

A Principal's Strategy in Developing Organisational Culture for Improving the Academic Achievements of High School Students

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The purpose of this study is to describe the principal's strategy in developing organisational culture to improve the academic achievements of high school students. The method used is a qualitative method with an ethnographic approach. The data collection techniques used observation, interviews, and study of documentation. The respondents were the principal as the leader in the school, educators and education staff, students, and parents. In analysing data, the authors use cross-site data analysis. The result of the study in three schools is that the principals' leadership style is transformational. The principal's implement strategies in developing organisational culture to improve student academic achievement, namely: (1) Socialising with the school community (educators and education staff, students, parents, and school committees), by providing an understanding of the vision and mission of the school, (2) Maintaining an organisational culture with visionaries, communicators, motivators, innovators and educators; (3) Improving organisational culture by (a) encouraging educators and education personnel to always be eager to improve themselves in improving students' academic achievement, (b) encouraging educators and education personnel to always maintain solidarity and togetherness, as a manifestation of school togetherness; (c) encouraging the teachers to improve their abilities through further study, in order to improve their competence.



Key words: *Principal's Strategy, Academic Achievement, Organisational Culture.*

Introduction

Over the last few decades, the education system throughout the world has experienced a wave of privatisation and market-based reforms (Hargreaves & Shirley 2012; Sikkink, 2015). This resulted in major changes experienced by the education system in the world. One of the changes was that school institutions had to prepare students to be able to work in a fast-changing world, and to use technology that had not even been created (Stoll & Kools, 2017).

The education system in Indonesia also underwent various changes, but unfortunately it was not followed by student achievement. According to PISA 2015, the quality of the education system in Indonesia ranked 62th out of 72 countries surveyed (OECD, 2016), especially for the level of high school education. There was a lot of negative news about education at the high school level. We can read in almost all media, both print and online media, about high school students brawling to the point that it took lives, high school students using drugs, teachers slapping their students for arriving late, teachers striking, high school principals and teachers committing immoral acts and many more problems that arise in high school and the last was high school students involved in a demonstration.

How can high school students improve their performance and compete with other countries if there are still problems? The problem must be resolved immediately by the parties concerned so that the various problems that occur do not arise again. Looking at various problems that occur, the problem is about human behaviour per individual because the characteristics of human behaviour per individual are family welfare (economy), pride, and social competence (Brendgen, Wanner, Vitaro, 2010; Buhs, 2005). It is also related to academic achievement.

Human behaviour and successful relationships between principals, teachers and educators, students, parents, and school committees are carried out routinely, transparently, openly, and trustworthily (Singh, 2004) where a culture is developed in a place where such behaviour does not deviate from the rules or order of the organisation. A culture that is carried out in an organisation is called organisational culture. The source of a quality that affects organisations in both public and private sectors throughout the world is the concept of cultural quality and cultural development within the organisation (Acker-Hocevar, 1996).

Educational institutions as well as effective school models, developed by Scheerens and Deem, DeLotell & Kelly, provide an overview of one factor that has an organisational culture, such as achievement orientation, ideology or joint mission, cohesion and collaboration among teachers (Scheerens, 2013; Deem, DeLotell & Kelly, 2015) Organisational culture is identified as being able to increase motivation and performance, and realising the mission of



a school (Levine & Lezotte, 1990; Negi-Sisik & Gursel, 2013). While Salmon, Hilman and Martimore research shows that organisational culture can improve academic achievement (Sammons, Hillman, & Mortimore, 1995). Organisational culture has an important role in improving quality, especially student achievement. Successful school reform requires a paradigm shift that begins by unlocking the existing school culture before efforts are made to integrate various reform variables (Weller, 1998).

School reformation certainly starts with the leader, the school principal. The principal is responsible for the organisation of the school. For this reason, the principal's leadership is very important because one of the main objectives of the school is to educate students to achieve academic and non-academic achievement. Various studies have shown that the principal's leadership has a direct impact on academic achievement (Pashiardis 2004; Kythreotis, Pashiardis & Kynakides, 2010) There are also studies showing that the principal's leadership has no direct impact (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1990; Witziers & Bosker, 2003), These studies show that there is still doubt whether the principal's leadership has an impact on student academic achievement or not. The objective of this study is to reveal how the principal's strategy in developing an organisational culture improves the academic achievement of high school students.

Literature Review

Principal's Leadership

The concept of "leadership" seems to be very influential in the life of school organisations. However, the concept of leadership as a whole has not been defined. There are five types of leadership according to Robbins (2006), namely: (1) Traits of model leadership; (2) Model of Situational Leadership, (3) Model of Effective Leadership; (4) Model of Transformational Leadership, (5) Supportive Leadership Model.

Leadership is the ability to influence the members of an organisation so that they are willing to work together to achieve the goals of the organisation (Yukl, 2012). The relationship between leaders and employees has a significant influence on the successful implementation of management (Sommer & Merritt, 1994). According to Sergiovanni and Denning, leadership is not an innate quality or certain personality traits, so that organisational leaders in schools must have professional competence and organisational skills, and must be able to find their actions in various theories (Sergiovanni, 2002; Denning, 2005).

The study of ideas in the framework of a centralised system as in Greece, in terms of school principals, relates to the operation of school administration as an organisation through bureaucratic procedures that involve routine tasks and conductive administration in schools



(Pashiardis, 2001), but school leaders must also become knowledge leaders (Leung 2010, Kurland, Peretz, & Hertz-Lazarowitz, 2010). In addition, the principal is also responsible for building a culture of teaching and learning in schools (Fink Resnick, 2001) Therefore, it requires leaders or principals who have the skills to lead diverse members of teams (Groves & Feyerherm, 2011).

The challenge of the education system changes requires that principals always improve their experience and knowledge to make decisions in the face of increasing internal and external pressure in schools (Leithwood, 2004). In addition to having an academic assignment, the principal also has another task which is to create an organisational culture (NegiS-isik & Gursel, 2013). Therefore, a leadership element from the principal is needed in the initiation process and which supports the development of quality culture in the organisation (Berry, 1997, Grace, 1995).

Organisational Culture

Culture is a fundamental component of an organisation and its quality indicators are complex, multi-dimensional, and multilevel ideas (Tzianakopoulou, Manesis, 2018). The single definition of organisational culture has proven to be very difficult to understand (Livari & Huisman, 2007), but most researchers provide an understanding that school organisational culture is a system of shared values and beliefs that results in norms of behaviour and establishes the way of school life. Martin & Siehl (1983) provide an understanding that organisational culture is the values, attitudes, beliefs and customs that are shared by the organisation. Whereas Lumby & Foskett (2011) note that metaphorical language used can reflect and encourage inaccuracies in thinking, where there is an illusion that the complex nature of educational organisations can be adequately captured by a word or phrase.

Organisational culture is the overall values, norms, assumptions, beliefs, ideology, language, rituals, and myths (Peterson, 2002) that are owned by members in the organisation. O'reilly (1991) views organisational culture as an observable norm and value which characterises an organisation so that organisational culture is seen to affect the aspects of its operations and its members become more prominent so that positive culture is usually maintained because if the organisational culture is to be replaced, it will be very risky to introduce new elements (Devi Ramachandran, Choy Choong & Ismail, 2011)

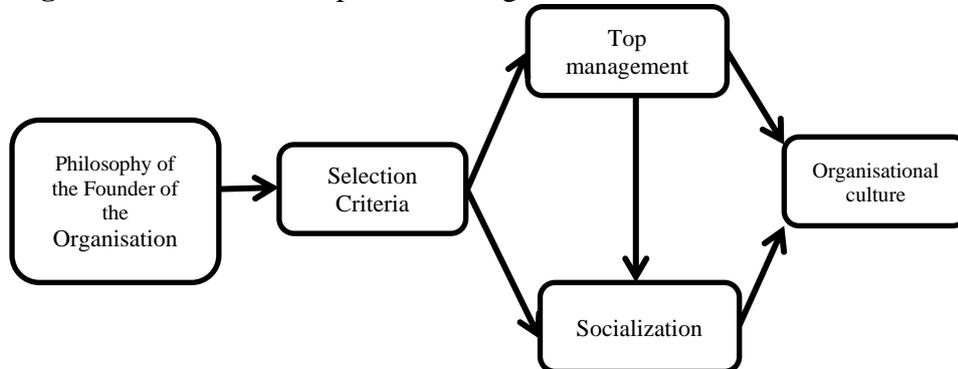
Organisational culture is profound because it is the essence of the organisation (Pinheiro, Mesquita & Matos, 2017); it is very broad because it influences all aspects, and it is stable, giving meaning and predictability to its members so that it becomes a manifestation of the climate of an organisation (Ekvall, Ryhammer, 1999; Rentsch, 1999) and the climate is an element of organisational culture. These values then manifest themselves in actions and

structures on the surface, namely observable artifacts such as behavioural (e.g. behaviour, rituals) and structural (e.g. physical environment, technology) patterns that are real representations of underlying cultural values (Schein, 2010).

It is very important to note that the concept of culture always refers to certain groups of people (Alavi, Kayworth, & Leidner, 2005). Depending on the context, this group can be a nation, a company, a work group such as the neighbourhood group, family, profession or even a volleyball team or soccer team, so that the culture can represent an organisation itself (Burrello & Reitzug, 1993).

Robbins, (2006) provides the concept that organisational culture is a shared system in which the system is followed by various members so that the system becomes a differentiator or characteristic of the organisation. Furthermore, Robbins (2006) explains the cultural function which are; (1) being a differentiator or characteristic between one organisation and another, (2) being a kind of sense or identity for members of the organisation, (3) giving easiness to commit to the organisation to promote more concern to organisational interests rather than to self-interest, (4) increasing social stratification. If described in a process, the formation of organisational culture can be seen in Figure 1.

Figure 1. The formation process of organisational culture



Looking at Figure 1, it can be said that in the process of forming organisational culture, the ideas, philosophy of the founder of the organisation are the initial milestones, then selected according to organisational criteria. Top management has an obligation to provide socialisation to members below them an understanding of the ideas, philosophy of the organisation. Organisational culture in schools is built by all stakeholders or the school community, principals, educators and education personnel, students and school committees who all have expectations of their psychosocial needs, and their development and education will be maintained (Kent, 2006).

There are several types of organisational culture according to Cameron (2006), namely: (1) Clan culture; just like extended family, leaders or heads of the organisations are considered as mentors and may even be considered as parent figures; (2) Adhocratic culture; this organisation is a dynamic, entrepreneurial, and creative place to work. Leaders are considered as innovators and risk takers; (3) Hierarchical culture; this organisation is a very formal and structured place to work. The leaders value themselves as being good coordinators and organise and think efficiently; (4) Market culture; this is a result-oriented organisation so that the main concern is work completion. The character of leaders is industrious and tough.

There are nine steps of development of organisational culture according to Kuppler (2013), namely: (a) Evaluating culture and performance, (b) Clarifying the vision, (c) Clarifying expected values and behaviours, (d) Clarifying strategic priorities, (e) Involving teamwork, (f) Clarifying and identifying supportive aspects, (g) Maintaining a management system for priorities and goals, (h) Managing habits and communication routines, (i) Building motivation throughout the process.

Academic Achievement

Several variables affect academic achievement, namely school principals (MacNeil, 2009), gender (Sarah, 2017; Chavez, 2014; D'Lima, 2014), time management (Aduke, 2015; Dalli, 2014), instructional organisational capacity, academic capacity, and teacher stability (Steele, Spencer & Aronson, 2002; Heck, 2010), parents (Fuligni, 1997; Fuligni, 2001; Taylor & Krahn, 2005), peers (Lynch, Lerner, Leventhal 2013; Gutman, Midgley, 2000), cultural familiarity with the education system (Deyhele & Swisher, 1997), language proficiency (Lansford, Deater-Deckard & Bornstein, 2007), socioeconomic factors (Fuligni & Fuligni, 2007), academic self-concept (Cokley & Patel, 2007), and academic motivation (Fuligni, 2001), and quantitative and qualitative measurement tools in assessing student learning outcomes (Ben-Tov, 2019)

Despite the fact that in general, intelligence significantly influences life outcomes (Neisser, Boodoo, Bouchard, 1996), there is a belief saying that whether intelligence, which can be forged or improved, can have a significant impact on academic achievement or not (Burnette, Boyle, VanEpps, Pollack and Finkel, 2013; Romero, Master, Paunesku, Dweck and Gross, 2014). Despite the fact that the theory of implied intelligence tends to influence student achievement, especially in the academic field (Blackwell, Trzesniewski, and Dweck, 2007), it is an important academic factor.

Academic achievement is the status of student learning and it refers to the knowledge gained and skills developed during their academic careers, that are assessed by school authorities with the help of teachers or standardised tests (Arora, 2016; Parveez, Tariq, 2016). So it can



be concluded that academic achievement is the result of learning skills in basic skills and knowledge in the academic field at school (Kozhabergenova et al, 2018).

Methods

This study was conducted at a Senior High School in Surakarta City, Central Java Province, Indonesia. This study aims to find out the principal's strategy in developing organisational culture to improve academic achievement. To get this data, the authors must understand people holistically using various techniques (eg drawing, visualising, keeping a diary) to build understanding of research and it's relationship to the topic being studied (Creswell, 2012).

Related to data collection and data analysis, authors used a multi-site study design. Multi-site study research is a method used to conduct direct investigations with a natural research setting, focusing attention on a phenomenon that is investigated thoroughly and in detail (Bogdan, Biklen, 2007; Ulfatin, 2015). This study was conducted in three high schools in Surakarta City, Central Java Province, Indonesia, namely Diponegoro Islamic High School, Muhammadiyah 6 Surakarta High School, and Yosodipuro Surakarta High School. The selection of these three locations is considering some aspects: (1) these schools are more than 15 years old; (2) the development of the schools is not too significant, meaning that the school is developing but not rapidly compared to other schools; (3) these are the final choice of prospective students who want to continue to the high school level; (4) Viewed from the facilities and infrastructure, students have been facilitated, meaning that it is in accordance with student needs. Seeing the various results of initial observations from this study, the authors provide suggestions that there is a need to develop organisational culture by the principal. This is the reason that underlies the authors to conduct a study in these three school locations related to the principal's strategy in developing organisational culture to improve student academic achievement.

To obtain these data, the authors used three data collection techniques, namely observation, interviews, and documentation studies. The main sources or respondents from this study are each school principal as the one who holds the authority in the school organisation. This is in accordance with Guba and Lincolns (2005) saying that the first selected informants are people who have the authority, special knowledge, and special status about the situation that is the focus of study. The next respondents were the educators and education staff, students, parents and school committees in each study location; while the objective of this study is the principal's strategy in developing organisational culture to improve academic achievement.



Results

The results of the interview, observation and document study show that the organisational culture in the three schools is achievement, honesty, responsibility, religion, cooperation, creativity, pleasure, friendship, wisdom, friendly communication, discipline, and responsibility. Development of organisational culture is carried out by the three principals through various strategies. **Firstly**, the formation of organisational culture through the school principal starts from the formation of vision and mission of the school. The making of the vision and mission of this school involves educators, education staff, and school committees. After the vision and mission of the school are made, the principal conducts socialisation to realise the vision and mission. **Second**, socialisation is given to teachers and educators, students, and parents the first time students enter the school.

Third, the next step is to maintain organisational culture. The third step of school principals in maintaining organisational culture is almost similar, namely giving an example, shown by: (a) the ability to answer various obstacles in realising the vision and mission of the school (visionary); (b) the persistence to always influence subordinates through direct communication by emphasising the importance of values, commitment, and beliefs to achieve goals (communicators); (c) the persistent attempt to provide motivation and inspiration to subordinates to always participate optimally in providing ideas in order to realise the vision and mission of the school (motivator); (d) the provided examples to the principal's subordinates to always work effectively and efficiently (innovators); (e) the given opportunities for the principal's subordinates to increase their work knowledge and professionalism (educator).

Fourth, the next step is to improve organisational culture. The three principals began with evaluating the various organisational cultures that had been implemented in the school. If something was missing or it was already not in accordance with the vision and mission of the school, then the culture of the organisation was evaluated. If there was something missing from the existing organisational culture, then it needed to be immediately added to the other organisational culture from the beginning, which is the socialisation with school community about the new organisational culture. The principal's steps in enhancing organisational culture are by: (a) Encouraging educators and education personnel to be eager to always improve themselves in increasing student academic achievement; (b) Encouraging educators and education personnel to always maintain grouping and togetherness, as a manifestation of school togetherness; (c) encouraging the ability of teachers to improve their abilities through further study, in order to increase competence.

For more details, the principal's strategy in developing organisational culture to improve student academic achievement can be seen in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Development of organisational culture to improve student academic achievement

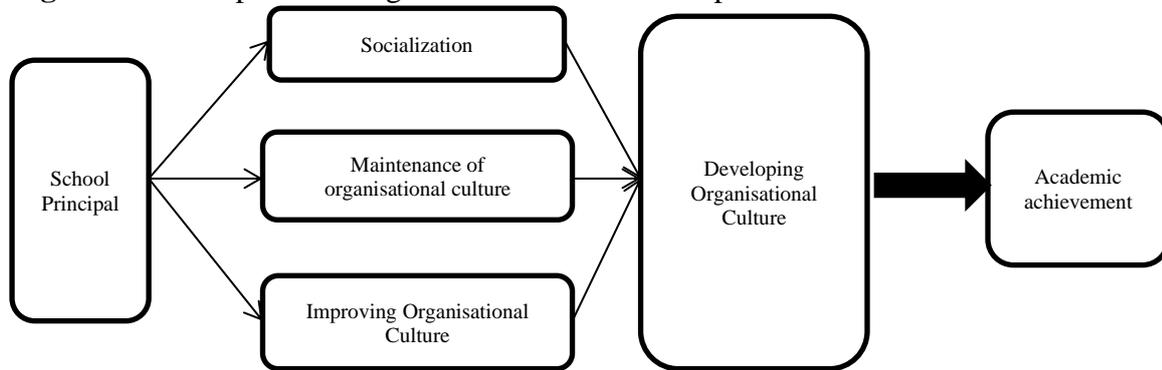


Figure 2 shows the development of organisational culture to improve academic achievement through various strategies, which consist of **step one**, the three principals carry out the socialisation of the vision and mission of the school to school community, namely educators and education staff, students, parents and school committees. This is done so that all school members understand the various organisational cultures implemented at the school. **In the second step**, the three principals maintain organisational culture. **In the third step**, the three principals try to improve the culture of the organisation.

Discussion

The principal's leadership has the same character as the transformational leadership style, namely being able to influence various components of the school; one of which is a component of human resources (educators and education personnel, students, parents and school committees) to continue to improve themselves by staying oriented towards student academic achievement. Transformational leadership is proven to put emphasis on psychological empowerment (Waldman & Yammarino, 1999; Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999) because psychological empowerment is a very important factor in supporting a conducive organisational culture (Sotirofski, 2014). A positive correlation was also shown in Song, Kolb, Lee, and Kim's research that transformational leadership consistently influences the climate of an organisation (Song, Kolb, Lee, & Kim, 2012).

Various studies have shown that transformational leadership has a significant impact on the development of organisational culture (Ogbonna & Harris, 2000; Sarros, Cooper, & Santora, 2008). As a process in transformational leadership, the school principal socialises the vision and mission of the school to the school community (Blase & Blase, 1997; Kurnaz & Arslan, 2011). The socialisation of this vision and mission is to provide school members of community with an understanding of the various values contained in the vision and mission (Hallinger, Bickman, Davis, 1996; Leithwood & Sun, 2012).

Leaders must share their vision, thoughts, knowledge, skills and strengths with everyone (Chibu, 2018), so that school principals make breakthrough visions with decentralised systems, school autonomy and flexibility, assignment of roles and substantial initiatives as cultural expressions (Pashiardis, 2001). In fact, the effective elements of organisational culture highlight the principal functions to bring changes, innovation and vision exceeding the bureaucratic dimension from its role as one of the important factors in the success of the principal.

The process of forming an organisational culture starts from the ideas, and values of the founders of the organisation which are selected according to the criteria of the characteristics of the organisation (Robbins; 2006). Leaders have a significant share of their members about this understanding (Robbins, 2006), so that in its implementation, the leader will oversee, maintain, and develop the culture of the organisation. Burhanuddin, Supriyanto and Adi (2018) stated that the formation of organisational culture is determined by three elements, namely the situation and conditions of subordinates, the strength of the leader, and the structure of the organisation.

According to Figure 1, the process of the formation of organisational culture as stated by Robbins (2006) and the development of organisational culture in the study location described in Figure 2, it can be said that they are almost the same. The formation process of the organisation starts from ideas and values; then there is interference by the principal in forming, maintaining, and developing organisational culture. Then the development of organisational culture at the study location can be explained as follows:

Firstly, the formation of organisational culture through the principal starts from making the vision and mission of the school. Making the vision and mission of the school involves educators and education staff, and school committees. This socialisation is held to provide an understanding of how organisational culture is implemented by realising the vision and mission of the school.

Second, maintenance of organisational culture is carried out by the principal in two ways, formally and informally. Preservation or maintenance of organisational culture is formally carried out by the obligation of new members to follow debriefing, training participants to introduce the culture that exists and applies while in school. While the informal way is by introducing the existing culture by means of direct socialisation, photocopying behaviour and manners, because this is more easily absorbed, because it deals directly with the participants. The school principal preserves and maintains organisational culture with strategies as follows:



- 1) The principal responds to various obstacles, nurturing the culture of the school organisation with high energy and commitment to achieve the vision and mission of the school (visionary). This is consistent with research from Katz; Berson, Avolio, Popper saying that visionary leaders are those who are successful in promoting a shared vision with great commitment and managing to connect with other organisational members (Katz, 1999; Berson, Avolio, & Popper 2001). While Yoeli, Berkovich showed in their research that successful leaders are leaders who are able to promote vision and mission with a great commitment to accommodate the desires of subordinates with a high work ethic (Yoeli & Berkovich, 2010).
- 2) The principal always tries to communicate directly with the school community in order to influence their subordinates. This communication is important to emphasise the values, commitment, assumptions and beliefs to achieve the goals of the school's vision and mission (communicator). One important role of communication is to stretch boundaries. Organisations need to listen, respect and respond to the environment strategically. For this reason, the principal's role is to be able to interact with members of different groups (Bettina, Meckel, 2009; Rocha & Granerud, 2011), so that this communication with different members will be able to legitimise the impact of change (Cornelissen & Clarke, 2010; Cornelissen, Holt, & Zundel, 2011).
- 3) The principal acts by motivating and giving inspiration and challenges to the school community. The school principal provides opportunities for the school community to participate maximally in terms of giving ideas about the state of the school organisation in the future (motivator). This is consistent with the research (Katzell & Thompson, 1990; Cenkseven-Onder & Sari, 2009) saying that leaders are able to remove obstacles and improve results through needs and motivators.
- 4) The principal encourages the school community to rethink the way or system of work to complete their tasks (innovator). One example is an idea for teacher development because teacher development is one way to improve student achievement (Shreah, Zidan, 2017). In addition, research conducted by Crum and Sherany (2008) shows that successful principals are capable of providing innovation to schools and the school environment. One example is developing teachers professionally (Louis, 2007). Whereas Bredeson, Johanson (2000) state that school principals have a significant impact on the development of the teaching profession by identifying four areas, namely; (a) principals as instructional leaders to students; (b) creation of a learning environment; (c) direct involvement in the design, delivery and content of professional development; and (d) assessment of the results of professional development.
- 5) The principal always provides opportunities for teachers and educators to improve their work knowledge and professionalism (educators). Principals as educators must at least be

able to advance, instil and improve: (a) mental values related to attitudes and character; (b) moral values (Cherkowski, Walker, and Kutsyuruba, 2015), related to the good and bad teaching of behaviour, rights and obligations of each educator and educational staff. Begley (2006) builds a high awareness of moral values and sensitivity to these values that will create a conducive environment in schools, while it is known that teaching and leading in schools is a moral activity (Furman, 2004; Johansson, 2004; Langlois, Lapointe, 2010); (c) physical value, related to physical, health or maybe even outward appearance; and (d) artistic value, related to art, culture and beauty.

Third, the improvement of organisational culture is carried out by the principal by increasing involvement, empowerment and maintenance of interpersonal relationships, so that the quality of the implementation of organisational culture includes the values of enthusiasm, togetherness, mistakeness and life behaviour values. Various attempts were made by principals to develop organisational culture, namely:

- 1) Encouraging educators and education personnel to be eager to always improve themselves in increasing students' academic achievement professionally, by developing a collaborative culture. This is in accordance with DuFour's research, Mattos (2013) which states that principals want to improve academic achievement by analysing evidence of student learning with strategies for creating collaborative culture and collective responsibility of community professional learning, not by micro-management instruction;
- 2) Encouraging school communities to always maintain grouping and togetherness, as a manifestation of school togetherness so as to create a comfortable climate for the learning process (Lynch, Lerner, Leventhal 2013; Mitchell, Willower (1992);
- 3) Encouraging the teachers to improve their abilities through further study, in order to increase competence. This is in accordance with research from Dinham and Scott (1998) saying that teachers grow and develop when they find positive efforts affecting students.

Conclusion

This research is related to the principal's strategy in developing organisational culture to improve academic achievement in high schools in Indonesia. Organisational culture emerges from complex, multi-level ideas where they change; development is restructured into a philosophy in management education so that it demands a holistic approach to the educational process, strategic orientation, system development and values.

Organisational culture is a fundamental characteristic of an educational organisation especially school organisations. Organisational culture contributes to the formation of the



character and way of thinking and behaviour of its members, while also influencing the performance of educators and education personnel as well as student academic achievement. Leadership and organisational culture are like two sides of a coin that are interconnected. Therefore, one of the most important tasks performed by the principal as the leader of a school institution is to create and manage organisational culture so that high organisational culture increases student academic achievement.



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