

IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF PRIMARY EDUCATION (Social Capital and Leadership of Primary School Principal Perspective)

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Abstract

Education in Indonesia still has a number of problems related to education quality, inequality, and governance efficiency, accountability, and transparency. The problem of education quality was found at all levels of education institution, including at primary school. To overcome the problem at the primary schools, the Government of Indonesia implemented a variety of policies and strategies. Although a number of efforts to improve the quality have been done to date, the quality of primary schools haven't increased dramatically yet. It was because the efforts paid more attention to the technical approach (such as teacher training, curriculum development, infrastructure development) rather than socio-cultural approach to overcome the problem. One of the new perspectives to improve the quality of primary school is by using socio-cultural perspective in education, e.g. by utilization of social capital in school leadership. Social capital can be used by school principal and school stakeholders for improving the quality of primary school. It consists of five stages: developing school environment, developing workplace climate of school, building a shared vision and mission of school, developing networks, and developing norms.

Introduction

For several decades The Government of Indonesia (GOI) has paid more attention to education development, because it can be used as one of the vehicles for improving the quality of human resources. As pointed out in The National Medium Term Development Plan (*RPJMN*, 2010-2014) that education is one of the important priorities of development. The purpose is to increase of the education access and quality. However, education in Indonesia still has a number of problems related to education quality, inequality, and governance efficiency, accountability, and transparency.

The education quality problem is like an iceberg. A number of the quality problems were found at all levels of education institution. At the primary education for example, the problems cover student's learning outcomes, high repetition rate among students, teacher deployment, quality, & commitment to teach, school facilities, school management, and disparity of quality among schools.

To overcome the problem of education quality at the primary schools, the GOI implemented a variety of strategies, such as Student Active Learning (CBSA), PEQIP (Primary Education Quality Improvement Project), AJEL (Active Joyful and Effective Learning), School Based Management, curriculum development, in-service teacher training, and so on. Although a number of efforts to improve the quality have been done to date, the quality of primary schools haven't increased dramatically yet.

It was because the efforts paid more attention to the technical approach (such as teacher training, curriculum development, infrastructure development) rather than socio-cultural approach to overcome the problem. Therefore, more studies and efforts need to be conducted to improve the quality of primary schools. One of the new perspectives to improve the quality of primary school is by using socio-cultural perspective in education, e.g. by utilization of social capital in school leadership.

Discussion

As mentioned above that the disparity of quality among primary schools is one of the important issues in Indonesia. Here is an interesting example of the quality problem at primary school X in Malang Municipality.

Primary School X is a public primary school in Malang - Indonesia. It is located at the center of the city. In 2013 the school had 566 students, 37 teachers, and 17 school committee members. The students input of the school was good enough in terms of academic background, and socio-economic status of their parents. However, the quality of the school for several years ago was not good and tend to decrease (Suharjo, 2014). In 2007 the average scores of national examination of the students of Year Six was 88,69. The score was ranked the 16th at the city level. However, in 2008 the scores was 85,20 and was ranked the 30th at the level (BSNP, 2998; BNSP, 2009). Similarly, the workplace climate among the teachers was not supportive. There were internal conflicts among school stakeholders, e.g. the conflicts among school principal, school committee members, and teachers. In 2007, Mr. Ds began to lead the school. He identified that the problem of the quality in his school was due to the internal conflicts. For example, the school

committee members interfered teaching and learning or academic affairs in the school, and some of the teachers was not discipline.

To overcome the problems, the school principal used social capital in his leadership. Social capital is an instantiated informal norm that promotes cooperation between two or more individuals (Fukuyama, 2000). According to Fukuyama the norms that constitute social capital can range from a norm of reciprocity between two friends, all the way to complex and elaborately articulated doctrines like Christianity or Confucianism. These norms must be instantiated in an actual human relationship. The school principal argued that to improve the quality of the school needs good relationship and cooperation among school stakeholders. Therefore, the use of social capital was the important strategy to promote the cooperation among them.

The utilization of social capital by school principal for improving the quality of primary school consists of five stages, (1) improving school environment, (2) improving work climate of the school, (3) building a shared school vision and mission, (4) developing networks, and (5) developing school norms (Suharjo, 2014).

Improving school environment

School environment or learning environment is a major aspect in teaching and learning process. It stimulates school stakeholders' engagement in the teaching and learning process and influences their behavior. Therefore, to improve the quality of primary school it is important to improve school environment first. When students find their school environment to be supportive, they are more likely to develop positive attitudes toward themselves and pro-social attitudes and behaviors toward others (Schaps, Battistich, & Solomon 1997).

At Primary School X for example, the school principal developed school environment improvement programs to overcome the problem of school quality. First, he asked school stakeholders (students, teachers, and staff) to plant a varieties of flowers and ornamental plants in the school, such as rose, orchid, jasmine, wave of love plant anthurium, etc. Another environment improvement program is providing instructional media in the classrooms and decorating the classrooms with education mottos. Some of the education mottos are displayed in the classroom. Here are some examples of the motto: "Give and take is fair play", "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step", "Don't judge a book by its cover". Third program is developing facilities of the school, such as new classroom, hall, health school canteen, praying room.

The improvement of good school environment has positive impact to the students and teachers attitude and behavior. As pointed out on EFA Global Monitoring Report that "One of the most important requirements for sustained progress towards better quality in education is an improved learning environment, encompassing the physical school

infrastructure, the learning process and the interaction between children and teachers. Low achievement levels are often associated with a poor school environment. Badly ventilated classrooms, leaking roofs, poor sanitation and lack of materials represent significant barriers to effective learning in many schools (UNESCO, 2010: 114–15).

Therefore, school environment improvement in school is requirement for improving the quality of primary school. The improvement encompasses school infrastructure, teaching and learning process, and the interaction between teacher and students.

Improving work climate of the school

Every school stakeholders has needs or self-interests. If his or her interest is not accommodated by school principal, it can create internal conflict in the school. For example, according to the Ministry of Education and Culture Decree of 2002, school committee has the roles of improving the quality of education services through (1) advising, (2) directing, (3) supporting personnel, materials and facilities, and (4) overseeing education. Based on the roles, it is imply that the school committee members don't permit to interfere teaching and learning process in the classroom. But if they break the roles, they will create a conflict among the school stakeholders.

Another example is a conflict among teachers and school principal. Not all teachers in the primary school X have good attitude and behavior toward their duties, e.g. the problem of teachers bullying student, discipline, and conduct. These attitudes may cause internal conflict among the teachers and school principal.

To overcome the conflict in the school, school principal can build a good and equal relationship among school stakeholders such as teachers, school committee members, and staffs. The principal should make good relationship with school committee members, teachers, and staffs.

To maintain good relationship among them, all school stakeholders should know and do what their roles and functions are. The school committee members do their role and function based on the MOEC decree. The teachers prepare and implement teaching and learning for their students as mandated by the Regulation (UU) No 20 of 2003 (National Education System). And the school principal performs his role as a leader, manager, and administrator of the school. The relationship and cooperation among the stakeholders relevance to their roles and function can remove the internal conflict in the school. As a result, the relationship among school stakeholders become supportive and the school climate become conducive.

Building a shared vision and mission

The third stage for improving the primary school is by building a shared vision and mission of the school. Kotter (1996: 68) pointed out that "vision refers to a picture of the future with some implicit or explicit commentary on why people

should strive to create that future". Similarly, Karl Albert in Boyet & Boyet (1990: 18) argued that "A vision is a shared image of what we want the enterprise to be or become ...It .. provides an aiming point for a future orientation".

In order to improve primary school, school principal should share the vision and mission of the school to all school stakeholders. For example, in 2007 the primary school X was proposed as a Pioneering of International Primary School (RSDBI) in Malang. It meant that the school was changed its status from traditional primary school to international primary school. Therefore, the school had a new vision and mission. The vision was "to prepare students who are able to fulfill local, national, and international needs, and who are able to compete globally based on the conviction and belief towards Almighty God".

The new vision, consequently, should be informed and shared to the teachers, school committee members, students' parents, and students. They should know the new vision in order to use it as a guide line for implementing teaching and learning in the school. According to Kotter (1996) in the change process, the vision serves three important purposes. First of all, by clarifying the general direction for change, by saying the corporate equivalent of "we need to be south of here in a few years instead where we are today". Second, it motivates people to take action in the right direction. Third, it helps coordinate the actions of different people in a remarkably fast and efficient way.

The new vision has some implications to the school. First, the school should develop a new school culture. For example, the students should attend habit-forming programs, such as fifteen-minutes in English before class begins, read Al-quran verses in the morning, etc. Second, the school should develop and implement a new curriculum. It contained two contents: Curriculum for Education Unit Level (KTSP), and curriculum containing international perspectives, such as mathematics, science, and English. The first curriculum was implemented by using Indonesian (Bahasa Indonesia) as a mean for delivering the contents. While the second one was implemented by using English for delivering the subjects.

Developing networks

The fourth stage in improving the quality of primary school is developing networks. For example, at the primary school X, the school principal built both internal networks and external networks with school stakeholders. The internal networks were developed through creating strong relationship between school principal and teachers, teacher with teacher, teacher with students, and student with student. In contrast, the external networks were developed through creating strong relationship and cooperation with external stakeholders. The school has cooperation with 18 stakeholders. Here are some examples of the school's partner: school committee members, parents, higher education

(State University of Malang, Brawijaya University), AIESEC (The Association Internationale des Etudiants en Sciences Economiques et Commerciales), Ganesha Operation Course, etc.

Developing school norms

Finally, to improve the quality of primary school it is important to develop school norms in the school. Schaefer (1989: 71) defines norms as follows: "norms are established standards of behavior maintained by a society". Similarly, Ferrante (1992: 88) states that "norms are the written and unwritten rules that specify the behaviors appropriate to specific situations". The definitions indicate that the function of the norms is giving direction for the school stakeholders' behavior in their everyday life or activities in school. There are a number of norms which considered to be effective for improving the quality of primary school. The primary school X has implemented 21 norms. Here some of the norm: discipline, friendship, honesty, good speaking, respect, commitment, trust, team work, sharing of information/experience.

The utilization of the social capital in leadership of primary school has an impact for the primary school quality improvement. For instance, the quality of primary school X was improved in terms of institutional quality (it became Pioneering International Primary School and reference school for other schools), student outcomes, and physical environment of the school. The utilization of the social capital not only has benefit for improving the quality of primary school, but also has benefit for external stakeholders for the school, such as parents, community, other schools, and business and industry sector.

Conclusion

In summary, social capital can be used by school principal and school stakeholders for improving the quality of primary school. It consists of five stages: developing school environment, developing workplace climate of school, building a shared vision and mission of school, developing networks, and developing norms. The utilization of the social capital not only has benefit for improving the quality of primary school, but also has benefit for external stakeholders for the school, such as parents, community, and business and industry sector.

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