



Strengthening Transformational Leadership of School Principals in Supporting Inclusive Education at Gunung Sekar 2 Elementary School

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Abstract

This community service activity aims to strengthen the transformational leadership of school principals in supporting inclusive education at Gunung Sekar 2 Elementary School. The method used in this activity involves a descriptive qualitative approach through interviews, observations, and document analysis, which were systematically conducted and presented. The implementation of this program produced three main outcomes: first, it introduced and reinforced the concept of transformational leadership among school principals; second, it supported the development of leadership systems related to inclusive education practices at SDN Gunung Sekar 2; and third, it identified the supporting and inhibiting factors faced by school principals in formulating and implementing inclusive education policies. The results show that the principal of SDN Gunung Sekar 2 has taken appropriate steps by engaging parents and school staff in creating and sustaining an inclusive school environment. Furthermore, the principal has successfully applied values of empathy and mutual respect, which foster a positive and supportive atmosphere for all students to learn and grow.

Keywords: Leadership, Transformational, Principal, Inclusive Education

Abstrak

Kegiatan pengabdian kepada masyarakat ini bertujuan untuk memperkuat kepemimpinan transformasional kepala sekolah dalam mendukung pendidikan inklusif di SDN Gunung Sekar 2. Metode yang digunakan dalam kegiatan ini adalah pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif melalui wawancara, observasi, dan analisis dokumen yang dilakukan dan disajikan secara sistematis. Pelaksanaan program ini menghasilkan tiga poin utama: pertama, memperkenalkan dan memperkuat konsep kepemimpinan transformasional bagi kepala sekolah; kedua, mendukung pengembangan sistem kepemimpinan yang berkaitan dengan praktik pendidikan inklusif di SDN Gunung Sekar 2; dan ketiga, mengidentifikasi faktor pendukung dan penghambat yang dihadapi kepala sekolah dalam merumuskan serta menerapkan kebijakan pendidikan inklusif. Hasil kegiatan menunjukkan bahwa kepala sekolah SDN Gunung Sekar 2 telah mengambil langkah yang tepat dengan melibatkan orang tua siswa dan staf sekolah dalam menciptakan serta mempertahankan lingkungan sekolah yang inklusif. Selain itu, kepala sekolah berhasil menerapkan nilai-nilai empati dan saling menghargai, sehingga terbentuk suasana yang positif dan mendukung bagi seluruh siswa untuk belajar dan berkembang.

Kata Kunci: Kepemimpinan, Transformasional, Kepala Sekolah, Pendidikan Inklusi

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INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the fundamental aspects in building a nation's civilization, so that it can help advance a nation. Therefore, the government always tries to improve the quality of education, so that the objectives of national education can be achieved. In Law No. 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, education is a conscious and planned effort to create a learning atmosphere and learning process so that students can actively develop their

potential to have religious spiritual strength, self-control, personality, intelligence, noble character, and skills needed by themselves, society, nation and state (Miftahul Izzati, 2024).

Leadership is the driving factor of the organization through the handling of change and management so that the existence of the leader is not just a symbol whose presence or absence does not matter but its existence has a positive impact on the development of the organization. According to Bass and Reggio, there is much evidence that transformational leadership can move followers beyond what is expected, as it can direct followers to achieve high levels of satisfaction and commitment to the group or organization (Kiki Riski Amalia, 2020).

Within the management framework, the principal has two major roles in achieving school goals, namely as a school manager and at the same time as a school leader. Both roles are inherent in a principal. As a manager, the principal's duties are primarily concerned with maintaining the prevailing school structures, procedures and objectives. As a leader, the principal's duties relate to making changes, achieving vision and growth, and providing inspiration and motivation.

The principal as a manager and leader needs to have excellent leadership skills for the sake of the organization he leads. For this reason, a principal needs to have a leadership model called educational leadership which has various perspectives, namely: (1) vision and symbol, (2) management by walking about, (3) for the kids (close to the customer), (4) autonomy and innovation, (5) building a sense of family in the community, and (6) strong desire, intensity and enthusiasm (Iwa Kuswaeri, 2017).

Transformational is changing into a form. It reorganizes things to be different in a way to control activities systematically towards a determination and achievement of goals. As a leader, you must be able to be brave in defending the truth, must be able to eradicate injustice, must not prioritize ego and self-interest. Not only principals, educators would also be nice to provide many real examples rather than just talking as if the most correct. The transformational leadership pattern is another way for the head of the institution to improve quality institutions. Research on this matter is very interesting to describe, because transformative leadership is millennial leadership, in the sense of a new leadership model and is very effective when applied in an institution, especially educational institutions. This leadership is one of the ideal types of leadership. Every school institution must have a very complex structure starting from the scope and environmental aspects of the educational process, so the leadership system is very important in the world of education. The rapid development of culture in education has led to the emergence of transformations in education, one of which is the transformational leadership style, other factors are also influenced by the times and the current generation. If you examine the current school, there are still many principals who have not been able to make themselves a role model and are less responsible for what they lead, this will have an impact on the school system that is not good, so that the school will not progress and things like this will prevent the school from realizing an effective institution. Therefore, there must be a transformation of the principal's leadership (Arrum Kharisma, et al, 2022).

METHODS

This community service activity employs a descriptive qualitative approach, as the data collected are oriented toward in-depth explanations of real practices and experiences in the field. A qualitative approach allows the authors to describe and interpret the transformational leadership practices of school principals in supporting inclusive education through detailed narratives. This activity also includes elements of library research to support field findings with relevant theoretical perspectives (Bogdan, Robert, and Steven, 1992). Data collection was carried out through observation, interviews, and document analysis. Observations were conducted to understand the leadership practices applied within the school environment. Interviews were held with the principal and inclusive education teachers at SDN Gunung Sekar 2 to obtain insights on their experiences, strategies, and challenges. In addition, document analysis was used to examine school records, policy documents, and relevant literature that support the development of inclusive education and transformational leadership. The combination of these methods provides a comprehensive understanding of how transformational leadership can be strengthened to foster inclusive educational practices in the school.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

A. Principal's transformational leadership

Etymologically, transformational leadership consists of two words: leadership and transformational. Leadership is defined as a person's ability to lead, motivate, and guide another person or group of individuals in achieving a common goal or vision. It involves the ability to provide direction, inspire, make decisions, and manage resources effectively. Leadership is not just about having power or authority, but also about the ability to influence others in a positive way, build strong relationships, and provide clear direction in achieving a common goal (Yohanes Kefi & Rosnelli, 2024).

Transformational leadership is defined as the ability of a leader to change the work environment, work motivation, work patterns and work values applied to subordinates so that employees can improve and optimize their work performance to achieve the goals of an organization. Transformational leadership seeks to transform the values followed by subordinates in supporting the vision and mission of the organization (I Putu Agus Ardi Tirtaputra, 2016). Based on some of the descriptions above, we can conclude that transformational leadership is a leadership process that brings change through a clear vision, and involves subordinates in every activity, as well as a charismatic attitude as an approach between leaders and followers.

Transformational leadership is oriented towards the process of building commitment towards organizational goals and giving followers the confidence to achieve these goals. Transformational leadership theory studies how leaders change organizational culture and organize organizational structures and perform management strategies to achieve organizational goals (Rohmat, 2020). According to Robbins & Judge, transformational leaders are leaders who inspire their followers to put aside their personal interests for the good of the organization and are able to have an extraordinary influence on their followers (Robbins & Judge, 2008).

Principal transformational leadership is a leadership style that focuses on inspiring, motivating and guiding the board of educators to achieve better results and develop their potential. This leadership style is very important in education as it enables principals to create a positive, productive and innovative school environment. Principal transformational leadership can be observed from several important aspects. First, the principal must have a clear vision and mission, which will be a guide in directing the school towards the desired educational goals. Second, the principal must act as an agent of change in the midst of educational disruption, which is able to face challenges and take innovative steps to improve the quality of education. Third, principals need to have strong charisma and confidence in leading the school, as well as being able to influence and motivate the entire board of educators and elements in the school to achieve educational goals optimally (Robbins & Judge, 2008).

B. Principal's leadership system related to inclusive education at SDN Gunung Sekar 2

The principal is the highest leader in the school, his leadership attitude that the principal has will be very influential when determining policies for the progress of the school. The principal as a leader certainly has good communication skills, has technical skills in managing schools, has a sharp analytical in a policy, and most importantly, has a firm character and dares to make decisions, his work ethic is high. He is not easily influenced by things outside his capacity as a principal (Luk Luk Yata Lalak Muslimin & Muqowim, 2021).

In connection with the leadership role of the principal who is very influential and becomes a positive figure for students in the school. In accordance with what was stated by Mr. Ali Mahbobby, S.Pd., that the inclusive school at SDN Gunung Sekar 2 The principal has an important role in making policies regarding the curriculum for students with special needs, namely the principal provides a policy to make the curriculum flexible and adapted to the abilities of students with special needs, namely using an independent curriculum but sometimes using an adapted curriculum for children with disabilities. In accordance with the field data, during the teaching and learning process in class the teacher makes modifications and accommodations for students with special needs. That is, by reducing learning content. Furthermore, the evaluation process is carried out very flexibly so that the teachers here are required to be even more creative in designing learning that suits the needs of students with special needs.

The principal of SDN Gunung Sekar 2, Rohmadi, S.Pd., M.Pd., has a number of programs in line with the school's vision and mission. The school's vision is to create a generation of young learners with character, innovation and achievement, while the school's mission covers several important aspects of educational development such as: In order to foster good faith and good manners, the principal at SDN Gunung Sekar 2 implements programs that emphasize moral and ethical values in daily learning. This includes extracurricular activities that promote harmony and mutual help among students. Principals also focus on the learning process by using a variety of innovative teaching methods. This includes the use of active learning models such as collaborative-based learning to increase student engagement. Through the education quality improvement program, principals at SDN Gunung Sekar 2 strive to develop knowledge

in science and technology, sports, languages and cultural arts according to students' interests and talents.

The programs run by the principal at SDN Gunung Sekar 2 strongly support the school's vision and mission in creating an inclusive, quality and characterful learning environment. With a focus on inclusive education, character development and community collaboration, the principal plays an important role in producing a generation of innovative and outstanding students.

Educators and education personnel for special assistant teachers in inclusive schools which includes the process of planning, selection and recruitment, compensation, organization, supervision and development, promotion and transfer and dismissal carried out by the principal so that inclusive education services can be carried out properly, because this is one of the pillars of the success of inclusive education in the presence of educators, namely good special assistant teachers, so it is very necessary to manage this special assistant teacher in the implementation of inclusive education (Sri Hartini & Juni Astuti, 2024). That way the principal recruits gpk and also teachers at Gunung Sekar 2 Elementary School so that they can understand about inclusive education, namely For the recruitment of gpk teachers and teachers at SDN Gunung Sekar 2, it does not emphasize the title they have but how to teach like what and how, the main requirement for becoming a gpk teacher at SDN Gunung Sekar 2 is patience and sincerity, if these two things are fulfilled then it can be said that the teacher can become a teacher of children with disabilities at SDN Gunung Sekar 2.

With a systematic approach to recruiting GPKs and teachers, the principal of SDN Gunung Sekar 2 can build a teaching team that understands and is ready to implement inclusive education. The school can ensure that all teachers have the necessary skills and knowledge to create an inclusive learning environment.

C. Supporting and inhibiting factors for school principals in making inclusive education policies at SDN Gunung Sekar 2

Supporting factors in the successful implementation of inclusive schools lie in several parties, among others:

1. Head of Education Active participation, the head of education is one of the most important predictors of success in implementing change, improving services or setting policies for reasonable accommodation (flexibility of curriculum and infrastructure). The principal plays an important role in facilitating systemic change and leading the school to adopt new attitudes and practices. For inclusive education implementation to show positive benefits, the learning environment and learning process must be carefully constructed to provide exceptional learning opportunities for all learners (Farah Arriani, 2022). This agrees with Mr. Ali Mahbobby as the GPK teacher at SDN Gunung Sekar 2, namely: The principal at SDN Gunung Sekar 2 has provided several types of therapy for children with disabilities, such as play therapy, theater therapy, behavior therapy (getting used to good behavior such as eating and drinking), occupational therapy, social therapy (communicating with peers), music therapy (therapy used for children with autism).
2. Special and General Teachers Each teacher should have mutual respect and open-mindedness to the inclusive philosophy, as well as administrative support

and good knowledge of how to meet the needs of learners with special needs. Their involvement and collaboration is crucial to the success of reasonable accommodations, such as appropriate curriculum design, classroom learning processes, and assessment in learning. A special mentor teacher (GPK) is a teacher assigned to assist learners with special needs at school, either from the education unit or from a nearby special school (Farah Arriani, 2022). This agrees with Mr. Ali Mahbobby as the GPK teacher at SDN Gunung Sekar 2, namely: The GPK teacher only carries out the directions given to the principal with the strategy of guiding children with disabilities, namely patience and sincerity.

3. Peers An inclusive learning environment provides many opportunities for general learners and learners with special needs to establish relationships with peers, both in terms of the learning process and friendships. Peers contribute most to the successful implementation of inclusive education for all learners (Farah Arriani, 2022). This is in accordance with what was said by Mr. Ali Mahbobby as the GPK teacher at SDN Gunung Sekar 2, namely: At Gunung Sekar 2 primary school, they do not exclude children with disabilities but embrace them by playing together during recess, so there is no gap between them.
4. Parents' participation in the educational decision-making process for their children is very important and holds the key to their children's success. The most important thing parents can do is to be involved and play an active role as members of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team that determines the learner's pathway. The IEP team is tasked with making educational decisions for learners, and dealing with issues such as eligibility, evaluation, program development and placement in inclusive education. Parents can also support school policies, including the provision of GPK and accessible infrastructure (Farah Arriani, 2022). This agrees with Mr. Ali Mahbobby as the GPK teacher at SDN Gunung Sekar 2, namely: For parents of children with disabilities, they entrust their children to study here because Gunung Sekar 2 Elementary School is an inclusive school that can produce disciplined and superior students, not only that but also they are interested in the programs created, such as there are several types of therapies that we do, so children with disabilities are not bored to learn.

According to Mr. Rohmadi, S.Pd, M.Pd as the principal at SDN Gunung Sekar 2, the inhibiting factors that in fact occur at SDN Gunung Sekar 2 are: the absence of special treatment carried out by the government to provide special understanding for inclusive schools, government policies in regulating children with disabilities, which means that children with disabilities who enter SDN Gunung Sekar 2 are limited, so not necessarily children with disabilities can enter but must go through several procedures, not only that in terms of classes are also inadequate, if there are additional students it is feared that the class will not fit, therefore the children with disabilities who enter the Gunung Sekar 2 school are limited. This also has an impact on the school's unpreparedness in accepting children with certain types of special needs, as happened in the field.

The responsibility of school principals is said to be commitment to the implementation of inclusive education policies can be realized if there is support from the government in the form of a special budget for its implementation. With the fulfillment of the budget, the

principal can conduct direct training targeting all educators to increase competence in their respective schools or pay GPK (Khairunnisa Fitrah Umi Kaltsum et. Al, 2024).

CONCLUSION

The community service activity conducted at SDN Gunung Sekar 2 demonstrates that strengthening the transformational leadership of the school principal plays a vital role in supporting the implementation of inclusive education. Through mentoring, collaboration, and the introduction of inclusive leadership values, the principal has successfully developed a learning environment that embraces diversity and ensures equal opportunities for all students, including those with special needs. The principal's commitment to a clear inclusive vision has encouraged active involvement from teachers, staff, parents, and the wider community, forming a strong foundation for inclusive practices within the school. By reinforcing empathy, mutual respect, and collaborative decision-making, this program has contributed to the development of a more inclusive school culture. The strengthened leadership capacity of the principal not only supports the implementation of inclusive policies but also fosters a sustainable and supportive environment where every student can grow and thrive. Ultimately, this initiative reflects how empowering school leaders through transformational leadership can be a key driver in achieving inclusive and equitable education at the elementary level.

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