

THE ROLE OF PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP IN IMPROVING LEARNING EFFECTIVENESS IN KINDERGARTEN IN TANJUNG MORAWA DISTRICT

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Abstract

This study aims to describe the role of principal leadership in improving learning effectiveness in Kindergarten at Tanjung Morawa District, including learning planning, academic supervision and coaching, creating a conducive learning climate, and learning effectiveness. This research used a quantitative descriptive approach with a sample of 30 kindergarten teachers selected through saturated sampling. The instrument used was a Likert scale questionnaire and data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The results showed that all indicators were in the very good category: learning planning (3.62), academic supervision and coaching (3.52), creating a conducive learning climate (3.50), and learning effectiveness (3.70). Overall, the role of principal leadership obtained an average score of 3.53 in the very good category. The Pearson correlation test showed a value of 0.519, indicating a moderate positive relationship between principal leadership and learning effectiveness. The research hypothesis was accepted.

Keywords: Principal Leadership, Learning Effectiveness, Kindergarten

INTRODUCTION

Learning in early childhood education (PAUD) is a process designed to facilitate a child's comprehensive development, encompassing cognitive, language, socio-emotional, moral, and motor skills. At the kindergarten (TK) level, learning is carried out through play activities that are meaningful, enjoyable, and developmentally appropriate. Therefore, learning in PAUD cannot be equated with learning at the elementary or secondary levels, but must emphasize active and contextual learning experiences (Mulyasa, 2019). The effectiveness of learning in kindergarten is characterized by the achievement of children's development goals, active involvement of children in learning activities, and the use of varied and innovative learning methods and media. However, in practice, various problems are still found, such as teachers who tend to use monotonous learning methods, less than optimal use of learning media, and low levels of reflection and evaluation of learning. These conditions impact the child's overall development (Nurhayati, 2020). In practice, the effectiveness of learning in early childhood education (PAUD) is not only measured by the achievement of learning objectives, but also by the active involvement of children, a pleasant learning atmosphere, and the teacher's ability to adapt learning to the characteristics of child development (Sanjaya, 2016). One factor that influences the effectiveness of learning in kindergarten is the leadership of the principal. The principal has a strategic role in managing the educational institution, developing teachers, and creating a school climate conducive to the learning process (Wahyudi, 2016). Effective principal leadership can improve teacher performance, work motivation, and educator professionalism in implementing learning in the classroom (Mulyasa, 2019).

Kindergarten principals not only act as administrators but also as instructional leaders who are responsible for planning, implementing, and evaluating the learning process with teachers (Suriansyah & Aslamiah, 2018). Through academic supervision, ongoing coaching, and motivation, principals can encourage teachers to develop creativity and innovation in learning that is appropriate to the characteristics of early childhood (Rahmawati, 2021). Ideally, principals act as instructional leaders who are able to direct, guide, and motivate teachers in improving the quality of the learning process (Mulyasa, 2013). However, many principals still focus more on administrative aspects than on teacher academic development, so that the learning process does not receive optimal attention (Pidarta, 2011). The principal's lack of attention to academic supervision results in teachers not receiving adequate feedback to improve and develop more effective learning methods. Learning supervision that is not carried out in a planned and

continuous manner can result in low quality learning and minimal teacher innovation in managing PAUD classes (Mulyasa, 2013). If the principal's leadership is ineffective, efforts to improve learning effectiveness will be difficult to achieve. Teachers tend to work individually without clear direction, learning innovations are underdeveloped, and learning objectives are not optimally achieved. Conversely, visionary, democratic leadership from a principal focused on improving the quality of learning is believed to improve teacher performance and learning effectiveness in schools. Based on the description, it can be concluded that the principal's leadership has a very important role in increasing the effectiveness of learning in kindergarten. However, based on theoretical studies and previous research results, there is still a gap between the expected role of the principal's leadership and the practice of learning leadership in early childhood education units. Various studies show that the principal's role as a learning leader has not been fully optimal, especially in the aspects of learning supervision and teacher mentoring (Mulyasa, 2019; Rahmawati, 2021). Therefore, an in-depth study is needed to determine how the principal's leadership role in increasing learning effectiveness, the supporting and inhibiting factors, and the efforts made by the principal in overcoming these problems.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Learning Effectiveness

Learning effectiveness reflects the level of success of the learning process in achieving its planned objectives. Learning is considered effective if the process actively engages students, creates a pleasant learning environment, and supports the achievement of optimal learning outcomes in line with the learning objectives. Learning effectiveness is measured not only by the final outcome but also by the quality of the learning process within the classroom.

B. Leadership Concept

Leadership is the ability of an individual to influence, direct, and coordinate the behavior of individuals and groups to achieve specific goals. Leadership is not only about power, but also about the ability to build relationships, communication, and trust within an organization. According to Northouse (2018), leadership is the process by which an individual influences a group of people to achieve a common goal. This definition emphasizes that leadership is a process involving interaction between the leader and the led.

C. The Concept of Educational Leadership

Educational leadership is the process of influencing, directing, and coordinating all educational resources to achieve educational goals effectively and efficiently. Leadership in educational institutions is not only oriented toward achieving organizational goals, but also toward improving the quality of the learning process (Bush, 2015).

D. Functions and Roles of Educational Leadership

Conceptually, the terms function and role in leadership have different meanings, although they are often used interchangeably. Leadership functions refer to the primary tasks or key activities a leader must perform to achieve organizational goals. Meanwhile, leadership roles refer to the concrete behaviors or actions a leader displays in carrying out these functions (Wahjosumidjo, 2010).

E. Principal Leadership

Principal leadership is a concrete manifestation of educational leadership in formal education units. Principals are primarily responsible for managing schools, developing educators, and ensuring the quality of learning. Principals are educational leaders who play a strategic role in improving school quality through effective resource management. Principal leadership focuses not only on administrative aspects but also on academic aspects. Principals are required to be able to guide teachers in planning, implementing, and evaluating learning to ensure its effective implementation.

F. Principal Leadership as a Learning Leader

Based on the study of the concepts of leadership, educational leadership, the functions and roles of educational leadership, and the leadership of the principal, it can be synthesized that the principal has a strategic role as a learning leader (instructional leader). The principal's leadership as a learning leader places improving the quality of the learning process as the main focus in the implementation of education in schools. Hallinger (2016) explains that learning leadership is a form of leadership that is directly oriented towards developing and improving the learning process through strengthening the role of teachers, systematic learning planning, and continuous

monitoring and evaluation of learning. In this context, the principal does not only act as an administrator, but as a leader who directs and coaches teachers so that learning runs effectively.

METHOD

A. Types of research

This research uses a quantitative approach with descriptive methods. This approach was used because the data obtained in this study are in the form of numbers, which are then analyzed to objectively describe the phenomenon being studied. The descriptive method aims to provide a systematic, factual, and accurate picture of the principal's leadership role in improving learning effectiveness.

This study does not aim to test hypotheses or find relationships between variables, but rather to determine the level of the principal's leadership role in learning planning, academic guidance and supervision, and the creation of a conducive learning climate, as well as to determine the level of learning effectiveness in Kindergartens in Tanjung Morawa District.

B. Place and Time of Research

This research was conducted at a kindergarten (TK) in Tanjung Morawa District. The location was chosen based on the institution's relevance to the research focus, which is to examine the role of principal leadership in improving learning effectiveness in early childhood education units.

C. Research Population and Sample

The population in this study were all Kindergarten (TK) teachers in Tanjung Morawa District who acted as respondents in providing an assessment of the principal's leadership role in improving learning effectiveness. The sampling technique used was saturated sampling, namely all members of the population were used as research samples because the population size was relatively limited and allowed for a comprehensive study. Thus, all Kindergarten teachers in Tanjung Morawa District were sampled in this study, while the principals were not used as questionnaire respondents, but as supporting data sources through observation and documentation.

D. Research Procedures and Design

The research design was conducted systematically to describe the role of principal leadership in improving learning effectiveness in kindergartens in Tanjung Morawa District. The research procedure began with a preparation stage, which included proposal development, literature review, determination of research variables and indicators, and development of a research instrument in the form of a questionnaire with a Likert scale.

Next, the data collection stage was carried out by distributing questionnaires to teachers as respondents to obtain data regarding the principal's leadership role and learning effectiveness. In addition, observations and documentation were also conducted as supporting data to complement the research results. The data obtained were then processed by calculating scores, percentages, and average values, and analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques to determine the categories of the research results. The final stage of the research was the systematic preparation of the report in accordance with scientific writing principles.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Description of Research Data

The data in the research were obtained through the distribution of research instruments to 30 kindergarten teachers in Tanjung Morawa District. The research instrument consisted of four parts, namely: (1) Learning Planning, (2) Academic Guidance and Supervision, (3) Learning Climate, and (4) Learning Effectiveness. Each part consists of 4 statement items with a Likert scale of 1-4.

The following will present the research results as follows:

1. Principal Leadership Role Variable Data (Variable X)

Table 4.1 Principal Leadership Roles

No	Statistical Descripti on	Calculation Results		
		Learning Planning	Academic Supervision Development	Creating a Learning Climate

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1	Sample (n)	30	30	30
2	Min Score	12	12	12
3	Max Score	16	16	16
4	Mean	14.1	14.5	14

Based on 4.1 above, it can be seen that:

1. The role of leadership in the learning role consists of $n = 30$; min score = 12; max score = 16; mean = 14.1. Based on these data, it can be seen that the principal's leadership role in terms of learning planning is classified as very good.
2. The role of leadership in academic supervision development consists of $n = 30$; min score = 12; max score = 16; mean = 14.5. Based on these data, it can be seen that the role of the principal's leadership in terms of learning planning very good
3. The role of leadership in creating a learning climate consists of $n = 30$; min score = 12; max score = 16; mean = 14. Based on these data, it can be seen that the principal's leadership role in terms of learning planning is classified as very good.

2. Learning Effectiveness Variable Data (Variable Y)

The Y variable in this study is Learning Effectiveness, which is measured through four statements. Based on data processing from 30 respondents, the following results were obtained:

Table 4.2 Statistical Description of Learning Effectiveness Variables

No	Statistical Description	Mark
1	Sample (n)	30
2	Min Score	12
3	Max Score	16
4	Mean	14.8

Based on table 4.2 above, the total score for the learning effectiveness variable is 444, the average value (mean) of this variable is 14.8. The average per item is 3.70. The value of 3.70 is in the range of 3.26-4.00 which is included in the very good category. It can be clarified that the independent variable of the principal's leadership in improving the effectiveness of learning in Kindergarten in Tanjung Morawa District is Very Good. This shows that the principal has carried out his role as a leader in learning planning, academic supervision development, and the creation of a very good learning climate.

B. Data Analysis and Hypothesis Testing

1. Overall Descriptive Analysis

Table 4.5 Summary of Overall Research Results

No	Variables	Total Score	Average	Average per Item	Category
1	The Principal's Leadership Role (X)	1278	42.6	3.54	Very good
2	Learning Effectiveness (Y)	444	14.8	3.7	Very good

Based on table 4.5 Recapitulation of Overall Research Results, variable x has a total score of 1278 with an average of 42.6 with an average per item of 3.54 in the very good category. variable y has a total score of 444 with an average of 14.8 with an average per item of 3.7 in the very good category.

C. Hypothesis Testing

The research hypothesis proposed in Chapter II is:

Hypothesis (H_1): It is suspected that the principal's leadership role in learning planning, academic guidance and supervision, and the creation of a conducive learning climate is in the good category, and the effectiveness of learning in Kindergarten in Tanjung Morawa District is in the good category.

Based on the results of data analysis:

1. The overall leadership role of the principal obtained an average per item of 3.54 which is in the Very Good category.
2. The learning effectiveness obtained an average per item of 3.70 which is in the Very Good category.

Thus, the results of the study indicate that the research hypothesis (H_1) is accepted, because the role of the principal's leadership and the effectiveness of learning in Kindergarten in Tanjung Morawa District are generally in the very good category, meaning that the role of the principal's leadership in increasing the effectiveness of learning in Kindergarten in Tanjung Morawa District is very good.

D. Pearson Correlation Test

Table 4.6. Correlation Test

No	Leadership Role Headmaster	Learning Effectiveness	Pearson Correlation
4.	1278	444	0.51885

The Pearson correlation test yielded a correlation coefficient of 0.519. This value indicates a moderate positive relationship between the principal's leadership role and learning effectiveness in kindergartens in Tanjung Morawa District. This suggests that the better the principal's leadership role, the more effective learning tends to be.

DISCUSSION

A. The Principal's Leadership Role in Learning Planning

Based on the research results, the learning planning indicator scored an average of 3.62 per item, categorized as Very Good. This indicates that the principal at the Tanjung Morawa District Kindergarten played a significant role in providing direction, ensuring the development of learning materials, evaluating planning, and encouraging teachers to adapt learning to children's needs.

This finding aligns with Mulyasa's (2019) opinion, which states that principals, as learning leaders, have a strategic role in providing direction and guidance to teachers in developing learning plans to align them with the curriculum and student development goals. Thorough learning planning is the initial step that determines the success of the overall learning process (Sanjaya, 2016).

These results also support the research findings of Rahmawati (2021), who stated that principal leadership plays a crucial role in improving the performance of early childhood education (PAUD) teachers, including in the aspect of lesson planning. Furthermore, Fajri et al. (2023) also found that principals play a key role in improving teacher performance at the kindergarten level through planned and systematic coaching.

B. The Principal's Leadership Role in Academic Guidance and Supervision

The results showed that the academic guidance and supervision indicator achieved an average score of 3.52 per item, categorized as Very Good. This indicates that the principal has conducted regular learning supervision, provided input on the learning process, guided teachers, and provided motivation for teaching very well.

This finding aligns with the theory proposed by Glickman, Gordon, and Ross-Gordon (2018), which states that effective academic supervision is guiding, reflective, and ongoing to improve the quality of learning. Planned and ongoing supervision will provide constructive feedback for teachers in developing their pedagogical competence. This research also supports the findings of Sari & Lestari (2024), who revealed that academic supervision carried out by principals in early childhood education (PAUD) can improve the quality of the learning process. Simaremare (2025) also emphasized that principals play a key role in improving learning quality through ongoing academic guidance and supervision.

C. The Role of Principal Leadership in Creating a Conducive Learning Climate

The indicator for creating a conducive learning climate received an average score of 3.5 per item, categorized as Very Good. This indicates that the principal has played a significant role in creating a comfortable working environment for teachers, supporting a conducive learning environment, encouraging collaboration among teachers, and paying attention to teacher needs.

These findings support Bush and Glover's (2016) argument that effective educational leaders are able to build a school culture that supports the learning process, increases teacher motivation, and provides adequate learning facilities and infrastructure. A conducive school climate will encourage teachers to innovate in learning and increase student engagement.

In the context of early childhood education, Wiyani (2017) stated that PAUD principals act as guarantors of learning quality and are responsible for ensuring that learning in kindergarten is implemented in accordance with the PAUD curriculum and is oriented towards children's developmental needs. Suyadi (2016) also emphasized that kindergarten principals are required to understand the principles of early childhood development and be able to create a safe, comfortable, and child-friendly learning environment.

The results of this study also strengthen the findings of Yusuf (2020) who stated that the principal's leadership determines the success of learning programs, including in creating an inclusive and supportive learning climate.

D. Effectiveness of Learning in Kindergarten in Tanjung Morawa District

Based on the research results, the learning effectiveness variable obtained an average score of 3.70 per item, categorized as Very Good. This is the highest score compared to other variables. This indicates that learning at the Tanjung Morawa District Kindergarten has been very effective, as indicated by the children's active involvement in learning activities, the use of engaging learning media, a pleasant learning atmosphere, and the successful achievement of learning objectives.

This finding aligns with Suyadi's (2016) opinion, which states that the effectiveness of learning in early childhood education can be seen from children's active involvement in learning activities, the use of appropriate learning media, and the creation of a pleasant learning environment. Effective learning allows children to feel safe, comfortable, and motivated to learn, allowing optimal development appropriate to their age.

Mulyasa (2019) also emphasized that the effectiveness of learning in early childhood education (PAUD) is characterized by the achievement of child development goals, active involvement of children in learning activities, and the use of varied and innovative learning methods and media. Effective learning focuses not only on achieving learning outcomes but also on processes that actively involve children, the use of engaging media, and the creation of a comfortable and enjoyable learning environment.

The results of this study indicate that the high learning effectiveness at the Tanjung Morawa District Kindergarten is inseparable from the principal's excellent leadership role in the three aspects studied. This is in accordance with Sanjaya's (2016) opinion, which states that learning effectiveness is influenced by various factors, one of which is the principal's leadership support in creating a supportive learning environment and providing guidance to teachers.

E. The Relationship between the Principal's Leadership Role and Learning Effectiveness

Overall, the research results show that the principal's leadership role in the Tanjung Morawa District Kindergarten is in the very good category (3.53), and the effectiveness of learning is also in the very good category (3.70). This indicates a positive relationship between the principal's leadership role and learning effectiveness. The better the principal's leadership role, the higher the learning effectiveness achieved.

This finding aligns with the theory proposed by Northouse (2018), which states that leadership is the process of influencing a group of people to achieve a common goal. In the educational context, the principal, as a leader, plays a strategic role in influencing, directing, and coaching teachers to effectively achieve learning objectives.

Wahjosumidjo (2010) also emphasized that principals, as school policymakers, should be able to guide and mentor teachers in implementing learning. If the principal's leadership is ineffective, efforts to improve learning effectiveness will be difficult to achieve. Conversely, visionary, democratic leadership, and a focus on improving the quality of learning are believed to be able to improve teacher performance and learning effectiveness in schools.

These results also support research conducted by Ningsih et al. (2022), which found that principals play a role in supervising and coaching teachers to improve the quality of learning. Research by Fajri et al. (2023) also showed that principal leadership plays a crucial role in improving teacher performance in kindergartens. Thus, it can be concluded that the principal's excellent leadership role in learning planning, academic coaching and supervision, as well as the creation of a conducive learning climate, contributes significantly to achieving excellent learning effectiveness in Kindergartens in Tanjung Morawa District.

CONCLUSION

1. The principal's leadership role in planning learning at Tanjung Morawa District Kindergarten has been implemented very well, as indicated by an average score of 3.62.
2. The principal's leadership role in academic development and supervision has been carried out very well, as shown by an average score of 3.52.

3. The principal's leadership role in creating a conducive learning climate has been implemented very well, as indicated by an average score of 3.5.
4. The effectiveness of learning at Tanjung Morawa District Kindergarten has been achieved in the very good category, as indicated by an average score of 3.70.
5. Overall, the principal's leadership role is in the very good category with an average of 3.1 so that the effectiveness of learning at Tanjung Morawa District Kindergarten is also in the very good category.

Implications

The research results show that the principal's leadership role, which is in the very good category, has implications for the creation of learning effectiveness, which is also in the very good category. Therefore, principals need to maintain and improve their role in learning planning, academic guidance and supervision, and the creation of a conducive learning climate to ensure the quality of learning in kindergarten is maintained and continues to improve.

Suggestion

Based on the research results, it is recommended that school principals maintain and continue to improve the quality of their leadership role, especially in learning planning which is still the lowest indicator, by providing more intensive assistance to teachers in developing creative and innovative learning tools and adapting them to the characteristics and needs of early childhood.

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