

# The Role of The School Principal As An Instructional Leader in Student Agency-Based School Program Management

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**Abstract**— This research aims to see the role of school principals as instructional leaders in managing student agency-based school programs. Student agency refers to the quality of students' self-reflective and intentional actions and interactions with their environment. National Education Bill year 2022 and Kurikulum Merdeka, state that students have an active position in the main subject of education, not just as participants in the process. The problems of this study were to obtain an empirical description of (1) How the Principal manages student agency-based school programs at Public Junior High School no 1 Lhokseumawe, (2) How to implement student agency-based school programs at Public Junior High School no 1 Lhokseumawe (3) What are the supporting and inhibiting factors in managing the student agency-based program at Public Junior High School no 1 Lhokseumawe. The research was conducted at Public Junior High School no 1 Lhokseumawe. The research approach used is a case study. Data was collected through interviews, observation, and documentation with the research instrument was the researcher herself. The results of this study are (1) The principal has an active role in the effort to manage the student agency-based school program Public Junior High School no 1 Lhokseumawe (2) The implementation of the student agency-based school program has begun to be developed at Public Junior High School no 1 Lhokseumawe (3) The supporting factor is the enthusiasm of the guardians and students in establishing each school program, and the inhibiting factor found was the guardian's less in-depth understanding of school programs and required a longer time if parents and students were fully engaged in every program management. Research at an advanced stage is expected to be able to find a leadership model that can facilitate student agency in managing school programs. So that the process of engaging the entire school community, especially parents and students, can run effectively and efficiently.

**Keywords**— *instructional leader, student agency, school program management*

## INTRODUCTION

The principal as a learning leader has an important role in the development of quality school programs that are pro-students. Principals are expected not only to have competence in developing themselves and others, to be able to develop learning, school management, and school program development. The principal as a learning leader is a school of someone who is can empower all the resources and potential in the school ecosystem, so that they can develop students as a whole in an integrated manner both in their initiative, taste, and creativity [9].

One indicator of the success of the school principal in implementing the management function can be seen in the innovations in the school programs that are implemented <sup>9</sup>. However, often the implementation of these school programs does not match the interests and potential of students. School programs often only place students as objects, not as subjects who can give voice and opinion regarding their wishes and interests[12] . This opinion is also supported by the results of preliminary observations conducted by researchers through interviews with the principal and deputy principal at Public Junir High School no 1 Lhokseumawe. The results obtained show that some of the school programs currently running are programs designed jointly by the principal, vice principal, and teacher. The discussion process regarding the program to be carried out rarely involves student guardians and never involves students at all.

However, students continue to carry out the school program, to carry out their obligations, without enjoying the learning process in the school program, so it does not create meaningful learning for students. In essence, meaningful learning is the essential essence of a student's learning process, which can later be entered into long-term memory and can be practiced in their daily lives [3]

The results of initial observations made by researchers via Google form addressed to eighteen public high school principals in the city of Lhokseumawe and obtained data that only 33% of schools involved parents and students in the school program planning process. Special observations made at Public Junior High School no 1 Lhokseumawe show that only 25% of school program planning involves only parents and students.

Based on the Decree of the Head of Education Standards Curriculum and Assessment of the Ministry of Education and Culture No.044/H/KR/2022 concerning the Establishment of Education Units to Implement the Implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in the 2022/2023 Academic Year, it shows that 93% of junior high schools in the city of Lhokseumawe, namely 26 out of 28 high schools first in the city of Lhokseumawe, has registered itself as a school that implements the Independent Curriculum independently. In line with the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in educational units, it is hoped that the development of school programs that favor students can be a major consideration in managing school programs.

The 2022 Draft Law on National Education explicitly states that the term learner will be changed to the student to emphasize the student's active position as the main subject of education, not just as a participant in the process. Therefore, the education unit is expected to be able to develop a vision of change in which all stakeholders who play a role in program management can provide space for student's voice, choice, and ownership to develop quality, meaningful school programs and develop the character of the Pancasila student profile. Therefore this research was conducted to see how far the role of school leadership in managing school programs is capable of developing student leadership.

Quality education for all (universal quality education) is one of the main topics discussed in the

Priority Agenda for Education Outcomes of the G20 Education Working Group. This shows that every child has the right to get the same quality of education, in terms of learning styles, learning abilities, interests, and talents of each student. High school students are in a phase of personal development with various skills, interests, abilities, and personalities. A student can have the ability to relate any topic of study to a favorite sport or video game. While others develop their digital skills. But some are gifted as leaders in school organizations. Though different, each of these students uniquely demonstrated agency [14].

Stakeholders who play a major role in creating a pro-student learning environment are school principals. The principal's leadership style will greatly influence the way decisions are made which will later affect the performance of teachers in carrying out learning in the classroom. This is in line with the theory of organizational behavior initiated by Coulquit which states that the leadership style and behavior of school principals will influence the way decisions are taken by school principals which will affect the performance of teachers<sup>5</sup>.

Management of school programs that involve students as a whole is an important factor that must be carried out. Students should be involved from the start of programming, listening to their needs and interests. This of course will have an impact on their sense of responsibility in carrying out each program and create a sense of ownership of what they have chosen.

Student agency refers to the ability of students to reflect on what they need in terms of their interactions with their environment. In other words, students are "agents" who influence what education they need for their future<sup>6</sup>. Student leadership is expected to be able to give a broader meaning to a student for their participation in giving opinions, choosing, and being an important part of every school program that is carried out. This research will discuss further the role of school leaders in managing school programs that develop student leadership (student agency).

The above phenomena have encouraged researchers to research the role of school principals as learning leaders in developing student agency-oriented school programs so that they can apply curriculum management that has a positive impact on students. The purpose of this research is to obtain an empirical description of (1) what is the role of the principal in

managing school programs at Public Junior High School no 1 Lhokseumawe, (2) how is the implementation of student agency-oriented school programs at Public Junior High School no 1 Lhokseumawe (3) What are the factors supporters and obstacles in program management oriented to student agency at Public Junior High School no 1 Lhokseumawe

## METHODOLOGY

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study approach because researchers want to see thoroughly and gain further and scientifically in-depth knowledge of the cases studied[8]. The research was conducted at Public Junior High School no 1 Lhokseumawe from September 28 to October 15, 2022. The research subjects in this case study were the school principal, deputy principal, teacher, school committee, and three students representing each class level.

Data collection techniques are carried out using primary data sources and secondary data sources. Primary data sources were obtained by researchers directly from the subject through observation and interviews. While secondary data sources come from data obtained by researchers indirectly either obtained from research locations or outside research locations in the form of documentation. The main instrument in this research is the researcher himself. In this study, the researchers went directly to the research location to interact with the respondents.

Data analysis techniques using qualitative techniques. The qualitative analysis used is an interactive analysis model, namely an analysis model that requires three components in the form of data reduction, data presentation, and concluding/verification using Sugiyono's interactive mode. Presentation of qualitative research data is carried out in the form of brief descriptions, charts, and relationships between categories, flowcharts, and so on [11]

## FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The school principal has not been optimal in assisting the entire school community to be able to use a reflective and iterative approach in managing school programs and resources. The school principal has not thoroughly evaluated every school program that has been implemented. The evaluation process is only based on whether or not a program has been completed, but

not on how the student's development process is after undergoing the program. The success of an educational process in an educational unit is inseparable from the process of supervising the school principal<sup>2</sup>. Therefore the mentoring process will be important to see the impact of a school program on the progress of education in schools.

The school principal has not been optimal in facilitating the involvement of parents/guardians of students and students themselves, in the management of school programs. Only a few school program developments involve the voices of student guardians but do not involve students directly. Even so, the principal has a fairly good understanding of the concept of student agency in the form of student,s voice, choice, and ownership. However, these aspects have not been fully involved in the school program management process. Therefore it can be concluded that the school principal can identify the extent to which student voice, choice, and ownership are considered in the school's intracurricular/ cocurricular/extracurricular programs, but their application has not been carried out optimally to create an environment that fosters student agency.

Principals and teachers can encourage the development of student agency in schools through curriculum implementation, assessment instruments, and creating a learning environment in the classroom that is oriented toward student agency{14} . Principals play an important role in involving parents in improving student learning. Leadership qualities and strategies are needed to encourage and involve student guardians and students in a learning community that encourages student agency[15].

Student agency is the ability of students to direct their learning, make choices, voice opinions, ask questions and express curiosity, participate and contribute to the learning community, communicate their understanding to others, and take real action as a result of the learning process). Since the word agency does not yet have an exact equivalent in Indonesian, for discussion in this proposal, the term student agency will be translated as 'student leadership.

The question then is to what extent school principals can place students in the decision-making process related to these learning programs/activities. Following the data obtained, it shows that the principal always mobilizes the school community to jointly develop and realize a school vision that is pro-student and based on universal values but has not provided sufficient space for voice, and student choices in the process of preparing and managing the program.

Student agency refers to the ability of students to reflect on what they need in terms of their interactions with their environment. In other words, students are "agents" who influence what education they need for their future[6]. Student agency is the ability of students to direct their learning, make choices, voice opinions, ask questions and express curiosity, participate and contribute to the learning community, communicate their understanding to others, and take real action as a result of the learning process[13].

Since the word agency does not yet have an exact equivalent in Indonesian, for discussion in this proposal, the term student agency will be translated as 'student leadership.

Based on the results of observations and documentation of the implementation of the school program at Public Junior High School no 1 Lhokseumawe, it can be found that there are several activities capable of facilitating student agency in learning activities. This can be seen from the Spenxa Expo activity, which is an activity where students express their creativity in an exhibition held at school. In this activity, students are given the freedom to express their creativity in producing products that will be displayed in exhibitions. This is a very positive activity, where in addition to producing products that suit each other's creativity, this activity also facilitates the development of student's abilities developing collaboration skills, critical thinking, and communication. These skills will certainly greatly support the development of 21st-century skills which are one indicator of the progress of the educational process in schools.

Encouraging student agency in school programs not only allows students to learn to become more responsible, empowered, and contributive individuals, but, the experience and meaning they get from their learning process in these school programs will provide provisions for them to become a lifelong learner, so, when we talk about impact, the positive impact of the learning process that our students are currently going through will certainly be felt by them throughout their lives.

The facts from the research results above are of course strongly influenced by supporting and inhibiting factors in program management oriented to student agency. The supporting factor for the development of this school program is the enthusiasm of the parents of students in developing the school program. This was marked by the very good participation of the parents when the school principal held a meeting regarding the

program implementation plan. However, the presence of student guardians is often limited to the process of gathering opinions regarding the approval of a program to be implemented.

However, in most of the program management, parents and students themselves are not involved directly because it is considered that it will take a lot of time. On the other hand, student guardians are unable to make deeper decisions regarding curriculum matters or student assessment processes in a school program, so this is still an obstacle faced in the direct involvement of parents and students in the process of managing school programs.

In further research, the principal as a learning leader can start the change process by developing change initiatives. With a clear goal of changing the origin of the problem, the goals to be achieved, and the way to solve them[4].

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Based on the results of the research and discussion above, it can be concluded that (1) the principal plays an active role in efforts to manage student agency-oriented school programs at Public Junior High School no 1 Lhokseumawe (2) Implementation of student agency-oriented school programs has begun to be developed at Public Junior High School no 1 Lhokseumawe (3) The supporting factor in this activity is the enthusiasm of the guardians and students in each school program, and the inhibiting factor found is the parents' understanding that is less in-depth about school programs and takes longer time if parents and students are fully involved in each program management.

### Suggestion

I hope that every stakeholder in every educational unit can work together and be thoroughly involved in this research. As well as support from the Lhokseumawe City Education and Culture Office is also expected to be able to help become a facilitator in carrying out this research.

It is hoped that this basic research can become one of the supporting materials in the effort to research the same theme but aims to develop a model for preparing a vision for change that is oriented towards developing student agency and is expected to be able to find discoveries as a result of implementing the vision of change in the development of programs school program to implement the Independent Curriculum. Research at



an advanced stage is expected to be able to find a leadership model that can facilitate student agency in managing school programs. So that the process of involving the entire school community, especially parents and students can run effectively and efficiently.

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