he wanted SMA Muhammadiyah to do so. So, on Monday, he came, immediately applied it for those who were late, and (he) asked to pay a fine. It was IDR 5,000, but after that, what was the name? It was eventually obtained. He was busy, but this is it."

"Alhamdulillah, until today, it is still running, and it is sufficient to reduce the number of teachers and students who come late to pay as a sanction. When teachers come late, it is not charity. It means sessions that should have been teaching students are reduced. If you come late, the student's right is there."

At that time, the principal was confirmed and validated by researchers to be traveling on a comparative study to a school in Singapore, so the principal of SMA Muhammadiyah made a discretionary policy decision. However, after being reviewed again, the school community could implement and agree upon the policy. Unlike the previous policy at SMA YPK TOBOALI, the new principal rarely uses discretionary decisions, relying on deliberation. Therefore, the decisions made are always based on the agreement; thus, making a review is seldom carried out to policy taken. In carrying out his role, the principal of SMA YPK TOBOALI actively considers school policy updates, for example, school uniforms. Based on the observations, SMA YPK TOBOALI uniforms have differences from previous school uniforms. SMA YPK TOBOALI's principal calls it a uniform with a Korean style. This is explained by SMA YPK Toboali's principal, who states,

"This school is not mine, so it belongs to teachers, employees, and students; but, suppose this is how we dress in torn pants like thugs, let us say it to be more exciting. Nevertheless, the students who wear it say, "Okay, sir, we do this, sir, but what about other opinions, teachers, for example, or the public?". Well, for every consideration, whether this shirt suits our school or not, we looked at the culture, and it turned out to be suitable. We say it Korean-style. The clothes are like how non-Muslims wear shorts, and they may if only socks are raised to the knees. So, if there are policies like that, we should discuss them first because this is an innovation that I cannot decide for myself".

Reviewing and updating a policy often occurs when decisions are taken using a discretionary system, so this requires a joint review of policies deemed incorrect and negatively impacting the school.

Then, in building relationships, a school principal must be able to establish partnerships with anyone. This corresponds with Kinanti (2016), who states that a school should maintain good communication with partners, continue to renew cooperation, have a high level of trust, and conduct evaluations regularly after completing the activity. The partnership is a mutually beneficial one. As the director, the school principal should have strong relationships to support the school's sustainability. Based on research, the principal of SMA, Muhammadiyah Toboali, has built various networks that have enabled the school's rapid development and ability to survive amidst challenges. His relationships include the Ministry and PT. Timah, Bank Sumsel Babel, Central LAZISMU, alums, and others. This relationship has helped the school grow with student numbers that regularly increase due to ongoing facility improvements. This is contrary to SMA Muhammadiyah Toboali. The principal only has slight differences regarding relationships. Based on the results of observations, the principal of SMA YPK, Toboali, has minimal relationships, so he experiences few difficulties at the school. This is a challenge for a leader in carrying out his role as a school principal because, with relationships, the principal can develop the school both in facilities and infrastructure as well as teacher welfare.

Increasing the number of students results from the principal's success in determining the direction of the school to create a good image in society. This aligns with research conducted by Kustian et al. (2018) that shows that increasing or growing prospective students will raise a positive image of an institution in society. In efforts to regulate its direction, the growth in the number of students is significant progress for SMA Muhammadiyah, which can attract students' interest in enrolling at the school. This aspect indicates that SMA Muhammadiyah has succeeded in undergoing a robust school resilience process. This achievement is positive news for the school, providing great motivation for the future. According to the observations, there was an increase in the number of students at SMA Muhammadiyah Toboali, confirmed by the statement of the vice principal of student affairs.

"Alhamdulillah, I have been here every year for five years for student admission. Thank God, it keeps increasing. However, I do not know if it will be in 2023. Out of six classes, the candidates for the first grade have already fulfilled four classes. I heard that Mr. Supiandi wants six classes despite having no classroom yet. Therefore, if we get six classes later, we can apply to add more buildings. If there were six classes last year, for example, five classes would be a decrease. If it remains six classes, it will be balanced depending on the number of the six classes and how many students will be admitted; that is how it is. However, thank God; usually, we used to admit those whom public schools do not accept. Moreover, public schools have not opened registration, but SMA Muhammadiyah has accepted four classes. So later, the state school will open. Most of the time, we already have full seats, which causes the parents to demand it. Other schools are closed even though we have given them a choice. There is

YBK and Yapebtob, but they insist on being admitted to SMA Muhammadiyah, and even though the public schools have not opened registration, parents insist on coming here."

In contrast to SMA Muhammadiyah Toboali, which remains stable and has a growing number of students, SMA Toboali YPK is experiencing significant fluctuations. According to research, SMA YPK Toboali has an inconsistent increase and decrease in the number of students. This is shown by the variation in the number of students each year. The explanation from the vice principal of student affairs also strengthens this explanation.

"One class, sir. So, in one batch, there are three classes or two classes. In 2016, starting from the establishment of YPK, the number of students decreased slightly. There were only 20 students per class, so I remained the student council supervisor for one year. So, how did I coordinate with the principal? In the future, we would have many students, and thank God, in the following year, we had three classes in 2017; the year after, two more classes were reduced, and then two more classes. Then, only one class until today. So, now the class is the class of 2022. The class of 2022 is one class, and the class of 2021 is also one class; well, the class before that is also two. Two classes before that, we went down there, up, down, and down."

"We have thought about the strategy but do not know the results in July. We will see whether it will increase or is still the same this July. Because we are a private school, we look at the public school first, right? If the country is closed, they register, or for example, if the school is considered good, you do not have to wait, but now, thank God, seven people have registered with us. Normally, we never used to wait, but now, thank God, there are seven students."

The student increase is a bonus from the principal's ability to perform his role. This is related to the school principal's role in setting direction by actively communicating with various parties, including school employees, parents, and other parties, using multiple promotional media.

The ability to sort out the school's priority scale, as conducted by Zulfadhli et al. (2022) in determining the order of priorities, is essential to measure how effective each alternative is for school needs. That way, it will be more effortless for schools to decide their priorities. This research suggests that understanding the priority scale allows schools to identify and meet their needs more precisely. In setting the direction for school sustainability, a leader should be able to sort out the priority scale; therefore, the school principal will be able to measure the extent of the strength of the school he leads and understand all the priority needs to be carried out in the short term. In setting direction, the principal should understand the crucial needs in the school environment. According to research, the principal at SMA Muhammadiyah Toboali has implemented the school's vision and mission through programs planned to satisfy short-term and long-term demands. The principal of SMA, Muhammadiyah Toboali, also confirms this.

"Firstly, we take a priority level according to our principal's model, so we adjust that first so that this is the most important(thing)for the school. Priority is the first."

With the ability to sort out which one to prioritize, the school principal can use the budget

for the school's needs. As in SMA Muhammadiyah Toboali, SMA YPK Toboali also has a priority scale that the school must consider. Research shows that school principals' primary focus is increasing the number of students, while other aspects only become a concern later. The principal of SMA YPK, Toboali, stated this in his statement.

"What target I pursue is the number of current students. It is my mission to admit more students."

As part of the leadership function in setting the direction of the school, the principal should carry out supervision and evaluation. These two actions are crucial to ensure that the direction set by the school progresses according to the mutual decisions. Based on research conducted by Rabani et al. (2023), there is expected to be an increase in transparency and accountability through the implementation of supervision and evaluation. This aims to prevent incompatibilities and prevent possible undesirable consequences from occurring. Based on the results of the researcher's observations, the school principal is very good at carrying out evaluations, especially supervision. The school principal installed CCTV to control everything in the school. The installation of CCTV is a sign that the principal pays attention to school environment control. This shares similarities with SMA YPK Toboali. According to researchers' observations, the principal of SMA YPK Toboali often carried out evaluations to study undone vision and mission. Regarding supervision (control), the principal of SMA YPK Toboali is considered very competent. This is supported by comments from a teacher at SMA YPK Toboali, who stated the following.

"Oh, if that is the case, he is always monitoring, sir. If something happens to us, he is immediately ready to help us, sir. So, in my opinion, if there is any event he is monitoring and helping, that is a complete package."

The opinion of the vice principal of student affairs also confirmed it.

"If we ask Mr. Septa about that, sometimes we are confused about whether he is the principal because he is directly involved in the field. Usually, the principal looks around, but he does not. Sometimes, he acts as the administration staff, and sometimes, he is the one who plays the role of the others. So, he is not only monitoring directly, but he is also involved and overseeing that the programs are being carried out properly. We also supervise him. He often gives ideas such as brochures. I was asked to make half of it; the next one was the package, which had not been completed because the brochure was not ready yet. He also helped make it. Like we want to promote, he always participates in exhibitions like that. Well, he always takes part, and he is busier than us. If it is someone else, if you are already a school principal, it might be 'Sir, please put it like this,' more like commands, not mingling with others."

Evaluation and supervision require an analysis of every aspect of the school environment. In this way, the school principal continues to be proactive in establishing communication and discussions with school employees regarding the developments of students and the school.

4. CONCLUSION

The leadership role of the school principal in setting the direction to develop the level of school resilience can be done in several ways, including a. formulating the school's vision and mission; b. making decisions and school policies by deliberation or discretion; c. reviewing and updating policies deemed inappropriate; d. increasing networks with other school principals, e., increasing the number of students; f. understanding the school's priority scale; g. they are conducting evaluation and supervision. By carrying out the role of the school principal in setting the direction, developing the level of school resilience will be stronger because the school principal's leadership can set the direction of the school following the expectation. Through the leadership role of the school principal, which is setting the direction, a private school will be able to develop a level of resilience through teachers and staff with exemplary leadership by the principal. Even under any conditions, if the principal does these three procedures, he can survive.

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