

# Mentoring Program of Elementary School Principals in The Era of Learning Freedom

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## ABSTRACT

This research was aimed to find out the elementary school principal mentoring program based on teachers' competence in learning management. This research was qualitatively ethnographic to describe the implementation of the principal mentoring programs and its process. The subject were principals and elementary school teachers in Boyolali. The data were collected using literature studies, interviews, and document studies. Data were interpreted using qualitative methods and validated using triangulation. The results show that: 1). Most principals have not provided support to teachers to carry out their duty. Teachers cannot yet translate freedom of learning into the learning process, and did not provide opportunities for students to obtain meaningful learning. 2). Mentoring helps students to get optimal learning opportunities, master skills, and interact with other democratically.

**Keywords:** *principal, program, mentoring, free learning.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Mentoring by principals is very important because it helps teachers who have difficulty in carrying out their tasks. Learning services in this era must be student-oriented, meaningful, and dynamic.

The principal needs to do mentoring program to help teachers who are struggling in the managing learning process. Mentoring can improve teachers' competencies in managing the learning process.

Mentoring is carried out after supervision. The results of supervision will be used to analyze teachers' strengths and weaknesses. In mentoring, the principal should focus on teachers' shortcomings, and turn those deficiencies into

strengths that teachers will develop through new understanding or strategies in managing the learning process.

This is supported by Crawford (2010), that mentoring is an interpersonal relationship in the form of caring and support between someone experienced and more knowledgeable with someone less experienced. A leader should be a good mentor for the success of others.

Mentoring is a follow-up to academic supervision. Principals must find what factors need to be improved from teachers. Thus, the teacher will be better at carrying out their duties as learning managers.

Mentoring will improve the teacher's skill to manage the learning process and have positive

impacts on learners' learning outcomes. The learning process needs learners to think critically, democratically, innovatively independently, and maintain the principles of humanism. The essence of free learning is to provide new ways to innovate. This requires the teachers to design learning that provide learning opportunities according to these demands.

Mentoring is an interpersonal relationship when someone with more experienced and more knowledgeable care and nurture someone with less experienced (Crawford, 2010). A leader should become a good mentor for the success of others. Douglas M. Lawson (1999) said in *Give to Life: How Giving Can Change Your Life*, "With what we receive, our existence is only temporary, yet we live forever through what we give." That's why developing others is so important. Mentoring comes from apprenticeships when older, more experienced people pass on their knowledge of how they work, says David Clutterbuck in the book *Everyone Needs a Mentor*.

The principal must act as an educator, manager, supervisor, leader, innovator, and entrepreneur. The principals' ability in facilitating coaching and mentoring will affect their leadership. In this development, research focuses on the principal's mentoring program.

The principal as a leader has a responsibility so that all teachers can manage learning to improve students' achievement. Dares and Playco (1995) define learning leadership as an effort to lead teachers to teach better.

The principal must increase school productivity. Productivity can be seen from the output in the form of an educational atmosphere, achievement, high-quality students', high relevance (E. Mulyasa, *silabus.web.id*). The principal should carry out supervision and evaluation, and follow them up with mentoring.

The era of independent learning requires learners to think democratically, innovatively, and independently. Learners are allowed to develop creativity, capacity, personality, and develop independence in seeking and finding knowledge through reality and social dynamics such as real problems, social interaction, collaboration, self-management, performance demands, targets, and achievements (Karim, 2020).

Day, C.Gu, Q.& Wilson, P.(2016) state the impact of leadership on learners' outcomes: successful school leaders who use transformational and instructional strategies can make difference. How principals should achieve and sustain improvement through transformational and instructive leadership strategies. Those studies discuss learning leadership in optimizing learning outcomes. Our study differs because we use comprehensive assessments.

Self-determining theories (Eyal, O. & Roth, G; 2011) stated that the principal is crucial for teachers' motivation. Different leadership styles can make difference in teachers' motivation. Results showed that transactional leadership characterized by controlling practices

such as monitoring subordinate behavior and demanding organizational standard adherence was associated with controlled motivation.

In general, this research was to interpret the principal mentoring program based on teachers' competencies in learning management. This research sought to describe the implementation of the principal mentoring programs and its process.

## 2. METHOD

This research was a part of R&D. Research and development sought to develop products that can be accounted for efficiency, effectiveness, and robustness (Sutama, 2019 a). This research was qualitative ethnographic study to describe the implementation of the principal mentoring programs and its process. Qualitative research is aimed at understanding social phenomena from the perspective of participants and turning them into theories. Ethnography describes the habits of a group of people, in which case, what happens or is done during the learning process.

The subjects were principals, teachers, and students from six elementary schools in Boyolali. Six principals, 12 teachers, and the students from 12 were selected as participants.

The research was conducted using the PDCA method or "Plan, Do, Check, Act." Data were analyzed to find root causes and their proper solutions. Data were collected from January to June 2021 using interviews, observations, and documentation studies. Data were validated using triangulation. Research instruments such as

guidelines, questionnaires, and observation sheets, were tested before being implemented (<https://bit.ly/instrumen-MANTUL>).

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### *3.1 Implementation of the principal mentoring program.*

Mentoring is very important because it helps teachers who are experiencing difficulties. Most of the principal has not implemented a mentoring program. It was shown by documents (Assessment of the Principal's Performance) were still low. The report showed that follow-up in academic supervision was low (58%). Report from Internal Quality Assurance Task Force obtained medium grades and the results, especially on Standards of Process that showed the lowest score.

Some principals have not yet compiled learning mentoring programs. They did not have sufficient knowledge and competencies in formulating mentoring programs. It was supported by results from monitoring and evaluation instruments. The results showed that from 10 principals, two principals got 55, two obtained a score of 45, and six others got 30. The minimum threshold was 75, the average score was 38%.

The results also showed that offline or online learning management during the pandemic period was still unidirectional (teacher-centered). Learning activities were dominated by teachers. Tasks were based

only on cognitive tasks and have not developed creative or innovative skills. Teachers use a lot of assignments. The learning process was monotonous, not yet collaborative, and lacks variety. Interaction between students is weak, not yet oriented to free learning. It caused the low students' productivity, creativity, motivation, and learning outcomes.

The results from accreditation document analysis also showed that the Standards of Process obtained the lowest score (81) compared to other standards. The Standards of Process also obtained the lowest level (3) compared to the other seven standards. It showed that follow-ups were required to improve learning process quality.

Implementation of Standard of Process has not yet optimal, but other standards have reached the good category. The academic supervision planning got level B performance (Score 2), and implementation of academic supervision got level C (score: 3).

Learning is the process of developing the spiritual and social attitude that can shape personality. Independence in the activities and learners' creativity is formed through interaction and learning experience. Learning should be done anytime, everywhere, and with everyone. However, current practices were less constructive to develop the independent attitude and ignore the spirit of free learning. In a pandemic era,

some teachers still used conventional learning models. Such a situation will bring less conducive conditions and boredom, thus lowering students' productivity, creativity, motivation, and learning outcomes.

A study showed the relation between school leadership on learners' learning outcomes (Robinson, V., M, J., Lloyd, C.A. & Rowe, K.J. (2008). However, we found that students' learning outcomes have not been maximized because of the lack of teacher ability in learning management. This is due to the principal has not compiled a mentoring program as follows to academic supervision.

The results showed that in 2018 Accreditation. The Standards of Process have the lowest score (83) compared to other standards, Standard of Quality Assurance also obtained the lowest level compared to the other seven standards (level 3). The learning management practices in those schools generated a recommendation for follow-ups.

Implementation of learning management was not yet maximal. It was supported by the results of the Accreditation Trial. The supervision planning obtained Level B Performance (Score 2). The implementation of academic supervision obtained level C (3). The supervision evaluation obtained level C (3). Based on these conditions the supervisor is obliged to

follow them up with mentoring with the assistance of the Superintendent.

The root causes of the problem we're following: (1) The Principal has not followed up the academic supervision; (2) Supervisions were limited to carrying out the main tasks; (3) Rigid supervision and no maximum impact; (4) No implementation strategy or mentoring model to overcome weakness and limitations.

It also found that: (1) Teachers cannot yet translate the needs of students in the learning process; (2) The principal needs to provide support to teachers to carry out their functions as learning leaders. (3) The principal should make the proper framework of school development, creating innovations, and be responsible for achieving the school's vision; 4) Programs were needed to overcome the problems.

Teachers need to plan, implement, and evaluate teaching and learning activities so that learners become independent, active, creative, innovative, communicative, and productive. Learning culture should be directed for character building, creating students' wellbeing, happiness, and welfare, and creating a conducive and bullying-free environment.

The learning process develops the spiritual and social attitude that becomes the students' personality. However, many learning activities were less constructive for building independence and creativity. Some

teachers still use conventional learning models, with paper-based assignments. Such a situation will bring less conducive learning conditions, boring, thus lowering students' low productivity, creativity, motivation, and learning.

### *3.2 Description of the Principal Mentoring Toward Teachers*

The mentoring strategies and steps in this study implement the theory developed by John C. Maxwell in 2009 in Team Work 101. Maxwell suggested that successful leaders give birth to many new leaders from their cadre. This research use PDCA (Plan, Do, Check, Act) method to find the root causes of the problem and find the solution.

In mentoring have various principles: They were: (1) prioritizing development of others; (2) Set priority on whom their competencies to be developed; (3) Develop good relationships; (4) Help unconditionally, expecting nothing in return; (5) Let them fly with you for a while; (6) Fill the fuel, give whatever they need; (7) Stay until they can work themselves well; (8) Give clear direction, positive support, and freedom of exploration to develop themselves; and, (9) Help them to repeat the process.

Before carrying out mentoring, principals should map out the teachers' needs and the teachers' competencies development program. Mapping the needs

can be implemented with the following steps: evaluating and analyzing the results of teacher assessment; making a professional development plan through mentoring; making mentoring plan through planning, implementing, evaluation, and reporting.

After mapping, the teachers were selected based on priority scale and need analysis. Every teacher may have different needs, but it does not rule out the possibility of the same competencies are development needs. Mapping the needs helps the process of improving teacher competence.

Interviews with the principles regarding mentoring and teachers' competencies developments, gave the following insight on the steps for mentoring: (1). The principals recommend the training on the learning management and their experience to help teachers; (2) Principals invite discussion and motivate teachers to help them implementing proper learning methods for free learning paradigm; (3) Principals gave examples from learning video recordings; (4) Principals use various lesson plan as an example for teachers, and sharing them to discuss the improvements. It was done to made teachers comfortable and did not feel patronized; (5) Principals scheduled consultation, and practice session for teachers, (6) Principals should become model teacher for teaching exercise; (7) Principal can give learning instruments for the teacher to use them in observation and teaching practices; (8) After

teaching activities were done, principals can invite the teachers to discuss, provide feedback, and gave some suggestions; (9) Continuous practices and mentoring improve teachers' skill in planning, implementing, and evaluating student-centered teaching practices; (10) Principals asked the teachers to make lesson plans in accordance with basic competencies and learning objectives; (10) Principals provide intensive guidance and mentoring to these teachers; (11) After the plans were ready, principals accompany the teacher to implement the lesson plan; (12) After lessons were completed, principal invite the teacher to discuss, give appreciation, feedback, and advice; (13) Principals should make sure that the teacher has become an agent of change.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

The implementation of mentoring by principals is often not optimal. The principals have not drafted a principal mentoring program as a follow-up to academic supervise. The results of supervision have not been analyzed to improve teachers' competencies. The principal mentoring program has not been implemented optimally, thus hindering the improvement of the learning process and students' achievements. The proper mentoring programs improve teachers' ability to carry out learning management.

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