The roles of school principal: An insight from disadvantaged areas of Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Sequence studies existing have advocated principal's roles in school development. However, limited study has addressed the principal's role as educator, manager, administrator, supervisor, leader, innovator, and motivator (EMASLIM) in disadvantaged areas in Indonesia. This current study delves into principals' efforts and challenges in their previously mentioned roles. For this purpose, a case study was carried out. Involving two participants from two schools in a remote area in Indonesia, this study employed in-depth interviews, WhatsApp chat, WhatsApp voice notes, and documentation for data collection of this study. The findings revealed that the principals focus more on how to deal with the lack of teachers at school so they can carry out their duty as an educator, manager, administrator, supervisor, leader, innovator, and motivator. This study is expected to enrich literature regarding the role of principle, particularly in remote area. Thus, it will help stakeholders in the policy-making that suit the needs of different characteristics. It was found that the main problem is not their location in the remote area, but the lack of quantity and quality of human resources. It seems that the principals shoulder all burden due to the lack of human resources available. This study suggests the government to pay attention to the ratio of teachers and students.

Introduction

The government of Indonesia had issued the policy for school decentralization and autonomy in the form of school-based management. School-based management is intended to enhance the quality of national education. School-based management allows schools to organize their schooling on their own (Achadah, 2019). According to the Ministry of Education and Culture, the school-based management model provides flexibility and freedom to schools and creates consensus decision-making between all school parties including school principals, teachers, guardians of students in an effort to improve quality schools that are guided by national education policies (Bandur, 2012). It is expected that the school-based management provides spaces for all members of the school, particularly the school principal in taking the charge of regulating the school.

Principals have a complex rule in their leadership at school. Being a leader possesses opportunity and challenge. Great power and authority can be a burden, but at the same time, it can be beneficial as the great authority allow the principal to regulate the member of the school to achieve the shared goal for the success of the school's governance. It is said that the principal acts as designer, teacher, and, servant (Fauzi & Arnudin, 2017). Another study states that the principal is responsible for school development in terms of planning, preparation, implementation, and supervision

(Amala, 2021). Another previous study describes that the existence of school principals involves their role in planning, organizing, actuating, and controlling (Amala, 2021). They are in charge of planning instructional activities, school management, training other educators, and utilizing and maintaining facilities and infrastructure (Sukandar, 2018).

The goal of education is to increase the quality of teaching and learning. However, there are more aspects to be considered outside the education domain for principals and teachers, such as their role as manager, administrator, supervisor, leader, innovator, and motivator. Previously, the role of the principal is abbreviated as EMAS (educator, manager, administrator, supervisor), However, it was revised to fulfill the need of current education into EMASLIM (educator, manager, administrator, supervisor, leader, innovator, and motivator). EMASLIM elements are:

Table 1. The Definition of Elements of EMASLIM from Experts

No	EMASLIM	Definition
1	Principal as educator	The principal as educator refers to the principal ability in guiding teachers, education staff, and students to follow the development of science and technology, as well as setting a good example (Hamirul, 2019).
2	Principal as manager	The principal as a manager involves the principal's ability in being responsible and accountable in managing school such as planning school work programs, utilizing human resources and infrastructure, implementing programs that have been designed, and evaluating the implementation of school programs (Sakir & Hartiningsih, 2018).
3	Principal as administrator	Principal as administrator involves its role in administrative systems in student affairs, curriculum and learning, personnel, finance, administration, infrastructure, and public relations, with an activity program oriented toward the administration of KBM and BK, student administration, financial administration, facilities/infrastructure administration, and school committee administration (Saleh et al., 2016).
4	Principal as supervisor	Principal as supervisor refers to principals who provide direction, guidance, service, and supervision to teachers, staff, and students, provides guidance to teachers, assist and overcome difficulties encountered by teachers in the learning process, and find a solution for problem (Ali, 2019).
5	Principal as leader	The principal as a leader refers to the principal with leadership qualities and uses their authority to direct subordinates to work together to achieve school goals (Juarman et al., 2020).
6	Principal as innovator	The principal as innovator refers to the ability to find the right strategy to be able to maintain a harmonious relationship with the environment, be able to find new ideas where the new ideas can inspire teachers to always be creative and innovative in improving competence (Syahrudin, 2019).
7	Principal as motivator	Principal as a motivator is defined to principal ability to create conditions or a school environment so that everyone who participates or all human resources is motivated from within himself, has hope, and is stimulated to be able to carry out his duties optimally so that the goals of the organization or school can also be achieved properly (Hardiansyah & Aryani, 2016).

Numerous previous studies have highlighted the prominent role of the school's principal role in the success of school management (Jazaudin et al., 2021). Good management costs a good leader. Without having a capable leader, an organization will struggle in encountering issues for the development of the organization. Principals as human resources determine the quality of school management. Principal as a leader has a high authority at school that allows good governance if they possess good leadership ability. The low quality of education is due to the low performance of teachers (Qistiyah & Karwanto, 2020). Thus, this calls for the good performance of the principal in supervising teachers at school. For this reason, this study explores the realization of EMASLIM from the perspective of school principals in disadvantaged areas of Indonesia.

Sequence studies existing have advocated principal's roles in school development. However, limited study has addressed the principal's role as educator, manager, administrator, supervisor, leader, innovator, and motivator in disadvantaged areas in Indonesia. This current study presents different perspectives from previous studies. It uncovers the situations of school principal in disadvantaged area. Thus, it provides insight into the success of EMASLIM as well as challenges that the principals encounter. This study is intended to add to the literature on the role of the principle, particularly in disadvantaged areas. As a result, it will assist stakeholders in developing policies that meet the demands of various characteristics.

Method

Research Design

This study employed a case study. Yin (2014) describes a case study as an approach to gain an in-depth investigation of a contemporary phenomenon in a real-life context. This study collected data using in-depth interviews, WhatsApp chat, WhatsApp voice notes, and documentation. A case study is considered the most appropriate for this study due to the small number of participants involved in this study allowing for an in-depth exploration. A case study is a research project that focuses on a single case or a small group of instances (Starman, 2013).

Prior to data collection, I provided an Informed Consent Letter to be given to the participants. I made sure that they understood the research objectives. Thus, all names in this study are written as "Informant 1 and Informant 2. The places are not mentioned. Both schools are from a disadvantaged area in Kalimantan, Indonesia. Based on Presidential Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia Number 131 the Year 2015 Article 1 that disadvantaged area is regions with less developed areas and communities compared to other regions on a national scale as seen from its community, human resources, facilities and infrastructure, financial capacity, accessibility, and characteristics.

Participants

This study involved two participants. They are the principals in junior high schools in Indonesia. They were selected since they came from schools in a disadvantaged area, which is categorized as the 3T (frontier, outermost, and least developed regions). All names are coded in this study to ensure the confidentiality of research participants' identities. Thus, this allowed participants to freely express their feelings and thoughts without the burden of being anxious.

Informant 1

Informant 1 is 57 years old. He has been teaching for 34 years. He has been a school principal for 12 years in 3 different schools. According to him, the school principal has three major tasks, which are managerial, supervision, and evaluation. He serves in a junior high school in a remote area. It is about 3-4 hours from the province. It requires him to across the sea for about one hour to get to his school. During his early career, he

was placed in areas with no electricity and internet connection. Hence, it makes him familiar with the situations in a disadvantaged area.

Informant 2

Informant 2 is 53 years old. During his 26 years of becoming a teacher, he has been serving as a school principal for 11 years. He describes that school tasks are shared responsibilities among the principal, teachers, and staff. Thus, the principal act as a leader who shares tasks with his subordinates. He is the principal of a junior high school in the border area. There is electricity and a low internet connection in his school. It takes two hours from his school to get to the regency/city.

Instruments and Data Collection

This study is contextualized into the realization of EMASLIM (educator, manager, administrator, supervisor, leader, innovator, and motivator). Data were collected using in-depth interviews, WhatsApp chat, WhatsApp voice notes, and documentation. The interview runs for one week using a telephone interview. The results of the interview were strengthened by the results of WhatsApp chat and WhatsApp voice notes. Documentation was in the form of the evaluation form, educational calendar, lesson plan, and other relevant documents. Using a semi-structured interview, the study focuses on participants' voices rather than dragging them to a certain theme of answers. Thus, the findings provided in this study gain considerable different perspectives from previous studies. This enriches the theoretical findings regarding EMASLIM in Indonesia.

Data Analysis

The interview lasted for about one hour for each participant. I carefully listened and transcribed the results of the interview and translated them into English. After that, the results of the interview were coded into the themes in EMASLIM (educator, manager, administrator, supervisor, leader, innovator, and motivator).

Results and Discussion

The findings of this study are presented thematically according to elements of EMASLIM (educator, manager, administrator, supervisor, leader, innovator, and motivator).

Educator

As an educator, the principal also acts as an educator. The principal as an educator means that he can catch up to the development of science and technology to give the most current knowledge to the students. Hence, students will easily adapt to this rapid change of world development. Educator also includes the ability to be role model (Sopian, 2016). A principal provides impact for the members of the school. A school principal should be capable of designing long-term and short-term programs for the teaching and learning process, one of them is by getting to know their students and the situation at school. Informant 1 describes:

> *"As we found challenges in designing appropriate educational instruction for students with different IQs, social backgrounds, economic levels, and environments. I was teaching in a remote area, the road was bumpy, in rainy seasons, the road was muddy. We need to cross the sea to get there. There was no electricity or internet connection. Every rice planting season, children help their parents and did not go to school for months since the paddy fields are far from the village."*

Adapting to culture is one of his ways to become a good educator. He does not focus on what method or technique for teaching. Instead, he tried to acknowledge his students and get close to them and their parents to get support. The remote area presents findings that are surprisingly different from any other areas since they could not focus on education rather, they fight with the situation. Principals make policies assisted by

teachers, school employees to improve the quality of graduate students as drivers (Hamirul, 2019). Informant 1 continued:

> *"I had a student with a good IQ, I taught him myself since I am a math teacher. Despite he came from a low economic, level now he is a math teacher in an international private school."*

Having a successful student creates a happy memory for him that despite all this shortage, he could provide ways for a better future for his students. He expresses another concern that may impact the characters of his students:

> *"We need more teachers; we have nine classes but only have four teachers. Thus, we looked for teachers who could us, anyone who was available. The situation forced us to recruit teachers who are not experts in that subjects since we took anyone who was willing to teach in a disadvantaged area. Even we could not recruit teachers with bachelor's degrees, we recruited high school graduates to be a teacher. There are overactive students at school since no teacher staying in the class due to the lack of teachers. Students create their own activities and it was so noisy. Therefore, we made personal feedback to students. I also approached the teacher to get closer to students."*

This is confirmed by Informant 2 who experienced the same problem:

> *"Juvenile delinquency is one of the problems we face. Currently, we provide guidance and approach to students and to know the character of these students. After that, we decide the next steps."*

At this rate, with the imbalance ratio between students and teachers, what principles do was making direct feedback and advice to students be it in formal or informal occasions.

Manager

The principal provides rules and regulations for all members of the schools, including the community and parents. Management includes systematic and detailed plans, clear tasks, supporting programs, efficient and effective quality control systems (Jazaudin et al., 2021). Managerial ability is one of the challenges possessed by the principals in Indonesia (Arum, 2017). Principals with good managerial ability will be an enforcer and drivers for the discipline of the teachers (Jazaudin et al., 2021). As managers in schools, principals have a legal role to develop staff, curriculum, and implementation of education in schools (Sakir & Hartiningsih, 2018). Informant 1 describes his initial effort for the management of the school:

> *"First, I identify our school needs for the next year and design it in Rencana Kerja Sekolah to adjust the fund provided by the government. I also consider the COVID-19 pandemic in the planning."*

A supportive environment for encouraging performance is one in which goals are clearly defined, work techniques are disclosed, rewards for effort are set, and equipment, materials, and supplies are readily available (Arum, 2017). Principals should be able to maximize resources at school which covers environmental and human resources with their intelligence and ability (Fauzi & Arnudin, 2017). If a headmaster is able to successfully manage school resources, then the implementation of education in schools will go smoothly, and high-quality education will be realized (Wiyono et al., 2019).

Still, in the managerial aspect, the lack of teachers becomes a problem as Informant 1 describes:

> *"Government should identify the lack of teachers at school since the funding for more teachers burden the school. It impacted the school development in other aspects due to the budgeting."*

Informant 2 also faces problem in the managerial aspects:

"Constraints in coordination and communication with fellow co-workers. To overcome this, the resource persons coordinated with the deputy principals of the school. Especially, during a pandemic, with limited time, it is difficult to manage school resources. I found it difficult to communicate and coordinate because the attitudes and characteristics between individuals are different."

Principal acts as resource allocator that refers to principal's ability to allocate school/madrasah resources (students, educators and education staff, school facilities and infrastructure, curriculum, finance, and information) based on a priority scale (Usman, 2014). Informant 1 said that this year, his schools get the funding to build laboratories and principal room. Informant 1 holds in-house training for the teachers:

"We have in-house training at school focusing on IT to ensure that every teacher can operate a computer. We have 40 computers provided by the government. I hope that teachers can catch up with global development."

However, Informant 2 has difficulty in IT-based management:

"It is difficult to stare at a computer monitor for a long time due to an accident and an injury in my head, radiation hurts my back and headaches. Thus, I ask colleagues in handling the administration, especially things with operating IT devices."

It was found that Informant 2 delegates his obligations to staff and vice-principals due to his inability to operate using IT devices. This confirms the findings of the study conducted by UNICEF (2021) that, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, the innovation for learning is upsurged. However, large populations, including educators struggle with a new way of learning. That is, not all people are familiar with computers, especially those who live in a remote area of Indonesia.

Administrator

The principal is required to regulate how teachers and staff fulfill the administrational obligation such as filling out student and teacher attendance books, students' grading and assessment, and writing the final report. According to Informant 1, teachers are required to make an educational timeline, semester program, syllabus, lesson plan, classroom action, evaluation, and reflection. Regarding the administration, Informant 1 finds it challenging especially in terms of financial administration:

"Now I have more than 300 students in 12 classes. This school only has 7 civil servant teachers. Ideally, 12 classes require 32 teachers. Therefore, I recruited more teachers and plan the funding from the school fund. "

Informant 2 also explains the same thing:

"We need more teachers with the status of civil servants. There are 18 classes t the number of civil servants is only 13 teachers. In addition, the honorary staffs have different graduate disciplines from the subjects they teach."

Administrative obligations have been always concerning for educators in Indonesia. The problem lies in the lack of human resources. This makes the principal carry the burden himself.

Supervisor

As a supervisor, the principal's job entails monitoring, development, and evaluation (Qistiyah & Karwanto, 2020). The principal should give direction, guidance, service, and oversight to all school inhabitants, including teachers, employees, and students. He or she should also provide guidance to teachers so that they can carry out their obligations in accordance with their responsibilities, help and overcome the shortcomings and difficulties faced by teachers in the learning process, and take a solution that is good at solving problems (Ali, 2019). The principal should formulate and

run the supervision program and prepare for school accreditation (Budio, 2020). The role of the principal as supervisor includes giving guidance to school members and noticing problems and finding solutions.

Informant 2 confesses that he was unable to complete the gratings for supervision, supervision schedule. The evaluation could not be done on time. This is in line with Arum (2017) that supervision is one of the competencies that many principals in Indonesia were lacking. Differently, Informant 1 revealed that he could do the evaluation on time.

> *"The supervision was done last year, from February to March 2021. All teachers had been supervised academically and ranked with all results passing the standard of 75. The lowest score was 80.25. Teachers who got a high score in the evaluation were asked to present their teaching techniques or media to enlighten their colleagues. This is held twice a semester or four times a year."*

He stated that the evaluation should not be complicated, the smallest thing can be a form of evaluation.

> *"I walk around the school every day to monitor the teaching process. It is one of the ways I supervise the teachers. This way, I found some teachers found it difficult to make a PowerPoint presentation or could not use the projector."*

Principals conduct an assessment of teacher performance as an evaluation for the betterment of school management and teacher competencies, especially pedagogical and professional competencies (Fauzi & Arnudin, 2020). Fauzi and Arnudin (2020) continue that the performance appraisal covers formative and summative assessment at least twice a week at the beginning and end of the school year.

Leader

A leader is sometimes interchangeable with the manager both roles are different. If the manager deals with the school management, the leader tends to focus on the principal's ability in regulating members of the school. An effective leader can promote, influence, and direct his group's activities and behavior (Sukandar, 2018). Informant 1 and Informant 2 express:

> *"It's difficult because everyone's character is different. It takes time to know the character of each educator and staff. It takes a lot of consideration to make a decision, usually, you have to discuss it first with the vice principals."*

> *"Being a leader is difficult. A principal is not always a leader but a leader can be a school principal. A school principal should create a policy. Policy made can result in positive and negative responses. I should acknowledge the character of all teachers at my school so I approach them according to their character."*

A principal can use both leadership styles effectively and flexibly to promote teacher competency, depending on the situation and circumstances (Sukandar, 2018). They need to have positive behavior as it can encourage and guide the member of the schools (Fauzi & Arnudin, 2020). Principals know their duties and set the tone for the school with high expectations for staff and pupils (Sukmawati et al., 2018). Sukmawati et al. (2018) describe principal leadership style as directing, coaching, and supporting styles.

Innovator

Today's education should adapt to the need of society. Thus, education should prepare students to adapt to the need of industry to survive. One of the purposes of education is to prepare people to meet their unique requirements while also being able to adapt to their surroundings (Arum, 2017). He is on the lookout for new ideas and innovative ways to execute school environment education (Qistiyah & Karwanto, 2020).

Given freedom and inventiveness, school management relies greatly on the reliability of a principal, with the headmaster having greater authority to make choices

connected to school management policies than the federal government's education management system (Jazaudin et al., 2021). Informant 1 describes his kinds of innovator adjusting to the need of the school:

> *"An innovator is someone who does action rather than talks only. What I do is more on the basic need of our school that we lack teachers. I propose the formation for teachers to the government to allow them to become a civil servant. I also ask teachers to join the program 'Guru Penggerak' so they can handle funds from the government without disturbing operational funds. It is an innovation mediated by the government. The principal should be a mediator. Innovation is not always acceptable since some teachers think that they are too old."*

If the principal, as the person responsible for the implementation of instruction in the school, uses and manages current school resources wisely and effectively, changes in attitudes and behaviors will be achievable (Jazaudin et al., 2021).

Motivator

The school principal's role is critical in improving teacher performance in terms of increasing competition and work motivation, as well as establishing effective work procedures and promoting a harmonious, safe, and enjoyable working environment (Sukandar, 2018). Informant 1 describes his way to motivate his subordinates:

> *"Since we already have our own computer laboratory, I motivate teachers to be able to operate computer. My current problem is the willingness and discipline of teachers. Sometimes it is hard to boost their motivation. Implementing reward and punishment is not easy. Giving rewards is easy, but punishment is not something I cannot do. Thus, I make an attendance list for every activity to ensure everyone is participating."*

Last but not least, the government plays an important role in inspiring principals and teachers by providing self-development training and rewards. Training and self-development initiated by the government cover ongoing professional development, teacher induction programs, teacher induction programs, and teacher certification program (Wiyono et al., 2019). Incentives should be taken into account for motivating better governance (Arifin et al., 2022).

Based on Government Regulation Number 19 of 2017 the principal should develop entrepreneurship. Muspawi (2020) described entrepreneurship competence as the instincts in managing production/service activities in schools as learning resources for students. Both participants describe the school canteen and cooperation as examples of entrepreneurship at school. Informant 1 added that his art teacher teaches students to create things they can sell, such as broomstick and ashtray. Informant 2 explains that human resources are available but the facilities and funds are lacking.

Seeing the significance of principals at school. It is necessary for the government to better select the candidate for the principal. Recruitment of principals who do not follow regulations results in the netting of principals who have a low mentality, lack of work motivation, lack of work spirit and team spirit, lack of organizational vision and mission, and lack of integrity (Nuphanudin et al., 2021). In addition, low compensation or incentive, less favorable environmental variables, limited facilities and infrastructure, lack of rewards, and limited budgets are all issues that affect the school principal's performance (Arum, 2017).

Conclusion

Changing toward better education promises a better future for our young generation. This study describes principals' efforts and challenges in being an educator, manager, administrator, supervisor, leader, innovator, and motivator. Principals tried to catch up to the recent science and technological development. However, the low quantity and quality of human resources, be it, teachers and staff, stumble the progress of the

school. This is a never-ending cycle since there was a lack of personnel at school that forced the principal to take even senior high school graduates to be a teacher. It seems that there is too much burden for the teacher that hinders them from being motivated and innovative. The lack of teachers at school gives a huge impact and even can be worse than the disadvantages a remote area may have. Thus, it is expected that government can pay attention to the ratio of teachers and students in remote are of Indonesia along with the self-development programs and incentives. After all, the success of the school principal relies heavily on the participation of all members of the school such as teachers, staff, students, parents, and government. Community plays an important role in educational success. The government's role is also very significant in motivating principals and teachers by giving training for self-development as well as incentives. Future studies may explore EMASLIM from teachers and students' point of view for more elaborated findings.

Acknowledgement

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