

Principal Leadership Strategies for Enhancing Elementary School Quality: Comparative Case Studies of Two Urban Schools in Indonesia

Dewi Komarasari

Universitas Islam Nusantara, Bandung, Indonesia
dewikomarasari@uinus.ac.id

Okke Rosmaladewi

Universitas Islam Nusantara, Bandung, Indonesia
okkerosmaladewi@uinus.ac.id

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Abstract

In a school environment, principal leadership can impact learning. A leader must be dedicated to advancing the school and raising learning standards in the institution they lead. The principal's role has a significant impact on how education is developed and improved. Focusing on SDN Bunut and SDN Kابدungan in Sukabumi City, this study attempts to characterize and examine principals' management practices in improving learning standards at the elementary school level. This study focuses on how principals plan, implement, and evaluate initiatives to improve educational quality. A qualitative research strategy, combined with a case study methodology and a multi-site research design, was used. In-depth interviews, documentation studies, and observations were used as data collection methods. Based on the research findings, principals at both schools can strategically improve learning standards by promoting a collaborative work environment, encouraging teachers to be professional, making optimal use of available school resources, and enlisting the support of parents and the community to support educational initiatives. The implementation of quality improvement management is also hampered by various issues, including limited budgets, inadequate infrastructure, and differences in teacher skills. On the other hand, data-driven, adaptive, and participatory leadership techniques can be more effective in encouraging the achievement of learning objectives. The findings of this study indicate that improving teaching standards at the elementary school level will largely depend on teacher quality, including the leadership of communicative, visionary, and sensitive principals.

Keywords: education quality; leadership of principals; principal management; quality improvement.

INTRODUCTION

Today, education is experiencing significant progress day by day. Current education is very different from education in the past. Thanks to technological advances, knowledge has advanced rapidly, significantly impacting education today. The social responsibility of educational institutions is very strong and does not diminish the importance of business (Alvarez et al., 2023; Soraya et al., 2024). One of the many factors that negatively impact education is the leadership of school employees. The principal is the person who will oversee the implementation of effective educational policies in the school environment. In

this example, the principal is the driving force that causes a teacher to become anxious while teaching due to the guidance from the principal (Baidowi, 2020; Mulyasa, 2013).

A teacher's enthusiasm for teaching is evident in their ability to carry out their duties, their tenacity, and their strong desire to solve problems and foster creativity. This has a significant impact on the learning process, ultimately resulting in quality learning (Tanjung et al., 2021). A teacher's success in teaching is determined by the role of the principal, so that motivated teachers in their work will produce higher work results and a higher quality of education (Komariah & Triatna, 2005). A teacher who can supervise the principal and has a high level of work motivation will be able to increase student productivity (Mahmudi, 2005). School success refers to the principal's success in carrying out their duties as an organizational leader. Given these issues, this study is needed to understand the key changes made by school administrators when assessing educational institutions (Pusveni et al., 2020; Setya et al., 2024).

Many factors, such as the principal, teachers, and students, influence the smooth running of the educational process. Consequently, the ability and quality of teachers in carrying out teaching activities must be compared with the principal's supervision and performance as an educational supervisor. The challenges of globalization are exemplified by the highly demanding and robust global competencies. Because schools are complex and unique organizations, coordination is crucial (Deming, 2020; Palah et al., 2022). A unified theory of thought must be established to assist principals in managing schools effectively. For example, principals must understand formal organizational theory, which is useful for describing the relationship between structure and academic performance (Kurniawati & Pardimin, 2021).

Given this, it can be said that "a school with a successful leader is a school that is successful." The effectiveness of school-based education is also greatly influenced by the effectiveness of school administrators in assessing the quality of education offered at the school. One component of education that has a significant impact on increasing teacher productivity is the principal (Silalahi, 2008). The implementation of educational activities, school administration, training of other educational staff, utilization, and maintenance of facilities and infrastructure are all handled by the principal. This becomes increasingly important as the principal's duties become more complex, resulting in a more effective and efficient work environment. As a leader, the principal must be able to understand the needs and work habits of those who work there so that teachers' tasks are always completed successfully (Surata & Aryani, 2024).

It is important to understand the various models of organizational management and leadership in education. Several models have been developed for students studying leadership and management issues in education. These models facilitate understanding of the processes that occur in the real world. These models also impact the management and leadership practices of educational institutions (Silalahi, 2008; Surata & Aryani, 2024). According to Tanjung et al. (2020), leadership, also known as leading activities, is an individual's ability to motivate, encourage, mobilize, encourage, and encourage others to work together to achieve common goals (Tanjung et al., 2021). In relation to the educational mission, leadership can be defined as the principal's efforts to motivate, encourage, and empower school employees so they can work effectively to meet established goals for education and learning.

The leadership character of a principal is determined by the desired outcomes and the maturity level of the members. As leaders who support the school organization, teachers and administrators are crucial to achieving school goals. Due to their differing abilities, needs, and personalities, principals must establish policies and procedures appropriate to their maturity levels (Latifah, 2022). Effective discipline between the principal and each student will vary depending on their individual needs. Maturity is not the same as age or emotional stability; it includes the willingness to support one's own relationships, the ability to accept criticism, and the possession of task-related skills or abilities (Praniisa & Monika, 2022).

In general, there are three types of leadership in schools: theoretical-contingency, behavioral-based, and trait-based. Leadership is based on self-improvement and the abilities that make someone a principal. Behavioral principal leadership focuses on the principal's actions in carrying out managerial duties. The contingency approach compares the principal's actions with situational characteristics, particularly the actions of teachers and school staff (Latifah, 2022; Noprika et al., 2020).

Research on the role of school principals in improving educational quality has attracted the attention of many academics, both nationally and internationally, as the principal's position is seen as a key factor in the success of educational delivery. Baidowi (2020), in his research in the *Journal of Islamic Education Management*, emphasized that effective principal management is not limited to administrative management

but also encompasses strategic aspects, such as long-term planning, optimal human resource management, and ongoing evaluation. This finding underscores that the success of educational quality is largely determined by the principal's ability to formulate a clear vision, direct its implementation, and conduct evaluations for continuous improvement (Baidowi, 2020).

Similarly, Palah et al. (2022) demonstrated that the application of strategic management principles by school principals has been shown to improve teacher performance and the quality of the learning process. This principle involves in-depth situational analysis, prioritization, measurable planning, and control over program implementation. These research findings reinforce the view that strategically oriented principal management can create a conducive learning environment and encourage teachers to be more innovative in their teaching (Palah et al., 2022).

In addition to the strategic approach, the participatory aspect is also highlighted. Latifah (2022) emphasized that participatory principal leadership plays a significant role in building a positive school climate. By involving teachers, students, parents, and the community in decision-making, principals not only strengthen a sense of ownership of the school but also foster a collaborative culture that supports the achievement of educational quality goals (Latifah, 2022).

From an international perspective, Alvarez et al. (2023) found in the *International Journal of English Literature and Social Sciences* that vision-based leadership and school community involvement have a direct influence on the success of educational quality improvement programs. Vision-based leadership fosters a clear direction for schools, while community involvement strengthens resource support and legitimacy of school policies (Alvarez et al., 2023).

These findings align with research by Soraya et al. (2024), which examined the implementation of School-Based Management (SBM) in elementary schools. The results of this study indicate that the effectiveness of SBM is highly dependent on the principal's transformational leadership. Transformational leadership not only motivates teachers and staff through inspiring examples and communication but also mobilizes all school components to innovate and achieve higher quality standards (Soraya et al., 2024).

Thus, various previous studies indicate that successful education quality management in elementary schools requires a combination of strategic, participatory, and transformational leadership. This aligns with the research focus on SDN Bunut and SDN Kabandungan in Sukabumi City, which positions the principal as the primary driving force in planning, implementing, and evaluating education quality improvement programs.

METHOD

The research methodology used in this study is a qualitative approach with a descriptive design, which was chosen to understand in depth the phenomenon of principal leadership in improving the quality of education at the elementary school level, specifically at SDN Bunut and SDN Kabandungan, Sukabumi City. The qualitative approach provides researchers with the flexibility to explore managerial and leadership dynamics holistically, thus being able to capture the meaning, perceptions, and practices carried out by principals in real contexts (Creswell, 2018; Lexy J. Moleong, 2018).

Descriptive methods are used to present a factual and systematic picture of the principal's strategies in managing resources, building a positive school climate, and overcoming various challenges faced in improving the quality of education. Qualitative descriptive research is very relevant when the research goal is to understand the process, not just measure the results, so this approach allows researchers to explore in detail every policy, decision, and interaction that occurs in the school environment (Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, 2018; Sugiyono, 2011).

Data collection was conducted through direct observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. Observations were used to observe the principal's leadership behavior in daily activities, such as staff meetings, teacher supervision activities, and interactions with students and the school community. In-depth interviews were conducted with the principal, teachers, administrative staff, and parent representatives to obtain diverse perspectives on the effectiveness of the principal's management. Document analysis included a review of the school's work plan, quality evaluation reports, and relevant activity archives.

Data validity was maintained through source and method triangulation techniques. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information from various respondents, while method triangulation was conducted by combining the results of observations, interviews, and document analysis.

This step aims to ensure that the findings obtained truly reflect real conditions in the field (Patton, 2002). The collected data were analyzed using the interactive analysis model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2018), which includes three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing/verification. Data reduction was carried out by selecting information relevant to the research focus, data presentation was carried out through systematic narrative descriptions, while conclusions were drawn by looking for patterns, relationships, and meanings from the analyzed data (Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, 2018).

This approach was chosen to answer the research objective, namely to describe and understand in depth how principals' managerial and leadership strategies can improve the quality of education at the elementary school level. By using this method, the research not only captures the principals' leadership practices but also uncovers the supporting factors, barriers, and strategic implications resulting from these practices. This qualitative-descriptive approach has been widely used in educational management studies because it can provide rich and in-depth contextual understanding (Bush, 2018; Oplatka & Arar, 2016). Thus, this methodology allows researchers to produce comprehensive, valid, and relevant findings in the context of elementary education in Indonesia, as well as to make a tangible contribution to the future development of principals' leadership strategies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A Comparative Case Study

The management teams at SDN Bunut and SDN Kabandungan have successfully implemented a structured quality program to improve student learning. This plan includes a clear vision and mission statement, needs analysis, program development, and teacher work standards. To ensure the program is tailored to student needs, the principals encourage teachers to participate in the program, which has been running for several years. This program focuses on improving the quality of education, developing teachers' professional skills, meeting the needs of students and staff, and creating a collaborative work environment within the school (Baidowi, 2020; Setya et al., 2024).

The implementation of educational quality management in both schools was carried out through a structured, collaborative, and goal-oriented approach to improve educational quality. The principals ensured that the management team understood their needs, developed strategic plans, and conducted comprehensive evaluations and reflections. Both school administrators actively acted as visionary, collaborative, and empathetic teachers, as well as facilitators and educators within the school environment. Strengthening teacher competency, involving all school elements, and effectively organizing resources were crucial factors in achieving quality educational outcomes (Mulyasa, 2013; Palah et al., 2022).

The principals of SDN Bunut and SDN Kabandungan conducted management evaluations, demonstrating that a structured and methodical review process involving all school staff can be a crucial step in improving student achievement. To obtain reliable information for their dissertations, the principals not only assessed student learning outcomes and teacher performance but also engaged in group reflection during community service meetings. These assessments were used to identify areas of strength and weakness and recommend appropriate improvements (Pusveni et al., 2020; Tanjung et al., 2021). The principals' role as active learning leaders in improving the quality of the school environment is reflected in this objective, collaborative, and continuous improvement-focused evaluation approach.

The principals' management of SDN Bunut and SDN Kabandungan demonstrated a goal-oriented, responsive, and collaborative approach to progress. As a proactive response to evaluation findings, both principals proposed strategic plans that benefited the entire school staff. To achieve more targeted results, these strategies included improving teacher competency, fostering teamwork, maximizing available resources, and ensuring the implementation of school programs (Alvarez et al., 2023; Noprika et al., 2020). To create a more flexible and adaptive learning environment, the principals encouraged collaborative and transformative leadership by engaging educators, students, parents, and the wider community (Komariah & Triatna, 2005; Silalahi, 2008).

The principal explained that the challenges faced by elementary school administration in achieving the goal of improving school quality are complex and require strategic thinking. The various limitations highlighted, such as lack of funding and facilities, as well as issues with teacher motivation and competence, demonstrate the importance of resource variables for quality management (Kurniawati &

Pardimin, 2021; Mahmudi, 2005). Adaptive, solution-focused school administrators who are able to build alliances with the entire school community are crucial for the success of quality improvement initiatives. Therefore, to effectively achieve the goal of improving student achievement, school administrators need a clear vision, superior managerial skills, and a strong work ethic that fosters collaboration and innovation (Mulyasa, 2013; Sumijo, 2003).

Innovative, participatory, and solution-oriented school leadership can help address a number of educational challenges, including low student participation, teacher motivation and competence, student dissatisfaction, resistance to change, and strong administrative support. Principals need to be able to establish effective management procedures, encourage collaboration among all stakeholders, and foster a school culture oriented toward improvement (Latifah, 2022; Pranilisa & Monika, 2022). These challenges can be mitigated with appropriate techniques and can also be used as opportunities to build a better and more sustainable learning environment.

Based on research findings, Deming's (2020) student behavior management theory and the Plan, Do, Check, Act (PDCA) framework have become the foundation for school management efforts to improve student achievement at SDN Bunut and SDN Kabandungan (Deming, 2020). Principals at both schools implemented participatory work programs as planning tools, focusing on infrastructure and facility development, teacher professionalism, and student quality improvement (Soraya et al., 2024; Surata & Aryani, 2024).

Principal's Strategic Planning in Improving the Quality of Education

Strategic planning is a key pillar of educational management, oriented toward improving the quality of learning in elementary schools. At SDN Bunut and SDN Kabandungan, the principals demonstrated effective and efficient planning skills, focusing on achieving short-, medium-, and long-term goals. This planning focused not only on academic outcomes but also on strengthening character, social skills, and developing students' overall potential. The principals at both schools implemented participatory strategic planning, in which teachers, education staff, and the school committee were actively involved in developing the annual work program. This aligns with Baidowi's (2020) perspective, which emphasizes that the participation of all school elements in planning will enhance a sense of belonging and shared responsibility for the success of the education quality program (Baidowi, 2020).

The strategies implemented include a school needs assessment, the formulation of a clear vision and mission, and the establishment of measurable success indicators. The principal ensures that each designed program includes Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) aligned with national education goals and the school's specific needs. This approach aligns with the findings of Setya et al. (2024), who confirmed that data-driven planning and continuous evaluation can significantly improve teacher performance and student achievement (Setya et al., 2024).

Furthermore, strategic planning at SDN Bunut and SDN Kabandungan utilizes the principles of School-Based Management (SBM), which allows decision-making at the school level, taking local conditions into account. Soraya et al. (2024) demonstrated that effective SBM implementation contributes to increased effectiveness in resource utilization, both human and material, in achieving the desired educational quality (Soraya et al., 2024). In practice, this strategic planning encompasses not only academic aspects but also teacher professional development programs through training, workshops, and peer mentoring. The principal sets targets for improving teacher competency based on professional competency standards set by the government. This is crucial because educational quality is highly dependent on the quality of classroom teaching (Mulyasa, 2013).

Planning evaluations are conducted periodically through monthly coordination meetings and quarterly program reviews. This process allows for strategic adjustments to reflect the dynamics and challenges faced in the field, such as limited infrastructure, changes in educational policies, or special student needs. This evaluative approach aligns with the principles of Total Quality Management, which emphasizes a continuous cycle of improvement in every aspect of school management. Therefore, the strategic planning implemented at SDN Bunut and SDN Kabandungan serves not only as an administrative document but also as a concrete operational guide for improving educational quality. This planning is based on participation, data, and continuous evaluation, thus aligning with the demands of modern educational management and relevant to the challenges of the globalization of basic education in Indonesia.

Collaborative and Participative Leadership

Collaborative and participatory leadership is a key factor in principals' success in improving educational quality, particularly at the elementary school level. At SDN Bunut and SDN Kabandungan, the principals implement a leadership style that prioritizes the involvement of all educational stakeholders. This leadership model positions teachers, students, parents, and the community as strategic partners in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of school programs. Collaborative leadership stems from the understanding that the complexity of educational challenges in the era of globalization cannot be solved by a single party but requires synergy from various elements. Kurniawati and Pardimin (2021) emphasize that active participation from all school elements, including parents and the community, strengthens support for educational quality improvement programs and ensures their relevance to local needs (Kurniawati & Pardimin, 2021).

In both schools, the principal is not only a decision-maker but also a facilitator, fostering dialogue and deliberation. Every strategic decision, such as developing additional curricula, procuring infrastructure, or developing extracurricular activities, is made through joint forums such as school committee meetings or parent-teacher meetings. This approach aligns with Latifah's (2022) view that participatory leadership fosters a sense of ownership among the school community, motivating them to actively contribute to achieving educational goals (Latifah, 2022).

The implementation of collaborative leadership is also reflected in teacher involvement in decision-making regarding learning strategies. Teachers are given space to provide input based on their classroom experiences, ensuring the principal's policies are more context-specific and targeted. Ocampo (2023) emphasized that leadership based on school community involvement has a positive impact on the successful implementation of the Education Quality Program (Alvarez et al., 2023). The principals at SDN Bunut and SDN Kabandungan also initiated partnerships with external parties, such as businesses, higher education institutions, and social organizations, to support teaching and learning activities. This support can take the form of providing facilities, scholarship programs, or skills training activities. According to Soraya et al. (2024), cross-sector collaboration expands the resources and opportunities that schools can utilize to improve the quality of education (Soraya et al., 2024).

Furthermore, this leadership style strengthens two-way communication between the school and the community. The principal regularly holds open forums to gather input and identify issues students face outside of school, such as economic barriers or the learning environment at home. This allows school policies to be designed more adaptively to students' social realities. Based on these practices, it can be concluded that collaborative and participatory leadership at SDN Bunut and SDN Kabandungan has created a school culture that is inclusive, transparent, and oriented towards continuous improvement. This approach not only strengthens social cohesion within the school environment but also ensures that every program implemented has legitimacy and broad support from all stakeholders.

Implementation of the PDCA Model in Educational Quality Management

The implementation of the Plan, Do, Check, Act (PDCA) model as a quality management framework for education at SDN Bunut and SDN Kabandungan demonstrates the principals' commitment to implementing a systematic, sustainable, and evaluation-based quality improvement process. Developed by W. Edwards Deming, the PDCA model emphasizes the importance of a continuous improvement cycle in every aspect of education delivery (Deming, 2020). The Planning phase at both schools began with an in-depth needs analysis through the collection of academic data, learning evaluation results, and input from teachers, students, and parents. This planning included establishing quality targets, developing strategic programs, and scheduling activities, including teacher training and improving school infrastructure. According to Soraya et al. (2024), data-driven and participatory planning increases the program's relevance to the school's real needs (Soraya et al., 2024).

The Do stage is realized through the implementation of work programs according to plan, such as developing a contextual curriculum, organizing relevant extracurricular activities, and implementing innovative learning methods. At this stage, the principal acts as a facilitator, ensuring that each teacher receives adequate support, both in the form of pedagogical training and the provision of learning facilities and infrastructure. Surata and Aryani (2024) emphasized that structured implementation supported by good coordination between stakeholders is key to the success of this stage (Surata & Aryani, 2024).

The Check stage involves a comprehensive evaluation of program implementation. This evaluation involves assessing student learning outcomes, teacher performance, and the achievement of established targets. Principals at both schools regularly hold evaluation meetings with teachers and the school committee to identify successes, obstacles, and potential improvements. The evaluation model used adheres to the principles of accountability and transparency, ensuring that all parties can objectively understand the school's progress. The final stage, Act, focuses on corrective actions and continuous improvement. Based on the evaluation results, principals develop corrective measures that include program revisions, teacher capacity building, and innovative learning methods that align with technological developments and student needs. This approach aligns with the view of Palah et al. (2022), who stated that the continuous improvement cycle through PDCA (Developmental Development Cycle) can improve the quality of the teaching and learning process and student academic outcomes (Palah et al., 2022).

The implementation of PDCA in both schools also emphasized the active involvement of all school elements, from teachers and students to the community. This cross-stakeholder collaboration not only strengthened commitment to achieving educational quality but also created a sense of ownership for each school program. This aligns with the findings of Alvarez et al. (2023), who stated that school community involvement in every stage of quality management increases the chances of educational program success (Alvarez et al., 2023). Thus, the implementation of PDCA at SDN Bunut and SDN Kabandungan is not merely an administrative procedure, but has become a work culture that instills the discipline of continuous evaluation and improvement across all levels of the school. This model has proven effective as a quality management instrument, maintaining the relevance, effectiveness, and sustainability of educational programs at the elementary school level.

The Role of the Principal in Teacher Professional Development

Teacher professional development is a primary focus of principal management at SDN Bunut and SDN Kabandungan, given that teachers are key players in determining the quality of classroom learning. Principals at both schools view teacher competency development as a strategic investment that directly impacts student achievement. According to Mulyasa (2013), principals play a crucial role in facilitating and directing teacher professional development through academic supervision, training, and providing appropriate motivation and rewards (Mulyasa, 2013).

One strategy implemented is the implementation of the Continuing Professional Development Program (CPD), which includes pedagogical training, the use of learning technology, and the implementation of innovative learning models. This program is designed to align with teachers' needs, including improving pedagogical, professional, social, and personal competencies (Pusveni et al., 2020). In addition, the principal also facilitates lesson study and peer teaching, where teachers can share experiences, discuss learning issues, and formulate solutions together. This collaborative approach has proven effective in improving teaching skills while strengthening a sense of community among teachers (Noprika et al., 2020).

In a global context, Alvarez et al. (2023) emphasize that principals who are proactive in developing teacher competencies through best-practice-based training and the use of technology will be better able to create learning that adapts to changing times. This aligns with the Merdeka Belajar policy, which requires teachers to have flexibility and creativity in teaching (Alvarez et al., 2023). The principals at SDN Bunut and SDN Kabandungan also utilize reflection-based academic supervision to monitor teacher performance development. Supervision is conducted not only to evaluate but also to provide constructive feedback. According to Palah et al. (2022), supportive and guiding supervision can increase teacher motivation and encourage innovation in the learning process (Palah et al., 2022).

Teacher professional development efforts in these two schools are increasingly effective because they are supported by a collaborative work culture and empowering leadership. The principal acts not only as a supervisor but also as a facilitator, mentor, and motivator for teachers. This approach aligns with the findings of Alvarez et al. (2023), who confirmed that the principal's active involvement in teacher development positively impacts the overall quality of education (Alvarez et al., 2023). With ongoing support, teachers at SDN Bunut and SDN Kabandungan have been able to improve the quality of their teaching, innovate in their learning methods, and build more positive interactions with their students. Ultimately, this teacher professional development has become a key factor in strengthening the success of principal management in improving the quality of education at the elementary school level.

Improving the Quality of Learning through a Positive School Climate

A positive school climate is a crucial prerequisite for improving the quality of learning in elementary schools. A conducive school climate encompasses a safe, comfortable, supportive atmosphere that encourages the active participation of all members of the school community. Research has shown that a positive school climate significantly impacts student learning motivation, teacher performance, and the effectiveness of the learning process (Cohen et al., 2009; Thapa et al., 2013). At SDN Bunut and SDN Kabandungan, the principals view fostering a positive school climate as a strategic priority, aligned with their vision of improving educational quality. This is realized through various leadership policies and practices that emphasize collaboration, open communication, respect for diversity, and emotional support for teachers and students. The principals play a central role in directing the school culture, ensuring that every individual feels valued and has a sense of belonging to the school.

The principals at these two elementary schools apply a collaborative and empathetic leadership style based on participation which allows teachers, students and parents to be involved in decision making (Kurniawati & Pardimin, 2021; Latifah, 2022). This participatory leadership not only strengthens a sense of community but also builds trust among all members of the school community. In this context, the principal serves not only as an administrative manager but also as a role model who reflects positive values such as integrity, cooperation, and mutual respect (Silalahi, 2008). Research by Soraya et al. (2024) confirms that principals who are able to build a positive school climate through effective communication and community involvement will encourage the creation of a more meaningful learning environment (Soraya et al., 2024). This is in line with the findings of Alvarez et al. (2023) in the international context, which stated that the active involvement of school principals in building harmonious relationships between school members contributed to increasing the success of the quality education program (Alvarez et al., 2023).

A positive school environment directly contributes to increasing student motivation to learn. Student motivation to learn is influenced not only by the subject matter and teaching methods, but also by the emotional and social atmosphere at school (Wentzel, 1997). At SDN Bunut and SDN Kabandungan, the principal ensures that teachers implement interactive, creative, and life-relevant learning approaches for students. This aims to foster curiosity and a strong enthusiasm for learning (Wentzel, 1997). Furthermore, rewarding student achievement, both academic and non-academic, is an integral part of motivational strategies. Research by Palah et al. (2022) shows that rewarding and recognizing student achievement can increase their self-confidence and commitment to learning (Palah et al., 2022). The principal also emphasized the importance of good relationships between teachers and students. Teachers who are able to build positive relationships will create a safe classroom atmosphere for students to actively participate, ask questions, and express their opinions. This type of environment has been proven effective in increasing student participation in the learning process (Hattie, 2008).

In addition to impacting students, a positive school climate also has a significant impact on teacher performance. Teachers who feel valued, supported, and have harmonious working relationships with their principals and colleagues will demonstrate a higher level of commitment to their work (Hoy & Miskel, 2013). At SDN Bunut and SDN Kabandungan, the principals encourage collaboration between teachers through regular discussion forums, peer mentoring, and jointly designed professional development activities. According to Noprika et al. (2020), teacher involvement in school program planning can increase their sense of ownership of policies and motivate them to perform more optimally (Noprika et al., 2020). Principals also provide emotional and professional support, for example by appreciating teachers' hard work, providing adequate learning facilities, and providing opportunities to develop new skills. This type of support has been shown to reduce teacher stress levels and increase creativity in teaching (Day & Gu, 2013).

To build a positive school climate, the principals at SDN Bunut and SDN Kabandungan implemented several key strategies. First, by improving effective communication, the principals held regular meetings to discuss school developments, resolve issues, and provide space for teachers and staff to express ideas and input. Open communication fostered mutual trust and transparency in decision-making (Baidowi, 2020). Second, strengthening a culture of appreciation. Every student and teacher achievement, no matter how small, receives appropriate recognition. This culture of appreciation motivates the entire school community to continue achieving and improving the quality of their work (Pranilsa & Monika, 2022).

Third, school community participation. The principal invites parents and the surrounding community to participate in school activities, such as school meetings, community service, and fundraising for facility development. This participation creates a sense of shared ownership of the school's success (Soraya et al.,

2024). Fourth, implementing a comfortable and safe physical environment. A clean, well-organized school environment with adequate facilities creates a comfortable learning environment for students and teachers. This is important because a good physical environment has been proven to improve student learning focus (Earthman & Lemasters, 1996). Fifth, the principal's and teachers' positive discipline approach emphasizes an educational, rather than punitive, approach to discipline. Positive discipline helps students understand the consequences of their behavior and encourages them to take responsibility for their actions (Bear, 2010).

Improving the quality of learning through a positive school climate at SDN Bunut and SDN Kabandungan has broad implications. First, students become more motivated to learn, reflected in improved academic achievement and participation in school activities. Second, teachers become more committed to their work, increase their creativity in teaching, and feel more satisfied with their work environment. Third, parental and community involvement becomes more active, strengthening support for school programs.

Cohen et al.'s (2009) research confirms that a positive school climate can be a key driver in achieving educational excellence (Cohen et al., 2009), while Thapa et al. (2013) add that this success can only be achieved if the principal is able to maintain consistency in implementing positive values in the school (Thapa et al., 2013). In both elementary schools, the principals' consistency in practicing the principles of empowering leadership, effective communication, and holistic school management was key to success. These efforts not only improved the quality of learning in the short term but also built a strong foundation for the sustainability of educational quality in the future.

Evaluation and Follow-up of the Education Quality Program

Evaluation is a crucial component of the education quality management cycle that cannot be ignored. Without a comprehensive evaluation, it is difficult to measure the extent to which a quality improvement program has achieved its intended goals and to identify areas for improvement. At SDN Bunut and SDN Kabandungan, the evaluation process is carried out systematically and continuously, involving all stakeholders, from the principal, teachers, administrative staff, students, and parents. According to Deming (2020), evaluation should not be viewed as the end of a process, but as part of a continuous cycle involving planning (plan), implementation (do), checking (check), and corrective action (act). This approach allows schools to adapt their strategies based on the results obtained in the field, ensuring that quality programs remain relevant to existing needs and challenges (Deming, 2020).

The principals at both schools implemented a Key Performance Indicators (KPI)-based evaluation mechanism that encompasses three main aspects: first, student learning outcomes, evaluated through analysis of report card grades, exam results, and non-academic achievements such as sports or artistic achievements. Second, teacher performance, including assessments of lesson preparation, classroom management skills, implementation of innovative methods, and attendance levels. Third, stakeholder satisfaction, conducted through surveys of parents, students, and teachers to determine their level of satisfaction with educational services.

This assessment is conducted at least once per semester, using an instrument designed in collaboration with the school management team. This process ensures the involvement of all stakeholders and increases public accountability. According to Pusveni et al. (2020), involving all stakeholders in the evaluation will increase their trust and commitment to the school program, allowing for more effective follow-up (Pusveni et al., 2020).

Evaluation results at SDN Bunut and SDN Kabandungan showed that most performance indicators had shown significant improvement over the past three years. However, the evaluation also identified several weaknesses, such as the low utilization of learning technology by some teachers and limited laboratory facilities. Based on these findings, the principals developed a follow-up plan that included: first, training teachers on the use of educational technology, in collaboration with the education office and third parties.

Second, community fundraising for school facility repairs and acquisitions. Third, a mentoring program for students experiencing learning difficulties through intensive after-school tutoring. This approach aligns with Sallis's (2002) opinion, which emphasizes the importance of transforming evaluation results into concrete action plans that can be implemented within a specific timeframe (Sallis, 2002).

Principals play a central role in ensuring that any follow-up to evaluation results proceeds according to plan. They not only act as supervisors but also as facilitators and motivators for the entire team. Soraya et al. (2024) stated that principals who are directly involved in the quality program follow-up process have a greater chance of achieving established targets. In both schools, principals routinely monitor follow-up progress through weekly meetings and progress reports from each program coordinator (Soraya et al., 2024). In addition, the principal developed a digital data-based monitoring system to track the achievement of performance indicators in real time. This innovation facilitates decision-making because information is always available quickly and accurately.

Stakeholder involvement is one of the strengths of the evaluation and follow-up mechanisms at SDN Bunut and SDN Kabandungan. Parents are involved in school committee meetings to provide input on improvement priorities. Students are also given the opportunity to express their aspirations through student council forums or satisfaction surveys. Research by Alvarez et al. (2023) found that schools that involve parents and the community in the planning and evaluation process tend to have higher levels of quality program success. At both elementary schools, community involvement extends beyond providing suggestions to include concrete actions, such as building facilities and providing learning resources (Alvarez et al., 2023).

The success of evaluation and follow-up at these two schools lies in their sustainability. Evaluations are not only conducted when a new program is introduced or a problem arises, but have become part of the school's work culture. This aligns with the concept of continuous improvement introduced by Deming (2020), where quality improvements must be carried out consistently, measurably, and involve all parties. This culture fosters a mindset that every aspect of the school can always be improved, and that current success is not the end point, but rather a stepping stone to future achievements (Deming, 2020).

The consistent implementation of evaluation and follow-up has had a significant impact on the quality of education at SDN Bunut and SDN Kabandungan. Some notable achievements include: first, a 12% increase in average student exam scores over the past two years. Second, a decrease in teacher absence rates from 6% to 2% per semester. Third, an increase in parent satisfaction with school services from 78% to 92% (based on an internal survey). These findings support Palah et al.'s (2022) argument that systematically implemented and appropriately followed-up evaluations will result in overall improvements in school performance (Palah et al., 2022).

Management Efficiency and Resource Management

Efficiency in school management reflects the principal's competence in effectively carrying out various leadership functions, from organizing, planning, implementing, supervising, to evaluating. At SDN Bunut and SDN Kabandungan, the principals implement systematic and structured management, creating a productive work environment conducive to quality learning.

According to Mulyasa (2013), a professional principal must be able to manage all aspects of education, from the curriculum to human resources and facilities, through thorough planning, effective organization, ongoing supervision, and comprehensive evaluation of results. This serves as the operational foundation at both elementary schools (Mulyasa, 2013). Likewise, Sumijo (2003) emphasized the importance of solid administrative functions as an indicator of the quality of school management, namely regularity of procedures, accountability of processes, and achieving educational goals consistently (Sumijo, 2003).

Komariah & Triatna (2005) present the concept of visionary leadership as a mechanism for building effective schools by instilling a culture based on a shared vision, which then strengthens the collective awareness of all school members regarding the school's long-term goals (Komariah & Triatna, 2005). In line with this, Pranilisa & Monika (2022) highlighted the importance of participatory management, where teachers are given space to participate in the decision-making process, creating a sense of ownership and strengthening the demands of teamwork in school quality improvement programs (Pranilisa & Monika, 2022).

In practice, the principals at both schools implement a balanced formal and informal managerial structure. The formal structure is evident in the clear division of tasks, such as curriculum coordinator, facilities coordinator, and school committee public relations coordinator. The informal structure, meanwhile, stems from a work culture that encourages teacher initiative through small teams, such as quality evaluation and inspirational class development teams. Participatory management is evident when the principals

facilitate teacher forums to develop development plans, adapt teaching methods, and propose innovative activities such as thematic classes or project-based learning. These forums strengthen teacher engagement and creativity and foster cross-class collaboration.

Management efficiency is reflected in tangible results: improved school grade point averages, optimal staff distribution, and targeted budget utilization. For example, the School Revenue and Expenditure Budget Plan (RAPBS) is developed in a participatory manner, integrating teacher needs and findings from school quality evaluations, creating a responsive and accountable budget model. Physical resources are also managed efficiently. The principal regularly evaluates the use of classrooms, supporting facilities, and library space. Budget allocations are focused on immediate needs, such as repairing leaking roofs or procuring digital learning devices, so that spending directly supports the quality of learning. The combination of managerial efficiency and participatory management creates a creative, responsive, and collaborative school culture. Teachers feel more engaged, students feel more comfortable, and the school committee is more supportive. This culture then strengthens continuous improvement efforts, in line with the principles of total quality management in education.

The Impact of Management Strategy on the Quality of Education

The implementation of planned and measurable management strategies by the principals at SDN Bunut and SDN Kabandungan has had a significant impact on improving the quality of education. This impact is evident not only in academic outcomes but also in non-academic areas such as school climate, community participation, and a strong culture of cooperation among teachers and education staff. The principals at these two schools integrate strategic planning, collaborative leadership, and the Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycle into all school programs. This strategy enables a continuous cycle of evaluation and improvement that impacts the quality of learning. Research by Baidowi (2020) shows that systematic principal management, particularly in planning and supervision, can significantly improve student academic achievement (Baidowi, 2020). This is in line with the findings of Palah et al. (2022) that strategic principal leadership contributes to improved teacher performance and the effectiveness of the learning process (Palah et al., 2022).

The management strategies at both elementary schools also have a positive impact on teacher competency development. The principals regularly hold internal training, creative learning workshops, and academic supervision, encouraging teachers to adopt innovative teaching methods. According to Latifah (2022), participatory leadership, which provides teachers with a space to discuss the formulation of school policies, can foster a sense of ownership in the school's vision and motivate them to improve the quality of learning. This practice is evident at SDN Bunut and SDN Kabandungan through internal MGMP forums that discuss thematic learning planning, evaluation of learning outcomes, and curriculum adaptation (Latifah, 2022).

In addition to its impact on academic aspects, the principal's management strategy also creates a conducive and collaborative school climate. Teachers feel more appreciated, students are more motivated, and parents are more actively involved in school activities. Soraya et al. (2024) emphasized that the effective implementation of School-Based Management, including the participation of all school elements, is a crucial factor in creating a school culture that supports sustainable educational quality (Soraya et al., 2024).

Efficient resource use is one indicator of a successful management strategy. The principals at these two elementary schools prioritized budget allocation for urgent needs that directly impact learning quality, such as procuring learning media, improving infrastructure, and improving teacher competency. According to Komariah & Triatna (2005), visionary leadership in resource management enables schools to maximize existing potential without sacrificing the sustainability of strategic programs. This approach aligns with the principles of efficiency and effectiveness in Total Quality Management in education (Komariah & Triatna, 2005).

One of the greatest achievements of the management strategy at SDN Bunut and SDN Kabandungan is the creation of a continuous quality improvement mechanism. The principals not only focused on short-term targets but also developed long-term plans that included curriculum evaluation, consistent teacher coaching, and innovation in technology-based learning programs. This model aligns with the Continuous Improvement framework popularized by W. Edwards Deming, where the process of planning, implementation, evaluation, and improvement forms a continuous cycle to ensure educational quality improves over time (Deming, 2020).

CONCLUSION

Based on the study findings, the principals at SDN Bunut and SDN Kabandungan strategically developed, implemented, and evaluated student learning improvement initiatives. Collaborative practices, participatory learning, and continuous assessment are crucial elements in ensuring the highest possible educational standards. To build teacher competency, support students' continuous learning, and adhere to the principles of mutuality and mutual benefit, the implementation followed the PDCA (participatory learning, accountable implementation, measurable evaluation, and continuous improvement) framework. Collaboration among the principals, instructors, students, and the general public is crucial to improving educational standards.

This collaboration enhances students' learning experiences, strengthens existing programs, and creates a positive learning environment. Budget and facilities remain paramount for both schools. Principals also need to pay special attention to issues such as low student participation and instructor motivation and competence. Adaptive management techniques were employed by the principals of SDN Bunut and SDN Kabandungan, who also used evaluation data to determine appropriate improvement periods. Furthermore, by conducting comprehensive assessments and reflections as crucial phases in the improvement process, the principals at both schools created a supportive and collaborative work environment.

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