



HEAD OF SCHOOL SUPPORTS LUNCH PROGRAM

FREE AT SCHOOL IN STUDENT LEARNING MOTIVATION

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ABSTRACTION

Education is a learning process carried out with good cooperation between leaders and teachers, students, and parents within a certain period of time. The role of the principal is very important in planning the curriculum, meeting with teachers, dividing subjects to teachers and supervising the teaching and learning process at school. The principal also cooperates well with the government which provides subsidies for free meal programs for elementary school students in the city of Ermera in Timor Leste. The purpose of the free meal program is to improve children's nutrition and motivate students to learn. The total respondents were 50 people consisting of men and women. The purpose of the study was to determine the impact of free lunches on children's health and motivation to learn. The research method is qualitative descriptive where researchers conducted direct interviews with informants at the research location. The results showed that all respondents said that the free meal program was very important for children's health growth and could motivate students to actively learn at school.

Keywords: Leaders, school children and motivation.

Introduction

The population of Timor-Leste reached 1.3 million people according to the Timor Leste census report (2015), with 12 municipalities and one special zone of Oekusi. In each village there is an elementary school, with different ownership statuses. However, the people of Timor-Leste are categorized as a country with the lowest per capita income in the world, the World Bank report shows that Unemployment in Timor-Leste reaches 52.9 % with income per day namely US\$ 1,940 Nahak & Ellitan , (2023:5). As a result from income low the causing some people to experience lack nutritious and easy under attack disease infectious like diarrhea and malaria WHO (2022). In the Constitution of the Democratic Republic Timor Leste, (2002: 10), chapter 6 that is Country ensure a decent life for citizens in a sustainable manner. This legal statement still does not answer the real conditions

of people's lives. This situation has made the Timor-Leste government , starting in (2010), provide free food assistance to school children from elementary school (SD) to high school (SMA). The purpose of the subsidy free meal to improve nutrition for children and motivate students to study hard. Schools as an organization need a leader at school. Alhabsyie (2020), an effective principal is not only able to manage school programs, but also provide motivation, an example to teachers to improve teacher performance. In relation to free meal subsidies in elementary schools, the role of the principal is very important to motivate teachers by giving awards to the best teachers in the school so that teachers are enthusiastic about making learning plans to teach students. Even though they have received free meal subsidies at school, the learning achievements of students have not received maximum scores, for example, when taking the national exam, some of them got pure scores that were still low and some did not pass the national test.

Problem identification Lack of motivation to learn Unwell Research purposes

This study aims to determine the role of the principal in supporting the implementation of the free meal program which has an impact on student learning motivation.

1.3. Previous Research

Adriani & Rasto (2019), the results of their research show that learning motivation is a determinant of student learning outcomes and there is a significant influence between learning motivation and student learning outcomes. Palitin (2019), learning outcomes are influenced by many factors, one of which is learning motivation. Tarudipa et al. (2020), students who get food intake are included in the category of fairly good nutrition, when compared to those who do not get food intake. Bergam et al. (2020), the results of a study in India show that lunch can improve children's health to improve *stunting*. Fang & Zhu (2020), The results of a study in China show that a free lunch program can improve children's cognitive and health outcomes better than those with low socioeconomic status. Hamda & Agustina (2011) there is a significant influence between learning motivation and student learning outcomes. Cleopatra (2015), Learning motivation has a significant relationship to learning outcomes after going through several stages of the learning procedure.

Theoretical review

Leadership Theory

Every organization needs a guide or guide to achieve organizational goals, in relation to educational programs as an organization also needs a leader to organize the teaching and learning process well. Gusmao, et. al. (2018:124), the role of leadership is very strategic and significant for the organization and determines the achievement of the vision, mission and goals of the organization. So Leadership is always related to the ability and skills to be able to work together with others to achieve the ideals of the organization. The achievements of the Higher Education Foundation in Timor-Leste can contribute to the goals of the country of Timor-Leste. Leadership is a style to influence subordinates to achieve organizational goals, and a good leader must be physically healthy so that they are enthusiastic about working in implementing the work curriculum and making evaluations Araujo (2025). The relationship with this article is the role of the principal in elementary school education organizations, especially supervising the implementation of the government's free meal subsidy program, so the role of the principal must be more active in making school program plans, especially in motivating teachers in educating students after free meals at school.

Goal and Siburia (2018) said that the role of the principal in improving teacher performance is also the main driving inspiration in teacher professional development, through training, class supervision and regular meetings with teachers to improve teacher performance.

2.2. Motivation Theory

Novitasari (2023), motivation is defined as a person's strength that leads to a level of willingness to realize an activity. Meanwhile, Hamalik o, (2017), said that basically there are 2 types of motivation, namely intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation is present because there is a drive from within the student or learner himself or pure motivation. This motivation is not influenced by external factors. Extrinsic motivation is motivation that is driven from outside the individual himself to achieve desires. For example, wanting to win a championship and a prize or wanting to get a high score. Masni H. (2015), motivation as a basic drive that triggers someone to move in acting to achieve goals. Wina Sanjaya (2010), motivation is one of the dynamic aspects that is very important because children are free to determine their own learning model and do not like to be regulated by parents or teachers, there are children who like to learn to be regulated, for example, making a study schedule.

Based on the above opinion, it can be interpreted that motivation is a factor that encourages someone to do something useful for themselves. In relation to this article, motivation as a tool in terms of free meal subsidies as a tool that stimulates students or attracts students to go to school to study well, therefore free meals can

be said to be a tool not a goal, because the purpose of children coming to school is not because of free meals but the purpose of students coming to school to gain knowledge and free meals as a tool to gain knowledge. School children's theory.

According to the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia (2006), the definition of the child development process includes the following aspects: 1. Biological aspects, namely the developmental aspects of the individual's physical condition. For example, the increase in a child's weight and height can certainly be measured. 2. Cognitive aspects include the child's ability to think. 3. Psychological aspects include aspects of feelings, emotions, and relationships with other people and those around them.

Karomach et al. (2014) defines school children as children aged between 6-18 years. While teenagers are aged between 10-18 years. While Palitan said that school children are children who are still studying in school starting from elementary school to high school. Ratnaningsih (2017), children's movements can be seen from several aspects including: 1. Gross movements. This movement includes aspects of body movements that involve large muscles such as sitting and standing. 2. Movement aspects must, such as body movements including hand movements, such as children using their hands to write, walking carefully. 3. Aspects of speaking ability, this aspect includes communication with others, through the volume of voice that goes up and down when talking to others, this aspect is related to cognitive or the ability of reason to think. 4. Aspects of socialization and independence, including children's independence, playing alone, eating alone.

Pangestika (2017), said that children studying in elementary school teachers should not teach conceptual material because it is very abstract, children in elementary school need operational material or real things that can be observed by children. Thus it can be concluded that school-age children are children aged 6-18 years, who study in elementary school to high school who focus on learning science with healthy health conditions.

Research methods.

The method used in this study is a descriptive qualitative method, Sugiyono (2018), the qualitative research method is a post-positivistic method with an artistic model or more artistic because it does not keep a distance from respondents, the goal is *discovery* or finding new theories.

3.2. Types and Sources of Data

The type of data used in this study is qualitative. and the data sources are primary and secondary data sources. Primary data sources are data obtained by researchers through direct interviews in the field. While secondary data sources are data obtained by researchers through reports and other documentation results. Sugiyono (2018).

3.3. Data collection techniques

Sugiyono (2018) stated that there are 3 data collection techniques in qualitative research, namely through observation. Researchers directly observe the phenomena in the field. Interviews, namely researchers will directly interview *informants* or sources who know about the phenomenon in the field. Documentation, namely data obtained through reports or documentation.

3.4. Research Location and Informants

This research was conducted at elementary school no.249 in Tarasu tribe, Railaku sub-district, Ermera city. Informants or sources are selected people who know the situation at school and are asked to provide views on the problems to be studied. These people are: Teachers, elementary school students, parents of students, village treasurers who manage free meal funds.

3.5. Data analysis techniques

Milles and Huberman in Sugiyono (2015) said that data analysis techniques have stages including: Data collection, data reduction, data presentation and conclusions. Data collection is data collected by researchers in the field. Data reduction is data obtained then filtered or reduced irrelevant information and only focused on accurate data or data that is related to the problem being discussed. Data presentation is presenting data describing data based on interview results. Conclusion is choosing the core summary of the research results based on research objectives.

4.1 Field Findings

The teachers said that the principal has been carrying out his duties well, such as implementing the curriculum according to the academic calendar year, including meetings with teachers to divide subjects based on their order, namely which subjects are for which classes and which teachers are clear, and so on until grade 6 of elementary school, the division of subjects and teachers must be clear. Meetings with teachers to plan the Mid-Semester Test (TTS). Plans to compile TAS questions or end-of-semester tests. In addition, the principal also supervises teachers during the teaching and learning process at school. Usually those who

violate school rules must first be reprimanded verbally, secondly, give a warning letter and if they still violate the rules, they will be punished according to the rules in force at the school. In addition, the teachers also said that the principal also often meets with parents and teachers to check the children's activeness in implementing the free meal program at school, the principal also said that every year the children move up a class one hundred percent, there have been some who did not move up a class because the students were sick. The principal holds meetings with the team that cooks free meals for children so that the menus that are cooked are washed clean, including the plates and spoons used by the children to eat. The principal checks the punctuality of meal times and pays attention to the menu served to students must be in accordance with the agreed rules. The teachers also said that additional food subsidies can increase students' motivation to come to school. Free meals at school can increase students' weight. Before eating, the students' weight is weighed and after six months, the students' weight increases. There are students who initially weighed 25 kg, but after getting free meals, their weight increased to 27 kg. The amount of subsidy per child was initially Rp. 2,500 per person, now it has increased to Rp. 4,500. Before the implementation of free meals at school, not all children came to study, but after implementing free meals, every day the school bench was full of students. In addition to being diligent in going to school, free meals also stimulate students to concentrate on the teacher when the teacher explains the material, because they don't feel hungry, if hungry it interferes with students' concentration in learning. The teachers also said that the obstacles faced were sometimes the government's subsidies for free meals, the disbursement of funds was late, sometimes the money was transferred at the beginning of the month, sometimes it was only transferred in the middle of the month. We hope that the disbursement of funds must be on time so that food services for children run regularly. In addition, there needs to be a medical team that must weigh children every semester or at the end of the year, so that they can know the development of children's health. The teachers said that for interest in learning, we do not yet know whether free meal subsidies can increase interest in reading and writing? We have not tested this to find out the development of students' mindsets. We believe that each student has different intellectual abilities and different motivations to learn. There are those who study diligently and get good grades and those who do not study get bad grades. So free meals do not one hundred percent make students diligent in reading books.

Because the purpose of children coming to school is to learn new knowledge from teachers, that is the basic purpose of elementary school students. With the implementation of free meals can help students to achieve learning goals every semester can move up a class with good grades. While the students' views on free meals at school 30 girls and boys, 15 girls and 15 boys they said they were very

happy to be able to get food so that we do not feel hungry when studying at school for 5 hours, our parents used to go to school did not get free food but they brought their own food from home, when they had a break they just ate.

The students also said that with free food it can increase our weight, at that time before I got additional food my weight was 25kg, after free lunch for 6 months my weight increased to 30kg. The menu that was eaten was rice, chicken, vegetables and fruits. Some students said, we eat but are not serious about studying, but some said we have to study in order to get good grades and be the best in class. Some said that we have to study because it is good for our future. There are some people, especially those who are in 6th grade, who say that our school has very limited teachers. We are in 6th grade, there is only one teacher who teaches all subjects so sometimes we are lazy to go to class. There is a library but the books are limited and written in Portuguese, so we don't read because we don't understand what they mean.

Our principal is very kind, he doesn't get angry with us, teaches us kindly and is often present during working hours. The free meal subsidy is not only for us students who eat but the teachers also eat, and the officers who cook for us also eat. So this free meal subsidy from the government is very helpful for the people in the village. One important thing we want to convey is that the implementation subsidy for the free meal program also creates jobs for mothers who cook for us school children because in addition to being able to eat, they also get a small commission from the money. The officers who cook and the finance department get a percentage of the money from the subsidy. The views of representatives of 10 parents said that, we are grateful to the government for providing free meals for our children, it really helps us so that we don't give them pocket money when they are at school. In addition, in the morning we don't need to prepare breakfast for our children because they will get breakfast at school. But if the free meal comes late, we are forced to give additional money to the children. We observed that teachers who teach students also eat the free food, so this subsidy is officially given by the government to school children, but in the implementation in the field, teachers also get free food. One thing we want to suggest is to add more teachers to this elementary school because teachers are still very limited. The government needs to pay attention to the problem of limited teachers, so that the teaching and learning process runs smoothly.

Parents said that the principal carries out his duties well, such as holding meetings with teachers, teaching and also holding meetings with school students every year.

The village head said that the free meal subsidy from the government was implemented well in this elementary school, I observed the children eating every

school hour, and they were very enthusiastic about coming to school to study, the school children also brought dry wood one by one to contribute to cooking, good cooperation between the schools. While the finance department said that all the notes taken from the bank when shopping must be collected in order to make a report to the Ministry of Education. The remaining funds were returned because there was a team that audited the government's finances. The mothers who cooked and I as the finance department, we got 4 people who got 2 cents from each student who received a subsidy from the government. Our income is very small, we work not for money but for our children, because this is in our own village. This free meal subsidy also has a positive impact on other groups, namely, the group of mothers who cook also get a commission from the subsidy money.

5. Discussion

The role of the principal in supporting the free meal program at school is running well, in order to motivate children to study enthusiastically so that they achieve their learning goals, namely gaining new knowledge and moving up a class at the end of the year. The measuring instrument can be seen in the statement whether the principal divides his time to supervise the free meal program at school? The respondents said that in addition to leading the teaching and learning program, the principal also holds meetings with the cooking group to maintain the quality of the menu cooked in order to provide good nutrition to school children. This finding supports the theory of leadership through the principal holding meetings with the cooks, which means that psychologically the cooking group feels supervised so they have to work seriously because their movements are monitored by others. So the findings in the field are related to the leadership theory that is the basis of an organization. Araujo (2025) Leadership is a style to influence subordinates to achieve organizational goals, and a good leader must be physically healthy so that they are enthusiastic about working in implementing the work curriculum and making evaluations.

This is in line with the view of Masni H. (2015), motivation is a basic drive that triggers someone to move to act to achieve goals.

In addition to the principal supervising the implementation of the free meal program at school, the principal also implements the elementary school education curriculum according to plan. This can be seen from the question of whether the principal holds meetings to implement the curriculum in elementary schools? The teachers said that the principal carried out his duties well through annual meetings to divide subjects for teachers to teach and also meetings to prepare exam questions. This is related to the motivation theory of Novitasari (2023), motivation is defined as a person's strength that leads to the level of willingness to realize an

activity. So school wars are very important in managing schools well in order to achieve goals through various means such as teacher motivation, and also seeking supervision with various groups in schools to work together to achieve school goals, namely that school children must feel comfortable learning. Related to the motivation of school children to learn that additional meals can motivate children to learn, all responses from teachers, parents, and students said that free meals at school are very helpful for children because they feel comfortable while studying because they are not hungry, feel not hungry, then children can concentrate well to follow the lessons taught by their teachers. This can be seen from the question of whether free meals can motivate you as a student to learn? Almost all responses answered that it is very helpful and can motivate school children. This means that this statement supports the motivation theory of Hamalik o, (2017), who said that basically there are 2 types of motivation, namely intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation is present because there is a drive from within the student or learner himself or pure motivation. This motivation is not influenced by external factors. Extrinsic motivation is motivation that is driven from outside the individual himself to achieve his desires. For example, wanting to win a prize or getting a high score. Masni H. (2015), motivation as a basic drive that triggers someone to move in acting to achieve goals. So it can be concluded that the role of the principal, teachers and additional food is very helpful for students to learn and students feel healthy to learn.

VI. Conclusion and suggestions

VI.1. The role of the principal in supporting the free meal program at school achieves its goals because the principal carries out his duties well in terms of managing the school curriculum and implementing it well, through cooperation with teachers and students regularly through routine meetings between teachers and students. The principal also collaborates with the group that manages the implementation of the free meal program at school. The free meal program can increase students' weight and can increase students' motivation to learn.

V1.2 suggestions

To the government to run the free meal program according to plan, namely the financial allocation must be on time. Carry out weighing every semester to find out the development of children's health growth, and collaborate with psychologists to see the behavior of children before they can eat for free and after eating whether there are changes in behavior in children, especially children's intellectuality . Cooperation with community health centers in the village to

provide health supervision for children. Propose to the government to pay salaries to cooks so that they no longer take commission from children's subsidies.

VI.3. Time constraints did not allow for in-depth interviews regarding the influence of free meals on the cognitive behavior of school children.

VI.4. Future researchers, develop research on the influence of free meals on the behavior of thinking in building logical thinking.

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