

# Performance of Principal in Elementary School for Realizing “Freedom to Learn”

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**Abstract**—The position of principal is very strategic in the progress and quality of a school. In order to obtain a principal who has the competence to lead and manage a school gradually the government has made various improvements in the implementation of the national education system. This research aims to identify the performance of the principal in realizing free learning. The research method used is a qualitative method based on phenomenological properties. The findings of the study obtained a number of supporting principal performance in the application of “Freedom to Learn”, such as social performance, teacher capacity building, commitment to completion of school assignments, and collegial communication.

**Keywords**—*freedom to learn, performance of principal*

## I. INTRODUCTION

The principal is a key person in advancing the quality of education in the school. Qualified principals will be able to make the teachers and staff they lead professional, the students smart, the school environment community will contribute to the progress of the school. The position of principal is very strategic in the progress and quality of a school. The quality of the school can be realized as long as there is a principal who is able to empower all the resources available to achieve the vision, and mission of education goals [1].

Schools as part of the national education system, in formulating school goals and policies should be based on nationally defined goals and policies, including in the implementation of freedom to learn. The concept of 'freedom to learn' formulated by the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia becomes a common policy and must be applied in every school throughout Indonesia. This concept offers flexibility for educational institutions to explore the potential of students to the maximum according to the interests, talents, and basic skills that students have [2]. Hopefully through this “freedom to learn”, the face of Indonesian education is increasingly advanced and qualified towards competitiveness globally.

The formulated policy "freedom to learn" contains four basic programs, Include: 1) National Standardized School Exams (USBN), 2) National Exams (UN), 3) Learning

Implementation Plan (RPP), dan 4) Zoning system in New Student Admission Rules (PPDB) [3].

The application of “freedom to learn” in schools has implications for the changing learning patterns that teachers have been doing all along. Teachers can't rely enough on conservative methods of teaching students. A flexible and *experiential learning approach* is needed to accommodate students' needs in learning [4].

As conveyed by Ramadania and Aswadi that in applying the concept of “freedom to learn” in school, teachers should be pleasant friends for students [5]. This is done so that the learner really learns of his or her own consciousness and is independent of his choice. Teachers need to be more patient in educating children with the diversity of interests and abilities they have and supported by good guiding and listening skills.

The implications of “freedom to learn” policy is not only on the teaching aspects that teachers do. In terms of principals, these implications are even greater and form of responsibility. The principal is fully responsible for the successful implementation of the “freedom to learn” policy in the school, so he does not rely enough on the performance that has been shown. The performance of the principal should be supporting the needs of teachers and students in learning and mobilize school resources more effectively. The competence of the principal should be developed at a more specific level in supporting “freedom to learn” in the school.

The principal's performance contributes to the collective efficacy of teachers, the teacher's commitment to the school's mission achievements, community engagement with the school, and student learning achievement [6], student learning and teacher teaching practices [7].

The performance of the principal becomes the way for the open professionalism of the teacher, because the principal is exemplified by the teacher in carrying out his professional duties. Through the creation of harmonious relationships (headmaster - teachers), it can give rise to trust between the two so that, teachers and principals have a vision in providing learning services to students [8].

Understanding the important role of the principal and the performance shown, it is appropriate for the government to prioritize the provision of a professional principal and be able to demonstrate its best performance, so that every policy implemented can be distributed to all school residents and optimally, including on the “freedom to learn” policy.

Permendikbud No. 6/2018 On the Assignment of Teachers as Principal mentions that Competency is knowledge, attitude and skills inherent in the dimensions of personality, managerial, entrepreneurship, supervision, and social competence (Article 1 paragraph 3). Then in article 15 paragraph 1 mentions that the principal's workload is fully to carry out the basic duties of managerial, entrepreneurial development, and supervision to teachers and education personnel. Furthermore, in paragraph 2 it is explained that the workload of the principal carries out the basic duties of managerial, entrepreneurial development, and supervision to teachers and education personnel.

The principal with his performance can change the teacher's perception that he is part of the school's vision, mission and goals so that he is encouraged to be involved in making school programs a success. Principals through leadership can create collaboration between teachers to generate learning interactions that enable each teacher to thrive. It is logically explained by Bredeson & Johansson that the principal's performance should align with the vision developed and form a framework holistically by looking at the current conditions and interpreting them into the form of activities that can be operationally carried out by the citizens of the school [9].

The principal's personality contributes positively to improving teacher performance and has a psychological impact in the form of relationships between teachers. The performance of the principal is not separated from the personal carrying factor and is displayed in the form of behavior [10]. Performance is sometimes not directly proportional to the personality shown by the leader. There are leaders with good performances because they are supported by experience and knowledge, but are disliked personally by subordinates. This is fairness given the different levels of maturity and understanding of different subordinates.

The principal's performance includes all organizational and structural tasks in improving the effectiveness of the school and the academic achievement of students. Various principal roles range from influencing education policy, to tracking all activities within the school to ensuring their school runs smoothly [11]. Headteachers with performance (social, managerial, and supervision) are valuable capital in bringing about better school change. Through collaborative and collegial strategies, schools can be brought to the realm of effectiveness and efficiency. In addition, it is also suggested that the principal should create a supportive, comfortable, friendly, productive, and relaxed atmosphere, to motivate greater student participation in learning and achieve educational goals [12].

These competencies are necessary in supporting the policy of “Freedom to Learn” in schools. Based on the above

problem's researchers are encouraged to conduct research with the intention of obtaining an idea of the performance of the principal in realizing “Freedom to Learn”.

## II. METHODS

This research is an evaluative study of the preparation of the principal that has been carried out in West Bandung Regency. In addition, this research can provide benefits for the principal to improve effectiveness and efficiency in managing the school after knowing its characteristics, abilities and performance as the principal.

The research method used in this study is a qualitative method. Research conducted departs from problems in the environment of ongoing events and can be observed and verified in real time during the study. This research is located in elementary school in West Bandung district, which is divided into urban, suburban and rural areas. The subjects of the study were people/officials related to the performance of principals in public elementary schools, including the Education Office, supervisors, principals, vice principals, teachers, and school committees. Collection of data and information using in-depth observations and interviews, documentation studies, cassette tapes and photographs. The steps of this research are as follows:

- Orientation over reading.
- Interview to the field.
- Explore by collecting data based on the focus of clear research studies.
- Check out the informant's interim research report.
- Presenting field results in the form of research report results.

Field data processed using Atlas.ti software to reconstruct research findings.

## III. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The results found a number of information that could be used as policy input and improvement of the principal's performance. Furthermore, these findings could also improve the current headmaster recruitment system. Some of these findings researcher's narrative as follows.

### A. *Principal's Understanding of “Freedom to Learn”*

The concept of “Freedom to Learn” as the results of the interview can be said to be understood by the principal. Information about the “Freedom to Learn” of the principal is obtained from various sources such as workshop, training, and socialization conducted by the relevant services and institutions through the Principal's Work Deliberation (MKKS). Aside from formal sources, the principal also obtained information about *free learning online such as the internet*, and social media platforms such as *WhatsApp*.

Principals understand that “*Freedom to Learn*” is a new paradigm in education that needs to be applied in the current era. Millennials with technological advances need to be given more wiggle room, not just classroom learning through lectures and discussions. Students in the current era need to be given freedom in developing their potential and talents in learning. So this brings new consequences and challenges to the school to present a learning process that is very different from before.

Integrated learning in *textbooks* is no relevant to the current era. An era where technology and knowledge are so open through “*Freedom to Learn*” trying to be applied in schools, that every teacher has the freedom to dig into information and materials to be conveyed to students. Teachers are more able to express strategies and learning that will be implemented so that the classroom atmosphere is more alive so that the child will feel more *enjoyed* in learning.

The consequences of this policy are specifically placed on the teacher figure. Teachers must design varied learning activities; able to develop the potential and competence of students. No longer fixated on materials, places, methods, and strategies. By “*Freedom to Learn*”, teachers are free to create and determine the learning resources used, including free in determining the place of learning, whether to be carried out *in the classroom* (indoor) or outside the classroom (*outdoor*). Children's opinions on the concept of “*Freedom to Learn*” should be appreciated as part of competence, as this is also part of the life skills that need to be given.

“*Freedom to Learn*” in the principal's view, attached to technological devices, and existing technology needs to be used and included in learning activities. Like the use of WhatsApp that can be used as a discussion room and exchange information between students. If the learning used to be more intellectual, in the “*Freedom to Learn*” in the view of the principal gives a wider portion for students to develop their social competencies, so that knowledge of life can be unearthed directly.

In principle, the principal supports the implementation of “*Freedom to Learn*” in the school. School is a place with a diversity of potential, talents and interests of students that must be developed in a balanced manner. It no longer disguises that potential in one measure but must give freedom to which potentials the school wants to develop and facilities through learning activities.

The implementation of “*Freedom to Learn*” in a number of schools studied has not been implemented. New at the socialization stage of preparation. Human resources factors are still an obstacle to this implementation. Change takes time for teachers, staff, and communities to adapt and find the best formula for implementing “*Freedom to Learn*” in schools.

Interesting findings obtained that the support of the school committee towards the application of “*Freedom to Learn*” is adequate. The school committee provides flexibility for the school to implement this concept, and provides the necessary assistance, such as in the provision of personnel in the

development of the interests and skills of students who are housed in the form of *paguyuban* in each class.

“*Freedom to Learn*” in a number of research sources, just entering the early stages (socialization). Socialization is done formally through regular weekly meetings with teachers, it is not uncommon for principals through social media such as WhatsApp to convey information regarding “*Freedom to Learn*”, and what teachers should prepare. Although the results do not yet look optimal because they are still in the situation of the Covid-19 Pandemic, at least the paradigm of teachers, staff and school committees is already a vision in free learning. Principal understanding of “*Freedom to Learn*” can be seen in table 1.

TABLE I. PRINCIPAL UNDERSTANDING OF “*FREEDOM TO LEARN*”

<b>Understanding Concepts</b>	obtained from socialization conducted by relevant agencies through the Principal's Work Deliberation (MKKS), and the internet, social media such as WhatsApp.
	“ <i>Freedom to Learn</i> ” is a new paradigm in education that needs to be applied in the current era
	“ <i>Freedom to Learn</i> ” in the principal's view, attached to technology devices
<b>Implementation</b>	not yet applied. New at the socialization stage of preparation.

*B. Principal's Performance in Preparation for Realizing Freedom to Learn*

As previously explained, the changes bring new consequences to a number of aspects, including “*Freedom to Learn*” policies that are the obligation for schools to implement them. This consequence is not only pinned to the teacher figure, but also to the principal. Current performance principals still need to be developed given that the paradigm of “*Freedom to Learn*” is not the same as previous education policies. The religious aspect of the learner with all his potential and interests must be facilitated. Students are free to choose the interests and competencies that want to be developed through learning, so this also impacts on the mastery of the competence of the principal as the individual most responsible in the success of the school.

The performance of the principal should be able to represent the freedom for teachers and learners to grow and develop, so it is not enough for the principal to have only one proficiency. The findings of the study show that the principal's performance is still within the same framework or standards as before. Performance as a mastery of competence that is still attached to the principal is leadership, social, and entrepreneurial performance.

The social performance of the principal in realizing “*Freedom to Learn*” is seen as the priority in building, encouraging, and influencing teachers to follow the established policies. Change takes not only time, but awareness for school residents, especially teachers, that change is a positive thing and needs to be wisely addressed as part of efforts to provide

quality educational services [13]. And this is not easy, because rejection must happen even though not directly, but can be seen from the reluctance of teachers to change the paradigm of teaching it to students.

Through social performance, the principal brings closer not only to teachers and staff, but also to the community, especially parents. Through a persuasive approach the principal can convey an “*Freedom to Learn*” policy in the school, so that parents wake up to the perception that the learning to be held is very different from the previous learning.

In addition to social performance, the principal's main capital in realizing free learning is to empower a number of teachers to be more 'familiar' with IT. Teachers in schools are required to have skills in operational it and use it during learning so that there are different touches and learning experiences in students. Through existing IT devices such as smartphones equipped with WhatsApp and Google Classroom applications and other applications teachers can carry out the learning process without having to meet face-to-face, as was done during the Covid-19 Pandemic.

The ability of the principal to build teacher capacity (*capacity building*) as the findings of this study have important significance and is seen as crucial to realizing the freedom of learning in the school. During this time *capacity building* is closely related to teacher teaching practices in the classroom such as the use of methods, learning media/ learning resources, teaching strategies and techniques, as well as learning skills. However, in the digital age as it is today the ability of teachers in IT mastery becomes the dominant element that needs to be mastered, and this is also the difference between the concept of previous education and free learning. Interaction between teachers and learners is no longer limited by space and time, as this is already bridged by technology. Students with information access skills can choose the learning resources needed, and so can teachers themselves.

*Capacity building* conducted by the principal on teachers in the face of “*Freedom to Learn*”, among others by organizing workshops that are integrated with regular meetings in the school. Teachers are required to bring laptops to school as part of the use of IT in learning. As for the development of social skills in teachers, the principal regularly invites the school committee (parents) in meetings and teachers are given the opportunity to convey and communicate to parents; what are the obstacles during guiding the students and delivered by the teacher in the meeting.

The next principal's performance to realize “*Freedom to Learn*” in the school is to streng then the commitment, namely the commitment to complete all tasks in the school, and not be brought home. The principal emphasizes to teachers to be productive in school, and not to delay work that results in the completion of work at home. This is done so that teachers do not have the burden of work so that teachers can focus on self-development; capacity at home.

The commitment built by the principal is one line with the school's efforts in developing teacher capacity (capacity building).). Capacity building will run well when teachers can balance work life with family life, or in a theoretical construct called work-life balance. Work-life balance is a person's ability to balance the demands of work with the demands of the family, so that when this can be balanced then a work conflict will not arise. The school's commitment in the form of demands to teachers to complete work in school is reasonable, to avoid work conflicts and family conflicts, so that tasks in the school can run properly without interruption. This is needed in the early stages of free learning implementation, which requires a lot of energy and time to adapt to this new learning concept.

Efforts to strengthen the principal's commitment to realizing “*Freedom to Learn*” also need to be supported by an adequate school climate. This is as the research source stated that the commitment needs to be strengthened with the school climate that allows teachers to exchange knowledge (*sharing knowledge*) and motivates teachers to realize fun learning together.

The quality of the school climate is reflected in the communication approach that the principal shows to teachers and school residents. Principals with collegial approaches have great opportunities in building a quality school climate [14]. In this approach, the principal does not position himself as the boss of the teacher, looks more at colleagues who are easy to discuss, ask for opinions, and can accept criticism or advice given. Through this approach, the teacher felt part of the school and was psychologically involved so that he was encouraged to give the best performance for the sake of his school's progress.

Communication is at the point of leadership. When the principal is able to communicate with the teacher and can give a clear understanding of what “*Freedom to Learn*” is, as well as build psychological aspects, then building a quality school climate is not difficult. The principal with his collegial communication approach can embrace all the citizens of the school, considering in this approach all have the same position in terms of knowledge. The principal's performance in realizing “*Freedom to Learn*” can be seen in table 2.

TABLE II. THE PRINCIPAL'S PERFORMANCE IN REALIZING “*FREEDOM TO LEARN*”

<b>Social Performance</b>	Take a persuasive approach in explaining the policy of ' <i>Freedom to Learn</i> ' to teachers and staff, as well as to the community, especially parents.
<b>Entrepreneurship Performance.</b>	The ability of the principal in the capacity building to be more 'familiar' with IT
<b>Leadership performance</b>	Communicate with collegial approaches to build a quality school climate so that there is a strong commitment to achieve work-life balance

IV. CONCLUSION

The conclusion that can be given from this study is that the performance of the principal who supports the implementation of “*Freedom to Learn*”, such as social performance, capacity

building teachers, commitment to completion of school assignments, as well as collegial communication. Some of these performances are necessary in the early days of “*Freedom to Learn*” application, considering changing the mindset of teachers and society is not easy. Collegial communication approaches are an important part of raising awareness encouraging teachers to engage psychologically so that the school climate that allows teachers to share knowledge can be realized.

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