Teacher Empowerment to Improve the Quality of Education and School Progress

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ABSTRACT; This paper will focus on empowering teachers to improve the quality of education and school progress. The progress of the school is determined by many factors including the quality of education carried out. Meanwhile, the quality of education is determined, among others, by the quality of educators (teachers). Therefore, to improve the quality of education and advance schools, it is necessary to improve the quality of teachers. One of the strategic steps to improve the quality of teachers is through teacher empowerment which is carried out integrally and continuously. Teacher empowerment is the involvement of teachers in school decision-making processes, taking action according to decisions made, and enjoying the results of implementing school policies. For effective teacher empowerment, effective strategies are needed, including: 1) Sustainable policy formulation; 2) Provision of selected support and assistance; 3) Supervision and motivation; 4) The creation of a conducive school environment; 5) Teacher career advancement based on performance and merit, and 6) Awarding prizes to outstanding teachers.

Keyword : Teacher Empowerment, Quality of Education, School Progress

INTRODUCTION
The issue of education is still an interesting theme to discuss all the time to this day. Scientists and education practitioners constantly discuss educational issues, especially education during the Covid-19 pandemic, which is perceived variously. Some put technology first and others reject the use of technology with various arguments. What is even more tragic is that every time there is an education issue, teachers are targeted and become topics of debate by making teachers the determinants of educational success.
The teacher as the person who is seen as most responsible for the success or failure of education. Therefore the quality of teachers should be improved constantly. To improve the quality of teachers, it can be done through teacher empowerment. This means that the quality of education is influenced by teacher empowerment because with this empowerment teachers are able to improvise in improving the quality of
themselves as teachers. As stated by Manaf, "The quality of education is influenced, among others, by teacher empowerment" (Manaf, 2016) in Widodo & Sriyono, 2020: 8). Teacher empowerment provides opportunities for teachers to participate in the processes of implementing education in schools to support school progress. Murray said, that "Empowerment makes teachers able to engage, share, and influence which ultimately has a positive impact on their lives" (Murray, 2010) in Widodo & Sriyono, 2020: 8).

Teacher empowerment provides an opportunity for teachers to express their creative ideas and successful experiences so that they become input in making decisions to improve the quality of education and school progress. If teachers participate in decision-making processes, it will have an impact on increasing responsibility and a sense of belonging to the implementation of education in schools. This is in line with the concept of empowerment proposed by MacAndrew et al, (2012) that, "Empowerment is a process of managers helping employees acquire and utilize the skills needed to make decisions that impact themselves and their work" (MacAndrew in Yunus, Sukarno, and Rosyadi, 2021: 491). Teacher empowerment is a process in which the leader (principal) helps teachers to acquire and use their abilities (new knowledge, skills, and attitudes) that have an impact on their own lives and their work as teachers.

Teacher empowerment is a strategic step to improve teacher competence and professionalism. With the empowerment of teachers, they have the opportunity to try to find new steps according to their respective talents and interests. Teachers should be given the freedom to speak up, choose and determine creative and innovative alternative activities that contribute to improving the quality of teachers. Therefore, in order to empower teachers, strategic steps are needed so that the implementation of teacher empowerment can run smoothly and achieve educational goals and school progress.

**Definition Of Teacher Empowerment**

The term empowerment is defined differently by different experts. The difference in definitions is influenced by several factors, such as reading literature, field experience, and thoughts according to individual capacities. The definitions of empowerment vary in that each expert as well as practitioner puts forward a different definition of empowerment from each other. Rappaport (1984) says that, "That it is easy to define in its absence—alienation, powerless, helplessness but difficult to define positively because it "takes on a different form in different people and contexts" (Rappaport, 1984: 2) in Zimmerman, 1990: 169). Rappaport asserts that empowerment is easy to pronounce, but difficult to define positively because it has various forms according to the context of the empowerment itself. Zimmerman went on to assert that, "Empowerment at all levels of analysis can have different intensities
that can change over time. It is not an absolute threshold that once reached can be labeled as empowered” (Zimmerman, 1990: 170). The definition of empowerment can change from time to time according to the contextual setting and social changes that occur.

Zimmerman defines empowerment as follows, "Empowerment embodies an interaction between individuals and environments that is culturally and contextually defined" (Zimmerman, 1990: 170). This definition is very broad where empowerment is the interaction between individuals and their environment. Alsop, Bertelsen, and Holland argue, "Empowerment is defined as a group's or individual's capacity to make effective choices, that is, to make choices and then to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes" (Alsop, Bertelsen, and Holland, 2006: 10).

Empowerment is the ability of a group or individual to make effective choices, and implementing those choices becomes concrete action and brings about the results of school change and improvement.

Based on the definition of empowerment above, the author provides a definition of teacher empowerment as a process in which teachers gain free authority to voice their aspirations or ideas and obtain academics in the process of making school decisions related to the interests of teachers to improve their competence and professionalism and contribute effectively to solving educational problems (learning) so as to improve the quality of education both locally and nationally which in turn contributes to the progress of the school. According to Bleumers et al., 2012) that, "At a micro level, teacher empowerment can be conceptualized as providing teachers with the privilege to exercise professional reasoning with the daily curriculum and teaching subjects. On a higher level, it is conceptualized as the administration’s investment in teachers by giving them the opportunity and freedom to be involved in the regulation of school objectives and policies" (Bleumers et al., 2012) in Ahrari et al., 2021: 3). Bleumer's statement emphasized that teacher empowerment is to give teachers more freedom of authority to increase their capacity in accordance with their competencies and also the involvement of teachers in determining policies, especially in curriculum preparation and school development so that teachers are able to implement curriculum and school development programs freely for the betterment of the school.

Reasons for the Need Teacher Empowerment

There are several reasons why it is necessary to empower teachers. Some of the reasons include the following:

1. Teachers have a wealth of teaching experience because they have interacted with students intensively and for a long time. The teacher's experience is very useful for improving and improving the quality of education (learning process). The experience will benefit if teachers are involved in the school’s
decision-making process and flexibility in carrying out creative and innovative activities.

2. The development of technology, especially Information and Communication Technology, has an impact on changes in the entire development sector, including the education sector. Online learning is a demand that must be mastered by teachers. Therefore, teachers must be able to adapt to technological developments, especially their application in the learning process.

3. So far, teachers work more based on government policies or school leaders' decisions, which regulate what teachers should do. Teachers do not gain access to decisions related to their duties as teachers to participate in independently determining new measures in efforts to improve and develop schools. Short and Rinehart says, "School improvement will occur if teachers are allowed more access to school decision making processes (Short and Rinehart; 1992) in Sharp, 2009: 2). So according to Short and Rinehart, school improvement will happen if teachers are given greater access to school decisions.

4. Teacher empowerment is an important part of the school’s progress through its participation in various decisions, taking actions according to choice, and obtaining results from the implementation of the principal’s policies. With teacher empowerment, teachers have the opportunity to convey their knowledge, experience of success, thoughts and imagination that can be considered in the decision-making process. If the teacher participates in the decision-making process until the results of the implementation of the decision, it will increase his participation in the implementation of various school development or improvement programs.

5. Improving the quality of education requires qualified or professional teachers. Only professional teachers are able to carry out educational development and improvement of the learning process. In this connection Hargreaves says, "The growth of educational needs requires professionalism development, thus professional teachers indicate the birth of a new era of education" (Hargreaves, 2000) in Cipto, Herdiani & Sulikah; 2017: 91). The advancement of education requires the development of teacher professionalism, so those professional teachers tend to show the emergence of a new era in education.

The Role of the Principal in Teacher Empowerment

The author's experience shows that so far teachers work as if they were "robots", meaning that they work according to applicable guidelines and do not provide wider opportunities to contribute to the improvement of the school. Teacher participation
in the process of improving the quality of education and management in schools will be possible if teachers gain access to various activities related to the duties and responsibilities of teachers, especially in the school decision-making process. This means that teacher empowerment plays an important role in the progress of schools.

To realize successful teacher empowerment requires effective leadership. Effective leadership is not just about management, it's more than that. As Sharp says that, "Effective leadership is much more than building management, as principals today must be able to consult with, and include others effectively (Short and Rinehart; 1992) in Sharp, 2009: 2). This statement confirms that the principal needs to consult with or involve others effectively in the school’s decision-making process. This statement reinforces the concept of teacher empowerment so that teachers are able to contribute more and better to school change and progress.

Many other experts commented and gave thoughts and concepts about the importance of empowering teachers so that schools do not fail. The success or failure of the school is largely determined by the leadership of the school and the participation of teachers. Teacher empowerment is essentially participation. However, the participation of the teacher can be full or less (limited) determined by the leadership of the school itself. If the teacher does not gain access in the decision process for school change and improvement, then the teacher cannot provide his creative ideas, nor can the teacher provide effective alternative options for improving the quality of education and school progress. Reitzug said that, "Principals are important in the establishment of autonomy, shifting problem solving to teachers, communicating trust, encouraging risk taking, and valuing teachers’ input. These principal skills become important mediating variables in the foundation of teacher empowerment. Additionally, current school reform calls for principals and teachers to work together more closely. The relationship between the two is significant in the success of schools and should not be ignored (Reitzug (1994) in Sharp, 2009: 3). Reitzug’s statement emphasized that the principal is an important mediation in teacher empowerment, and for the betterment of the school, the principal should be able to cooperate with the teacher. This is in accordance with the concept of empowerment that allows the teacher to control his own life (the task as a teacher) to determine the essentials for the betterment of the school.

The role of the principal in teacher empowerment is not only in the decision-making dimension, but also in the process of improving teacher professionalism so that teachers are increasingly motivated to participate in teacher empowerment programs. Improving teacher professionalism will be realized if the principal really includes teachers in teacher empowerment programs and provides full support for the implementation of teacher empowerment. Professional teachers are the hope of society because they want their children to have the skills needed by employment
and be able to face change. Only professional teachers are capable of giving birth to such a student. What is meant by a professional teacher is "A person who has special competence and proficiency in the field of teacher science, so that the teacher can carry out his responsibilities and functions optimally" (Dewi, 2015) in (Dewi, 2020: 281). According to Sanusi; 1991) in Dewi, 2011: 5) that, "The professional abilities of the teacher include, "(a) the appearance of a positive attitude towards the entirety of his duties as a teacher and towards the overall educational situation and its elements; (b) the understanding, passion and appearance of the values that a teacher should adhere to; (c) personality, value of life attitude appearance attempts to establish himself as a role model and role model for his students".

Effective Teacher Empowerment Strategies
Effective teacher empowerment requires effective strategies. The definition of strategy is put forward by Denny & Quinn (2015) as follows, "Strategy is a form or plan that integrates main goals, policies, and a series of actions in an organization into a unified whole" (Yunus, Sukarno, and Rosyadi, 2021: 33). A strategy is a plan that integrates goals, policies, and a set of activities in an organization. So the strategy is not a policy formulation for the benefit of the policy maker (principal), but is integrated with the goals of the organization and is evidenced by concrete actions to achieve the goals of the organization (school). Therefore, in the interests of improving the quality of education and the progress of schools, the strategy should be formulated properly. As Denny & Quinn further asserts, "A well-formulated strategy will help organize and allocate the organization’s resources into a unique and durable form. In organizational dynamics, strategies are needed for various organizational development needs, including teacher empowerment" (Yunus, Sukarno, and Rosyadi, 2021: 33).

Teacher empowerment is ultimately the personal responsibility of the teacher itself, but schools also have the responsibility and role to empower teachers in order to improve the learning process and graduates. The quality of graduates of an educational institution (school) depends on the learning process, while the main players in the learning process are teachers. Therefore, teachers should make various efforts to improve the quality of their professional competencies. The main strategy to improve the teacher profession and the quality of education is through teacher empowerment which is carried out in an integral, intensive, and sustainable manner.

There are several programs of activities that should be implemented by the school, which in this case is the key role of the principal, to improve the education and progress of the school. In accordance with the role of the principal as a manager (manager) should manage the improvement of the quality of human resources
within his institution (school), especially the quality of educators (teachers) through teacher empowerment.

According to Govindarajan & Natarajan, that, “Efforts to empower teachers can be done by (1) assisting employees in achieving mastery of performance (providing proper training, training, and experience directed at results as the beginning of success); (2) allow more control (giving them the consideration of job performance, and then helping them with accountable outcomes); (3) providing success models allow them to observe colleagues who have helped success in work); (4) using social support and persuasion (giving praise, encouragement, and feedback designed to increase self-confidence); (5) providing emotional support (providing stress reduction and anxiety through better job definitions, task assistance, and honest handling)” (Govindarajan & Natarajan (2015) in Yunus, Sukarno, dan Rosyadi, 2021: 491). The statement confirms that teacher empowerment can be carried out with the following strategy:

1. Helping employees achieve mastery of performance (providing appropriate training and experience directed towards results as a prelude to success);
2. Allows more control (giving them consideration of the performance of the work, and then helping them with accountable results);
3. Providing a success model allows them to observe colleagues who have helped succeed at work);
4. Using social support and persuasion (providing compliment, encouragement, and feedback designed to boost confidence);
5. Provide emotional support (providing stress and anxiety reduction through better job definitions, task assistance, and honest handling).

In relation to this teacher empowerment strategy, the author offers the following ideas: 1) Teacher involvement in various school decision making; 2) Encourage and assist teachers in organizing scientific activities such as seminars/institutional discussions; 3) Provide opportunities and assistance to teachers to carry out research and writing scientific papers (articles / journals); 4) Provide encouragement and opportunities for teachers to conduct comparative studies in excellent schools; and 5) Provide opportunities for teachers to structure individual or collective programs related to their professional development. All of this should be initiated by the principal and supported by all components in the school, including teachers, staff, and education personnel. On the other hand, actually the most urgent thing for teacher empowerment is empowerment that is initiated and implemented by teachers both individually and collectively, namely what is called self-empowerment.
CONCLUSION
Based on the above exposure there are several important conclusions that will be spelled out in the following:

1. Teacher empowerment is a strategic step to improve the quality of education and school progress. Improving the quality of education that contributes to the progress of schools also starts from improving the quality of teachers through teacher empowerment.
2. Teacher empowerment allows teachers to participate in school decision-making processes so that teachers can convey their creative and innovative ideas to produce effective decisions for improving the quality of education and school progress.
3. Teacher empowerment increases the teacher’s sense of belonging to the implementation of various educational programs so that he or they have a high enthusiasm and willingness to take concrete actions related to improving the quality of education and school progress.
4. There are several effective strategies for teacher empowerment, including: 1) Sustainable teacher empowerment planning; 2) Involvement of teachers in various school decisions; 3) Careful control and mentoring; 4) Awarding prizes to outstanding teachers; 5) Creation of a scientific atmosphere in the school; 6) Provide cost assistance in the implementation of scientific activities initiated by teachers; and 7) Career advancement of teachers based on performance and achievement.

REFERENCE


