Headmaster's Leadership in Solving Problems at Islamic Elementary School (SDI) Hikmatul Fadhillah Medan

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Abstract

The school headmaster is at the forefront in cooperating to build human relation at school as well as its surrounding environment. Harmonious relation should be planned and implemented by the school headmaster as the top leader. The school headmaster is a leader, and a teacher is a colleague and a friend at work. In school management, headmaster-teacher relation is a mutual relation in making efforts to achieve a better quality of school management. This article uses naturalistic phenomenological approach by studying events in certain situations. The article discusses leadership management of the school's headmaster who used human relation approach in solving problems. The headmaster also analyses some important problem-solving methods at the school by using a guided method towards human relation values, religions, personality, cross-check of facts, friendship, and polite conversation with lean voice.

Keywords: *Leadership Management, Headmaster's Leadership, Problem-Solving, Psychology*

Abstrak

Kepala sekolah berada di garis terdepan untuk mengkoordinasikan upaya membangun human relationship di lingkungan sekolah maupun dengan lingkungan sekitar sekolah. Hubungan harmonis harus dirancang dan dilaksanakan oleh kepala sekolah sebagai top leader. Kepala sekolah adalah pemimpin dan guru adalah rekan dan sahabat kerja. Dalam pola manajemen sekolah hubungan antar kepala sekolah dan guru adalah partner saling melengkapi dalam penataan sekolah yang lebih bermutu dan berkualitas. Artikel ini menggunakan pendekatan fenomenologi naturalistis dengan studi peristiwa saat situasi tertentu. Lokasi penelitian adalah SDI Hikmatul Fadhillah Medan. Artikel membahas tentang manajemen kepemimpinan kepala SDI Hikmatul Fadhillah Medan yang menggunakan human relationship pada pemecahan masalah

dan menganalisis cara memecahkan masalah penting di lingkungan SDI Hikmatul Fadhillah Medan dengan menggunakan metode terarah, pada nilai-nilai human relationship, agamis, personal, kros-cek fakta, persahabatan atau pertemanan, dan tutur sopan dengan suara lembut.

Kata Kunci: *Manajemen Kepemimpinan, Kepemimpinan Kepala Sekolah, Problem Solving, Psikologi*

Introduction

The current educational world changes in improving educational quality. An institution leadership needs to start from the basic educational level for developing in advance level. The children's character takes through various concepts, which determine their future educational steps, hence resulting in education participants ready to deal with social life and to bring Indonesia towards a better future.

A leader has a significant and strategic role in the forefront to achieve success in running the education. The activities at school are human-to-human relation and interactions between the school elements to achieve their common goals.[1] At school, inharmonious relation frequently occurs between individuals due to either lack of proper communication between the individuals or different individual interests. A harmonious relation should be planned and executed by the headmaster as the top leader for the sake of successful leadership.[2]

Leading people with various characters obliges school headmasters to understand any problem occurring under their leadership. Conflicts and problems are dynamic changes in moving an Islamic educational institution forward. Islamic Educational Institution (LPI) requires high coordination levels, especially regarding human relationships. The headmaster's success reflects the success of LPI in building its human relation mainly when solving problems. At the highest operational level, the headmaster is always at the forefront in cooperating to construct better relations between school components.

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[1] Wahyudi, *Kepemimpinan Kapala Sekolah Dalam Organisasi Pembelajar (Learning Organization).* (Bandung: Alfabeta, 2009), hlm. 71.

[2] *Ibid.*, hlm. 72.

Society's trust in an Islamic educational institution is currently minimal. Most LPI especially the private ones are not able to develop, and eventually could not survive. Many of the private LPI have conflicts with their foundation party or between their individual's internal conflicts. The main reason is the headmaster's failure to build better personal relationships either teachers, students, staffs, or students' parents. The change is the diversity in personal race, religions, and social status form their characters. However, despite the decline in society's trust in LPI, SDI Hikmatul Fadhillah Medan was successful to attract society's attention, not only those who are surrounding the LPI.

The Islamic Elementary School (SDI) Hikmatul Fadhillah was selected because the school had implemented harmonious relations among the school components and with outsiders such as students' parents and the surrounding society. The implementation of good human relation sees in their problem-solving activities led by the headmaster. As a result, the Islamic school was able to minimize problems and conflicts at the school, hence eventually improving the school reputation.

According to the discussion with the headmaster of SDI Hikmatul Fadhillah Medan, the school he leads values rewards to its people, especially when dealing with problems. The private school components were always involved in problem-solving based on their capacity although eventually the conclusion was made by the headmaster after receiving suggestions from the people he leads. The management school leader is the researcher value of observes during the visits to the school.

According to the observation at SDI Hikmatul Fadhillah, the headmaster's working table put at the same room with member teacher, which was gapped only by the trophy-displaying cupboard. The researcher found out that the reason to have a standard room is to have togetherness with the school staff, expecting a harmonious relationship with the school components.

The closeness of the headmaster with the foundation and the school staffs was preserved and run professionally. According to the interview with the headmaster, for the sake of the school's improvement, the foundation party had not intervened any of the headmaster's decisions for about 12 years

of his leadership. He had been an agreement as to be a requirement and proposed by the previous headmaster, Zulyasari.

Another uniqueness of SDI Hikmatul Fadhillah is that the school is under an Islamic education foundation. The school is far from Medan city. It is also located right in the middle of a Christian-majority area with teachers and staffs from various tribes, religions, and races. Therefore, it demands a robust and skillful leader who embraces school elements and involves them when solving problems and eventually moves the school forward beyond the achievement of the Christian schools, whose number is far more than Islamic schools in Medan.

This article is expected to contribute to scientific development in general and particularly to the development of Islamic educational management. This articles meticulously elaborates the leadership of school headmaster's leadership in creating proper human relation in solving problems.

There has been a minimal number of studies conducted by either researchers or practitioners about headmaster's role in creating harmonious human relation in an Islamic educational institution. Husaini Usman[3] in his research, "Education is welcoming free trade," found that leaders in a vocational school must have specific technical skills. The study explained that the managerial skills of its headmaster largely determine the school's success. The leadership role in a workgroup or an organization has an effect in achieving the standard targets, which is why having a reliable, skillful headmaster is very crucial. Therefore, Husaini's finding is different from the writer's finding. According to Husaini's research, a headmaster needs special technical skills. Meanwhile, the writer will have a look more in-depth at social skill requirement, which is to improve human relations.

Suyanto[4] in his research, "Transformational leadership style of an elementary school headmaster and teachers' satisfaction," found that the majority of headmasters have a high level of transformational leadership. The transformational leadership style of an elementary school headmaster

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[3]   Husaini Usman and Husaini Usman, "Permasalahan Pendidikan Menyongsong Pasar Bebas," *Jurnal Cakrawala Pendidikan* 1, no. 1 (May 12, 2016), doi:10.21831/cp.v1i1.9217.

[4]   Suyanto, "Pendidikan Menyongsong Pasar Bebas" (Universitas Negeri Malang, 2003).

positively correlated with teachers' satisfaction. In addition, headmasters' sex did not influence this correlation. The headmaster transformational leadership is benchmarking of the teacher duty. However, although both studies are about leadership roles, the writer's focus is different Suyanto's research.

Sulthon says,[5] "Leadership by headmasters of school takes place for teacher staff involvement in decision making and organizational climate about teacher motivation. Sultan research is not only different regarding methods and variables, but also not comprehensively discuss headmasters' leadership roles in building human relationships such as to help solve problems.

None of the previous studies directly relate leadership and problem-solving in making good human relation. Therefore, this article is expected to enrich management on leadership concepts in cooperative mutual to human relationships.

Headmaster's Leadership Management at SDI Hikmatul Fadhillah Medan

The headmaster of SDI Hikmatul Fadhillah is one of the national high achieving headmasters representing North Sumatra and was given award by former Indonesia's President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono. This achievement was due to his creativity and innovation during his leadership, that moved the school forward to an outstanding Islamic school.

A Christian majority area that is a specific leadership change as the headmaster had to socialize with the surrounding society. As the headmaster understood this, he always involved the society in his leadership. Often the headmaster conducted a meeting once there was a problem and owed the society to be part of the problem-solving so that none of the party was disadvantaged.

The headmaster needs to be creative and innovative in his leadership, which is evident in his leadership. Despite being the top leader at the school, he avoided being a one-person show. School elements were always involved

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[5]   M Sulthon, "No Title" (Malang State University, 2005).

in giving inputs to the problems faced. Based on the data available at SDI SDI Hikmatul Fadhillah Medan, appreciation and rewards to subordinates were considered pivotal, especially when dealing with problems, of course, based on their capacity. However, eventually, the decision would be made by the headmaster.

The relationship of the headmaster of SDI Hikmatul Fadhillah Medan with personal official takes professionally saving on the multicultural area. For 12 years of his leadership, he has not followed regarding solving problems by the foundation in order for the school to keep moving forward. The commitment takes an agreement between the foundation and the headmaster during his appointment to be the headmaster.

Theoretically, in order to solve problems effectively and efficiently, a leader has to manage the problems and to synchronize the action. According to Wiles, two methods does a headmaster in solving problems, general[6] and specific problem-solving methods. [7] After implementing these two, the headmaster would then be able to find ways to prevent problems among the teachers or staffs.

The headmaster of SDI Hikmatul Fadhillah Medan used the general problem-solving method in regular and incidental meetings if the problem relates to general problems. However, if the problem is individual, such as teachers or staffs, the headmaster will solve it by talking to them in private. The general problem is to avoid the spread of anyone's secret to the public or the other staffs. It intended to preserve comforts among his teacher staffs and to keep positive energy among them.

Every organization has problems. Problem-solving has to emphasize sustainable betterment in the workplace to prevent subsequent problems. In this case, there are two methods of solving problems with regards to sustainable betterment. There are Deming Cycle and Perry Johnson Method. This cycle consists of four main stages[8], which are constructing plans for the betterment plan, conducting the plan, evaluating the results, and performing

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[6]   Kimb Wiles, *Supervision for Better School* (New York: Englewood Cliffs. Prentice Hlml. Inc, 1961), hlm. 114–24.

[7]   *Ibid.*, hlm. 114–17.

[8]   Fandy Tjiptono and Diana, *Total Quality Management* (Yogyakarta: Penerbit Andi, 2003), hlm. 188.

act adjustment when needed. The problem-solving method by Perry Johnson in Goetsch and Davis [9] includes stages forming a problem-solving team, discussing lists of problems, limiting list of problems, defining the problems and choosing priority problems to be solved.

The headmaster of SDI Hikmatul Fadhillah Medan seemed to prefer the method from Perry Johnson. It was apparent through the data that the headmaster would form a team instead of doing it alone if the problem is a common problem. Then the headmaster would perform a meeting and discuss the problem. Limiting the problem scopes was conducted to focus on specific priority problems. Before choosing a problem, the former team would make priority lists to clarify the problems' urgency.

In addition to that, Gorton and Schneider stated that in order to empower the school's human resources, the headmaster's leadership relies on managerial skills. There are three managerial skills necessary for a headmaster, which are: conceptual skill,[10] human relation skill,[11] and technical skill.[12] These are needed to perform effective management. However, skill types vary depending on manager levels in the organization including a school.

Technical skill is essential in lower management levels, such as newly established educational institutions or those that just faded in fame. Conceptual skills do for developed, famous educational institutions, in which technical skill is not dominant. The higher the leadership position someone possesses the less demand for technical skills, but the higher the need for social human relation skills, which are always relevant in managerial levels.

Other than managerial skills, a headmaster's competence includes a social dimension that must acquire. The examples of networking skills are social participation and alertness to people, or other groups benefit the school.

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[9] David L. Goetsch and Stanley M. Davis, *Introduction to Total Quality : Quality, Productivity, Competitiveness* (Merrill, 1994), hlm. 232–40.

[10] "Conceptual Skill Is the Skill to Understand and Operate an Organization," n.d.

[11] "Human Relation Skill Is the Skill in Cooperating with, Motivating and Leading the People," n.d.

[12] Technical skill is the skill in utilizing knowledge, methods, techniques and facilities for certain tasks

Out of the above skills, data from various parties showed that the headmaster of SDI Hikmatul Fadhillah mostly utilized his human relation skills when performing his tasks and functions as a leader and a manager. It was evident from harmonious relation between the headmaster and surrounding communities. The data also show that conflicts rarely occurred the school where he leads.

The practice is in line with Mayo's theory cited from "Educational Management from an Islamic Perspective" by Rosnani Hasyim, known as human relationships as a reaction as well as revision from Taylor's leadership theory, which treats humans as a machine. Mayo argues that performing leadership is essential to pay attention to human feelings, and relations, not only on work techniques but also the methods. The Other argument of mayo is the center of power that takes at personal relations at the workplace and leadership functions is to help achieve teacher staff purpose cooperatively and to develop their personality.[13] SDI Hikmatul Fadhillah used this theory in solving problems. The headmaster regarded his subordinates as people worthy of respect.

Techniques in Solving Essential Problems at SDI Hikmatul Fadhillah Medan

In performing the duties, a leader would face various problems as life dynamics. During humans' life, problems, either severe or negligible, are inevitable. Once a problem is solved already, another would come. To effectively and efficiently solve a problem, a leader needs to integrate the problems and to adjust them with the solving methods.

It is vital for a headmaster to track the root of the problem faced by the teacher staffs to adjust the solving method to avoid further complications. For example, problems among the teachers and staffs at school frequently occur as a result of a failure in achieving needs.

The unmet necessity can be from school environment, homes and societies. Problems that could result in dissatisfaction of a teacher are, for example, the status, such as delayed position promotion, improper job

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[13] Rosnani Hashim, *Education Management From an Islamic Perspective*, 2012, hlm. 165.

placement resulting in emotional disturbance, inexistence of opportunity to develop, and injustice from the headmaster.

The data from SDI Hikmatul Fadhillah showed that simple problems include conflicts between individuals, health, economics, and sexual satisfaction, which are primarily physical and mental. Problems among the societies would be economics, social status, and metal pressure from neighbors. Dissatisfaction due to any reason could cause strange behavior on other occasions, which makes it difficult for the headmaster to help solve the problem.

Wiles defines some types of teachers who need helps for their problems. These include teachers with great laziness, discouragement, oldness, anti-democracy, and disagreement. According to Wiles, there are two problem-solving methods for a headmaster to tackle problems with the teachers and staffs: general and specific problem-solving methods.

The general method means that the problems close with scientific. The scientific approach includes finding the teachers details, finding proper steps to solve the problems, finding alternative problem-solving methods for the teachers, and determining the best proper problem-solving method.[14] The teacher must be motivated and behavioral symptoms, their reason for not fulfilling their intention or need, the period in which they start having the problems, and the source of the problem. The headmaster performs the analysis. Subsequently, a conclusion is required to prove the previous hypothesis before getting the data

Wiles illustrate laziness as a problem that uses specific methods. The solving method for this starts from observing the symptoms of a lazy teacher, such as willingness for unconditional wage improvement, ignorance towards course materials or curriculum updates, always rushing to leave the school mockeries, loneliness and smokes, insisting higher honorarium salary, using similar teaching materials over the years, uncooperative behavior, and ignorance to check students' work. The observation on the causes of dissatisfaction is such as to ignorance on appreciation and rewards, to failure

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[14]   Wiles, *Supervision for Better School*, hlm. 114–24.

and to get higher positions, too much attention on non-school matters, to distrust towards the leader.[15]

According to the data on SDI Hikmatul Fadhillah, its headmaster implemented similar ways to Wiles' regarding solving problems. The headmaster solved the problems with the help of the staffs to solve simple problems. The foundation party, as the school owner, would accompany the headmaster, who was directly involved in the problem-solving. However, sometimes, the foundation just received a report from the headmaster without having to involve.

The headmaster understood very well that leadership in an educational institution is about leading a group of people. Therefore, from this point of view, human relation skill is essential. Moreover, human relation skill refers to integrating people into a workplace circumstance, in which the staff can work together satisfied economic, psychologically, and society. In conclusion, human relations are the development of a productive, satisfying group effort.[16]

Human beings are the central point in human relations so that the teacher staffs are the centers of an organization. Therefore, they need from their humanity point of view. In this regard, a leader needs to identify the characters of the subordinates, which vary among individuals. A leader needs to adjust this variation with the leadership method. It inspired the headmaster of SDI Hikmatul Fadhillah Medan to determine methods to solve problems with human relation approach. The various methods in solving problems are expected to effectively target the problem, preventing the emergence of new issues and entirely tackling the problems.

The data showed that the headmaster of SDI Hikmatul Fadhillah took several steps in solving problems. The steps included: developing betterment plans, executing the plans, selecting the problems, delegating staffs for solving the chosen problems, forming a team for problem-solving, discussing the problems, limiting the problem list, evaluating the results, and conducting proper adjustment to the methods when needed.

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[15]   *Ibid.*, hlm. 114–17.
[16]   Keith Davis, *Human Relations at Work* (New York: Mc Graw hill book company, Inc., 1962), hlm. 4.

Based on the above discussion, there are generally two methods conducted by a headmaster. To solve strange or incidental problems, the headmaster uses face-to-face approach to the subordinates. Meanwhile, for more significant and general problems, the steps taken are pictured in the following image.
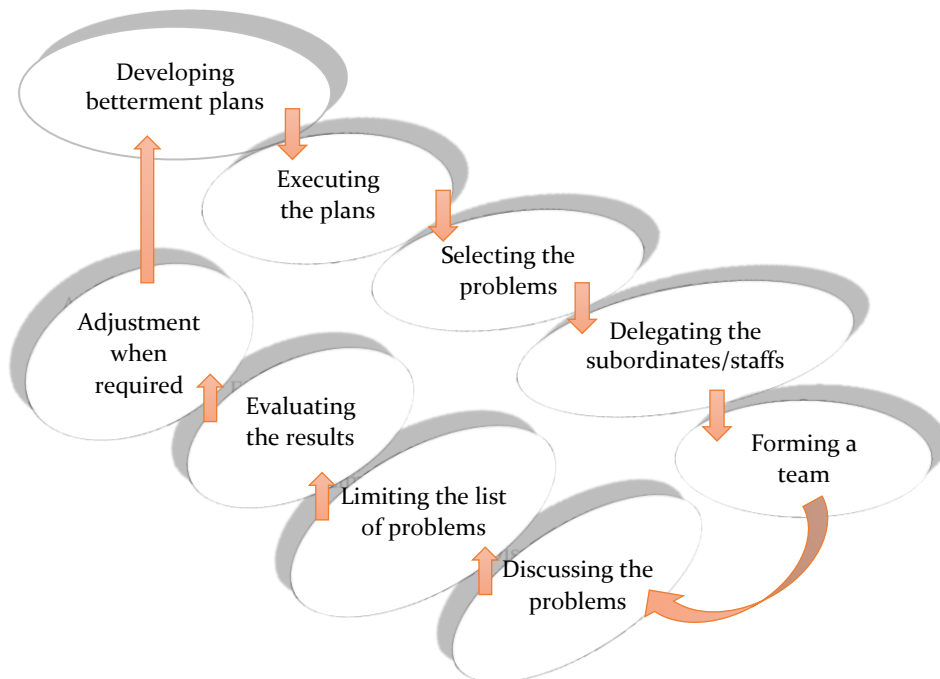
Figure 1. Methods of solving problems in building human relation at SDI Hikmatul Fadhillah Medan

When solving a problem, a leader expects positive changes. To make it real, as the top leader, a headmaster needs to plan for betterment, which is also required to make a change to the faced problem. It was implemented by the headmaster of SDI Hikmatul Fadhillah Medan by giving positive solutions for the betterment. Moreover, the headmaster involved teacher staffs in absorbing ideas they would share.

The subsequent step of the headmaster is to execute the decided plans. These plans must be applied gradually from sm-scale problems in a certain period till the bigger ones. The headmaster of SDI Hikmatul Fadhillah

Medan shared the plans he made with the teacher staffs using leaflets, expecting the best results and minimizing the emergence of a new problem.

When performing a leadership role, a leader will face various problems that could co-occur. However, a responsible headmaster in regard to the problems will always calm down and does not panic despite several simultaneously occurring problems.

The school's headmasters require team-forming when dealing with serious problems. Specific school problems cannot be solved individually but demand a group of people to have them solved more efficiently — an example of rewards that the headmaster of SDI Hikmatul Fadhillah Medan was to give the opportunities and freedom to the Teacher staffs so they could solve their problems both individually and collectively through the team. By forming the team, the headmaster was able to teach them about responsibility for their duties. Also, the team was formed to strengthen their friendship.

The best results will conduct a proper discussion on the problems. It allows the teacher staffs to share their thoughts about the problems. Moreover, team discussion can improve the cooperativeness of the teacher staff dealing with their everyday problems. The headmaster of SDI Hikmatul Fadhillah Medan obliged himself and the Teacher staffs to perform discussion on the problem list. His purpose is to facilitate their opinions to be heard and to improve individual satisfaction in a problem-solving team.

problems must be solved. However, it is essential to select the highest priority problems, problems with the highest urgency level. It is what a leader must clarify before taking further steps. A leader cannot consider problems equally urgent. Each problem would have different solutions. The headmaster of SDI Hikmatul Fadhillah Medan selected the problems based on the group and type of the problems private and general. Meanwhile, to define the priority level of the problems, the headmaster classified based on the difficulty levels as difficult, medium, and comfortable. By selecting and prioritizing the problems, a headmaster would be able to effectively and efficiently solve the problems.

Facing various problems during leadership period, a leader also needs to give some limitation on each problem to avoid problem neglection. During his leadership period, the headmaster of SDI Hikmatul Fadhillah Medan

always limited the problems to ease making priority lists. This limitation is also essential to prevent the emergence of other problems that could negatively affect the school.

The last step important for a headmaster is to evaluate the achievement of the problem-solving process. It allows determining the success level from the efforts taken. It was also a must for the headmaster of SDI Hikmatul Fadhillah Medan that he intended not only to evaluate himself and his responsibility as a leader but also to detect any incorrect result. In performing the evaluation, the headmaster of SDI Hikmatul Fadhillah Medan always involved his subordinates, which he also aimed to prepare for future leaders.

Conclusion

From the above discussion, the leadership management of the headmaster of SDI Hikmatul Fadhillah Medan emphasizes human relations in leadership activities including problem-solving. The methods problem-solving at SDI Hikmatul Fadhillah Medan is the idea of managing school teaching-learning. The headmaster instructed the teacher staffs follows the participate in solving problems from the surroundings. The headmaster mostly involves teacher staffs to create betterment plans. The headmaster formed problem-solving teams show trust in teacher staffs. The headmaster does not intervene in the discussion conducted by the team in order to respect teacher staffs. The headmaster involves teacher staffs that is analyze the problems base on their capacity. The headmaster delegates the problem-solving task to teacher staffs. The headmaster prepares cadres for his teacher staffs to improve their skills. The headmaster involves teacher staffs in monitoring and evaluating the success of the problem-solving process.

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