

Leadership style of high-achieving school principals in teacher professionalism

Ririn Faridah^{a*}, Universitas Negeri Surabaya, Jl. Lidah Wetan, Lidah Wetan, Kec. Lakarsantri, Surabaya, Indonesia, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0947-1429>

Haris Supratno^b, Universitas Negeri Surabaya, Jl. Lidah Wetan, Lidah Wetan, Kec. Lakarsantri, Surabaya, Indonesia, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2238-5656>

Mudjito Mudjito^c, Universitas Negeri Surabaya, Jl. Lidah Wetan, Lidah Wetan, Kec. Lakarsantri, Surabaya, Indonesia, <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7562-4115>

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Abstract

This study aimed to describe the implementation of leadership styles of High-Achieving School Principals in teacher professionalism. This research was conducted using a qualitative method and a human instrument. The participants consisted of 1 school principal, 4 deputy principals, and 2 teachers. The data were collected using in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. The obtained data were analyzed using data condensation, display, and verification. The results found that the leadership style of high achieving school principals did not only comply with one leadership style. Relationship-oriented, participatory, transactional, and transformative leadership styles were mostly applied in collaboration. Such collaborative leadership style became a strategic approach in supporting teacher professionalism. Of the four leadership styles, transformative style had been the most dominant style as the principal's vision gave a positive energy to the teachers in developing their competence.

Keywords: leadership, style, principal, teacher, professionalism;

* ADDRESS FOR CORRESPONDENCE: Ririn Faridah, Universitas Negeri Surabaya, Jl. Lidah Wetan, Lidah Wetan, Kec. Lakarsantri, Surabaya, Indonesia

E-mail address: ririn.19003@mhs.unesa.ac.id

1. Introduction

School is an educational institution that is responsible for producing more qualified and competent human resources (Siswono, 2018; Retnawati et al, 2018). It must carry visions and missions in achieving its target (Norman et al, 2022; Courtney & Gunter, 2015). The visions are used to set the target goals that have been mutually agreed upon by the whole school stakeholders (Sung & Kin, 2021). Hence, it is significant to have professional school principals and teachers. Riyanto and Hartono (2021) conveyed that professional school members will not only attain the predetermined school targets but also be an effective institution due to effective resource management.

School efforts in realizing the vision and mission cannot be separated from the role of each school component (Hartono, 2020). Although each component has its own roles and responsibilities, the principal's role, in this case, is the main yet crucial determiner (Siswono et al., 2017; Ali et al., 2015). The way how a school principal manages his school greatly influences the success of school programs (Mulyani, Meirawan, & Rahmadani, 2020). The principal's strategy indeed determines the quality of a school, the applied procedures and system, and the school values (Nurhayati, Harun, & Bahrun, 2018; Suliah & Arafat, 2019). In addition, the principal is the key holder in every policy (Mulyasa, 2012), particularly the principal's strategy in relocating teachers to their maximum advantage. The teacher's main role has a direct relation to the students (Lethwood, Sun, & Schumacker, 2020). As a significant profession in shaping state's young generations (Prawoto et al, 2018), they have not shown any improvement in the quality of education in Indonesia (Edu, Arifin, & Nardi, 2017). This phenomenon is an important concern to remember in how professional teachers are in carrying out their duties at school.

The principal role in encouraging and motivating the teachers to improve professionalism is strongly influenced by the leadership style implemented (Iswahyudi et al., 2019; Al Khajeh, 2018; Akprep et al., 2019). The leadership style applied by a school principal is indispensable as an agent of change. Since leadership style is generally in connection with a leader's attitudes, subordinates might contribute to the success of the leadership. The leadership style that contributes effectively in determining the appearance of the organization is the leadership style. This leadership style helps employees become more creative and innovative (Agarwal, 2020; Tolkyn et al, 2021). One that affects the productivity and success of an organization, namely leadership. So, it is highly recommended that a leader has the right leadership style in order to increase organization's performance efficiency. Leadership style refers to the activities carried out by a leader including how to approach and how to influence the members in achieving an organization's target goals (Tontowi et al, 2020; Ngadiman & Rahmawati, 2013).

Leadership style based on the meta category can be divided into three types namely task-oriented, relations-oriented, and change-oriented styles. Task-oriented leaders will focus on completing tasks efficiently, so that the principal will organize work activities, make short-term plans, divide tasks to individuals or groups, explain the purpose of the task to attain an expectation, monitor the implementation of tasks and problems, and find the effective solution. Relations-oriented leaders will tend to maintain good affairs with their relations by providing mutual trust, believing all members, socializing to strengthen relationships, acknowledging contributions of each member's achievements, and providing coaching to members. A change-oriented leader will tend to find innovation in adapting to environmental changes so that the principal will monitor the external environment to look at threats and opportunities, analyze events, learn new opportunities that are interesting for the organization, provide motivation in seizing opportunities, and publish the change of succession determined.

In the recent studies, leadership styles can be grouped into several types, including charismatic, transformational, participatory, consultative, democratic, autocratic, entrepreneurial, and situational leadership styles. A charismatic leader has a dominant charisma so that the leader has a deep effect on her/his fellows. This leader is believed by her/his fellows that whatever s/he does and what is conveyed is always right. Transformational leaders tend to prioritize new innovations in a change. Transformational leaders will give the ideal influence to their subordinates, where the influence or behavior is to increase the dedication of subordinates by providing intellectual stimulation. Entrepreneurial leadership style is a leadership style that tends to have a high achievement drive and dare to take risks, has a high level of enthusiasm and creativity, become a typical pattern of being proactive, act quickly based on opportunities, has a sense of impatience and visionary perspective, dislike hierarchies and bureaucracy, prefer for transacting with external customers, and look forward to the future. Situational leadership style is the approach of a leader to her/his fellows who believe that each organization has a different situation so it must be faced with a special situation-based leadership style.

SMK Negeri 2 Buduran, Sidoarjo, Indonesia, is one of the schools with a myriad of achievements in East Java province. This achievement is accomplished by both students and teachers. Based on the data obtained, around 10 to 15 achievements are obtained every month, both academic and non-academic achievements. Student achievement is inseparable from the teacher's role in the learning process and coaching in non-academic fields. Teacher competence is inseparable from the principal's motivation. The achievements are the reflection of the school members' skills and competences. In 2020, the school principal won the principal's championship.

Realizing the importance of the principal's leadership style in teacher professionalism, this study described how the principal's leadership excelled in teacher professionalism at SMK Negeri 2 Buduran. The focuses of this research included the dominant leadership style of the high achieving school principal and the implementation of the leadership style in supporting teacher professionalism.

2. Method

The present study used a qualitative research approach, research produced from various sources of descriptive data in a research procedure. This study was conducted to explore in-depth data about the leadership style of the school principal in supporting teacher professionalism. In particular, this study aimed to obtain further information on how the principal's leadership style in teacher professionalism was undertaken. This study was carried out for 6 months, from January to June 2021. The results of the study were expected to be the basis for the development of further research, especially on the leadership style in developing higher-quality human resources.

2.1. Participant

The participants of the study consisted of 1 principal, 4 deputy principals, and 2 teachers. They were selected using purposive sampling and snowball sampling techniques (Naderifar et al, 2017). Before the researcher decided to choose the participants, the researchers made observations of High Schools in Sidoarjo and conducted interviews with several school principals at high schools/vocational schools in Sidoarjo. Furthermore, amongst the population, the researchers chose the eligible participants based on four indicators, namely high achieving school principal, the numbers of school's academic and non-academic achievements, the school acting as the community's brand image, and the school's professional teachers. So, the participant who met these indicators was the Head of SMK Negeri 2 Buduran. The researcher also used the snowball sampling technique to invite relevant informants such as the vice school principals, stakeholders, and teachers. Through this technique, it was expected that

the data obtained would be more complete and could describe how the leadership style was implemented by the principal in teacher professionalism.

2.2. Instrument and procedures

Data were collected using in-depth interviews, participant observations, and documentation. In-depth interviews were conducted in a semi-structured format (Ajith et al, 2021). Its duration was around 45 to 60 minutes. The in-depth interviews was undertaken at SMK Negeri 2 Buduran. If the situation was not possible due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the interviews were also be conducted virtually through a zoom meeting. Interview questions were in general, which led to the principal's leadership style. Observations were made at the research site. Observation procedures carried out by researchers included carrying out activities at the research site but not being personally bound, conducting observation activities at the research site, conducting observations on the research subjects, and evaluating and analyzing data systematically (Fadli, 2021). While the documentation in this study was in the form of photos, recordings, prints, writings, recordings, or images related to the principal's leadership style in teacher professionalism.

2.3. Data analysis

The data analysis carried out in this study used three steps, namely data condensation, data display, verification and inference (Miles & Huberman, 2014). Data condensation was carried out by collecting all data from in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation. The data analysis procedure was started by transcribing the voice recordings of the in-depth interviews so that the researchers could easily check the information. Moreover, significant information was selected and simplified by sorting the data. Data sorting was performed by selecting and sorting the data according to the research focus. Furthermore, the simplified data from the results of in-depth interviews were grouped according to the research focus. The final step was drawing conclusions or verification. The conclusion from the results of this analysis was used to obtain data about the characteristics of the principal's leadership style in teacher professionalism.

3. Results and Discussion

In accordance with the focus of this research, the following described the dominant leadership style of the high achieving school principals and how to implement this leadership style in teacher professionalism.

3.1. Style of High-Achieving School Principal Leadership

Leadership style can refer to how the principal in carrying out her/his leadership and how the principal in influencing, mobilizing and approaching subordinates in this case teachers, education staff and employees in the school. The principal of SMK Negeri 2 Buduran Sidoarjo, East Java, Indonesia was the Head of a dedicated, innovative, and inspirational school at the national level in 2020. In carrying out his leadership, he believed that example was more important than a million directions. This was conveyed by the Head of SMK Negeri 2 Buduran in the following interview excerpt:

“In carrying out of my duties as a school principal, I develop and improve school performance while still referring to the school's vision, namely the realization of superior and qualified education and training institutions based on imtaq—faith and piety—and science and technology, as well as caring and environmental culture. I always motivate the teachers by starting with myself, for example, I take part in competitions, take part in training, because I believe that example is more important than a million directions.”

Another participant also said, “Our principal rarely gives warnings or reprimands to teachers or education staff, but he always sets an example from himself. For example, he always comes earlier than us, before we come, he is already at school, then for example there is a webinar activity, he gives an example by registering first and then sharing it with us via the WhatsApp group. So that the teachers are motivated to follow it.”

This statement was corroborated by several other participants as follows: “In writing, his vision is never conveyed. But what I do know is that he often says that an example is more important than a million directions.” “Our principal always sets an example in every step in all fields, both in the fields of education, discipline, social, and religion. For example, in the field of discipline, he always comes first than us. He even gave the motto that there is no day without achievement.”

From the results of these interviews, the Head of SMK Negeri 2 Buduran in mobilizing teachers and education staff tended to set an example starting with himself. He gave motivation by giving example. He attended school early as a motivation so that his subordinates could be discipline in attendance. He took continuous professional development training as a motivation so that his subordinates could also take part in the training, besides, he also participated in competitions as a motivation for his subordinates to improve their competence.

In mobilizing the teachers and education staff of the Head of SMK Negeri 2 Buduran, Sidoarjo tended to provide approaches by establishing intimacy and togetherness. We could see this from the excerpts conveyed by him in the following interview: Alhamdulillah, while I am at SMK Negeri 2 Buduran, all the teachers and employees supported me. I initially took approaches to establish intimacy. I bring only food such as wrapped rice, then invite them to take a photo together. Indirectly I can memorize one by one through the photos. I invite them to pray together and eat together, even if it's just wrapped rice that I brought. Thank God that way I can be closer to them.

Another participant corroborated this statement in the following conversation: “In terms of social affairs, our school principal is very concerned about his subordinates, almost every day he makes *shodaqoh* by bringing food to school, even if it's just rice packets”. “Our principal is very flexible (not stiff) so the teachers are welcome. He was never angry, but he reminded in a good way even making the teachers feel reluctant. He also always provides motivations through briefings every Monday. In addition, every moment he invites a group photo, with a group of photo he can indirectly see one by one the teachers who are present participating.

Based on the information provided by the participants above, the approach taken by the Head of SMK Negeri 2 Buduran, Sidoarjo to his followers tended to be a social approach. By establishing togetherness, intimacy through photos with subordinates could be used as a medium to memorize one by one their subordinates. The form of attention by sharing food was one of the approaches taken by the head of SMK Negeri 2 Buduran in order to influence his subordinates so that they participated in his programs. The leadership style of the Head of SMK Negeri 2 Buduran, who was the principal of this nationally outstanding school. If you saw his tendency by setting an example, it rarely gave reprimands to his subordinates but tended to set a good example, approaching the characteristics of a relationship-oriented leadership style. A relationship-oriented leadership style always maintained good relations with subordinates both individually and in groups (Ngadiman & Ratmawati, 2013). However, in motivating teachers to improve their competence, the leadership style of the Head of SMK Negeri 2 Buduran tended to be transformative, which was to prioritize new innovations in a change, transformational leaders would have an ideal influence on their subordinates, where the

influence or behavior is to increase dedication of subordinates, by providing intellectual stimulation (Hosna et al, 2021).

In carrying out its programs, the Head of SMK Negeri 2 Buduran was assisted by deputy principals. So that his step in carrying out his programs was to coordinate with the vice principal first, before conveying it to the school community. This was in accordance with the following excerpt from the Head of SMK Negeri 2 Buduran: "I always invite WAKA– deputy principals– to coordinate related to school programs. But I don't always ask them for help, as long as I can do the work myself." This was confirmed by one of the vice principals as follows: "We, as waka are always invited to communicate in every program. He tends to invite people to work together, even sometimes he does it himself as long as he can handle it himself." Another vice principal also added: "We, as waka are always invited to communicate in every program. Even though, for example, the program is a program in the realm of public relations, the waka curriculum, students and waka sarpras are invited to communicate to work together".

In carrying out its programs, the principal of SMK Negeri 2 Buduran always coordinated with the vice principals, but did not fully hand over these programs to the vice principals. As long as the program could be implemented solely, the Head of SMK Negeri 2 Buduran would do it alone with the deputy principals. Based on the information from the participants above, in carrying out his programs the principal of SMK Negeri 2 Buduran, Sidoarjo tended to implement a participatory leadership style. Where the principal of SMK Negeri 2 Buduran, Sidoarjo, Indonesia tended to involve a consultation system with the vice principals, decision making was carried out jointly, division of tasks, empowerment, and democratic management.

3.2. Implementation of the Leadership Style of School Principals with Achievement in Teacher Professionalism

In coping with the implementation of teacher professionalism programs, the Head of SMK Negeri 2 Buduran Sidoarjo had several strategies so that teachers could be motivated to join the teacher professionalism program. We could see this from the statement of the Head of SMK Negeri 2 Buduran, Sidoarjo, Indonesia in the following conversation: "I always set an example to the teacher, by giving an example from myself first. Because the example is more important than a million directions. As I mentioned earlier, for example, there are workshops/webinar activities. So, I registered first, and I shared the proof of registration in the teacher's group, then I invited my teachers to study together. I also give them the opportunity to improve their competence, for example attending training or continuing their studies to a higher level."

This statement from the head of SMK Negeri 2 Buduran was in line with what was conveyed by the vice principal for public relations in the following conversation: "Mrs. Maria always sets an example in every step in all fields, both in the fields of education, discipline, social, religious. For example, in the field of discipline, she always comes first to us. In fact, she gave the motto there is no day without achievement".

The deputy principal for the infrastructure sector when interviewed by the author also confirmed and stated the statement from the head of SMK Negeri 2 Buduran above, as in the following conversation: "He always shares if there is information related to training on WhatsApp, he also always shares if he has worked for example in the field of writing that has been published in one of the journals, or he is winning in one of the competitions, he himself shares in the WhatsApp group Mr / Mrs teacher. He always starts with himself first as an example, then he invites other ladies and gentlemen.

The Deputy Head of Curriculum added information related to the role model of the head of SMK Negeri 2 Buduran in teacher professionalism as well as in inviting teachers to write, as in the following information: "She always invites us to work together, for example by writing, then also motivates teachers by showing the results of their writings published in journals or in print media. He hopes that the teachers will be motivated to participate in writing."

From the information above, the role of the school principal was very important as a motivation for teacher professionalism. Leithwood (2020) stated that Principal leadership has a huge impact on learning. It could also be said that the principal's leadership style played a very important role in a teacher's professional motivation (Iswahyudi et al, 2019). In addition to always providing an example, the head of SMK Negeri 2 Buduran, Sidoarjo, Indonesia provided motivation in the form of rewards for teachers or employees who excelled in their performance. This was conveyed by the Head of SMK Negeri 2 Buduran in the following conversation: "I always give appreciation to those who have carried out their duties well. Awards or rewards are not always in the form of gifts or money. By congratulating them, and informing them of their achievements in the meeting forum and also publishing it, I think it can be a reward for them (Tran et al., 2022).

This was also confirmed by one of the teachers when interviewed by the author, the following was conveyed by the teacher: "If any of us have completed the task well, she gave us a reward, and she said "don't look at the value or the price, okay?" The rewards given to us are like a notebook or other.

The statement above was also in line with what was conveyed by the student council in the following excerpt of the conversation: "Our principal approaches the teachers through rewards. For example, there is a teacher who excels, she publishes on social media and also informs in the WhatsApp group, and also informs us when we have official meetings. Even the rewards are not only given to teachers who excel, the principal approaches teachers to be more disciplined and professional in carrying out their duties as well as through giving rewards. For example, if a teacher is late, she calls the teacher and gives them food so that they are not late again.

Giving rewards to subordinates was one of the characteristics of the transactional leadership style (Hartono, 2018). The principal of SMK Negeri 2 Buduran, Sidoarjo, Indonesia in providing motivation in teacher professionalism in addition to providing examples, inspirational motivation, and intellectual stimulation, she also gave rewards to teachers who excelled in their performance. This meant that apart from implementing a transformational style, the Head of SMK Negeri 2 Buduran also implemented a transactional style in her leadership in teacher professionalism.

In terms of teacher professionalism, the strategy of the Head of SMK Negeri 2 Buduran included providing facilities in the form of providing infrastructure for the development of teacher professionalism. This was as stated by her in the following interview excerpt: "The pandemic period made learning held online, but the teachers came alternately, namely work from office (WFO) and work from home (WFH). So, we have to provide learning infrastructure for teachers who are WFO, starting with internet/wifi networks, laptops and also online rooms. We provide all of that so that online learning can run effectively."

This statement was confirmed by one of the teachers interviewed by the author, the following was the teacher's explanation: "She gave an opportunity for the teachers who were scheduled by WFO to carry out online learning in the spaces provided, for example in the laboratory, in the library, then she saw how the learning was implemented and provided input and she would fulfil the need for learning facilities if necessary. To upgrade the learning model during the pandemic, she also brought some speakers so that the teachers could deliver fun lessons during the pandemic."

Fulfillment of infrastructure in learning related to teacher professionalism was also carried out by the Head of SMK Negeri 2 Buduran, this was done as an intellectual stimulant so that learning could run effectively. As a follow-up to the challenges during the pandemic, learning must continue to run effectively, so one of the efforts made by the head of SMK Negeri 2 Buduran was to meet the needs of the required infrastructure. Based on the information above, the Head of SMK Negeri 2 Buduran implemented a transformational leadership style (Gkolia, Koustelios & Belias, 2018; Voelkl, 2019).

4. Conclusion

In this study, it was found that the leadership style of the principal who excels at the national level, in this case the principal of SMK Negeri 2 Buduran, Sidoarjo, Indonesia, is not only one leadership style that is implemented. There were several leadership styles that were implemented, including relationship-oriented, participatory, transactional and transformational leadership styles. However, among the four leadership styles, the dominant one in its implementation is the transformational style. Besides that, the implementation of leadership style in teacher professionalism can provide motivation in teacher professionalism. The implementation of the four leadership styles above each provides positive energy in teacher professionalism. However, in this study, the level of influence of the leadership style implemented in the teacher's professionalism has not been found. So, for further research, the author suggests that it can be analyzed how the influence of the principal's leadership style on teacher professionalism

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