WHY DOES INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVE MATTER IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SCHOOL REFORM IN INDONESIAN SCHOOLS

by Umiati Jawas

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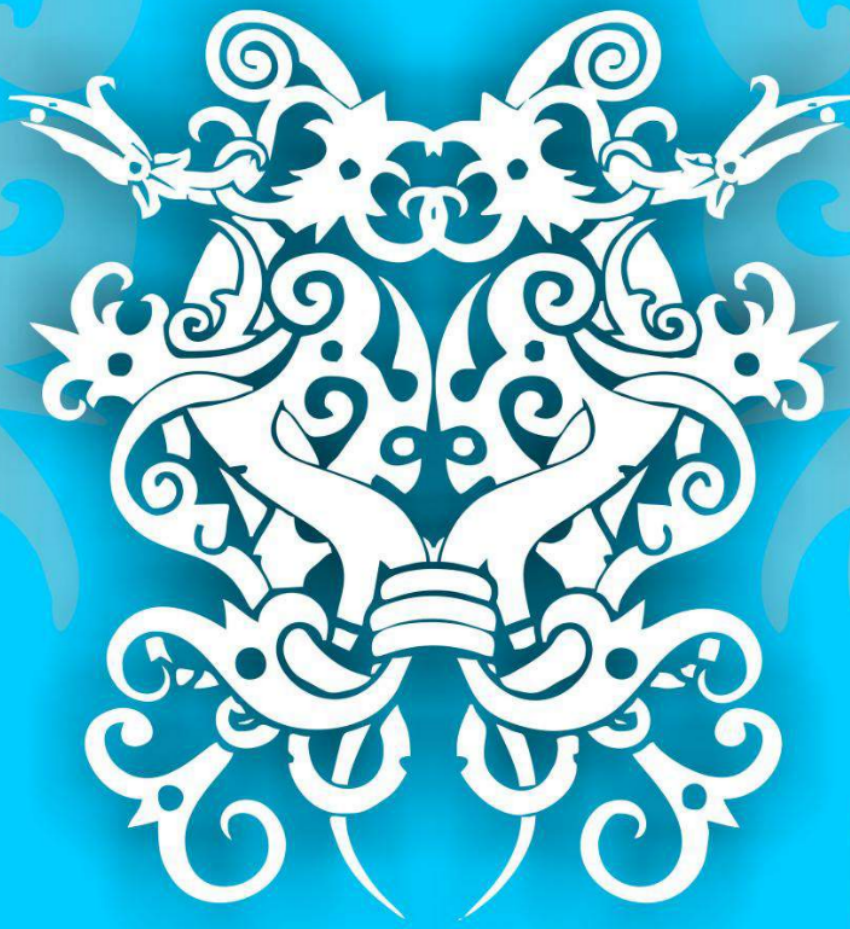

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FAKULTAS BAHASA DAN SASTRA

UNIVERSITAS KANJURUHAN MALANG

Jl. S. Supriadi No. 48 Malang

Telp: (0341) 801488 (ext. 341)

Fax: (0341) 831532

KATA PENGANTAR

Puji syukur kehadirat Allah SWT atas terselenggarakannya **Konferensi Nasional Sastra, Bahasa, dan Budaya (KS2B) 2017** dengan tema **"Sastra, Bahasa, Budaya, dan Pengajarannya di Era Digital"** yang diselenggarakan oleh Fakultas Bahasa dan Sastra (FBS) Universitas Kanjuruhan Malang pada hari Sabtu, 6 Mei 2017 bertempat di Auditorium Multikultural Universitas Kanjuruhan Malang (UNIKAMA).

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Besar harapan saya penyelenggaraan KS2B yang kedua ini akan diteruskan dengan penyelenggaraan pada tahun-tahun berikutnya sehingga dapat terus memberikan manfaat yang sebesar-besarnya untuk perkembangan dan pengajaran ilmu Bahasa, Sastra, dan Budaya di Indonesia.

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DAFTAR ISI

WHY DOES INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVE MATTER IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SCHOOL REFORM IN INDONESIAN SCHOOLS?

Umiati Jawas
Faculty of Languages and Literature, Universitas Kanjuruhan Malang
umiati_jawas@unikama.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This article will review the relevance of instructional roles of school principals in the attainment of school reform objective in Indonesia. Such roles have been argued by many scholars to have significant impact on school reform process in terms of improved student's learning outcomes as well as teacher's teaching performance. School reform is a change in learning and other related internal conditions through a systematic and sustained effort to accomplish educational goals more effectively. It aims at raising students' achievements by focusing on instructional process and improving schools' capacity for providing better education. From reviews of empirical studies, similar emphases are found among school reform characteristics and instructional leadership dimensions. They require the practices of stimulating leadership, challenging expectations and learning climate, and frequent evaluations. The main goal is for a change in the teaching and learning process that is oriented to high expectations of student achievement. The reviews also point out the instructional roles of principals as school leaders in contributing to the growth of student learning and development through teachers as a mediating variable.

Keywords: instructional leadership, school reform implementation, Indonesian schools, student achievement, teacher performance

A. INTRODUCTION

To improve school effectiveness and provide better learning for students, there have been consistent global efforts by educational policy makers to reform schools by increasing their public accountability (Leithwood & Day, 2008; Pont, Nusche, & David, 2008; Robinson, 2010; Sofo, Fitzgerald, & Jawas, 2012).The demand on schools of public accountability, particularly for improved student learning achievements, has brought substantial pressures for principals as school leaders, who are expected and even scrutinised to show the contribution of their work (Gunter & Fitzgerald, 2008; Gurr & Drysdale, 2012; Leithwood & Day, 2008). Effective school leaders are now recognised based on their ability to ensure academic success for every student in their school (Davies, 2005; Donaldson, 2006; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Southworth, 2005). These pressures on principals' capabilities, however, provide the opportunity to prove the importance of school leadership (Leithwood & Day, 2008). Sx

An underlying reason for the increased accountability of school leadership on student learning outcomes is driven by the aspiration of the authorities as the policy makers to minimise the constant gap in learning achievement between various social and ethnic groups and their confidence on the ability of school leaders to achieve this objective (OECD, 2001 cited in Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008). The confidence of the public and politicians in the capacity of school leaders to make a substantial difference to

student learning outcomes is supported by research examining the impact of leadership on school effectiveness and improvement, that consistently recognises the roles of school leadership in school and teaching effectiveness (Chapman, 2003; Day, et al., 2008; Harris, 2008; Robinson, et al., 2008; McDougall, Saunders, & Goldenberg, 2007; Robinson, et al., 2008; Southworth, 2002). The literature also acknowledges the quality of school leadership as a determining key to sustainable school organisational learning and improvement (Datnow, 2005; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Robinson, et al., 2008).

B. OBJECTIVES

This article specifically discusess the relevance of instructional leadership in Indonesian school reform context by particularly looking at the current condition of Indonesian educational performance as measured in international indexes and the scholarly analysis on leadership practices on Indonesian schools. Review on instructional leadership for school improvement is also included to build its relevance in the context of Indonesian school reform. The primary interest of this review is to identify issues surrounding the gap between the goals of the school reform and students' educational achievements and to propose the relevance of instructional leadership in Indonesian school reform.

C. LITERATURE REVIEW

It is problematic that research has shown different findings on the effectiveness of school leadership, particularly on the effects of school leadership on student learning outcomes. While some empirical studies in the U.S., U.K, France and the Netherlands have shown a positive relationship between school leadership and student outcomes (Bush, 2003; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003; Opdenakker & Van Damme, 2007; Southworth, 2005), other empirical studies conducted in the same countries indicate the inconsistency of these two variables in size and direction (Opdenakker & Van Damme, 2007). Although principals can have measurable effects on student learning outcomes, these effects are more likely to be influenced by other school and classroom factors (Supovitz, Sirinides, & May, 2010). Research evidence in Australia has also indicated the indirect relationship between school leadership and students' learning outcomes (Gurr, Drysdale, & Mulford, 2007; Silins & Mulford, 2004).

The contrasting evidence of the direct relationship between leadership and student learning has led to the popularity of the indirect influence of school leadership on student learning in recent leadership literature (Opdenakker & Van Damme, 2007). Indirect models have been shown to have a greater impact on student performance compared to direct models (Gurr, et al., 2007; Opdenakker & Van Damme, 2007; Southworth, 2005).The literature suggests that although principals can have quantifiable effects on student learning performance, these effects are mostly influenced by other aspects of school life which subsequently affect what and how teachers teach in classroom (Supovitz, Sirinades, & May, 2010). Accordingly, more leadership research has been conducted to examine a range of other leadership activities in schools that influence instructional practices.

School climate has been identified as one of the mediating variables between school leadership and student learning outcomes. Teacher-student interaction and professional culture are found to be a contributing factor to improved learning outcomes (Hill & Rowe, 1998). A clear school mission has a positive effect on students' reading achievement (Hallinger, Bickman, & Davis, 1996). Instructional leadership behaviours of school principals influence the behaviours of teachers and students' learning experiences (Hoy & Miskel, 2005). Principals who had a strong academic focus and

were committed to support this with resources foster students' learning achievements (Alig-Mielcarek & Hoy, 2005). School leadership and student learning outcomes are also mediated by teachers (Gurr, Drysdale, & Mulford, 2007; Silins & Mulford, 2004). Principals indirectly influence student outcomes in reading and mathematics through feedback and evaluation practices that shape teachers' job satisfaction and achievement orientation (Bosker, De Vos, Witziers, 2000).

Research examining possible direct correlations between school leadership and learning outcomes has thrown up some explanations of the indirect relationship between these two variables. First, the methodologies employed by many of the studies might have significantly underestimated the actual effects (Nettles & Herrington, 2007). Second, studies on effective leadership behaviours to improve instructional quality typically observed a limited range of leadership behaviours that restricted comparisons across studies (Louis, Dretzke, & Wahlstrom, 2010). Third, studies on school leadership focused not on actual student outcomes but rather on other secondary results of principals' practices (Nettles & Herrington, 2007). Finally, studies have frequently assumed that school leadership has influenced students' learning because it changed the behaviours of teachers, and neglected leadership practices that could improve classroom teaching and learning activities (Louis, et al., 2010).

Time restrictions on performing instructional roles are also argued as a factor contributing to the gap between school leadership and student learning outcomes. Principals are found to be predominantly occupied with performing their organisational functions, rather than creating and encouraging a vision of education (Opdenakker & Van Damme, 2007). The dominance of organisational functions can be linked to the different assumptions about what school leaders are and what they do (Middlehurst, 2008). School leaders are predominantly influenced by the logic of leading reform that does not much appraise the professionalism and quality located in pedagogic expertise and research (Gunter & Fitzgerald, 2008).

Amidst the existing arguments on the relationship of school leadership and student learning, research to understand the contribution of leadership to school improvement and student learning conducted by scholars in many different school contexts has supported the conclusion that school leadership affects learning by creating structural and socio-cultural processes that develop the capacity of schools for academic improvement (Chen, 2008; Cravens & Hallinger, 2012; Ee & Seng, 2008; Fullan, 2007; Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Hallinger & Kantamara, 2000; Robinson,et al., 2008; Southworth, 2002). Successful school leadership is identified by the ability to provide conditions that support effective teaching and learning and the capacity to promote professional learning and change (Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Mulford &Silins, 2009; Robinson, et al., 2008). Therefore, school leadership should see instruction as an important dimension of viable leadership practices. This conclusion brings the relevance of instructional leadership practices.

The introduction of instructional leadership to the leadership domain is driven by the inquiry to understand the capacity of school leaders to make substantial contributions to student learning outcomes (Robinson, et al., 2008) and to examine its role in school improvement programs (Datnow, 2005; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Robinson, et al., 2008). However, the concept of instructional leadership is as various and subjective as the number of scholars who proposed it (Alig-Mielcarek & Hoy, 2005). The existing literature also fails to provide unambiguous and uniform descriptions of this leadership theory (Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 1999). From the diverse concepts of instructional leadership, four central focuses are found that can provide the conceptual framework to understand this type of leadership. Those four focal emphases are students, teachers,

teaching and learning activities, and principals. In a simple definition, instructional leadership can be construed as leadership practices that focus on students and teachers as they engage in teaching and learning activities.

In its earlier introduction, the model of instructional leadership is basically defined, based on a set of job descriptions that principals needed to perform. The roles of principals in instructional leadership have been traditionally described as the practices of communicating high expectations for teachers and students, supervising instruction, monitoring assessment and student progress, coordinating curriculum, promoting a climate for learning, and creating a supportive work environment (Bush, 2003; Marks & Printy, 2003; Reitzug, et al, 2008). In its more recent description, it is seen from some of the behaviours of principals in executing their roles. A current focus of instructional leadership has added the emphasis on teachers' growth into the description. This is done through collaborative inquiry with teachers, creating opportunities for reflection, discourse, and professional growth, and the development of professional learning communities (Bush, 2003; Huffman & Hipp, 2003; Marks & Printy, 2003; Mitchell & Sackney, 2006; Reitzug, et al, 2008; Southworth, 2002). It can be concluded that instructional leadership practices are the activities and responsibilities of school principals in relation to classroom instructions (Goldring,et al., 2009; Nettles & Herrington, 2007; Robinson, 2010).

Research on instructional leadership has acknowledged its substantial contribution to student learning. The effects of instructional leadership on student outcomes were found to be three to four times as great as the effect of transformational leadership (Robinson,et al., 2008).Instructional leadership of school principals was found to be positively related to students' mathematics and reading achievement (Alig-Mielcarek & Hoy, 2005). A 10 percentile point increase in student test scores was found from the improvement of leadership abilities, where a key focus was instructional leadership (Waters, Marzano & McNulty, 2003). Students in schools where leadership was reported to be more focused on teaching and learning outperformed students in schools where such leadership focus did not get much attention (Robinson et al., 2008). In addition, instructional leadership demonstrated by principals influenced how teachers performed their job (Hoy & Miskel, 2005; Opdenakker & Van Damme, 2007). Various instructional leadership practices are found to have positive effects on student outcomes compared to other leadership practices (Robinson et al., 2008). Such instructional leadership practices include promoting and participating in teacher learning and development; establishing goals and expectations; planning, coordinating, and evaluating teaching and curriculum; strategic resourcing and ensuring an orderly and supportive environment.

The practices of instructional leadership also influence teachers and teaching. Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins (2008) found that the way principals directly established positive, successful cultures of teaching and learning in schools had very powerful indirect effects on student outcomes. They also found that the influence of school leaders on teachers' motivation, commitment, and belief about working condition indirectly improved teaching and learning processes. Practices of developing the pedagogical capacities within the school were found to be a key to meeting challenges such as low achievement in particular curriculum areas or of a specific group of students (Penlington, Kington, & Day, 2008). Effective school leaders were distinguished by their focus on critical instructional areas and personal responsibility for instructional matters (Nettles & Herrington, 2007). Developing teachers' capacity and creating opportunities for them to plan and work together on instructional issues contributed to a school's high performance (Nettles & Herrington, 2007; Penlington, et al., 2008).

In addition, a significant amount of research has thrown in increasing evidence that principals do actually have an effect on student learning outcomes (Day, et al., 2008; Leithwood & Day, 2008; Nettles & Herrington, 2007; Pollington, et al., 2008; Louis, et al., 2010; Robinson, 2010; Robinson, et al., 2008). Some research emphasises the principal's knowledge of curriculum content and instructional materials (Louis, et al., 2010; Stein & Nelson, 2003) and other research highlights the presence of the principal's support for improved instruction (Leithwood, 2001; Louis, et al., 2010; O'Donnell & White, 2005). Other research has signified that instructional leadership is a core responsibility for principals (Mangin, 2007; Reitzug, et al., 2008; Robinson, 2010). Research has also shown that principals of effective schools have a strong focus on critical instructional areas (Halverson, et al., 2005).

A main conclusion that could be drawn from the empirical findings is that the practices of instructional leadership substantially improve the performance of students, teachers, school principals, and schools in general. Substantial influence on student learning outcomes is dependent upon the focus and practices of instructional leadership (Robinson, et al., 2008). It appears that in the current wave of global school reform and the increasing demand for school accountability for its learning systems, the practice of instructional leadership cannot be more important than other forms of leadership. School reform requires certain leadership practices that can facilitate mediating variables such teacher motivation, classroom activities, school culture and organisational direction to affect teaching and learning and influence student outcomes (Chapman, 2003; Day, et al., 2008; Harris, 2008). This conclusion underpins the discussion on Indonesian school reform as explained in the following section. The discussion focuses on the contradiction between the goals of school reform and the learning performance of the students.

D. DISCUSSION

The enactment of National Education System Law Number 20 in 2003 marked the beginning of educational reform in Indonesia. This law introduces the practice of decentralisation of educational autonomy in this country. Local governments are endowed with the autonomy to manage primary and secondary schools as the effort to accommodate and promote local characteristics and potential (Ministry of National Education, 2004). This practice of decentralised autonomy was triggered by the transition in the governance system. The collapse of the New Order Era in 1998, prompted by the severe national economic crisis and political turbulence, introduced this nation to the new perspective of a decentralised governance system. The endorsement of the Regional Governance Law Number 22 Year 1999 started the decentralisation process. By virtue of the 1945 Constitution, the Indonesia National Constitution, the law grants freedom to regions to organise regional autonomy to uphold the principles of democracy, community participation, equitable distribution and justice, and the regions' potential and diversity.

After more than a decade of implementation, it becomes crucial to know how far Indonesian school reform has progressed to achieve its expected educational goals. An examination of the Indonesian profile of various indexes, including the Human Development Index (HDI), Education Index (EI), Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), and Progress in International Reading and Literacy Study (PIRLS) indicates substandard performances. Compared to its neighbouring countries, Indonesia's HDI measuring life expectancy, educational attainment, and income have been constantly the lowest for almost three and a half decades (see Table 1). The index in 2008 is worth noting as it was lower by 0.002 points than it was in 2005. Although the decline is minor, it is important

to take into consideration because 2005 was two years after the introduction of school reform to the school system while 2008 was five years after the implementation.

Table 1 Indonesia's and the Neighbouring Countries' HDI Profile

Country	Human Development Index							
	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2008
Singapore	0.729	0.762	0.789	0.827	0.865	0.892	0.922	0.918
Brunei Darussalam	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.894	0.919
Malaysia	0.619	0.662	0.696	0.725	0.763	0.790	0.811	0.823
Thailand	0.615	0.654	0.679	0.712	0.745	0.761	0.781	0.786
The Philippines	0.655	0.688	0.692	0.721	0.739	0.758	0.771	0.745
Indonesia	0.471	0.533	0.585	0.626	0.67	0.692	0.728	0.726

Source: UNDP, 2009

Indonesia's 2005 and 2006 Education Index (EI) comprising adult literacy rates (aged 15 and older) and the combined gross enrolment ratio for primary, secondary, and tertiary schooling has also been the smallest among the countries in the region (see Table 2). Moreover, the indexes are stagnant at 68.2% for these two consecutive years.

Table 2 Indonesia's and the Neighbouring Countries' Education Index Profile

Country	Education Index 2005		Education Index 2006	
	Adult Literacy Rate (%)	Combined Gross Enrolment Ratio (%)	Adult Literacy Rate (%)	Combined Gross Enrolment Ratio (%)
Singapore	92.5	87.3	94.2	96.4
The Philippines	92.6	81.1	93.3	79.6
Brunei Darussalam	92.7	77.7	94.6	78.5
Thailand	92.6	71.2	93.9	78.0
Malaysia	88.7	74.3	91.5	71.5
Indonesia	90.4	68.2	91	68.2

Source: UNDP, 2009

Indonesia's performance in 2006 and 2009 PISA tests has shown similar under achievement. Using the performance of Thailand as a comparison (see Table 3), Thai students outperformed Indonesia in those tests and showed a slight increase in their 2009 PISA scores. Like Indonesia, Thailand also experienced an intense crisis in its national education that led to educational reform in 1997, which promoted the practice of decentralised systems and school-level management (Hallinger & Kantamara, 2000: Hallinger & Lee, 2011). The statistics indicate that there has been a gradual increase in Thai students' performance in numeracy, reading, and scientific literacy as measured in these tests. On the contrary, Indonesia's 2009 PISA scores in Mathematics and Science were lower by 20 and 10 points respectively than its 2006 PISA scores. In both the 2006 and 2009 PISA tests, Thai students attained higher scores in all domains than Indonesian students. In the 2006 PISA tests, Thai students got 26, 24 and 28 more points respectively for mathematics, reading, and science than Indonesian students. The comparison shows even higher points for Thai students in 2009 PISA mathematics and science domains, where they attained 48 and 42 more points in these respective domains than their Indonesian counterparts.

Table 3 Indonesia's and Thailand's 2006 and 2009 PISA Profile

Domain	Indonesia		Thailand	
	2006 PISA	2009 PISA	2006 PISA	2009 PISA
Mathematics	391	371	417	419
Reading	392	402	416	421
Science	393	383	421	425

Source: OECD PISA, 2011

Indonesia's performance in 2007 TIMSS (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study) and 2006 PIRLS (Progress in International Reading and Literacy Study) further demonstrates a poor achievement (see Table 4). From the rank of participating countries, Indonesia is at the lower part of the rank. In the 2007 TIMSS, Indonesia ranked 36 from 49 participating countries, while in the 2006 PIRLS, it ranked 37 out of 41 participating countries. As TIMSS provides data on curriculum coverage and implementation as well as teacher preparation, resource availability, and the use of technology, it can be assumed that these aspects of mathematics and science in teaching and learning processes in Indonesian schools are also low. Indonesia's low rank in PIRLS tests indicates that the Indonesian curriculum for reading and its classroom approaches do not support reading literacy achievements for the students.

Table 4 Indonesia's 2007 TIMSS and 2006 PIRLS Profile

2007 TIMSS (8th grade)		2006 PIRLS (4th grade)	
Average scale score (0-800)	Rank from 49 countries	Average scale score (100-700)	Rank from 41 countries
397	36	405	37

Source: Timssandpirls, 2009

As TIMSS provides data on curriculum coverage and implementation as well as teacher preparation, resource availability, and the use of technology, it can be assumed that these aspects of mathematics and science in teaching and learning processes in Indonesian schools are also low. Indonesia's low rank in PIRLS tests indicates that the Indonesian curriculum for reading and its classroom approaches do not support reading literacy achievement for the students.

The gap between school reform goals and educational performance as presented in the previous section raises the question of educational accountability, which is one of the highlighted aspects of Indonesian school reform (Sofo, et al., 2012). In questioning the power and efficacy of school reform, a few problematic conditions are identified. Lack of management efficiency both at local government and local school levels is one of them (Sofo, et al., 2012). Local authorities, including principals, have limited expertise and experience in handling the consequences of educational autonomy that calls for public participation and shared decision-making (Bjork, 2005; Chan & Sam, 2007; Nandika, 2007). This condition has prevented many principals from taking any initiatives to make necessary changes, as they continue to rely on directives from their superiors in their school districts (Chan & Sam, 2007; Irawan, et al., 2004; Surachmad, 2002). Moreover, the insufficiency of the central government's assistance has made local schools unprepared to execute their authority, thus maintaining the status quo (Bjork, 2003, 2005; Chan & Sam, 2007).

A further shortcoming of management has been the poor direction provided to the teaching staff (Sofo, et al., 2012). The lack of interest in teaching performance has decreased the responsibility to improve the quality of teaching (Azra, 2002; Bjork, 2005;

Tilaar, 2009). Moreover, the civil service culture minimises the exercise of intellectual capacity and emphasises obedience to the authority (Bjork, 2005; Chan & Sam, 2007; Kintamani, 2002; Raihani, 2007; Tilaar, 2009).

The second problematic condition is the erratic change of education policies, especially those related to the national curriculum (Sofo, et al., 2012). The frequent curriculum changes due to poor educational leadership have been seen as one of the major impediments to improving educational quality (Sofo, et al, 2012). The curriculum does not adequately represent students' characteristics, voices, and interests (Kunandar, 2007; Taruna, 2007). The curriculum is also criticised for its preference for accommodating the needs and interests of the high-achieving students (Drost, 2005; Kunandar, 2007; Taruna, 2007). Only 30 per cent of Indonesian students are believed to achieve the desired benefits from the curriculum (Drost, 2005). The arguments also address the inability of the curriculum to generate the excitement for learning and the freedom to learn (Taruna, 2007). In addition, the practice of content-transfer learning to cope with the heavy load of the curriculum has weakened the relevance of learning (Kunandar, 2007; Taruna, 2007). These two key problematic conditions explained above apparently indicate some shortcomings in Indonesian school reform particularly in terms of leading, teaching, and learning.

E. CONCLUSION

Accumulating empirical evidence has implied the urgency to prioritise the development and welfare of students as the main objectives of educational leadership (Davies, 2005; Gunter & Fitzgerald, 2008; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Southworth, 2005). Current research on school leadership has been showing growing emphasis on the contribution of instructional leadership in reforming and improving school performance (Alig-Mielcarek & Hoy, 2005; Frederick, Blumenfield, & Paris, 2004; Gurr, et al., 2007; Leithwood & Day, 2008; Pennington, et al., 2008; Reitzug, et al.,2008; Robinson, et al.,2008; Waters, et al., 2003). Instructional leadership brings a new conception of creating accountable learning systems in schools (Halverson, et al., 2005). As it accentuates students' learning and teacher empowerment, a focus on this type of leadership can be the strategy in promoting and sustaining school reform programs. As the examination of the progress of Indonesia's school reform has indicated a gap between reform goals and educational achievements of the students which underline shortcomings in Indonesian school reform, particularly in terms of leading, teaching and learning. Therefore, instructional leadership becomes strongly relevant in the implementation of school reform in Indonesian schools.

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