



Why Some “*Program Guru Penggerak (PGP)*’s Graduates Do Not Want to Become a Principal?

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Abstract. This study aims to explore the reasons why elementary school teachers who graduated from Program Guru Penggerak (PGP)/Transformational Teacher Program do not want to become a principals. For this reason, this study applied a qualitative approach. It was carried out in July - August 2023. The participants of this study were 4 teachers who graduated from the PGP. Data collection applied a semi-structured interview method. Data collected was, then, analyzed using the thematic analysis technique. The output of data analysis was given back to participants to meet the credibility and confirmability criteria. The results of this study identified the reasons why PGP graduates did not want to become a principals. The reasons included lack of experience to lead, passion for teaching more than leading, and family, health, and religious focus. This study also found that, in teachers’ view, the principal workload is heavy, but the incentive is low. In addition, the principal’s assignment is often far from home. These three together make the principal position is less attractive for teachers.

Keywords: Principalship, Principal Position, Elementary School Principal.

1 Introduction

The principal is a teacher who has duties and responsibilities to lead and manage a school. Regulation of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology Number 40 of 2021 concerning the assignment of teachers as school principals stipulates that the principal is a teacher who is given the task of leading learning and managing schools in Indonesia and abroad [1]. The role of the principal as a leader is very important to enable a school achieves its goals effectively and efficiently [2][3][4].

In order to meet the need for qualified school principals, the government has implemented a national policy of comprehensive principal preparation program that provides a standard of recruitment, selection and training and certification of prospective principals since 2013. In 2022, the training for prospective school principals had substantial changes and changed its name into the *Program Guru Penggerak* (PGP) or namely in English, the Transformational Leader Program [5]. The PGP is a leadership training program for teachers in Indonesia to become leaders for

learning. It is expected that the graduates have capability to become learning leaders for their colleagues as well as school principals in the future. [6] [7][8]. As Tahajudin, et al., [2023] say that by participating in the PGP program, teachers are expected to be able to lead [9][10].

However, many regions in Indonesia still lack of principal candidates. In Pati Regency, for example, the number of principal vacancies is high especially at the basic education level, as reported by Radar Kudus Jawapos on January 15, 2022. Therefore, it is not surprising that today some principals are responsible to lead in more than one school [11][12]. At the same time, not all teachers who are eligible to become school principals are interested to apply this position [13][14].

Considering this phenomenon, we had studied the PGP’s graduates’ views on the position of school principal [15]. The study found that some PGP graduates want to become school principals, meanwhile some others do not. This study focused on PGP graduates who do not want to be a principal. More specifically, this study aimed to explore the reasons underlying that decision and their views on principal position, particularly regarding its workload, incentives, and job assignment.

2 Research Methods

2.1 Research Type

This is a qualitative study that aims at ‘investigating the way in which people make sense of their ideas and experiences’ [16]. The ideas and experiences investigated in this study are why some PGP’s graduates do not want to become a principal and what are their views on principal workload, incentives and job assignment.

2.2 Location and Time

This study was conducted in four state elementary schools from different sub-districts in Pati Regency. It was carried out from July to August 2023

2.3 Study Participant

Research participants are individuals who take part in the research process and contribute to providing data to researchers [17]. The participants in this study were four elementary school teachers who graduated from *Program Guru Penggerak* [PGP] in Pati Regency in different years. They varied in terms of gender, length of service, and employment status. They have received a [PGP] certificate which is one of mandatory requirements to become a principal.

2.4 Data Collection Technique

Data collection technique used semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews according to Jailani [2023] is an interview conducted with a clear structure. However,

the questions given can be developed according to the information needed to be achieved [18].

2.5 Research Instrument

The instrument used in this research was a semi-structured interview guide. It contains a list of questions developed from the researcher's knowledge about the object being studied gained from the literature review [19]. The interview guide was tested before being used to collect data to confirm the scope and relevance of the questions and the need to reformulate questions

2.6 Data Analysis Technique

This study applied a thematic analysis that enables researchers to identify patterns generated from data that has been collected [20]. The stages of thematic analysis include: preparing and grouping data; identifying certain items relevant to the research topic; categorizing data based on themes; testing similarities and formulating themes into a particular category; paying close attention to each theme separately and being careful to re-examine each answer transcript that has the same theme; using all material related to each theme to create a final theme containing category names and meanings accompanied by supporting data; and selecting relevant data to illustrate and report each theme [21]. The output of the data analysis was given back to participants to assure their trustworthiness.

3 Results

The results show the reasons why some PGP's graduates do not want to become school principals, as well as their views on school principal position which, according to them, makes this position less attractive. Following are the results of the study in detail.

3.1 Reasons why some PGP's graduates do not want to become school principals

1. A lack of leadership experience

Participants reveal that a lack of leadership experience made teachers graduated from PGP do not want to become a school principal. They believe that they will find difficulties when leading with insufficient leadership experiences. They said:

"A principal needs to understand his school condition. I'm a new teacher. I don't understand what principal duties are. So if I were asked to lead at this time, I would definitely face troubles; I don't want it [AF/18/07/2023]".

"The leadership knowledge I gained from PGP is sufficient. However, I lack leadership experiences. So I don't want to be a school principal yet [QQ/17/07/2023]".

Passion in teaching more than leading.

Participants reveal that the passion for teaching made some teachers do not want to become school principals. They said, indeed, PGP teaches leadership. But I am interested in teaching more than leading. It is my passion to be a teacher. I always enjoy visiting other classes to learn good teaching techniques [AF/18/07/2023]”. Furthermore, he said:

“Many of my fellow teachers are eligible to become a school principal. However, they do not want it”. The main reason is that they prefer teaching, their comfort zone. They do not want to get out from it.

Other reasons

One of the participants added family, health, and religion as the other reasons for not applying for a principal position. He said: “I have friends who have met the requirements as prospective school principals. However, they do not want to apply for the position due to a desire to focus more on family, health, or religious matters. If they become a school principal, those things will be neglected for sure as they are busy working [AF/18/07/2023]”.

3.2 Teachers' views on workload, incentives, and assignment of principal positions**Heavy workload**

The participants viewed that the principal's workload is heavy. It makes teachers do not to want to become school principals. They put it as follows:

“A school principal has a heavier burden and responsibilities than teachers. He must lead students and teachers and be responsible for everything that happens at school. That’s hard [AF/18/07/2023]”.

“The duties and responsibilities of a school principal are too many to. He has to handle the teachers and the school. [AS/20/07/2023]”.

Low incentives.

According to participants, the principal’s incentive is low. They said:

“The principal's salary is too little compared to what they should do [AF/18/07/2023]”

“Principals in elementary schools have the lowest incentives compared to their counterparts working in middle and high schools. It is because elementary schools received funding only from one resource, the governments, namely school operational assistance [BOS]. The funding should be allocated to cover many school expenses [QQ/17/07/2023].”

“If I'm not mistaken, the principal's incentive is only five hundred thousands more compared to an ordinary teacher’s incentive. Very small gap, isn’t it. The principal should receive much more than that, as he or she handles much more works [US/20/07/2023].”

Assignment far from home

Assigning novice principals far from their home is also found to be the main reason why teachers do not want to become a principal. They expressed it as follows:

“Usually, a novice principal is given responsibilities to lead in school far from home. The school usually lacks students and has many issues. Also, it is far from the city center. [AF/18/07/2023]”

“If you become a school principal, you will be placed at different school. The school could be far from where you live now. [QQ/17/07/2023]”.

4 Discussion

This study shows the reasons why PGP graduates do not want to become school principals. These reasons include a lack of leadership experience. This can be understood considering that the position of 21st century school principal requires strong leadership ability [22][23], which is not easy to master. For this reason, PGP graduates need to be given leadership roles in their schools to gain leadership experience. This can be done, for example, by assigning teachers to become committee chairs. Involving staff in a committee can provide valuable experiences of working together, understanding, and resolving professional and interpersonal problems [24].

The study also shows that the other reason is passion for teaching rather than leading. Related to this, the recruitment of PGP participants needs to be selective. It should consider teachers' motivation or desire to lead. Studies found that in order to prepare a good school principals, prospective principals should be individuals or teachers who do not only understand the curriculum and are skilled at teaching but also have motivation or desire to become leaders [25][26]. At the same time, leadership skills of teachers should be developed. This can be done by sharing leadership roles. Printy & Liu [2021] suggested that the distribution of leadership by school principals is an alternative way to develop teacher leadership [27].

The study also revealed that there were other reasons related to family, health, and religious affairs. Teachers believed that the high principal's workload would make them busy, so they did not have enough time for family, health, or religion. These teachers' concerns should be addressed. A study in Texas, US of America, revealed that the success of school principals requires good social and psychological conditions [28]. Otherwise, they cannot perform well in their principal roles.

The study also reveals the views of the studied teachers regarding principal workload, incentives, and assignment. According to them, the school principal's workload is heavy, but the incentive is low. This view may demotivate teachers to become school principals. Many studies show that the heavy workload have made the position of school principal less attractive [29][30][31]. The low incentive is the second reason [30][31]. The other reason is placing novice principals to schools far from their home. These three things need to be considered to make the school principal's position more attractive.

5 Conclusion

Some PGP’s graduates do not want to become school principals. The reasons underlying that decision are a lack of leadership experience and a passion for teaching rather than leading. Reasons related to family, health, and religion sometimes also arise. Besides, they view that the workload of school principals is high, but the incentive is low. In addition, the assignments of novice school principals is often far from home. Thus, teachers lack motivation to be a principal. Those things need attention and follow up to make the principal job attractive to teachers.

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