

# Interpersonal Communication between Principals and Teachers in Elementary Schools

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**Abstract**—Principal leadership is very important in improving school quality. One indicator of a principal's success is his or her ability to communicate interpersonally with the teachers well and intensively in order to know the obstacles faced by the teachers in school. A successful principal is able to influence and give direction to the teachers to be responsible in carrying out their duties, so that the teachers can play a more active role in improving the school's quality. This research aims to describe the implementation of principals' interpersonal communication in improving the quality of elementary schools. It used a qualitative approach with a case study method, whereas data were collected through interviews, observation, and documentary study. The participants of the research were elementary school principals and teachers in Garut Regency. The findings of the research show: Principals' interpersonal communication takes the forms of, among others, providing directions to teachers in improving the quality of teaching and learning through instructional leadership and conveying messages to teachers verbally through professional dialogues.

**Keywords**—*interpersonal communication; instructional leadership; professional dialogue*

## I. INTRODUCTION

The low quality of education in Indonesia is largely due to the low professionalism of the human resources of the organizers and managers of education, especially of teachers [1]. This is also affirmed by the Ministry of Education and Culture's Directorate of Educator Profession, explaining that the factors causing the low quality of education in Indonesia in terms of the teachers include [2]: 1) There are still many teachers who do not have qualifications and competencies; 2) Some teachers are already satisfied with the conditions and abilities they have; 3) The efforts of teachers to improve self-competence are very limited; 4) A lot of time is spent in the classroom just to pursue curriculum targets; 5) Outside the class the teacher's time is spent on non-academic interests; 6) Academic contact between teachers is limited; 7) Contacts between teachers are more non-academic; 8) Many teachers lack serious attention to students; and 9) There is a low frequency of functional training for teachers in an effort to improve their competence and professionalism.

Looking at the problems mentioned above, the leadership of school principals is needed to change the behavior of their subordinates and develop a school organizational culture that supports school quality improvement in achieving educational

goals. As revealed by Satori, the success or failure of a school in performing satisfactorily depends a lot on the leadership qualities of the school principal [3]. The principal is a leader who can determine the direction of the development of the school organization, so that the leadership of the school principal is able to influence all those involved in the process of education in a school in order to achieve the stated goals. Meanwhile, the leadership quality of a principal is influenced by his or her effective communication skills. Effective and developed communication of the principal will relate to the quality of the school, considering that communication creates similarities that build cooperation towards a better direction in organizational life, including in schools.

Communication held by school principals plays an important role in coordinating all the components in a school, which in turn can improve the quality of the school. The problem in school communication is how to build communication between people who are part of and involved in school life based on the rules and principles of communication that can affect the professionalism of teachers. Robbins suggests that the main function of communication is to control, motivate, express emotions, and provide information [4].

One of the competencies that must be possessed by the principal based on Minister of National Education Regulation number 13 of 2007 concerning Principal Standards is social competence [5]. Social competence is the ability of a person to communicate, socialize, collaborate, and provide information to others. In professional practice, social competence is the ability of a person to interact and communicate with peers in improving teachers' professional abilities.

A school as an organization consists of a number of people who have different duties and roles and are interdependent upon one another. This interdependence requires coordination, and coordination requires communication. Good school communication will improve the quality of the school because the principal can influence teachers to improve the quality of teaching and learning with his learning leadership and guarantee the quality of learning with his supervision.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. Interpersonal Communication

Communication in the organization is not just a process of exchanging information that can be seen or understood, but it also includes behavior and roles. Communication is absolutely necessary because with effective communication all activities within the organization can be coordinated, enabling the organization to achieve its objectives. One example of communication in school is interpersonal communication.

Interpersonal communication in particular is the establishment of verbal relationships between individuals, both between an individual and another individual and between an individual and a group of individuals in an organizational environment that leads to the expectations and successes of the organization. In interpersonal communication, "there is a process of sending and receiving messages between two people or among a small group of people, with some effects and some direct feedback" [6–8]. A principal's interpersonal communication can be done through a learning leadership process to influence teachers to improve the quality of their classroom teaching and learning.

### B. Instructional Leadership

Instructional leadership or better known as learning leadership has been known in Indonesia since 2010. According to Huber, learning leadership is also alternatively called education leadership, school leadership, visionary leadership and teaching, and supervision leadership [9].

Instructional leadership is a principal's daily activities of influencing the people who run the school academic activities. These people are teachers and education personnel or teaching staff. The principal's main activity is related to teachers, both individually and in groups, to improve and enhance academic activities, namely improving the teaching and learning. The influence of leaders is targeted at student teaching and learning through teachers [10,11].

A principal who prides him/herself as a manager usually focuses more on rigorous tasks than principals who act as learning leaders. Learning leaders involve clear goals, allocation of teaching (instructional) resources, curriculum management, monitoring of lesson plans, and teacher evaluations. Effective learning leadership is the key to achieving school improvement, meaning that a school principal who can carry out learning leadership has advantages in a number of things that are recognized by subordinates, superiors, and observers of leadership. Hence, with the excellent qualities that s/he has, a principal plays the role of achieving improvement in the school, and through his activities of influencing people who run the academic processes at school the principal shows that as a learning leader s/he is concerned with the school.

## III. METHOD

This research was conducted using a qualitative approach and the case study method. In qualitative research, researchers rely on the views of participants, asking in depth questions,

collecting data in the form of "words" from participants, describing and analyzing the data, and conducting subjective investigations [12,13]. The research was conducted in elementary schools in Garut Regency. Informants or subjects who provided information in the research included principals and teachers. Key informants in the research were the principals. Data were collected through literature review and field studies using interview, observation, and documentary study.

## IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A school as an education unit that carries out education at the micro level is a system that consists of parts that interact and synergize in carrying out their roles and functions in order to achieve educational goals. One of the factors that influence the achievement of the expected goals is effective communication between school personnel.

Interpersonal communication between principals and teachers takes the form of communication between superiors and subordinates (principals and teachers), as well as between teachers. Principals, through learning/instructional leadership, ensure that teachers carry out their teaching and learning activities well, among others, by developing the teachers' professional ability through scheduling activities and plans; facilitating various meetings (planning, problem solving, decision making, or in-service training) for teachers to discuss issues on teaching and learning; giving teachers the opportunity to participate in collaborative training, making joint decisions, coaching, mentoring, curriculum development, and presentations; and motivating and empowering teachers to participate in professional development activities. Communication with students is in the form of positive attitude towards students, staff, and parents, serving students and communicating with them about various aspects of their school life. Communication with all staff is done openly with respect for differences of opinion, showing concern for the problems that students, teachers, and staff face and getting involved in solving their problems as needed; demonstrating interpersonal relationship skills with all parties; always maintaining good morals; always being responsive to the concerns of staff, students and parents; and acknowledging/praising the success/the ability of others.

Communication between teachers occurs in the form of dialogue. Dialogue is not just having a conversation, chatting, being friendly, or talking about personal and social matters. It is also not about discussion or debate. Dialogue here is more structured than conversation, but less structured than discussion or debate. Professional dialogue is one of the ways in which a professional community learns. It is a conversation between teachers that is planned and carried out regularly in order to solve problems that occur in the classroom. In a professional dialogue, each teacher reflects his/her practical experience and solves the problems faced. The main activity of the dialogue includes speaking, asking, and listening, which is sometimes accompanied with simulations and practices. Dialogue is the ability to communicate, whose basic elements are generally found in a conversation. The activities, which include asking, listening, giving feedback, explaining, and discussing, aim to improve teachers' professional knowledge and practice in

learning to improve student achievement. Dialogue allows teachers to share instructional practical knowledge [14]. Knowledge sharing is the process of giving and receiving information about the practice of the teaching profession.

#### V. CONCLUSION

In an organization, effective communication is needed to achieve the expected goals. Interpersonal communication between the principal and teachers is one form of communication in school. The principal influences the teachers to improve the quality of teaching and learning by carrying out professional dialogues in school interaction. Through his leadership, the principal ensures that the teachers carry out learning activities well and the principal carries out professional dialogues on improving teacher competencies.

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