

Original Research Article

# Principal leadership styles in improving the quality of education in Lhokseumawe Aceh Indonesia

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**Abstract:** This article aims to explain the principles of the leadership styles of madrasah heads in enhancing the quality of Islamic education in Lhokseumawe City. It turns out that the leadership of madrasah heads has a significant impact on the functioning of the madrasah leadership. The madrasah head plays a direct role in developing Islamic educational institutions through leadership characteristics, leader types, leader functions, and leader activities during their tenure as madrasah heads. A quantitative research method with a phenomenological approach is considered capable of addressing various issues in the research problem formulation. It simultaneously analyzes data obtained from observations, interviews, and in-depth documentation to find answers to the research problem. The research findings reveal that the leadership styles of madrasah heads can be divided into two categories: democratic leadership style and autocratic leadership style. The first principle of leadership style involves giving responsibilities and authority to all parties, encouraging active involvement in the organization. Members are given opportunities to provide suggestions, recommendations, and criticisms for the progress of the organization. The second principle, the autocratic leadership style, positions a leader as the source of policies.

**Keywords:** leadership styles; principal

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## 1. Introduction

The development of schools is greatly influenced by the society around them<sup>[1]</sup>. Historically, the school has been an educational concept with a community-based system. The willingness of society to develop schools, especially religious-based schools, is so high that the proportion of private schools is much higher compared to public schools. The proportion of private schools is stated to be 90%, with the remaining 10% being public schools, which has a significant impact on the development of Islamic education in Indonesia, especially in the city of Lhokseumawe in Aceh<sup>[2]</sup>.

As part of the Indonesian educational system, all schools under the administration of the Ministry of Religious Affairs need serious attention from well-qualified leaders. In a rapidly changing society, future schools will need dynamic, creative, and innovative principals. Static and anti-innovative principals will have a huge negative impact on the schools they lead. The effect is that society will neglect these kinds of schools. The modern lifestyle and the changing way of thinking lead to high competition in all aspects of life, and society needs a better quality of education than in the past<sup>[3]</sup>.

In many cases, principal leadership styles have a big impact on the school system, even though some findings discover the contrary result, stating that there was no correlation between principal leadership style and school performance. In performing their (Placeholder 1) tasks, the principal leadership style is much determined by the characteristics, types, roles, and activities of the principals<sup>[4]</sup>.

The role of the principals in creating the school's innovation and improvement program is vital to improving the quality and innovation of the school in the future. Although principals are important for the management style of schools, school leaders' influence on academic results is indirect and mediated by a variety of ways that leaders act<sup>[5]</sup>. Compared to transactional leadership, which simply affects participatory decision-making, transformational leadership has an impact on four components of school climate (affiliation, innovation, professional interest, and resource sufficiency)<sup>[6]</sup>.

The principal leadership styles are not restricted by only the ability to manage and perform leadership mechanisms; they are also required to show the capability to improve organizational and quality management in the whole school system. The principal's leadership style is expected to reflect the principal's characteristics, which will empower the school system to be in a better and more stable condition. Leadership styles implemented by principal's must be in line with the vision and mission of the school as well as suitable with the quality management concept, with the target of bringing the school to a better position.

The ideal principal is expected to have four functions that will support them in directing and managing the school. Firstly, the principal is the pioneer. It means how the principal understands how to fulfill the stakeholders' expectations, vision, and mission (what is the school's target and how to reach it). Secondly, the principal is the mediator, which means that the principal understands all parts of the school system to synergize all these elements. Thirdly, the principal is the motivator. It means how the principal supports and encourages all school elements to perform at their best. Fourth, the principal is the role model, which means that he will be the reference for the school community on how to act and behave appropriately and how he responds to all words, attitudes, behavior, and decisions he makes.

The condition found in some schools is far from the four main functions mentioned above. The position of the principal is closely related to a political position rather than a professional position. The consequence of this phenomenon is that the quality of the school system is so poor and static. The appointment of the principal is not based on a good standard of operational procedure. The principal is sometimes exchanged from one school to another without any clear reasons and not at an appropriate time. The only way to transfer the principal from one school to another is through a decision made by the school administration officials of the city. Due to the poor management system, the achievement and quality of the school system are still far from the expectations of the government itself, either the central government or local government. Of all the causes, the principal is the main cause of the low quality of education in Aceh province generally and in Kota Lhokseumawe specifically.

Principal leadership styles have a big impact on the quality of education, either positively or negatively. The leadership styles of principals can be a benchmark for the school's progress or not. In this paper, we will present the principal leadership styles and their effects on improving education quality in Kota Lhokseumawe.

## **2. Methodology**

This study was conducted by employing qualitative research<sup>[1]</sup>, a paradigm with a phenomenology approach<sup>[7]</sup>. The purpose of the study is to provide answers to issues surrounding the development of an awareness of the dimensions of meaning from a madrasah principal's leadership and the experience of the madrasah principal's management within the teacher and school community. The significance of the madrasah

head's subjective acts in exercising leadership in the madrasah will be explored in further studies. The research subjects were several madrasah heads, teachers, and education practitioners in the City of Lhokseumawe. There were 15 madrasahs that were the sites of this research so that they could represent several madrasahs in the City of Lhokseumawe.

## **2.1. Data collection procedures**

The data in this research was collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. The observations were intended to directly observe the phenomenon. The interview questions were about the principals' perceptions of their duties at school and their relationship with teachers, students, administrative staff, school committees, and society around the school. The principles chosen for the interview are based on the considerations of (1) understanding and knowing well the object of the research, (2) being involved in the studied object, and (3) always being available in the research setting. Documentation is the process of acquiring and understanding the archived document to understand the leadership process in a period.

## **2.2. Data analysis**

Techniques for gathering data through in-depth interviews and observation are subsequently theoretically examined. When data is gathered using reduction strategies, data display, extraction, verification, and conclusion, data analysis is ongoing<sup>[8]</sup>. They are reducing the data, presenting the data, and drawing conclusions. Furthermore, the data were classified inductively to group the data accordingly. The process of classification was performed by reducing the data, grouping it into categories, synthesizing, and drawing conclusions.

## **3. Results and discussion**

### **3.1. Leadership styles and education quality**

Leadership means the capability of determining what to do to achieve the goal by all members of the community, in this case, the community is the school community. Leadership is the ability to influence others to achieve a goal through interpersonal relationships and communication processes<sup>[9]</sup>. According to Stogdill, it is "an influencing process aimed at goal achievement", emphasizing leadership as a technique for persuading a particular set of individuals to meet a certain objective or a well-defined goal<sup>[10]</sup>. Defined leadership as the style that can maximize productivity, job satisfaction, and improvement, and is easily adapted to the work environment. She divides the leadership style into three main styles: task-oriented, cooperation-oriented, and outcome-oriented<sup>[11]</sup>.

When leadership is viewed from the educational side, the viewpoint will be restricted to education. Educational leadership is the process of influencing, coordinating, and encouraging people in the educational community to ensure that everyone performs their best to achieve educational aims<sup>[12]</sup>. Principals, professors, and parents in madrasahs are crucial in eradicating toxic culture and fostering healthy culture. An example of this type of leadership is given by four model schools<sup>[13]</sup>. In school management discourse, distributed leadership has gained popularity as a strategy for enhancing teacher engagement and empowerment as well as establishing advanced and evolving schools that meet stakeholder expectations<sup>[14]</sup>.

In the new paradigm of educational management, management must be supported by a high-quality human resource to achieve improvements in efficiency and effectiveness<sup>[15]</sup>. Human resource development, in this case, is the process. The paradigm that gives the principals the great authority to improve all aspects of school life requires the principals to improve their capability. The principal is one of the most important components of a school community in improving the quality of education<sup>[16]</sup>. School leadership stated that

many aspects of school life have a strong relationship with the principal, such as discipline, school atmosphere, and juvenile delinquency<sup>[17]</sup>.

Due to the fact that the principal is also the leader, there are some functions that a principal must have, which are:

- 1) Planning (seeking all available information, defining group tasks or goals, and making a workable plan).
- 2) Initiating (briefing the group, allocating tasks, and setting group standards).
- 3) Controlling (maintaining group standards, ensuring progress towards objectives, and prodding action and decision).
- 4) Supporting (expressing acceptance of individual contributions, encouraging and disciplining, building team spirit, relieving tension with humor, and reconciliation disagreements).
- 5) Informing (clarifying tasks and plans, keeping the group informed, receiving information from the group, and summarizing ideas and suggestions); and
- 6) Evaluating (checking the feasibility of ideas and testing consequences<sup>[18]</sup>).

By building relationships of trust, developing environments that support teacher learning, and either linking their faculties to outside experts or assisting teachers in coming up with changes inside, principals can maintain high levels of capacity<sup>[19]</sup>.

Furthermore, quality means the degree of the products, either goods or services, that are tangible or intangible. In terms of education, quality refers to the quality of the process and outcome. From the perspective of educational processes, its quality includes various kinds of input such as teaching materials (cognitive, affective, and psychomotor), teaching methods, schools' facilities, administrative support, infrastructures, and any other resources, as well as a conducive atmosphere<sup>[20]</sup>. School management is supported by classroom function to synchronize all kinds of input or to synchronize all components in the teaching and learning interaction between teachers, students, facilities inside and outside of the classroom, curricular and extracurricular contexts, and academically and non-academically climate to support the process of teaching and learning<sup>[21]</sup>.

The quality of a school can be identified by the number of students who achieve high levels of achievement, either academic or nonacademic, if the achievement is in line with the school's aims. School management, teachers' profiles, learning resources, and environmental situations can be traced through students' achievement, flexible learning in the classroom helps to promote quality education<sup>[22]</sup>. Therefore, the quality of a school is the quality of its students, which reflects the satisfaction of its users, active participation to support management in continuous quality improvement, individual understanding toward specific responsibility for quality, individual and stakeholder awareness of the principle of preventing failure and supporting the quality approach as a way of life.

Essentially, the terminology of quality shows an assessment or acknowledgment standard toward products or services based on an objective consideration of their quality and performance. The quality of goods and services should be at the same level or beyond the user's expectations. The definition of educational quality is the material inputs and non-material features of schools that have been demonstrated to improve student learning<sup>[23]</sup>.

A quality-oriented service gives user satisfaction through quality assurance that prevents any complaint and prevents unexpected products (zero defects). The quality can be seen as either absolute quality or relative quality. Absolute quality has the highest assessment standard, unique and goodness-related expression, beauty, truth, and ideal. Absolute quality standards are usually subjectively declared by the producer and based on the

criteria provided by the producer itself. Goods with high-quality standards will have a big impact on the consumer, making them feel proud and prestigious when using them.

Absolute quality standards are difficult to apply in the educational system because of various outside judgments. People will see many sides, and each side will have its own standard. Therefore, quality standards will apply based on the user's needs. Also, in his case, the quality is determined not only by the producers but also by the users. Therefore, the good quality standard in educational settings is not absolute quality but relative quality that is suitable for the user's needs. The quality of a school will be good if it provides services suitable for the users' needs. There are several breakthroughs that challenge the government to improve the quality of education. The following are the breakthroughs the government currently performs.

The effectiveness of leadership can have a big effect on schooling. The direction, culture, and outcomes of educational institutions are heavily influenced by effective educational leadership. Here are a few leadership philosophies and how they might affect the standard of schooling.

- 1) Transformational leadership. By establishing high standards and encouraging a shared vision, transformational leaders inspire and motivate their team members and pupils. They help teachers and offer chances for professional growth, while also fostering innovation and creativity. By fostering a pleasant school environment, increasing teacher effectiveness, and encouraging student involvement and performance, transformational leadership can result in higher educational quality.
- 2) Leadership in instruction. Leadership in instruction focuses on enhancing the teaching and learning processes. They contribute actively to the creation of curricula, teaching methods, and evaluation procedures. Instructional leaders can improve the quality of instruction, support efficient teaching methods, and guarantee compliance with educational objectives and standards by offering advice, criticism, and resources to instructors.
- 3) Distributed leadership. Distributed leadership refers to the division of leadership duties among a few people, such as managers, educators, and staff members. This cooperative strategy develops a culture of continuous development, fosters a sense of ownership and accountability among stakeholders, and supports group decision-making. A more inclusive and participative learning environment where different viewpoints are acknowledged and creative ideas are developed can be achieved through distributed leadership.
- 4) Servant leadership. Servant leaders put their employees' and students' needs ahead of their own. They put a lot of effort into fostering relationships, encouraging personal development, and fostering a friendly environment at school. Servant leadership encourages cooperation, empathy, and trust, which can help to improve student well-being, teacher job satisfaction, and academic results.
- 5) Transactional leadership. Transactional leaders place a strong emphasis on a structured style of management that is built on rewards and consequences. To encourage teachers and pupils, they set up clear standards and apply prizes or disciplinary actions. While transactional leadership can provide structure and uphold order, it might not ultimately encourage creativity or inner motivation. As a result, its influence on educational quality could be minimal.

It's important to remember that each educational institution has unique needs, so leadership styles should be modified accordingly. To address multiple areas of educational excellence, including curriculum development, teacher professional development, student well-being, and community participation, a blend of several leadership philosophies may be required. Regardless of style, effective leadership should put a high priority on developing a welcoming and inclusive learning environment that supports educational performance. The ability to arbitrate between various levels, the internal and external environments of the school, between instructors and pupils (and parents), and between various groups within the school is a quality of good

leadership. A good school leader exercises shared or distributed leadership, which is direction based on collaboration and teamwork<sup>[24]</sup>.

### **3.1.1. Teachers' certification**

Certification is the process of awarding certificates to teachers who have fulfilled certain criteria as certified teachers. The certificates are awarded to teachers who have fulfilled the requisites as professional teachers<sup>[25]</sup>. Professional teachers are an absolute requisite for creating a high-quality education. The certificate for teachers is the certificate given by government-appointed universities as formal proof to teachers as a professional workforce.

Certification is the procedure for granting lecturers and teachers educator certifications under Republic of Indonesia Regulation No. 14 of 2005 from the Minister of Education and Culture. During this process, a variety of competency evaluations, including ones for educational, personality, professional, and social competencies, were given. The certification's objectives are to foster the development of professional educators and to provide a specified wage in accordance with the achieved rank or class<sup>[26]</sup>.

Someone who wants to teach elementary school might need to specialize in elementary education, whereas someone who wants to teach high school math might need to show they are mathematically proficient. A crucial step in ensuring that teachers have the abilities, expertise, and credentials required to give their children a quality education is obtaining certification as a teaching professional. It supports the upkeep of professional standards within the teaching field and gives parents and employers confidence that instructors possess the qualifications needed to succeed in their positions.

### **3.1.2. Accreditation**

Accreditation is the assessment activity performed by government or private institutions that have the authority to determine the eligibility of an educational body, either in formal or informal settings. The process is performed based on predetermined criteria to show public accountability in an objective, fair, transparent, and comprehensive form of national education standards. The procedure through which an association or organization formally assesses the quality of an educational institution to see whether it meets or surpasses certain norms and criteria that have been established from the requirements or quality standards of schooling<sup>[27]</sup>.

The reason behind the school accreditation in Indonesia is that every citizen deserves a good quality education. To be able to deliver a quality education, every educational body must fulfill the standard criteria issued by an accreditation body. The accreditation process is based on laws No. 20/2003 on the National Education System, Government Regulation No. 19/2005 on National Education Standards, Education Ministerial Decree No. 59/2012 on the National School Accreditation Board, Central Java Governor's Decree No. 8/2013 on the Provincial School Accreditation Board (2013–2018), and the Governor's Decree of Establishment of Provincial School Accreditation Board N. These are some of the laws that specify school accreditation. It is specifically stated in the National Education System Law No. 20/2003<sup>[28]</sup>.

The aim of school accreditation is to provide information on the eligibility of schools, acknowledge the level of eligibility, and recommend educational quality assurance in the form of quality standards. The goal of accreditation may be related to program quality or result quality<sup>[29]</sup>.

The Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture (Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan or Kemendikbud) is in charge of overseeing the accreditation procedure for schools. The accrediting process strives to raise national educational standards and guarantee the caliber of instruction delivered by schools. The following are the essential steps in Indonesia's process for accrediting schools: (1) Self-evaluation: the school conducts a self-evaluation to start the accreditation process. This entails evaluating several aspects of

the school's operations, such as the curriculum, teaching strategies, physical environment, administration, and academic performance of the students. (2) Application submission: following the completion of the self-evaluation, the institution submits an accreditation application to the appropriate regional education office. The application contains pertinent files such as the school's profile, curriculum designs, and supporting documentation for accrediting requirements. (3) A team of assessors selected by the regional education office pays a visit to the school to undertake an evaluation after receiving the application. The assessors go over the school's physical space, watch classes in action, talk to parents, students, and teachers, and look through pertinent records. (4) Assessment report: based on their observations during the evaluation visit, the assessors write an assessment report outlining the school's advantages, disadvantages, and opportunities for development. The report evaluates the school's adherence to the requirements and standards for national education put forth by the Ministry of Education and Culture. (5) The regional education office and the National Accreditation Board (also known as BAN) then analyze the assessment report before making an accreditation decision. Based on the evaluation report and conformity with the accreditation criteria, BAN oversees making the ultimate accreditation decision. (6) Status of accreditation, the institution's accreditation is determined by how well it performs and how closely it adheres to predetermined standards. In Indonesia, accreditation statuses can range from A (excellent), B (good), and C (fair), to D (not accredited). (7) Improvement plan, if a school doesn't satisfy the accrediting requirements, it might be given a set amount of time to make changes and reach the necessary standards. It is expected that the school will create an improvement plan describing the steps it will take to address the vulnerabilities found. And (8) regular reviews. To keep their accreditation, accredited schools go through regular reviews. The frequency of these reviews varies according to the level of accreditation the school has attained.

Method for accrediting schools. It is significant to note that different regions or provinces in Indonesia may have slightly different accreditation procedures and specifics. For the most precise and current information, it is advised that schools consult the regional education office or refer to the official recommendations issued by the Ministry of Education and Culture. The Minister of Education of the Republic of Indonesia has approved and validated the use of the Accreditation Instruments in the Ministerial Regulations to make it easier to implement the school accreditation program for each of the educational units.

### **3.1.3. Standardization of education**

National education standards are minimal criteria for an educational body in all parts of Indonesian territory. The national education standard consists of the standard of graduate competencies, the standard of contents, the standard of process, the standard of educational human resources, the standard of infrastructures, the standard of management, the standard of educational funding, and the standard of educational assessment<sup>[30]</sup>.

National education standards function as a basis for planning, operating, and supporting the quality of national education, including ensuring national education quality in relation to improving the quality of all its citizens and building citizen characteristics. The national education standard is purposefully and continually upgraded in line with the demands of local, national, and global users.

### **3.2. Principal leadership style in improving the education quality in Kota Lhokseumawe**

Leadership is the ability to direct and decide what to do. Leadership is the ability to influence others through interpersonal relationships and communication processes to reach predetermined goals. The data in this study show various kinds of principal leadership styles in improving education quality in Kota Lhokseumawe. The findings were summarized and extracted from the leadership style indicators, followed by

observation and interviews as well as documentation studies such as circular information and any other related document.

The leadership style indicators were collected from the school principal in Kota Lhokseumawe, starting with the decision-making related to the school quality. Some principals said that, through interviews, they make decisions initialized by general meetings with all teachers and school staff, and some made them by meeting with vice principals. The meetings are conducted to find solutions to problems, acquire brilliant ideas, and identify effective and efficient ways to improve future school quality. The next step is to bring the decisions from the meetings to a meeting with the school committee to make final decisions before they are implemented.

The other way of planning is for the principal to directly implement a policy. The policy is usually issued by a local or central educational officer, the Ministry of Education, or the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Shortly, there are two types of decisions made by the principals. The first is the decision made through the meeting with all school members, and the second is the decision that is directly instructed by the higher education administrative authority.

Based on the interview, some principals in Kota Lhokseumawe also shared the same experience that the decision was made through the meeting. The meeting is expected to share the same viewpoint on the project or activities that will be executed. For example, a decision on the selection of members and supervisors that would take part in the sports competition was openly held. The open selection process was intended for all school elements to have the same viewpoint and understanding of the activities.

Those were the ways the principals in Kota Lhokseumawe used to make decisions. They confessed that the authority to make decisions is not wide enough because most of the decisions had been made at a local office or the ministry level. The principal has simply spread information about the policy to all parts of the school to implement it appropriately. In this case, the authority of the principal is to control and supervise the implemented policy. The policy made at the school level is the result of meetings with teachers and staff. The result is then composed as an information letter or circular.

The next indicator of leadership style found through interviews and observation is the procedure of expressing ideas to improve the quality of the school. One of the principals, Samsami, said that there are various kinds of procedures for expressing ideas. According to him, some of the procedures for expressing ideas are through weekly or monthly meetings, but some of them express them informally while interacting in the classroom, in the schoolyards, or anywhere else. This way of expressing ideas is also performed by principals for all school elements. In emergency cases or individual problems, the principal directly meets with the teachers to discuss and solve the problems.

Expressing ideas can also be done individually for a specific case, such as the problem of teaching and learning in the classroom. For such problems, the principal comes to meet the teacher to find solutions and provide advice without waiting to discuss them in a regular meeting. For the general problems that require all school elements to understand, the principals have their own procedures for expressing ideas to achieve the school development program. In fact, there are some principals in Kota Lhokseumawe who make decisions without conducting any meetings with teachers and staff. This phenomenon was uncovered by teachers through interviews. An example of such a policy is when the principal wanted to renovate a classroom. He sometimes suddenly instructed me to move the process of teaching and learning from the classroom to the prayer room for classroom renovation. The teachers suggested that it was better if the principal told them in advance that the classroom would be renovated and the teaching and learning process would be moved to the prayer room.

Principal leadership styles can also be classified by the planning mechanism. It was found in some schools that the planning made by the principal to improve the quality of education was very good. There is a mechanism for regulating school development program proposals through academic and necessity reports submitted electronically. This way of proposing a program is admitted by some chairmans of administrative staff in some schools where the program proposals were submitted electronically and the schools simply wait for verification before the facilities are delivered to schools. The provided facilities will correspond to the number of students or the school's needs. There were some weaknesses in the development program, as they happened in other educational sectors under the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Centralized budget systems make the school program difficult and late in realization, particularly in providing and maintaining school facilities and incentives for internship teachers. A centralized budget system is also one of the problems that makes the program of quality development at the local level run slowly. This is because the schools sometimes need to synchronize two different policies between the local and central governments. The complicated budget system between the central and local governments makes the school smoothly improve the quality of education.

To make school development programs for improving educational quality more eligible, the principal synergizes the program with all elements at the school level. The plans made by the principals were driven by necessity, such as improving the quality of instruction (teaching and learning). This kind of program only involves the need for internal school elements. If the programs need to involve external elements, the development program will involve the school committees, stakeholders, and society around the school.

The participation of society in improving the quality of education is highly expected. This is in line with what some principals said: that they often invited people around the school and the school committee to plan the school programs. The purpose of involving all parts of the school, society, and school committee is to gather opinions as a form of participation and responsibility to improve the quality of education in their residence.

Strengthening the data on principal leadership styles in Kota Lhokseumawe can also be seen through the coordination performed by the principal. The coordination is done by controlling the daily teaching and learning process performed by the deputy principal of the curriculum section. Besides the coordination, the principal also controls and monitors directly the process of teaching and learning when needed. The principal also coordinates with the deputy principal of the curriculum section in monitoring and evaluating the educational quality. The other routine activity the principal does is to supervise all school activities inside and outside the classroom at any time.

Therefore, the mechanism used by the principal in coordinating the improvement of the quality of education in Kota Lhokseumawe can be divided into two types. The first type is direct coordination. Direct coordination means the principal directly delegates tasks to the deputy principal of the curriculum section. The deputy principal of the curriculum section is responsible for monitoring and evaluating the teaching and learning process. The deputy receives a mandate from the principal to monitor and evaluate the teaching and learning process according to government regulations. The deputy is fully responsible for the teaching and learning process and the standard quality of the graduate. The second is indirect coordination, which is performed by the principal to ensure the process of teaching and learning is conducted conditionally. Conditionally monitoring and evaluating means that the principal monitors and evaluates when it is needed. The principal comes to supervise the process of teaching and learning in the classroom. The supervision process includes teaching and learning, teaching media, teaching methods, and teaching approaches.

Another indicator of the principal leadership style in improving the quality of education in Kota Lhokseumawe is the mechanism used by principals in solving any problem encountered at school. It can be

seen from the mechanism used by the principal in solving any problems by conducting meetings or solving them through negotiating with related elements. Before solving the problem, the principal usually monitors it first. If the problem can be solved simply with one related element, it will be solved without involving any other elements, but if the problem has any connections with many elements, it will be solved by carrying it to a meeting.

It is difficult to find a principal who can fulfill all the criteria suggested by the theory of leadership. It is difficult to notice the leadership style of the principal, who is ready to receive any criticism from all school elements. There are two types of critics: direct and indirect. The direct critics are those who point directly to the unfit condition shown by the principal. But the indirect criticism is done by showing proof of an unfit condition, followed by the proposed solution to the criticized problem. The principal is sometimes unable to receive direct criticism without any proof or alternative solutions to the problems.

### **3.3. Strengthening school leadership to improve the quality of education**

Leadership style is the style a leader uses to maximize productivity, job satisfaction, and productivity growth. In the educational system, educational leadership is a product of influencing, coordinating, and mobilizing other people who have a close relationship with the educational process. This study found some indicators of the principal leadership styles in improving the quality of education in Kota Lhokseumawe. The indicators were then analyzed and validated, and they can be described as follows:

The first style is the authority style, where all decisions are in the hands of the principal. The second one is the style that only applies principal-sourced ideas. This means that the principal only believes his or her own ideas and tends to dismiss others' ideas as unfit to be implemented. The third style is a meeting-based decision. Teachers and other staff are given opportunities to participate and share ideas to achieve the school's goals.

To summarize the leadership styles, there are three main types of styles. The style that emphasizes task achievement, the style that emphasizes cooperation, and the style that emphasizes the outcome. Of all of these styles, the task achievement style is the one that dominates the others. This means that the principal preference to run routine tasks is far greater than to perform the task effectively and efficiently.

If the leadership style is analyzed using the other frame of theory, the dominant leadership style of the principal in Kota Lhokseumawe is democracy. This type of leadership style gives authority and responsibility to all members of the school organization. There are a lot of opportunities to propose, suggest, and criticize for the purpose of organization development. This kind of leadership style considers all staff as part of the organization so that all its members are equally treated. The tasks of the principal are directing, controlling, evaluating, and coordinating them all.

Besides the style, there are few schools that apply the autocracy style. This kind of leadership style puts the leader as the source of the policy. The leader is everything, and the staff are considered task executors. Therefore, the staff simply receives instruction, but expressing ideas and giving opinions are not allowed. In such a position, the staff is not involved in organizational policy-making. In this type of leadership style, everything is decided by the leader, so the success of the organization is totally determined by the leader.

It is highly expected that the future principals who lead the schools will be ideal leaders who will improve the quality of education. The following are some of the criteria that should be possessed by the principals:

- 1) Having strong positive energy

Having strong positive energy as a leader means being strong intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually. These three kinds of energy are so important possessed by the principals that harmony and stability will be in

every corner of the schools. A strong leader comes from a person with good leadership characteristics. His/her performance is blessed by Allah, beautified by the art of leadership that may emerge positive energy from all parts under his/her leadership and leave a long-lasting impression on the society around the school.

2) Understanding that he is a leader

As a leader, the principal does not need to understand that he/she is a leader who has a task to improve the quality of education at the school he/she leads. The leader who better understands the role of a leader will show her capability as a leader through self-accountability, acceptable policies, and satisfied decisions.

3) Having the ability to improve the organisation

As a leader, the principals are expected to have a vision with good future planning. The principal should initiate the development through appropriate programs and planning. Threatening and barriers must be considered a challenge to moving forward in any situation or condition. Therefore, the principal should have specific training and even pursue advanced education. These trainings and advanced education are intended to equip the principals with a wide and broad view in terms of knowledge and management.

4) Having the attitude to nurture all parts of the school

Nurturing in this case is to build a positive emotional tie among the principal and teachers, administrative staff, students, school committee, and all of society around the school. A good emotional tie between the principal and all school elements in all school activities will lead to a positive image of the principal, and in the end, the principal will grow as a charismatic principal.

5) Having the ability to manage

For a leader, leadership management is a basic foundation for running the wheel of leadership. Leadership talent does not appear spontaneously, even though there are many leaders born into the system of caste in society, through descent, polling, and administrative fulfillment. All kinds of leadership have their own strengths, and they cannot be abolished or extinguished spontaneously due to the modern system. and this must be handled wisely. Whatever the leadership styles are, they are derived from the past culture of the society. They cannot be abolished or extinguished spontaneously due to the modern system.

Therefore, the leader must understand the basic concepts of leadership management so that his leadership will run smoothly. The basic concepts are as follows: (1) Planning: planning is the process of thinking about and deciding on activities and steps that will be executed to achieve the goal efficiently and effectively. Planning is about what to do, when to do it, who will do it, and where and how to do it. (2) Organizing, organizing is placing people in the right position to be able to perform the function personally or collectively to achieve the organizational goal. (3) Directing means the steps taken by a leader to explain and guide staff either before or after performing the tasks. (4) Communicating is a leader's attempt to deliver information, either internal or external, that is related to the process of achieving organizational goals. (5) Coordinating: coordinating is the process of arranging, unifying, synergizing, and integrating all activities performed by staff. (6) Supervising is the leader's attempt to know everything relating to the delegated jobs. Supervising is often called controlling, assessing, investigating, monitoring, etc. The main purpose of supervising is to know the progress of the job and to avoid misconduct. Therefore, supervising is often called controlling.

## **4. Discussion**

The leadership of the principal is essential in determining the standard of instruction in schools. Effective principals establish an environment that fosters learning, growth, and overall student success by providing

vision, direction, and support. There are some important leadership values that are frequently linked to raising educational standards. Vision and mission, principals must create a compelling vision for their institution that outlines the ambitions they have for the students. To provide the school community with a sense of direction and purpose, this vision should be shared with everyone.

Principals should take an active role in promoting and enhancing teaching and learning strategies as instructional leaders. To establish high standards, offer chances for professional growth, and guarantee the application of efficient instructional methodologies, they must work in partnership with teachers. In building a positive school culture, principals should foster a welcoming and positive school environment that encourages cooperation, respect, and a sense of community among students, faculty, and staff. They must lay out precise guidelines for conduct and punishment while hammering home the significance of justice, compassion, and a nurturing environment.

The recruitment, development, and retention of highly successful teachers should be a priority for principals in order to build and support a strong teaching team. For teachers to cooperate, share best practices, and get continuing support and feedback in order to improve their instructional skills, they should establish a professional learning community. Engagement of parents and the community, principals should take proactive measures to involve parents and the larger community in the educational process. They can obtain support for school projects, boost parental involvement, and develop a collaborative climate that improves student achievement through cultivating strong relationships and collaborations.

Effective principles encourage a culture of constant improvement among all staff members. They promote feedback, exercise reflection, and look for chances to advance their careers. Principals encourage their employees and students to aim for excellence and pursue lifelong learning by serving as positive role models for a growth mindset. The establishment of a positive and motivating environment that fosters the development and achievement of both students and educators is one way that these leadership principles contribute to the overall quality of education. Principals can have a beneficial impact on student achievement and foster an excellent culture in their schools when they exhibit strong leadership qualities and use these guidelines successfully.

## 5. Conclusions

Based on the research findings through the instruments, there are two leadership styles shown by the principal in improving the quality of education in Kota Lhokseumawe. There are two styles: the democratic style and the autocratic style. The democratic style provides opportunities for all parts of school systems to be involved and participate so that all elements have the right to propose, suggest, and criticize for school improvement. While the autocratic style puts the principal as the sole policymaker (the principal's policy is everything). The staff are considered the executors of the principal's policies. Therefore, the staff are merely prepared to receive instruction, and criticizing, preparing, and giving opinions are not allowed. In this case, the staff is not involved in an organizational management system.

## Conflict of interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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