

Forming The Leadership of School Students Through the Leadership of the Principal

Pembentukan Kepimpinan Pelajar Sekolah Melalui Kepimpinan Pengetua

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Abstract: Discipline in the classroom is a critical issue that teachers must address to ensure effective learning and academic success. Developing and sustaining student leadership in schools requires a holistic approach that includes structured mentorship programs, continuous leadership training, and a supportive atmosphere. Principals can facilitate this by implementing leadership academies and peer leadership programs, as well as by incorporating leadership training into the curriculum through project-based or service learning. Creating student councils and promoting student initiative are also essential components. Additionally, integrating real-world leadership experiences through partnerships with external organizations significantly enhances students' leadership skills. These strategies must be sustainable and embedded into the school's strategic plan and culture, ensuring a lasting impact on students' leadership development. Research and best practices indicate that for these strategies to be effective, they must be incorporated into the institution's strategic planning process. This comprehensive approach ensures that leadership training is not a one-time event but a continuous process, shaping students' capacities for leading others. By embedding leadership development into the core fabric of the school's operations, principals foster the growth of well-rounded individuals prepared to take on leadership roles both within and beyond the school environment. This method not only develops future leaders but also contributes to a school culture that values and nurtures student leadership, ultimately benefiting society at large.

Keyword: Student Leadership, Mentorship Programs, Leadership Training, Extracurricular Activities, Sustainable Leadership Development

Abstrak: Disiplin di dalam bilik darjah adalah isu kritikal yang perlu ditangani oleh guru untuk memastikan pembelajaran yang berkesan dan kejayaan akademik. Pembangunan dan pemerkasaan kepimpinan pelajar di sekolah memerlukan pendekatan holistik yang merangkumi program bimbingan yang teratur, latihan kepimpinan yang berterusan, serta suasana yang menyokong. Para pengetua boleh memainkan peranan penting dengan melaksanakan akademi kepimpinan dan program kepimpinan rakan sebaya, serta mengintegrasikan latihan kepimpinan ke dalam kurikulum melalui pembelajaran berasaskan projek atau perkhidmatan. Penubuhan majlis pelajar dan galakan inisiatif pelajar juga merupakan komponen penting. Selain itu, integrasi pengalaman kepimpinan dunia sebenar melalui

kerjasama dengan organisasi luar mampu meningkatkan kemahiran kepimpinan pelajar secara signifikan. Strategi-strategi ini perlu mampan dan disepadukan dalam rancangan strategik serta budaya sekolah, bagi memastikan impak jangka panjang terhadap pembangunan kepimpinan pelajar. Kajian dan amalan terbaik menunjukkan bahawa untuk strategi ini berkesan, ia mesti dimasukkan ke dalam proses perancangan strategik institusi. Pendekatan komprehensif ini memastikan bahawa latihan kepimpinan bukan acara sekali sahaja tetapi proses berterusan, membentuk kapasiti pelajar untuk memimpin orang lain. Penyepaduan pembangunan kepimpinan ke dalam operasi teras sekolah, pengetua dapat memupuk pertumbuhan individu yang seimbang dan bersedia untuk memikul tanggungjawab kepimpinan di dalam dan luar persekitaran sekolah. Pendekatan ini bukan sahaja membangunkan pemimpin masa depan tetapi juga menyumbang kepada budaya sekolah yang menghargai dan menyokong kepimpinan pelajar, sekali gus memberi manfaat kepada masyarakat secara keseluruhan.

Kata kunci: Kepimpinan Pelajar, Program Bimbingan, Latihan Kepimpinan, Aktiviti Kokurikulum, Pembangunan Kepimpinan Mampan

Introduction

Developing leadership among school students is an essential aspect of holistic education, closely tied to the role of the principal in guiding and shaping the learning environment (Bafadal et al., 2020). The principal's involvement is critical in creating the conditions necessary for effective leadership development, achieved through exemplary modeling and the implementation of structured programs. These programs may include leadership courses embedded in the curriculum and active encouragement for students to participate in co-curricular activities, fostering skills such as communication, teamwork, and critical thinking (Lin et al., 2016). Despite these initiatives, challenges such as resource limitations and varying student engagement and motivation levels still need to be overcome. Addressing these challenges requires strategic planning and innovative approaches emphasizing the principal's pivotal role in cultivating an atmosphere conducive to leadership growth. Literature underscores that the principal's leadership significantly influences this process, mainly through their ability to align personal and organizational values and maintain consistent, ethical behavior. This alignment not only enhances the overall disciplinary climate of the school but also fosters a supportive environment for leadership development (ŞENOL & Lesinger, 2018). By adopting a holistic and sustainable approach to leadership training, schools can effectively nurture future leaders equipped to navigate modern society's complexities. The principal's leadership, therefore, serves as the cornerstone in establishing a culture of growth, discipline, and empowerment, ensuring that leadership development becomes an integral and continuous part of the school ecosystem (Akinbode & Shuhumi, 2018).

Research Objective

There are two objectives in this study.

1. To investigate the impact of principal leadership styles on the development of student leadership qualities.
2. To evaluate the effectiveness of school-based leadership programs and strategies implemented by principals.

Significance of The Study

The significance of this study lies in its potential to significantly enhance the understanding and practices of educational leadership, particularly in the context of shaping student leadership through the pivotal role of the principal. By investigating the impact of various principal leadership styles, the study aims to uncover the nuanced ways in which leadership approaches influence student outcomes and school culture. Evaluating the effectiveness of school-based leadership programs is another critical aspect, as it provides a comprehensive assessment of how these programs can be optimized to serve students better. This research is poised to offer valuable insights that can directly inform policy-making and strategic planning within schools. By identifying best practices and highlighting successful strategies, the study can guide principals in adopting leadership styles and programs that foster a supportive and empowering environment for student leaders. Moreover, the findings can aid in the development of targeted professional development for principals, ensuring they are equipped with the skills and knowledge necessary to cultivate effective student leadership. Ultimately, the study aims to contribute to a broader understanding of how educational leadership can be leveraged to develop the next generation of leaders, thereby enhancing both individual student success and the overall effectiveness of educational institutions.

Methodology Framework

This conceptual paper adopts a mixed-methods framework as a theoretical lens to explore the role of principal leadership in shaping student leadership. By integrating quantitative and qualitative perspectives, this approach provides a comprehensive framework for understanding school leadership development processes. The quantitative perspective assesses measurable outcomes such as student engagement, participation in leadership roles, and program effectiveness. It emphasizes the importance of surveys and performance metrics to capture trends and correlations between principal leadership styles and student leadership development (Robinson et al., 2008; Day et al., 2016).

From a qualitative standpoint, this paper conceptualizes leadership development through the nuanced insights of principals, teachers, and student leaders. The paper draws on theoretical constructs from interviews, focus group discussions, and observations documented in existing literature (Harris, 2013; Spillane & Diamond, 2015). These qualitative elements highlight the relational and contextual factors that underpin leadership programs and their effectiveness. Themes such as the role of transformational leadership, mentorship, and the influence of school culture are explored to provide depth to the discussion (Kouzes & Posner, 2017).

By integrating these perspectives, this conceptual framework argues for the triangulation of quantitative data (to establish general trends) and qualitative insights (to explain underlying mechanisms) as an ideal method for studying principal leadership and its impact on student leadership. Theoretical integration supports the claim that principal leadership is multifaceted, requiring measurable outcomes and contextual understanding for meaningful analysis (Leithwood et al., 2020; Bush & Glover, 2014). This conceptual approach provides a foundation for future empirical studies and policy discussions on enhancing leadership in educational settings.

Literature Review

Miles of literature have been written on principals' involvement in the development of students as leaders, and the importance of their contributions must be addressed in the achievement of students. School principals play a critical role in nurturing leadership, proactively seizing the role, and being strong role models that shape the school's culture (Leithwood et al., 2020). Not limited to tasks that pertain to paperwork and other organizational processes, they are involved in major decision-making processes and interpersonal interactions that promote creating a supportive environment for students who take on leadership roles.

One of the principal's key roles is to implement and support leadership training programs within the school. Establishing leadership academies provides students with structured opportunities to develop essential skills such as communication, problem-solving, and decision-making (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). Principals can also champion

peer leadership programs where senior students mentor juniors, fostering a culture of guidance and responsibility (Hattie, 2009). These initiatives enhance students' leadership capabilities and contribute to a supportive school environment where leadership is valued and encouraged.

Principals also play a crucial role in integrating leadership training into the school curriculum. They can advocate for dedicated leadership courses and ensure that leadership components are embedded across various subjects. For instance, incorporating project-based learning (PBL) in subjects like science and social studies allows students to engage in long-term projects requiring planning, teamwork, and presentation, enhancing their leadership skills (Kokotsaki et al., 2016). Additionally, principals can facilitate service-learning projects that integrate community service with classroom instruction, providing students with real-world leadership experiences that enhance their civic responsibility and problem-solving skills (Billig, 2002).

Further, principals are extensively involved in supporting activities such as sports, music, theatre, clubs, and any student organization that enhances leadership. Curricula activities include group support such as clubs, societies, and sports teams, and student government offers opportunities for leadership with the chance to develop specific skills (Eccles & Barber, 1999). Engagement in these activities has been associated with increased leadership skills and mastery, which implies that students' optimal development is multi-faceted. Another way this paper formulated is that the support and encouragement of leadership conferences and camps given to students also afford them intense leadership training and networking, thus complementing the lessons learned from the principals (Smith et al., 2018). In these various ways, principals play a massive part in the leadership mentoring process of students, and this helps shape their leadership capacity in their future endeavours.

Principal Leadership Styles and Student Leadership

Transformational leadership is a style characterized by inspiring and motivating students and staff to achieve their full potential. Principals who adopt this approach focus on creating a vision for the school, fostering an inclusive and supportive environment, and encouraging innovation and creativity. Research by Day, Gu, and Sammons (2016) highlights the significant impact transformational leadership can have on student leadership development. Their study indicates that such leadership practices not only improve academic performance but also enhance students' leadership skills by fostering a supportive and engaging school climate. Transformational leaders build strong relationships with their students and staff, promoting a sense of community and shared purpose, which is crucial for the holistic development of student leaders.

In contrast, transactional leadership focuses on routine supervision and performance-related rewards and punishments. This leadership style is more concerned with maintaining order and ensuring compliance with established rules and procedures. While it can be effective in managing day-to-day operations and maintaining discipline, it is generally less effective in fostering leadership qualities among students. Bush and Glover (2014) suggest that while transactional leadership can maintain order and discipline, it lacks the inspirational and motivational elements necessary for nurturing student leaders. Students under transactional leadership may not feel as empowered or encouraged to take the initiative, which is essential for developing strong leadership skills.

The differing impacts of transformational and transactional leadership on students are significant. Transformational leadership tends to create a positive and inclusive school climate where students feel valued and motivated to participate in leadership roles. This environment encourages students to take initiative, collaborate with peers, and develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills. On the other hand, the transactional approach may stifle creativity and limit opportunities for students to engage in leadership activities. The emphasis on compliance and performance can lead to a more rigid and less supportive atmosphere, where students are less likely to feel encouraged to step into leadership roles (Dong, 2023).

The implications of these findings for policy-making and strategic planning in schools are profound. Educational

leaders and policymakers should promote transformational leadership practices among principals to enhance student leadership development. Professional development programs for principals could focus on building skills related to transformational leadership, such as vision-setting, relationship-building, and fostering a positive school climate. Additionally, schools could implement structured mentorship programs and leadership training initiatives that align with transformational leadership principles. By prioritizing these practices, schools can create environments that not only support academic success but also cultivate the next generation of leaders (Heenan et al., 2023).

Effective Programs and Strategies

Effective programs and strategies for developing student leadership often involve a blend of curricular and extracurricular activities. Schools that integrate leadership training into their curricula see a more holistic development of student leaders. For instance, the Leadership Development Program (LDP) implemented in various schools has successfully enhanced students' leadership competencies through structured modules and practical applications (Robinson et al., 2008).

Extracurricular activities, such as student councils, clubs, and sports teams, also play a crucial role in leadership development. These activities provide students with opportunities to practice leadership skills in real-world settings. According to Spillane and Diamond (2015), participation in extracurricular activities helps students develop critical skills such as teamwork, communication, and problem-solving, which are essential for effective leadership.

Challenges and Solutions

Nevertheless, the research identifies the following challenges in implementing student leadership through principal-led initiatives. Some difficulties include the scarcity of resources, some students' inactivity, and the necessity to assess a program's effectiveness frequently. Solving these problems needs the implementation of new approaches and effective planning.

One practical step is to create a culture that requires teachers and students to be involved in leadership development activities at the school. According to Robinson et al. (2018), leadership is specifically distributed or fragmented across staff and students, so everybody will have to be a part of the solution.

Furthermore, procedures for continuous professional development of principals should also be in place. Effective professional development can be informative and help principal candidates acquire tools to address these obstacles and thus become effective promoters of student' leadership (Harris, 2013).

Research Findings

The study highlights that principals' leadership is crucial in shaping student leadership qualities. Transformational leadership, characterized by vision, inspiration, and a student-centred approach, fosters a school culture that supports student leadership development. Distributed leadership further enhances this by involving students in collaborative decision-making. Initiatives like leadership development programs, service-learning projects, and student councils have improved students' communication, confidence, and problem-solving skills. Principals who serve as role models, support project-based learning and cultivate positive relationships with students significantly contribute to nurturing ethical and innovative student leaders, ensuring sustainable leadership development within the school environment.

The Role of Principals in Shaping Student Leadership Qualities

In this research, leadership practised by principals is considered one of the significant factors in the overall climate in schools and determines the manipulation of student leadership. The studies have also established that transformational leadership is quite efficient in schools. Transformational leadership entails the head's capacity to influence the employees and promote change for the better (Leithwood et al., 2020). These principles involve vision, inspiration, and a student-centred approach that prepares students to be leaders with characteristics that include critical thinking, understanding, and perseverance.

Transactional leadership is more concerned with daily supervision and using rewards and punishments based on employees' performance. However, this style can guarantee staff stability and compliance and is not valuable for developing leadership from within the pupils. Bush and Glover (2014) stated that for transactional leadership to be effective, it requires the visionary aspect necessary to mobilize the students into leadership positions and gain total leadership capacity.

Distributed leadership is another style gaining attention. It emphasizes the distribution of leadership roles across various school community members, including teachers and students. This approach promotes a collaborative culture where students are given more opportunities to participate in decision-making, enhancing their leadership skills (Harris, 2013).

Numerous case studies illustrate how principals can successfully lead initiatives that promote student leadership. One notable example is the implementation of the Leadership Development Program (LDP) in various schools. This program integrates leadership training into the curriculum, including leadership workshops, mentorship programs, and student-led projects. A study by Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe (2008) found that schools implementing the LDP reported significant improvements in students' leadership skills, including better communication, increased confidence, and enhanced problem-solving abilities.

Another successful initiative is the establishment of student councils and leadership teams, where students are given real responsibilities and a platform to voice their opinions. For instance, a case study of a high school in California showed that involving students in the decision-making process led to increased engagement and ownership of their educational experience. The principal's role in this initiative was crucial, as they provided guidance, support, and resources to ensure the success of the student council (Spillane & Diamond, 2015).

Also, schools that engage in the sponsorship of service-learning projects benefit from the improved leadership traits of students. It incorporates service-learning projects where students are involved in educational activities as a way of 'paying back' something to society, which makes them be on their own, working in groups, and at the same time exercising leadership. A study by Day, Gu, and Sammons (2016) showcased how principals can influence students' leadership development by giving them actual chances to lead and serve when they support and advocate for service-learning.

It established that the behaviour of the principal considerably affects student leadership. There is an agreement between variables related to transformational leadership behaviour – provision of vision and inspiration, active encouragement of supportive organisational climate, and coaching – and principals' perception of the positive leadership results regarding students. Leithwood et al. (2020) established that when principals are transformational, they foster school culture in ways that make the students be heard, take risks and celebrate success, thus training students to be leaders.

Therefore, another essential characteristic of the research is the relational aspect of principal behaviour. One of the present study findings revealed that principals who foster positive and trusting interpersonal relations with students enhance the students' leadership attributes in one way or another. According to Robinson et al. (2018), a self-organising leadership Environment results from students' impression that the school has a leadership-promoting environment fostered by the principal's support and accessibility.

Further, the consistency and integrity of principals' behaviour contribute much to this question. When principals lead by practice and always practice what they preach on ethical issues, they are special role models to emulate the students. This modelling behaviour aids in the enlightenment of the students, hence becoming ethical leaders, and promotes the same amongst them in leadership positions (Harris, 2013).

Programs and Strategies for Developing Student Leaders

Developing student leaders requires a comprehensive approach integrating targeted programs and strategic initiatives. Principals play a crucial role in this process by implementing various leadership training programs and service-learning projects. Leadership academies, for instance, offer intensive training on essential leadership skills such as communication, problem-solving, and decision-making, often under the mentorship of experienced faculty and community leaders (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). Additionally, peer leadership programs, where older students mentor their juniors, have effectively cultivated a culture of leadership and responsibility within the school (Hattie, 2009). Furthermore, service-learning projects embedded in the curriculum allow students to engage in community service, fostering leadership through real-world problem-solving and civic engagement (Billig, 2002).

Integrating leadership training into the school curriculum is another vital strategy. Schools can offer dedicated leadership courses that cover theories and practical applications, enabling students to explore various aspects of leadership in depth. Embedding leadership components into existing subjects, such as requiring presentations in language arts or studying historical leaders in social studies, helps students develop leadership skills organically (Thomas, 2000). Project-based learning (PBL) is particularly effective, as it involves students working on long-term projects that necessitate planning, execution, and presentation, enhancing their problem-solving abilities and leadership qualities (Kokotsaki et al., 2016).

Extracurricular activities and student organizations also play a significant role in fostering leadership skills. Participation in clubs, societies, and sports teams allows students to take on leadership roles and develop specific skills related to those activities. Research shows that involvement in extracurricular activities is closely linked to higher levels of leadership skills and academic performance (Eccles & Barber, 1999). Student government positions offer practical experience in governance and decision-making, while leadership conferences and camps provide intensive training and networking opportunities, often leading to significant personal and leadership development (Smith et al., 2018). These experiences collectively contribute to nurturing well-rounded student leaders capable of making meaningful contributions within and beyond their school communities.

Future Suggestions to Ensure Sustainability of Student Leadership

It is, therefore, essential to carry out adequate planning of the future of these students' leadership and support from the school administrators, teachers, and community members. Among the measures is a systematic approach to mentorship organisation when experienced student leaders' mentor a new generation of leaders. Such a relationship can assist a new leader in managing his/her responsibilities well, enabling efficient transfer of leadership skills and knowledge. Studies have shown that mentoring as a leadership development method improves students' organisational commitment and personalities (Ehrich et al., 2004). Moreover, leadership can be developed as a long-term process during the student's education, starting from early years to graduation, if leadership development programs are continuously established.

The other strategic approach is to ensure leadership training for some of its faculty forms part of the school's five-year development plan. In this sense, leadership development needs to be integrated into the school's vision and mission so that leadership becomes valued at all levels. This entails professional training of teachers to help them mould the students to become the best leaders in society. Integrating effective leadership training into the curriculum through project-based and service learning can also guarantee that leadership skills are continuously

being imparted step by step (Kokotsaki et al., 2016). Some ways schools may harness such technology include digital tools and platforms for student leadership training and other collaborative forums.

Therefore, to have continuous student leadership, the school needs to develop general policies to support students in developing innovative ideas. This can be done by involving the students, whereby their views are considered, such as through the student leaders, suggestion bins, and meetings with the school administration. Educational institutions that can support student projects and initiatives can foster students' leadership taking charge. In addition, schools ought to develop good relationships with other institutions, agencies in society, and companies so that students can have actual leadership experiences and opportunities. Community stakeholders can increase students' opportunities and learning perspectives, improving their leadership skills.

Discussion

This study underscores the pivotal role of principal leadership in shaping student leadership development within schools. Principals act as role models and facilitators, directly influencing the implementation of leadership programs, school culture, and student engagement in leadership roles. Transformational leadership emerges as an efficient approach characterized by a focus on vision, inclusivity, and motivation, aligning with the broader objectives of fostering student leadership. Principals adopting this style improve academic and organizational outcomes and create a supportive climate where students feel empowered to take the initiative and develop critical leadership competencies (Day et al., 2016).

Moreover, distributed leadership models offer an inclusive strategy, promoting collaboration among students, teachers, and staff. By involving students in decision-making processes and leadership tasks, schools encourage active participation and foster skills such as teamwork, problem-solving, and communication (Harris, 2013). This aligns with findings that distributed leadership significantly enhances students' leadership abilities, offering practical and relational learning experiences (Leithwood et al., 2020).

The research also highlights the effectiveness of integrated curricular and extracurricular strategies. Leadership academies, peer mentoring programs, and service-learning projects are among the impactful initiatives identified. These programs offer structured opportunities for students to develop essential skills in real-world settings, enhancing their readiness for future leadership roles. Furthermore, embedding leadership training into academic subjects and adopting project-based learning (PBL) provides continuous, context-based skill development. This holistic approach ensures that leadership training is not siloed but becomes an intrinsic part of the educational experience (Kokotsaki et al., 2016).

Challenges, such as resource limitations and inconsistent student engagement, were identified. Addressing these requires strategic solutions, including professional development for principals, fostering a leadership culture among all stakeholders, and leveraging community partnerships to provide additional resources and opportunities. The study emphasizes the importance of aligning school policies with leadership development goals, ensuring sustainability through structured mentorship and long-term planning (Robinson et al., 2008).

The findings support the assertion that transformational and distributed leadership styles are most effective in fostering student leadership. Recommendations include prioritizing professional development for principals, integrating leadership into school curricula, and promoting a participatory school culture. By implementing these strategies, schools can create environments that nurture confident, capable leaders prepared to address the complexities of modern society.

Conclusion

This study establishes that the sustainability of student leadership in schools relies on a comprehensive, strategic approach integrating mentorship, leadership training, and school culture development. Principals serve as catalysts in this process, shaping environments where leadership is nurtured through structured programs and continuous opportunities for practice. The findings underscore the critical role of transformational leadership in creating a supportive school climate conducive to leadership development, characterized by inclusivity, vision, and motivation. Distributed leadership further enhances these efforts by promoting collaboration and decision-making among students and staff, ensuring that leadership becomes a shared responsibility (Harris, 2013; Leithwood et al., 2020).

Critical strategies for sustaining leadership development include embedding leadership programs into the curriculum, such as through project-based learning (PBL) and service-learning projects, which offer practical, real-world experiences that foster independence and creativity (Kokotsaki et al., 2016). Additionally, extracurricular initiatives like student councils and peer mentoring programs are pivotal in providing platforms for skill development and fostering a culture of responsibility and engagement (Smith et al., 2018).

Significant hurdles include resource constraints, inconsistent participation, and the need for continuous evaluation. Addressing these requires systematic mentorship programs where experienced student leaders guide new ones, thus ensuring seamless leadership knowledge and skills transfer. Moreover, embedding leadership development into the school's strategic vision and integrating it into routine operations guarantees that leadership training is continuous rather than episodic (Ehrich et al., 2004; Kokotsaki et al., 2016).

The study recommends strengthening collaborations with external organizations, including NGOs, to give students broader exposure to leadership challenges and opportunities. Such partnerships enrich students' learning experiences, fostering a practical understanding of leadership dynamics in diverse contexts. Furthermore, professional development for principals and educators is critical to equipping them with the skills and knowledge necessary for nurturing leadership effectively (Robinson et al., 2018).

Ultimately, the sustainability of student leadership depends on institutionalizing leadership development within the school culture. A consistent focus on mentorship, innovative training programs, and fostering a participatory school environment ensures that schools prepare students for leadership roles and contribute to a broader societal impact by producing visionary and ethical leaders. This approach aligns leadership development with the strategic goals of educational institutions, embedding it as a cornerstone of holistic education.

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