

The Role of Servant Leadership in Implementing a Culture of Innovation and Work Discipline Among Teachers at Public Elementary Schools in Region V Mutiara, Pidie Regency

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the role of servant leadership in fostering a culture of innovation and work discipline among teachers at public elementary schools in Region V Mutiara, Pidie Regency. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. The findings show that servant leadership promotes innovation and discipline by prioritizing others' interests, building positive relationships, and supporting professional development. Strategies include effective communication, meeting teachers' needs, providing resources, encouraging collaboration, setting examples, and enforcing time discipline. Challenges include resistance to change, limited resources, differing perceptions, lack of external support, and time constraints.

INTRODUCTION

Education is an integral part of human life, serving as a lifelong effort to enhance human quality. According to Nuranifah and Nasir (2022:630), education is a structured system with a broad mission encompassing physical development, health, skills, thoughts, emotions, will, social issues, and faith. The effectiveness of education depends on collaboration between family, school, and community environments. Schools play a crucial role in ensuring discipline among teachers, as disciplined educators contribute to an effective learning process (Indrawan et al., 2020:43).

Teachers, as professional educators, have the primary duty to educate, guide, and evaluate students at different educational levels. High-quality teachers are essential for education, and discipline is a key factor in maintaining professional integrity. The role of the school principal is instrumental in fostering teacher discipline. A well-disciplined school ensures an effective learning process, whereas a lack of discipline leads to disorganization and inefficiency (Hajar & Putra, 2021:11).

School leadership significantly impacts teacher performance and discipline. According to Nasution (2022:4), school principals must guide, empower, and support their communities to achieve institutional goals effectively and efficiently. Leadership characteristics influence a principal's effectiveness, including self-assessment, responsibility, independence, emotional control, goal orientation, and social adaptability (Wahyuni, 2021:1). Negative traits, such as quick temper, anxiety, and excessive criticism, can hinder effective leadership.

Servant leadership is a leadership style that prioritizes serving others, promoting growth, and fostering a supportive environment. According to Rahayu and Benyamin (2020:30), servant leadership includes ten key characteristics: listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to growth, and community building. Principals who adopt servant leadership positively impact teachers and students, fostering a culture of innovation and discipline.

Preliminary observations indicate that some teachers lack discipline, often arriving late, and that principals are not actively supervising teachers. This study aims to examine the role of servant leadership in fostering a culture of innovation and work discipline among teachers at SDN Region V Mutiara, Pidie Regency.

This study aims to analyze the role of servant leadership in fostering a culture of innovation and work discipline among teachers by examining the programs and strategies implemented by school principals, as well as identifying the challenges they face in enhancing teacher discipline and innovation, ultimately providing insights into effective leadership practices in education.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Servant leadership is a leadership style that prioritizes serving others, emphasizing empathy, trust, and integrity to create an environment where teachers feel valued and motivated to excel. This approach plays a crucial role

in fostering an innovative and disciplined work culture in schools. The literature suggests that servant leadership enhances teacher performance by promoting collaboration, providing support, and encouraging professional growth. This review explores the key concepts, characteristics, and implementation of servant leadership in the educational setting, particularly in developing a culture of innovation and work discipline among teachers.

Concept of Servant Leadership

Servant leadership is based on the principle that a leader's primary role is to serve others. Spears (Robert, 2019:9) defines servant leadership as a leadership model that starts with an innate desire to serve, leading to a commitment to meeting the needs of others. This leadership style emphasizes developing individuals within an organization by fostering trust and collaboration. According to Ni'mah (2022:20), servant leaders prioritize service, naturally seeking to uplift and support their subordinates to achieve optimal performance. Rahayu and Benyamin (2020:30) argue that servant leadership transforms individuals by instilling a mindset focused on service rather than authority.

Siahaan (2024:6) highlights that servant leadership is an effective model for addressing leadership crises, as it prioritizes the needs and aspirations of subordinates. This leadership approach requires leaders to actively listen, provide guidance, and empower their team members. Lantu (Robert, 2019:9) further emphasizes that successful servant leaders focus on developing their employees first, which indirectly drives long-term organizational success. By fostering a supportive and inclusive environment, servant leadership enhances teacher engagement and job satisfaction, leading to improved educational outcomes.

Characteristics of Servant Leadership

Servant leadership encompasses several key characteristics that distinguish it from traditional leadership models. Siahaan (2024:7-9) identifies ten essential traits: listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to growth, and community building. Spears (Siahaan, 2024:10) also supports these attributes, highlighting their importance in building strong, trust-based relationships within an organization.

Dennis (Siahaan, 2024:15) expands on these characteristics by including love, empowerment, vision, humility, and trust. He argues that servant leaders build influence through support rather than control, creating a positive and inclusive work culture. These attributes help cultivate a disciplined and innovative environment in schools, where teachers are encouraged to take initiative, collaborate, and develop professionally.

Innovation Culture in Education

Innovation in education is essential for improving teaching methodologies and adapting to technological advancements. According to Mulyati et al. (2023:2428), innovation involves the development of new ideas,

practices, and structures that enhance the educational experience. A strong innovation culture encourages creativity, continuous learning, and adaptation to change.

Romadi (2023:38) states that educational challenges require innovative solutions, necessitating a culture that supports experimentation and professional development. Batumenyan (2024:1) identifies three primary roles of education in fostering innovation: providing knowledge and skills, increasing motivation for innovation, and building an innovative mindset. By embracing these principles, schools can better prepare students for future challenges while ensuring that teachers remain engaged and motivated.

Teacher Work Discipline

Teacher discipline is a critical factor in maintaining an effective learning environment. Hafidulloh et al. (2021:39) define work discipline as adherence to established rules and norms that ensure consistency and reliability in job performance. Lestari (2022:2) argues that discipline is essential for maintaining order and professionalism in the workplace. A well-disciplined teacher serves as a role model for students, fostering a structured and productive learning environment.

Tarwanto (2024:1129) suggests that discipline is developed through self-regulation and adherence to organizational policies. Key indicators of teacher discipline include punctuality, compliance with school regulations, ethical behavior, and commitment to professional responsibilities (Amelia, 2024:1001). By implementing clear policies and consistent enforcement, schools can cultivate a disciplined workforce that positively influences student learning outcomes.

Implementation of Servant Leadership in Fostering Innovation and Discipline

Servant leadership significantly contributes to the development of an innovative and disciplined work culture in schools. By prioritizing teacher needs, servant leaders create an environment that supports professional growth and innovation. Effective servant leaders engage in active listening, provide necessary resources, and encourage collaboration among educators.

According to Siahaan (2024:6), servant leadership enhances social adaptation skills, enabling leaders to interact effectively with teachers and staff. This approach fosters strong relationships, leading to increased motivation and commitment to school goals. By emphasizing ethical values, transparency, and shared decision-making, servant leaders cultivate a work culture that supports continuous improvement.

Hafidulloh et al. (2021:41) highlight the importance of maintaining discipline through motivation, respect, and structured oversight. Leaders who serve as role models in discipline encourage teachers to uphold professional standards, ultimately benefiting the entire school community. Implementing servant leadership principles ensures that teachers feel valued, leading to improved job performance and student outcomes.

METHODOLOGY

The research approach refers to the method used to collect, analyze, and interpret data in a study. This research employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive research type. Sujarweni (2023:19) explains that qualitative research produces findings that cannot be achieved using statistical procedures or other quantification methods. This approach is used to understand the role of servant leadership in implementing a culture of innovation in work discipline among teachers at SDN Wilayah V Mutiara, Pidie Regency, based on data obtained both orally and in writing from informants, as well as observations of actual behaviors.

Arikunto (2021:20) states that descriptive research aims to investigate specific conditions, situations, or phenomena, with the results presented in a research report. The phenomena examined may include forms, activities, characteristics, changes, relationships, similarities, or differences between one phenomenon and another. Sugiyono (2020:63) adds that descriptive research is conducted to determine the value of a variable independently without comparing or associating it with other variables. The primary goal of descriptive research is to systematically describe the facts and characteristics of the research object or subject.

This research was conducted at SDN Wilayah V Mutiara, Pidie Regency, from December 2024 to February 2025. The selection of this location was based on several considerations, including the researcher's interest after conducting preliminary observations, the school's status as a preferred educational institution in Pidie Regency, as well as considerations of time, cost, and accessibility. The schools selected as research sites include SDN 1 Bereunun, SDN 3 Bereunun, and SDS Islam Mutiara.

The research subjects are data sources that provide clarity on the issues under study. In qualitative research, subjects are individuals who provide complete and accurate information about events, people, and situations observed. Creswell (2020:249) states that qualitative research aims to construct a complex picture of an issue or problem by reporting diverse perspectives and identifying relevant factors in a particular situation. Arikunto (2021:25) defines research subjects as entities where data related to the research variables are embedded.

The main subjects in this study are the principal, vice principal, and teachers at SDN 1 Bereunun, SDN 3 Bereunun, and SDS Islam Mutiara. The selection of the principal as the primary subject is based on their role as the main person responsible for school activities, including policies related to implementing servant leadership in fostering a culture of innovation in work discipline among teachers. Teachers are selected as supporting subjects because they directly experience the implementation of this leadership approach in their daily practices.

The research instruments used include interview guidelines, observation guidelines, and document studies. Interview guidelines are used to gather in-depth information from informants, while observations allow researchers to directly witness how servant leadership is applied in the school environment.

Document studies are conducted by collecting relevant documents to support the research data.

The data collection techniques used in this study include observation, interviews, and documentation. Observations are conducted systematically by recording and noting phenomena occurring in the field. Interviews are carried out with the principal, vice principal, and teachers to obtain information regarding the role of servant leadership in fostering a culture of innovation in work discipline. Documentation is used to complement data obtained from interviews and observations by collecting archives, notes, reports, and photos relevant to the research.

Data validity is tested through credibility, transferability, and confirmability tests. Credibility testing is conducted by extending the observation period, increasing accuracy in data collection, using source and technique triangulation, and performing member checks to ensure that the collected data aligns with what the informants intended. Transferability refers to the extent to which research findings can be applied to other contexts. Confirmability ensures that research findings are an objective reflection of the research process rather than the researcher's subjective interpretation.

The data analysis technique in this research follows the steps of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Data reduction is carried out by summarizing, categorizing, and organizing data to generate meaningful and more comprehensible information. Data display aims to present data systematically for further analysis, whether in the form of narrative descriptions, tables, or charts. Conclusion drawing is based on patterns found in the analyzed data.

By implementing this research procedure, it is expected that a deep understanding of the role of servant leadership in fostering a culture of innovation in work discipline among teachers at SDN Wilayah V Mutiara, Pidie Regency, can be obtained.

RESEARCH RESULT

The Role of Servant Leadership in Implementing a Culture of Innovation and Work Discipline Among Teachers

This study aims to examine the role of servant leadership in fostering a culture of innovation and work discipline among teachers at SDN Wilayah V Mutiara, Pidie Regency. Servant leadership is a leadership model that positions the leader as a servant to their team, with the primary goal of improving the well-being and growth of their members. In an educational setting, this leadership style plays a crucial role in creating a positive learning environment, increasing teacher job satisfaction, and cultivating a school culture based on service and collaboration.

Data collected from interviews with school principals and teachers at SDN 1 Bereunun, SDN 3 Bereunun, and SDS Islam Mutiara shows that school leaders who adopt servant leadership demonstrate the following key roles:

1. Prioritizing service to others, placing the needs of teachers and students before personal interests.

2. Building strong relationships with all school stakeholders, including teachers, students, parents, and local education authorities.
3. Fostering a culture of discipline by setting clear expectations and leading by example.
4. Encouraging teacher innovation by providing support, resources, and a safe environment for experimentation in teaching methods.
5. Developing a growth-oriented school culture, where teachers feel valued, motivated, and committed to continuous professional development.
6. Creating a collaborative school community, where open dialogue and teamwork are emphasized to solve challenges and drive improvement.

While all three schools implement servant leadership principles, differences in execution were observed. SDN 1 Bereunun focused on building a strong community and fostering innovative teaching practices, SDN 3 Bereunun emphasized discipline and maintaining positive relationships with stakeholders, while SDS Islam Mutiara prioritized teacher empowerment and professional growth.

Strategies of Servant Leadership in Fostering Innovation and Work Discipline

School principals at SDN Wilayah V Mutiara implement several strategies to strengthen a culture of innovation and work discipline, including:

1. Effective communication between school leaders and teachers to ensure that their needs, concerns, and aspirations are heard and addressed.
2. Providing support and resources, such as training programs, access to learning materials, and mentorship opportunities to help teachers develop professionally.
3. Encouraging collaboration by fostering teamwork among teachers, enabling them to share innovative teaching methods and best practices.
4. Leading by example in terms of discipline and commitment, inspiring teachers to uphold similar standards in their professional conduct.
5. Recognizing and rewarding achievements, offering appreciation for teachers' contributions and innovations to boost morale and motivation.

These strategies have been effective in increasing teacher motivation and engagement, leading to a more dynamic, innovative, and disciplined teaching environment.

Challenges in Implementing Servant Leadership

Despite the positive impact of servant leadership, several challenges were identified in its implementation, including:

1. Resistance to change, as some teachers were hesitant to adopt new methods or adjust to new expectations.
2. Lack of resources and facilities, such as limited access to technology and professional development opportunities.
3. Insufficient support from parents and government authorities, making it difficult to implement new initiatives effectively.

4. High teacher workloads, preventing them from fully engaging in additional training or innovation efforts.
5. Differences in perception between school leaders and teachers regarding the concept of innovation and discipline, leading to misalignment in expectations.

To overcome these challenges, school leaders focused on open communication, continuous professional development, and fostering a flexible work culture, making it easier for teachers to embrace and sustain innovative practices.

DISCUSSION

The Impact of Servant Leadership on Innovation and Work Discipline

The findings indicate that servant leadership plays a critical role in fostering a culture of innovation and work discipline among teachers. School principals who adopt a servant leadership approach prioritize the needs of their teachers, provide necessary resources, and create an environment where educators feel valued and motivated to innovate.

The impact of servant leadership on innovation is particularly significant. Teachers who feel supported by their leaders are more likely to experiment with new teaching methods, incorporate technology into their lessons, and adopt student-centered learning strategies. Principals who provide opportunities for professional development and recognize teachers' contributions create an environment where innovation is encouraged and rewarded.

Furthermore, servant leadership also influences work discipline among teachers. By setting a strong example through their own discipline and professionalism, principals inspire teachers to maintain punctuality, commitment, and responsibility in their work. Schools that have successfully implemented servant leadership report improvements in teacher attendance, lesson preparedness, and adherence to professional ethics.

Effectiveness of Servant Leadership Strategies

The study found that the strategies implemented by school leaders at SDN Wilayah V Mutiara were effective in enhancing teacher engagement, motivation, and performance. Key successes include:

1. Increased innovation in teaching, with teachers more willing to adopt new methods and technologies.
2. Higher levels of work discipline, reflected in improved teacher attendance and lesson planning.
3. Greater collaboration among teachers, leading to a more productive and supportive work environment.

These outcomes highlight how servant leadership contributes to the development of a school culture that values continuous improvement and professional growth.

Challenges in Implementation

While the benefits of servant leadership are evident, certain challenges remain. The limited availability of resources, resistance to change, and misalignment in expectations pose obstacles to fully realizing the potential of servant leadership. Overcoming these challenges requires a structured approach, including:

1. Ongoing leadership training for school principals to strengthen their ability to apply servant leadership principles effectively.
2. Providing teachers with greater access to professional development opportunities to encourage continuous learning and innovation.
3. Developing stronger partnerships with parents, government agencies, and educational organizations to secure the necessary resources and support.

By addressing these challenges, servant leadership can be more effectively implemented, leading to a lasting positive impact on teacher performance and student learning outcomes.

Recommendations for Strengthening Servant Leadership in Schools

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations can be made to enhance the role of servant leadership in fostering a culture of innovation and work discipline:

1. Regular training programs for school leaders and teachers on servant leadership principles and their application in education.
2. Enhanced access to resources, including technology, teaching materials, and professional development workshops.
3. Encouraging a culture of collaboration, where teachers have platforms to share ideas and best practices.
4. Recognition and incentive programs, to reward teachers for their contributions to innovation and work discipline.
5. Strengthening school-community partnerships, engaging parents and local authorities in supporting educational initiatives.

By implementing these measures, servant leadership can further improve educational quality, enhance teacher satisfaction, and create a more innovative and disciplined learning environment.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The role of servant leadership in fostering a culture of innovation and work discipline among teachers at SDN Wilayah V Mutiara, Pidie, is carried out by prioritizing the needs of others without expecting material rewards or power. It involves building strong relationships with stakeholders, enhancing teacher discipline and performance, fostering a culture of care and personal growth, and creating a collaborative school community.

The strategies employed include open communication between the principal and teachers, understanding their challenges, and providing necessary support and resources for innovation. The principal encourages collaboration among teachers through discussions and teamwork, sets clear

expectations regarding discipline and responsibilities, and serves as a role model in maintaining discipline. This approach empowers teachers, increasing their motivation to innovate while maintaining work discipline.

Challenges in implementing servant leadership in this context include resistance to change, inconsistency in adherence to discipline policies, limited resources for innovation, and differing perceptions between school leaders and teachers regarding innovation and discipline. External factors such as lack of support from the government or parents and time constraints for professional development further complicate the process.

The implementation of servant leadership in fostering a culture of innovation and discipline among teachers should be reinforced with strong commitment and consistency from school leaders. Leadership training for principals should be prioritized to enhance their ability to apply servant leadership effectively.

Strategic approaches should be carefully selected to ensure efficiency and feasibility, considering available resources and existing school conditions. Regular training sessions should be scheduled to sustain teachers' innovation and discipline efforts.

School leaders and stakeholders must remain proactive in addressing challenges by promoting clear communication, empowering teachers, and ensuring continuous support. By fostering an environment where teachers feel valued and motivated, servant leadership can successfully drive a culture of innovation and discipline in the school.

ADVANCED RESEARCH

1. Future research could explore the effectiveness of servant leadership in different educational settings, such as urban and rural schools, to compare its impact on teacher innovation and discipline culture.
2. Further studies could examine the role of digital technology in supporting servant leadership practices, particularly in enhancing communication, collaboration, and professional development among teachers.

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