

RESEARCH ARTICLE



The Principal's Role In Enhancing Student Achievement At The Bengkulu Province Sports Talent Senior High School

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Abstract

This study aims to examine in depth the influence of principal leadership on student achievement in talent-based sports schools, emphasizing the framework of transformational leadership. The primary focus is to determine how the principal's role contributes to creating a supportive learning environment, fostering students' intrinsic motivation, and cultivating a sustainable culture of excellence. A quantitative approach was employed using a simple linear regression model, supported by qualitative data from students' open-ended responses. The findings revealed a significant impact of the principal's role on student performance, with a coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.58 and a t-statistic value of 8.143 ($p < 0.05$). This indicates that 58% of the variance in student achievement is attributable to the principal's leadership, while the remaining 42% is influenced by other factors such as training quality, parental involvement, and individual student conditions. Qualitative insights reinforce the statistical results, showing that students perceive the principal's emotional support, personal attention, and active involvement in training and competitions as highly impactful. The principal is viewed not merely as an administrator, but as a motivator, facilitator, and central figure in the development of student achievement. The study underscores the importance of strengthening leadership competencies, especially in interpersonal communication, motivation strategies, and the cultivation of adaptive school environments. This research offers both practical and theoretical contributions to the development of effective educational leadership models in talent-based schools.

Keyword: Principal Leadership, Student Achievement, Talent School, Motivation, Transformational Leadership

Introduction

Education is a fundamental instrument in producing future generations who are not only academically superior, but also have life skills and excellence in various fields, including non-academic fields such as sports. Law No. 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System states that education aims to develop the potential of students to become people who are faithful, pious, have noble character, are healthy, knowledgeable, creative, independent, and become democratic and responsible citizens. This shows that the success of education is not only measured by students' cognitive achievements, but also by their involvement in developing their interests and talents to the maximum. This is where the role of educational institutions, especially schools, as a strategic space to grow and manage these potentials holistically and in a directed manner, is important. In the context of developing interests and talents in the field of sports, the Senior High School for Sports Talent (SMANKO) is an educational model that is specifically aimed at fostering students who have potential and talents in the field of sports. SMANKO Bengkulu Province is one of the concrete forms of talent-based education policies developed by the local government as an effort to strengthen the early age athlete development system institutionally. In the implementation of education that emphasizes the balance between academic and sports achievements, the role of the

principal becomes very crucial, considering that the success of educational institutions cannot be separated from the capacity of their leaders in directing, fostering, and motivating all elements of the school (Wibowo, 2016).

The principal, in this context, not only acts as an administrator who is responsible for managing school management, but also as a transformational leader who is able to create an achievement-based education vision. According to Bass and Avolio (1994), transformational leadership is characterized by the leader's ability to inspire, motivate, and pay attention to the specific development needs of individuals. This kind of leadership style is very much needed in a school environment that demands intensive development of students, both in terms of mental aspects, discipline, training strategies, and the ability to perform optimally in competitions.

The results of initial observations at SMANKO Bengkulu Province showed that students had succeeded in carving out various proud achievements. During 2022 to 2023, it was recorded that more than 200 medals were won by students from various sports, both at the city, provincial, and national levels. This achievement shows that there is a structured coaching system, as well as progressive leadership support in encouraging a culture of achievement. However, a more in-depth academic study is needed to explore the extent of the principal's contribution to this achievement. Is student achievement significantly influenced by the principal's leadership style? Or is it determined by other factors outside the direct influence of leadership?

Therefore, the formulation of the problem in this study focuses on the question: To what extent is the principal's role in improving student achievement at SMA Negeri Keberbakatan Olahraga Province of Bengkulu? To answer this question, this study aims: (1) to determine and analyze the extent of the principal's role in supporting student achievement; and (2) to identify the influence of the principal's leadership on the

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dimensions of student development, both technically, emotionally, and socially.

This study uses a descriptive quantitative approach with data collection techniques through closed questionnaires and documentation of student achievement. With the number of respondents as many as 76 active students, and simple linear regression analysis as an analytical method, it is expected that the results of this study can provide theoretical contributions to the development of educational leadership studies and practical contributions to the management of schools based on talent and interest, especially in the field of sports. In addition, this study is also expected to be a reference in formulating policies to strengthen the capacity of school principals in dealing with the complexity of tasks in schools based on talent.

Method

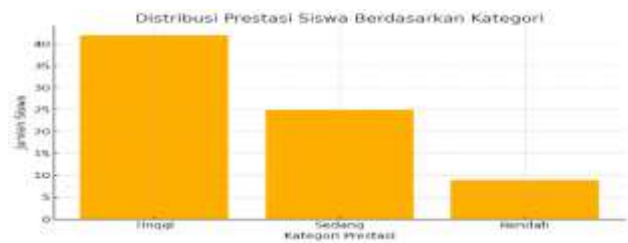
This study uses a quantitative approach with a descriptive correlational method that aims to determine and measure the extent of the relationship between the role of the principal and student achievement at SMA Negeri Keberbakatan Olahraga, Bengkulu Province. This method was chosen because it is appropriate to describe ongoing phenomena objectively and to test the influence between variables statistically. The independent variable in this study is the role of the principal, while the dependent variable is student achievement.

The population in this study were all active students of SMANKO Bengkulu in the 2023/2024 academic year, totaling 76 people. The sample determination was carried out using a total sampling technique because the population size was relatively small and allowed for comprehensive research. Data collection was carried out using a closed questionnaire compiled based on indicators of transformational leadership style (Bass & Avolio, 1994) and indicators of student achievement which included medal achievements and participation in official competitions. In addition, documentation of student achievement was also used as supporting data in validating the findings.

To analyze the data, the researcher used a simple linear regression analysis technique with the help of SPSS software version 26. Validity and reliability tests were first carried out on the research instrument to ensure the accuracy and consistency of the data obtained. The results of the analysis were used to measure the strength and direction of the influence of the independent variables on the dependent variables, as well as to test the significance of the relationship. With this method, it is hoped that the results of the study can provide a strong empirical picture of the principal's contribution in encouraging student achievement in a school environment based on sports talent.

Results and Discussion

This study aims to determine the extent to which the principal's role in influencing student achievement at SMA Negeri Keberbakatan Olahraga Province of Bengkulu. Data obtained through questionnaires and documentation were analyzed descriptively and inferentially. Initial analysis of transformational leadership indicators showed that most students considered the principal to have a positive influence in building motivation, providing individual attention, and encouraging a learning and training atmosphere that supports achievement development. Descriptively, the distribution of student achievement is categorized into three levels: high, medium, and low. This category is based on the accumulation of achievements achieved by students in the form of medals from regional to national competitions. Based on the results of the processed documentation, 42 students (55%) were in the high achievement category, 25 students (33%) were in the medium category, and 9 students (12%) were in the low category. This distribution provides an illustration that more than half of the student population has significant achievement. Details of this distribution are presented in



The results of the simple linear regression test showed a significant relationship between the role of the principal (independent variable/X) and student achievement (dependent variable/Y) in sports talent schools. Quantitative analysis produced a coefficient of determination (R^2) value of 0.58, indicating that 58% of the variation in student achievement can be explained by the contribution of the principal's role. Meanwhile, the remaining 42% is influenced by other external variables outside the scope of the study, such as family support, training quality, and psychosocial factors. The results of the significance test (t-test) showed a calculated t value of 8.143 with a p-value <0.05 , indicating that the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. Statistically, this confirms that the role of the principal has a real influence on improving student achievement. Furthermore, the most influential indicators of the principal's role according to student perceptions include the dimensions of inspirational motivation and individual attention. The principal is considered to actively support student development both emotionally and practically, such as providing representative training facilities, building intensive communication with coaching teachers and parents, and being directly present at important student activities. This condition creates a conducive learning climate and increases students' self-confidence in facing various forms of competition. Additional evidence was obtained from qualitative data through open-ended comments in the questionnaire. Several students expressed that the presence and moral support from the principal before the match provided a significant psychological boost. One student stated that "moral support from the principal when we were going to compete made us more confident and proud to carry the name of the school." This finding highlights the importance of the affective dimension in educational leadership, especially in the context of schools that demand high achievement. Overall, these findings confirm that the principal is not just an administrative manager, but also a strategic change agent who plays a role as a motivator and shaper of a culture of achievement in the school environment. This role has proven effective in shaping the character of students who are competitive, disciplined, and have high self-confidence amidst increasing performance demands.

Discussion

The findings of this study confirm that the principal plays a crucial role in supporting and encouraging student achievement, especially in schools based on sports talent. The principal's leadership not only acts as a management regulator, but also as a central figure in forming a culture of achievement in schools. The results of the analysis show that most students respond positively to the leadership style shown, especially in the form of motivation, coaching, and consistent personal attention. This role is in line with the principles of transformational leadership, which encourage leaders to inspire and motivate individuals through a clear vision, attention to personal development needs, and intellectual empowerment (Bass & Avolio, 1994). The principal at SMANKO Bengkulu seems to have internalized this role well, as seen from his support for student competitive activities and his ability to create a conducive learning and training atmosphere. The ability to be a figure who is able to move students' enthusiasm is one of the key factors in the high achievement achieved by more than half of the students. However, this success also reflects the synergy between school elements, not just relying on one party. The success of the principal in building effective communication

with coaches, teachers, and parents of students also becomes an important foundation for the success of achievement coaching.

In this context, the principal acts as a facilitator of a learning and coaching ecosystem that is adaptive to the needs of talented students in sports. The results of the study also indicate a strong relationship between the role of leadership and student medal achievement, as shown in the achievement category which is mostly at a high level. Even so, there are still a small number of students who have not shown optimal performance. This indicates that leadership, no matter how effective, still requires support from individual readiness, environmental influences, and the continuity of the training system. The principal needs to be supported by inclusive institutional policies, comprehensive coaching programs, and collaboration between stakeholders in assisting the student development process. Therefore, a principal who has a strong vision, interpersonal skills, and sensitivity to the needs of students has great potential in forming a productive and competitive school climate. Leadership in this context is not just a structural action, but a strategic action that can foster a spirit of achievement in complex learning dynamics. The results of this study emphasize the urgency of increasing the leadership capacity of principals as one of the main pillars in the transformation of education quality in Indonesia.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the results of the research that has been conducted, it can be concluded that the principal plays a strategic role in influencing student achievement in sports gifted schools. Transformational leadership, demonstrated through the provision of motivation, individual attention, and the creation of a conducive learning environment, has been proven to contribute positively to increasing self-confidence, competitive spirit, and student achievement results, both academically and non-academically. This finding confirms that the principal does not only act as an administrative manager, but also as an agent of change who is able to bring a culture of achievement to life in the school environment. However, the success of this leadership still requires support from all components of the school—including teachers, coaches, parents, and an adaptive school policy system that is oriented towards developing student potential.

Suggestions

1. Strengthening Principal Leadership Competence
Continuous training is needed that not only focuses on managerial aspects, but also the development of

transformational leadership, effective communication, and understanding of student psychology, especially in the context of gifted schools.

2. Development of a Collaborative Support System
Schools need to build a more solid communication and cooperation system between principals, teachers, coaches, and parents of students, in order to create a holistic and sustainable achievement coaching ecosystem.
3. Implementation of a Structured and Responsive Coaching Program
A student achievement coaching program needs to be designed that is adaptive to individual needs, by considering factors of mental readiness, training discipline, and the sustainability of strengthening student character and motivation.
4. Periodic Evaluation of Achievement and Leadership
It is recommended that schools conduct routine evaluations of the principal's leadership style and its impact on student achievement, as material for formulating policies based on data and real field needs.

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