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School Principal Leadership Strategies in Improving Academic Quality in High Schools

Hariyadi, Ahmad[1], Darmuki, Agus[2], Shofwani, Siti Aniqoh[3], Auruma, Putri H. M[4] & Sasmita, Winda Rahma[5]

[1,2,4,5]Universitas Muria Kudus, Kudus, Central Java 59327, INDONESIA

[3]High School of Economics (STIE) Semarang, Semarang, Central Java 50232, INDONESIA

*Corresponding Author: ahmad.hariyadi@umk.ac.id

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Abstract: The aim of this research is qualitative descriptive research, which aims to obtain a description, observing how the current leadership of school principals is to increase the standards of educators and education personnel to produce students who excel and are able to produce quality graduates. Data collection techniques use observation, questionnaires, and interviews. The data analysis technique uses data triangulation through data analysis, grouping, and drawing research conclusions. The research results show that the school principal's leadership has a very important role in improving academic quality in senior high schools (SMA) and can be the main driver in achieving increased academic achievement. Leadership strategies can be implemented, including staff development, careful monitoring and evaluation, student and parent involvement, and teamwork. Supporting factors include support from school staff, adequate resources, and active participation of students and parents. Barriers include a need for more resources and administrative challenges. Positive impact. The conclusion shows that effective leadership strategies positively impact academic quality in high school. It is reflected in improved exam results, better student performance, and the development of more effective learning programs.

Keywords: Principal leadership, academic quality, high school

1. Introduction

Education is a very important factor in human life; without education, life is like vegetables without salt. With education, people can increase their intelligence and skills, develop their potential and form a responsible, intelligent and creative person to work and compete in social life. Education is a conscious effort carried out by families, communities and the government through guidance, teaching and training activities that take place at school and outside school throughout life to prepare students to be able to play roles in various living environments appropriately in the future (Pulimeno et al., 2020). Furthermore, they also emphasized that education is a conscious human effort to prepare humans to have the ability to play an active role in shaping their future. Education is a process and system that leads to achieving certain goals assessed and believed to be ideal. The goals of education for the Indonesian people have been explained in Law No. 20 of 2003 in Chapter II, article 3 states that national education functions to develop abilities and shape the character and civilization of a dignified nation to educate the life of the nation to develop the potential of students to become human beings who believe and are devoted to God Almighty (Rulandari, 2020).

Previous research stated that the principal's leadership is key to improving high school academic quality. According to research by Wu et al. (2020), the principal's leadership greatly influences student learning outcomes. Research was also conducted by o Supriyono, Fitria and Marta, (2021) in their research showing that school principals' leadership has an important role in student performance and learning quality. This situation proves that the school principal has a role in managing the school so that it can provide quality education. School principals can take the initiative in leadership strategies to improve high school academic quality.

Meanwhile, leadership strategies that can be applied to school heads are useful for improving academic quality, including 1) creating a conducive learning environment: School principals can create a comfortable, safe and enjoyable

*Corresponding author: ahmad.hariyadi.@umk.ac.id
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learning environment for students. It can increase students' motivation to learn and create a sense of self-confidence and creativity in students; 2) establish good relationships with students and teachers: The principal can establish good relationships with students and teachers to build mutual trust. It can reduce the level of student and teacher resistance to change and make it easier for school principals to collaborate with teachers in improving academic quality; 3) providing adequate resources: School principals can provide adequate resources for students and teachers, such as textbooks, laboratory equipment, and other supporting facilities. It will help students and teachers improve the quality of education and learning in high school, and 4) develop innovative learning programs: School principals can develop learning programs that are innovative and relevant to student needs and community needs. This program can motivate students to study and improve the quality of learning in high school (Navaridas-Nalda et al., 2020). By implementing this leadership strategy, it is hoped that school principals can improve academic quality in high schools and produce quality graduates who are able to compete in the global world.

2. Literature Review

As the education leader, the principal is one of the powerful forces in school management who is also accountable for managing these changes as the school moves in a more advanced direction. Like educators, principals gain increased efficacy with experience, particularly in their initial three years (Clark et al., 2009). A school principal needs to be able to adapt to the community's changing needs and bring forth fresh ideas in fostering engagement within the school. Improving the standard of instruction and principal leadership is necessary to draw in more potential new students and to make educational institutions more competitive when they face off against one another. Several school outcomes, including student achievement, are influenced by effective principals. These outcomes include attracting and retaining qualified teachers, identifying and communicating the school's vision and goals, allocating resources efficiently, and creating organizational structures that enhance instruction and learning (Loeb et al., 2010).

A strong leadership approach is essential for the principal to carry out the school's vision, mission, and goals. The action plan is a "general program for achieving organizational goals in implementing the mission." The principal is key in directing school operations, particularly regarding raising academic standards (Khairuddin, 2014). As a result, policies about school leadership are crucial to school administration. A systemic and integrated effort by academic units or programs, managers of academic units or programs, local governments, the federal government, and the community is called quality education, to raise the educational attainment of the populace (Mulyasana, 2019).

Every educational establishment aims to raise the calibre of its graduates by raising the standard of instruction or schools. A high-quality education process is necessary for an educational institution or school to create graduates of the highest calibre. To raise the standard of education, principals must be adept at organizing, planning, mobilizing, and supervising tasks related to instruction, student affairs, finances, public relations, counsel, and infrastructure (Syafaruddin, 2015). Up to the point where learning outcomes, attitudes, knowledge, and skills can be fostered through a variety of teaching and learning activities in schools, as well as coaching extracurricular activities as a vehicle to foster and develop an appropriate educational curriculum, there is an urgent need to improve the quality of the teaching and learning process in schools for all members of professional schools. It is envisaged that efforts to raise classroom educational standards can also be made in the context of families and communities.

3. Methodology

The method used for this research is descriptive qualitative, with a case study type of research. According to Pathak et al. (2013), qualitative research is a research method used to examine the condition of natural objects, and the researcher himself is the key instrument. The data collection technique used is triangulation. The data collection techniques used in this research were interviews, field observations and documentation. Triangulation of the use of different data collection techniques can be interpreted as meaning that if, in the first stage, informants are collected by observing an object, then in the next stage, other methods such as interviews and documentation are used (Flick, 2018). The data obtained tends to be qualitative, the data analysis is inductive or qualitative, and the results of qualitative research are for understanding meaning, understanding uniqueness, constructing phenomena and finding hypotheses. As a qualitative research instrument, it is a case study. The steps for analyzing the data used in this research are: 1) observation is a direct observation of an object in the environment, whether it is ongoing or still in a stage which includes various attention activities towards a study of the object in question, 2) an interview is communication between two or more parties in a face-to-face manner where one party is the interviewer and the other is the interviewer with a specific purpose such as obtaining data, and 3) documentation is a source of data used to complete research in the form of images and writing. Apart from that, documentation is useful as evidence in this research. This research method requires data collection called a questionnaire. According to Sugiyono (2010), a questionnaire is a data collection technique that gives respondents a set of questions or written statements to answer. This research is also followed by a test that will be given with questions to strengthen the data that will be obtained.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 School Principal Leadership Strategy

In a group or organization, some goals want to be achieved together. For a leader, leading and achieving the goals of an organization is more challenging than turning the palm of your hand. In essence, leadership is the process of influencing, encouraging, inviting, moving and guiding other people in the work process to think, behave and act by the applicable rules in achieving the goals that have been set (Soini et al., 2016). A leader must be able to influence, encourage, invite, mobilize and guide other people to want to work, think, behave and act by applicable rules to achieve the desired goals effectively; of course, there must be a way. People often call this method a strategy.

Strategy is the key to an organization's success in achieving its goals. With a strategy, the program will run. Strategy is the first step that a leader must take in achieving goals. No matter how great a leader is, the program will be meaningless if he doesn't have the right strategy, and the goals will not be realized. Leadership does not only rely on one's abilities but also must have a strategy for leading.

George, Walker and Monster (2019) stated that strategy is a comprehensive and integrated plan needed to achieve organizational goals. An organization can obtain a strong position in its work area with a strategy. It is because the organization has better knowledge and experience in fulfilling customer needs and desires in its work area. Furthermore, according to Kabeyi (2019), strategy is related to decision making to determine the direction the organization wants to achieve. Strategy is a means used to achieve the ultimate goals of an organization, but the strategy is not just a plan; it is a plan that unites. Strategy ties all parts of an organization together so that strategy covers all important aspects of an organization; strategy is integrated from all parts of the plan, which must be in harmony with each other and compatible. Therefore, determining strategy requires a level of commitment from an organization, where the organizational team is responsible for advancing strategies that refer to the final results or goals. Thus, educational leadership strategy is making decisions or planning strategic actions to achieve stated organizational goals that can be achieved effectively and efficiently.

4.2 Quality of Education

The quality of education is a very important indicator in education. It is because the quality of education will determine the performance and quality of human resources produced by the institution or place where a person receives education. The quality of education is an assessment of an education that is declared worthy and is believed to be able to produce quality human resources to compete with the quality of human resources in other places (Madani, 2018). For this reason, it is necessary to improve the quality of education as one of the main pillars in developing education in Indonesia, because if education is quality, it will produce intelligent and competitive human resources.

The quality of education in Indonesia continues to be a concern for the government and society, so improving the quality of education continues to be intensified by society and the government. It is the basis for improving the quality of education, namely the determination of the quality of Indonesian education by UNESCO as a country ranked 121st out of 185 countries (Rulandari, 2021). This problem is the background for education quality management to regulate and improve the quality of education in Indonesia. Quality is relative, so improving the quality of education is defined as something that is made optimally because something of quality is considered more important for the owner (Fitria & Fitriani, 2021).

For this reason, improving the quality of education must be a special concern for the Indonesian people. Even though the Indonesian nation is very advanced in education, various things still need to be addressed so that education in Indonesia has very stable quality standards. The stable quality of Indonesian education will produce the nation's young generation or human resources who are very intelligent and capable. It will benefit Indonesia to become a developing or advanced country that can compete in terms of the quality of human resources with the human resources of other nations. Improving the quality of education is not only the government's responsibility but every element that plays a role in the education sector, such as society. However, in efforts to improve the quality of education, there is an important role that determines the direction of education and has the strongest authority in these improvement efforts. An important role in efforts to improve the quality of education is the school principal. The school principal is a leader who leads all education to achieve the appropriate vision and mission or what is desired to be achieved in education (Tonich, 2021).

The school principal plays a role in directing, organizing, guiding, or compiling all matters relating to education within the school environment. It means that all activities related to education are the full responsibility and burden of the school principal. For this reason, the quality of education is one of the main indicators that every school leader or principal wants to achieve (Kempa et al., 2017). The principal as a leader has the heaviest responsibility because the role and authority possessed by the principal is a responsibility or mandate given. Improving the quality of education is certainly one of the issues every school leader strives for. To achieve the expected quality of education, it is not uncommon for a school leader to pursue various policies related to the quality of education. School principals demand that the quality in the schools they lead be of good quality so that they can create children who are intelligent, competitive, the best, and, most importantly, have competitiveness both at home and abroad (Arhipova et al., 2018). This demand is considered very heavy considering that the state of human resources possessed by the Indonesian people is not yet one hundred per cent qualified in education or economics, so various obstacles and challenges must continue to be faced in trying to improve the quality of education in schools. School principals who play an important role in improving quality

must develop their strategies even though the quality of education has been regulated by the government or related agencies, such as indicators that will be used in the world of education, achievements, supporting activities, etc. However, innovation or strategies are still needed to raise the quality of education. What has been prepared by the government is only a rough idea. The school will carry out field activities to achieve these achievements.

The various achievements or indicators that have been prepared require pawns to execute them so that the quality of education can be achieved by its objectives. For this reason, various strategies are implemented or determined by the principal as the school leader to achieve high and higher quality education. According to Pinto et al. (2020), strategy is a tool to achieve a goal through all incremental actions (always increasing) and carried out continuously. These actions are carried out based on the perspective that the person hopes for in the future. It means that strategy is an action that is carried out continuously and will increase until it reaches the goals expected by someone. The use of strategies that the government will carry out requires good management.

Management means a systematic arrangement; there needs to be well-designed and mature plans. School principals use various strategies to improve the quality of education, the most important of which is by providing facilities and infrastructure in schools. Apart from that, there are various strategies carried out by school principals related to improving the quality of education (Komalasari et al., 2020). This strategy is prepared together with existing elements in the school, which are also related and play a role in improving the quality of the school.

The principal's strategy for improving the quality of education is based on 8 educational standards, vision and mission, and school goals. The presence of the principal's vision will greatly determine the direction the educational institution takes. After all, if the principal does not have a further vision and mission, it will only present a situation that remains in place and can even experience setbacks and allows the principal to only just do their daily routine without thinking about things that will happen in the future. The following are strategies that school principals can use to improve the quality of education.

4.2.1 Fulfillment of Suggestions and Infrastructure

Facilities and infrastructure are two important things that will become learning media. Complete and capable facilities and infrastructure will form human resources that are qualified, intelligent, knowledgeable and well-skilled. Because nowadays, learning media is needed to improve learning effectively. Likewise in improving children's skills (Ariyani & Zuhaery, 2021).

4.2.2 Increasing Teacher Professionalism in Schools

Teachers are the main pillar in shaping a child's intelligence, skills, and character. For this reason, a teacher must continue to have an attitude of professionalism without being dismissive or even condescending so that children will be open and comfortable with ongoing learning or education (Patrick & Joshi, 2019).

4.2.3 Carrying Out Special Coaching for Outstanding Students

Each student will have a new side that stands out in him; for example, a child with debating skills needs special coaching. Because in class, you often don't get a special partner who can help you do these skills. Classes or special coaching are used to improve these skills. It is because often a student needs help to hone this. After all, he has no media or partner to do this, as with children with other field achievements (Zakaria et al., 2021).

5. Conclusions

Principal Leadership Plays a Key Role. This research confirms that principal leadership is very important in improving academic quality in senior secondary schools (SMA). An effective school principal can be the main driver of increased academic achievement. School principals can implement various leadership strategies to achieve the goal of improving academic quality. It includes staff development, careful monitoring and evaluation, student and parent involvement, and teamwork. Supporting Factors and Barriers: In implementing leadership strategies, there are supporting factors such as support from school staff, adequate resources, and active participation of students and parents. However, there are also constraining factors, such as the need for more resources and administrative challenges. Positive impact. The research results show that effective leadership strategies positively impact academic quality in high school. It is reflected in improved exam results, better student performance, and the development of more effective learning programs. The results of this study have important implications for leadership practice in high schools. Recommendations include staff development, improved monitoring and evaluation, increased student and parent involvement, and fostering teamwork. The principal's leadership plays a major role in improving academic quality in high school. Effective leadership strategies can positively impact student learning outcomes and the overall quality of education. This research concludes that it is important to develop effective school principal leadership in the context of high school education to achieve better academic quality.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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