



The Role of School Principals in Conflict Mediation and Policy Negotiation with Teachers at SMP Negeri 1 Parigi

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Abstract: This study aims to examine the role of school principals in conflict mediation and policy negotiations with teachers at SMP Negeri 1 Parigi. School principals play a key role in creating a harmonious and effective work environment in mediating conflicts and formulating policies that involve various parties, especially teachers. Conflicts that occur in schools can be interpersonal or structural, while negotiated policies involve various aspects of school management, such as curriculum, student assessment, and the division of teaching tasks. Through a qualitative approach, this study collects data through interviews with principals and teachers involved in conflict and policy negotiations. The results of the study show that the principal at SMP Negeri 1 Parigi acts as a wise mediator and facilitator by using a restorative and participatory approach. Transformational leadership implemented by school principals has succeeded in creating a more open and cooperative work environment, reducing conflict, and increasing teacher productivity. In addition, negotiation strategies based on open communication and compromise increase agreement and support for implemented policies. The impact of this mediation and negotiation is very positive, strengthening the relationship between teachers and principals, and improving the quality of policy implementation. This research makes an important contribution to the development of education management and provides guidance for school principals in improving leadership capacity and managing work relationships in schools.

Keywords: Principal, Conflict Mediation, Policy Negotiation

INTRODUCTION

Leadership in the context of education refers to the ability of an individual, in this case the principal, to direct, motivate, and manage school staff in order to achieve predetermined educational goals. Leadership can also be understood by considering a variety of variables, including personality traits, behaviors, capacity to influence others, ways of involvement, alliances of cooperation, administrative duties, and others' perceptions of the credibility of their influence. The principal as a school leader has the responsibility to create an environment that supports the academic and social development of students, as well as to create a conducive working environment for teachers and staff (Yunianto et al., 2024). School leadership involves aspects of



planning, organizing, directing, and supervising that are carried out with the aim of achieving optimal educational goals.

The principal plays an important role as a leader in creating a harmonious work environment in the school(Sholeh, Singh, et al., 2024). The principal is the highest operational leader of a school, so that in the implementation of school management, all school personnel are under the leadership of a principal. The position of principal is a heavy responsibility, because its role greatly affects the progress of the school. Therefore, the principal must be able to divide and determine tasks by forming work units, according to the size of the school he leads. The ability to select the right staff for each work unit is part of managerial duties that involve efficient management of human resources. The principal has an obligation to motivate each staff member to be willing and committed to carrying out their duties through administrative functions such as direction, coordination, and supervision(Wahyuningrum, 2008).

A conducive work environment is essential to support the achievement of educational goals, but the complexity of relationships between individuals in the school environment often creates conflicts that require the role of the principal as a mediator. In addition, school principals are also required to have good negotiation skills in formulating and implementing policies involving various parties, especially teachers(Megawati et al., 2021).

Conflicts in schools can arise as a result of differences of opinion, division of duties, or school policies that are considered unfair, while policy negotiations often face challenges in aligning individual interests with educational regulations. For example, differences of opinion about how to manage classes, the division of teaching hours, or the allocation of school resources. In addition, unclear division of tasks, imbalances in workloads between teachers, and differences in teaching approaches can also be sources of conflict(Nurdiana & Ulum, 2023). Interpersonal conflicts between teachers are also often triggered by poor communication problems or personality differences, which can disrupt professional relationships between them(Sholeh, 2023b). In principle, conflict is a new force that will be used as a school repair and renovation, so as to make the school better than before. Although these conflicts can be a force for improvement through school quality renovation, there will still be challenges from some members of the school. Conflicts that arise, whether intentional or not, must be understood by all parties involved in the world of education, such as principals, teachers, and staff, as part of a revolution, renovation, or



improvement of school stability. A "Vision" cannot be maintained for 5 years, especially when schools are facing the development of science and technology, so the direction of the "Vision" may change. This change in the direction of the vision creates a conflict, where some school members agree, while others do not, and some even consider the change unimportant, thus creating tension(Jamali, 2018).

In conflict mediation and policy negotiation, school principals need a flexible and adaptive leadership style. Transformational leadership styles are often considered effective in this context, as school principals who adopt this style are able to inspire and motivate teachers to collaborate in resolving conflicts and negotiating policies in a constructive way(Sholeh, 2023a). Transformational leadership focuses on developing open and communicative relationships, which is important in mediation and negotiation situations, where all parties must feel valued and heard(Sabarudin et al., 2024). In addition, participatory leadership is also needed, where the principal invites teachers to be actively involved in decision-making, provide views, and contribute to solving problems that arise in the school(Sari et al., 2023).

This research is very important to carry out because in practice, school principals are often faced with various challenges in creating a conducive school environment, both in academic and social aspects. Conflicts that arise between teachers or between teachers and principals can affect the overall school climate, while effective policy negotiations are essential to create a balance between the interests of various parties. Therefore, the role of school principals as mediators in conflicts and negotiators in policies is very important to support the achievement of optimal educational goals. This research is also relevant to overcome the existing knowledge gap regarding how school principals manage conflicts and conduct negotiations in the context of junior high schools, especially in SMP Negeri 1 Parigi.

In previous studies, although there have been studies on the importance of the role of school principals in conflict mediation and policy negotiations, most studies still focus more on aspects of leadership in general or on the larger education sector. For example, research by Irfan Firmansyah Batubara (2024) and Akmal Al-Hasyimy (2024) provides insight into the importance of principal leadership in conflict mediation and policy implementation, but is still limited to conceptual analysis and not too in-depth in the specific context of a particular school. This research will fill this gap by examining more deeply the way the principal at SMP Negeri 1 Parigi handles



conflicts and policy negotiations, as well as how the policy is received by teachers. This makes a more profound practical contribution to the development of educational management.

The contribution of this research to the development of science is to provide a clearer understanding of the role of school principals in mediating conflicts and negotiating policies at the junior high school level. This research is expected to enrich the theory of educational leadership by adding insights into effective leadership styles in the context of conflict and policy in schools, as well as providing practical references for school principals in improving their mediation and negotiation skills. The findings of this study are also expected to help develop better education policies and have a positive impact on the teacher's work climate and overall school performance.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach to examine the role of school principals in conflict mediation and policy negotiation with teachers at SMP Negeri 1 Parigi. Data were obtained through direct interviews with principals and several teachers involved in the mediation and negotiation process (Rukminingsih et al., 2020). The research subjects consist of school principals as decision-makers and teachers involved in conflict or policy negotiations. The data collection technique was carried out with semi-structured interviews, which aimed to explore the experiences, views, and role of school principals in resolving conflicts and negotiating policies with teachers (Arikunto, 2010). The data obtained was analyzed using thematic analysis, which included data reduction by filtering relevant information, grouping data based on key themes such as mediation, conflict, and policy, and presenting data in the form of narratives to facilitate understanding. Through this approach, the research aims to provide a clear picture of the dynamics of the role of school principals in conflict mediation and policy negotiation at SMP Negeri 1 Parigi.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Role of School Principals in Conflict Mediation

Conflicts that occur at SMP Negeri 1 Parigi can be divided into two main types, namely interpersonal conflicts and structural conflicts. Interpersonal conflicts usually occur between



fellow teachers, or between teachers and school principals, which are often triggered by differences of opinion in carrying out certain tasks or implementing certain policies. For example, conflicts related to the division of teaching hours, disagreements regarding learning methods, or difficulties in carrying out administrative tasks. Structural conflicts, on the other hand, are related to policies set by local or central governments that affect school governance, such as curriculum changes, budget allocation arrangements, or classroom arrangement policies that are felt to be unfair by some parties.

To resolve these conflicts, the principal acts as a mediator and facilitator. In this case, the principal not only functions as a mediator, but also as a leader who is able to direct the mediation process wisely. One of the techniques used is the restorative approach, which focuses on restoring relations between parties to the conflict through open dialogue. The principal holds special meetings, either between disputing individuals or collectively in certain meetings, to explore the root of the problem and find a solution that is acceptable to all parties (Insan et al., 2024). The principal also seeks to suggest alternative solutions that accommodate mutual interests, such as providing training or workshops to improve communication skills between teachers and more open management.

Principals who successfully resolve interpersonal conflicts among teachers often use an approach based on restorative justice, where they emphasize the importance of mutual understanding and mutual understanding between individuals involved in conflict. This approach has proven effective in reducing tensions and preventing greater conflicts in the future (Rahmadani, 2024). The principal at SMP Negeri 1 Parigi uses several approaches to facilitate conflict resolution at school. One of the main approaches is a participatory approach that involves all parties involved in the problem-solving process. The principal invites teachers to be actively involved in discussions and provide opinions on possible solutions. School principals also adopt a transformational leadership approach, which is by inspiring and motivating teachers to look at problems from a broader perspective and find solutions that can improve the collective performance of the school.

Principals who have a transformational leadership style are able to create a more open and cooperative work environment, which in turn will reduce the occurrence of conflict. This



leadership style motivates teachers to be more proactive in solving problems and finding solutions together (Kusweri, 2016).

Policy Negotiation Strategies by Principals

The policies that are often negotiated between principals and teachers at SMP Negeri 1 Parigi cover various aspects related to school management, including curriculum policies, student assessments, and the division of teaching tasks. One of the policies that is often a point of negotiation is the timing and schedule of learning. Sometimes, teachers feel that the set schedule does not fit their workload, or there is a mismatch between the teaching policy and the needs of the students. In this case, the principal conducts negotiations to create a more flexible schedule and in accordance with the teacher's capacity. In addition, policies related to the division of teaching tasks are also often a topic of negotiation. Some teachers may feel that their teaching load is unbalanced, or they prefer to teach certain subjects that are more in line with their expertise. The principal tries to reach an agreement that is acceptable to all parties without harming each other.

The main challenges that arise in policy negotiations are the differences in interests between principals and teachers, as well as the limited resources available in schools (Marlina et al., 2023). For example, a policy that requires teachers to attend certain trainings may be rejected for reasons of time or cost. In addition, the distribution of budgets for school facilities is often a problem, because limited funds cannot cover all school needs (Azah et al., 2024). To overcome this challenge, the principal takes a compromise approach (Syafi'i & Ikwandi, 2023). The principal opens up space for discussion and asks for input from teachers to find solutions that can minimize dissatisfaction. In terms of budget policy, school principals also seek to find alternative sources of funding, such as fundraising from students' parents or collaborating with other parties outside the school (Maesyaroh, 2024). Negotiation strategies that prioritize open, needs-based communication will be more effective in addressing these challenges. In addition, the involvement of teachers in decision-making has also been proven to increase agreement and support for the policies implemented (Aulia et al., 2024).

The Impact of Mediation and Negotiation on the School Environment

The impact of mediation and negotiation carried out by the principal on the relationship between teachers and school leaders is very significant. Principals who successfully resolve conflicts and negotiate policies wisely can create a more harmonious working atmosphere and



increase trust between teachers and principals(Mahesa & Hadijah, 2024). Success in mediating internal conflicts in schools can strengthen interpersonal relationships among school members, which will ultimately contribute to a more positive work climate(Sholeh, et al., 2024). This improvement in relationships also has an impact on more effective communication between teachers and principals. Open communication makes it easier to deliver new policies and makes policy implementation more efficient. Teachers feel more valued because the principal actively listens to their opinions and suggestions in the decision-making process(Khovivah et al., 2024).

One of the main impacts of successful negotiations is a higher rate of success in policy implementation. After being involved in the negotiation process, teachers tend to be more receptive to the policies implemented, because they feel they have a role in decision-making. For example, policies related to student grading or lesson hour arrangements that were previously debated, once well negotiated, can be implemented more smoothly. Participation in policy negotiations can increase teachers' commitment to the successful implementation of these policies. Teachers feel more responsible and have involvement in achieving common goals(Aulia, 2024). In the case of SMP Negeri 1 Parigi, this is evidenced by the increase in teacher performance in the implementation of the new curriculum and changes in the evaluation system. Overall, effective mediation and policy negotiations involving all parties can have a very positive impact on the relationship between teachers and principals, as well as increase the effectiveness of policies implemented in schools. The success of the principal in resolving conflicts and negotiating constructively has been proven to improve the quality of the work environment, which leads to an improvement in the quality of education at the school.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that school principals have a very important role in conflict mediation and policy negotiation at SMP Negeri 1 Parigi. In handling conflicts, both interpersonal and structural, the principal acts as a wise mediator and is able to use a restorative and participatory approach to solve problems. With a transformational leadership approach, principals can create a more open and cooperative work atmosphere, which reduces conflict and increases teacher productivity.



In addition, in policy negotiations, the principal successfully navigates the differences of interests between related parties, by prioritizing open communication and finding mutually beneficial solutions. A negotiation process involving teachers in decision-making can strengthen agreement and support for policies, as well as improve more effective policy implementation in schools.

The impact of this mediation and negotiation is very positive on the working relationship in the school, creating a harmonious atmosphere, improving communication, and strengthening teachers' commitment to the policies implemented. The success of the principal in carrying out these two roles contributes to the creation of a better school environment, which in turn can improve the quality of education provided to students. Therefore, this research makes an important contribution to the development of education management, as well as providing guidance for school principals to strengthen leadership capacity and management of working relationships in schools.

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