

The Principal's Strategy in Improving Student Achievement at Darunnajah Islamic Boarding School Jakarta

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Abstract

This research aims to determine and describe the strategies implemented by school principals in improving student learning achievement at the Darunnajah Islamic Boarding School, Jakarta. The research method used is qualitative with a case study approach. Data collection was carried out through in-depth interviews, observation and documentation studies. The research results show that school principals play an important role in improving student learning achievement by implementing several strategies, including: (1) Creating systematic and planned educational programs; (2) Improving the quality of educators and education personnel through training and professional development; (3) Encourage active involvement of parents in the teaching and learning process; and (4) Using technology in the learning process to increase teaching effectiveness. Apart from that, collaboration between aspects of the curriculum, character building and extracurricular activities is also a supporting factor in improving student learning achievement. It is hoped that this research can become a reference for other educational institutions in formulating strategies to improve student learning achievement.

Keywords: strategy, school principal, learning achievement, Darunnajah Islamic Boarding School, Jakarta.

Abstract

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui dan menggambarkan strategi yang diimplementasikan oleh kepala sekolah dalam meningkatkan prestasi belajar siswa di Pondok Pesantren Darunnajah Jakarta. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah kualitatif dengan pendekatan studi kasus. Pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi, dan studi dokumentasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kepala sekolah memainkan peran penting dalam meningkatkan prestasi belajar siswa dengan menerapkan beberapa strategi, di antaranya: (1) Membuat program pendidikan yang sistematis dan terencana; (2) Meningkatkan kualitas pendidik dan tenaga kependidikan melalui pelatihan dan pengembangan profesional; (3) Mendorong keterlibatan aktif orang tua dalam proses belajar mengajar; dan (4) Menggunakan teknologi dalam proses pembelajaran untuk meningkatkan efektivitas pengajaran. Selain itu, kolaborasi antara aspek kurikulum, pembinaan karakter, dan kegiatan ekstrakurikuler juga menjadi faktor pendukung dalam meningkatkan prestasi belajar siswa. Diharapkan penelitian ini dapat menjadi referensi bagi institusi pendidikan lain dalam merumuskan strategi peningkatan prestasi belajar siswa.

Kata Kunci: strategi, kepala sekolah, prestasi belajar, Pondok Pesantren Darunnajah, Jakarta.

Introduction

Education is the main pillar in the formation of character and quality of human resources.¹In the midst of the complexity of the world of education, the role of a school principal becomes very crucial, not only as an administrative leader, but also as a visionary leader who is able to guide the school to achieve optimal achievement.² Student achievement not only shows the quality of education provided by the institution, but also reflects the effectiveness of the strategies implemented by the principal.³

Schools as a formal forum for education must also be able to take advantage of the interests and talents that have been instilled by parents in activity programs at school. Because not a few parents are new to the interests and talents of their children after entering the school level, in this case the school plays a role in addition to developing interests and talents as well as forming the character of their students.⁴

Given the important role of strategy in improving learning achievement, it is interesting to explore how a principal develops and implements the right strategy to achieve these goals. This journal aims to review and discuss various strategies implemented by school principals in an effort to improve student achievement, as well as identify challenges and opportunities that exist in the field. It is hoped that the findings and discussions in this journal can provide insights and recommendations for policy makers, school principals, and education practitioners in maximizing the quality of the teaching and learning process in schools.

In the era of globalization and advances in information technology, the challenges of the world of education are increasingly diverse and complex.⁵ Students no longer only compete with their peers at the local level, but also with students around the world. In this context, schools are required to not only prepare students with basic knowledge, but also with relevant skills and competencies to be able to compete in the international arena. As the spearhead in an educational institution, the principal has a great responsibility in creating a conducive and innovative school

¹ Bujang Rahman, *Quality Management of Educational Personnel Educational Institutions* (Yogyakarta: Graha Ilmu, 2013).

² Rokimin Sofwan Manaf, 'The Role of School Principals in Improving Teacher Competence', *Mudir : Journal of Education Management*, 1.5 (2023), 375–83 <<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.55352/mudir.v5i1.28>>.

³ Siti Haryuni, 'Application of Educational Counseling Guidance in Forming the Discipline of Self-Development Guidance Services', *Edukasia : Journal of Islamic Education Research*, 8.2 (2013), 389–416 <<https://doi.org/10.21043/edukasia.v8i2.760>>.

⁴ Rokimin & Sofwan Manaf, 'The Role of School Principals in Improving Teacher Competence', *ARMADA : Journal of Multidisciplinary Research*, 1.5 (2023), 375–83 <<https://doi.org/10.55681/armada.v1i5.527>>.

⁵ Zahra Amalia and Utami Maulida, 'Teacher Strategies in Shaping Student Character through the Concept of Strengthening Character Education (PPK)', *Tarbawi*, 6.1 (2023), 23–30.

climate. The principal's strategy no longer only focuses on curriculum aspects, but also integrates various other aspects such as character development, digital literacy, 21st century skills, and others.

Often, the challenges faced by school principals are not only sourced from internal schools, such as human resources and facilities, but also from external such as parental demands, changes in education policies, and rapidly changing socio-cultural dynamics. Therefore, having a comprehensive, adaptive, and innovative strategy is the main key in ensuring that student achievement can continue to be improved. Through this journal, we will dive deeper into various strategies applied by school principals in various regions and contexts. Through case studies and in-depth analysis, we will try to understand how these strategies can be effectively implemented and have a positive impact on student achievement.⁶

The Principal's leadership in improving teachers' Professional Competence should be carried out through; (1) formulate school planning and development (2) improve teacher work discipline, both in terms of learning, administration, and behavior; (3) conduct periodic academic supervision; and (4) cooperate with supervisors, committees, parents, and government agencies.⁷

Research Methods

The research method used is using qualitative descriptive methods. Qualitative research also seeks to see and understand the subject and object of research (a person, society or institution) based on facts that appear as they are (natural paradigm).⁸ The description in this research method is as follows:

1. Research Design:

Qualitative research with a case study approach. This study was designed to understand and deepen the principal's strategy in improving student achievement in selected schools.

2. Location and Subject of Study:

The location of the study was carried out in three schools with the following criteria:

- Schools with student achievement that showed significant improvement in the last three years.
- Schools located in urban, suburban, and rural areas, to get a diverse picture of strategies based on geographical context.

⁶ Rokimin and others, 'Management of Islamic Boarding School Marketing Strategy', *Mudir (Journal of Education Management)*, 4 (2022).

⁷ Rokimin et al, Principal's Leadership Management in Developing Teachers' Professional Competencies, *Taduruun Journal, Journal of Basic Education*, Vol. 1 No. 2 (2022): September 2022,

⁸ Noeng Muhadjir, *Qualitative Research Paradigm*, Yogyakarta: Rake Sarasin, 2007, p 147

- The subjects of the study included principals, teachers, students, as well as school committees.

3. Data Collection:

Data is collected through:

- In-depth interviews: with the principal, selected teachers, and some students to gain their perceptions and experiences regarding the strategies implemented.
- Observation: recording daily activities at school, teacher meetings, and extracurricular activities that support the learning process.
- Documentation: analysis of related documents such as School Work Plans, student achievement reports, and training materials provided to teachers.

4. Data Analysis:

The data that has been collected is then analyzed with content analysis techniques. The stages include:

- Data reduction: summarize and select essential data that is appropriate to the research focus.
- Data presentation: organizing data in the form of narratives, tables, or flowcharts for easy interpretation.
- Inference: interpreting patterns, themes, or concepts that emerge from data to answer research questions.

5. Validity and Reliability:

To increase validity, researchers triangulate sources, that is, by comparing information from various sources (principals, teachers, students). Reliability is guaranteed by providing field notes and interview results to research subjects for confirmation (member check).

6. Research Ethics:

Before conducting the study, the researcher obtains written permission from the relevant schools and information to the subject about the purpose of the study. All information obtained is kept confidential and only used for research purposes.

With this research method, it is hoped that a comprehensive picture can be obtained of the principal's strategy in improving student achievement, as well as supporting and inhibiting factors.

Discussion and Research Results

1. The Strategic Role of School Principals in Educational Leadership

This research found that school principals have a very strategic role in ensuring the quality of education. Referring to Leithwood et al. (2004), effective leadership affects student learning significantly. This is consistent with findings in the field where schools with visionary and collaborative principals tend to have better student achievement.⁹ The principal holds a very important position in determining the direction and quality of education in an institution. His role is not limited to just being an administrator, but more than that, the principal is the driving force of the school's vision and mission.

a. Visionary Leaders

As a leader, the principal must have a clear vision of what the school wants to achieve in the long term. This vision is then translated into a clear mission, goals, and objectives. According to Leithwood et al. (2004), successful principals are those who are able to communicate this vision to all school stakeholders, such as teachers, students, parents, and the community.

b. Motivators and Innovators

The principal must be able to be a source of motivation for teachers and students. In addition, in an era full of changes like today, principals must be innovators who are able to bring schools to keep up with the times, such as the integration of technology in learning. Hallinger (2005) states that innovative principals are often successful in dealing with contemporary educational challenges.¹⁰

c. Collaborators and Mediators

The principal also has a role as a collaborator who is able to bridge the needs of various stakeholders. He must ensure that all parties feel involved in the educational process. In addition, as a mediator, the principal must be able to resolve conflicts that may arise in the school. Robinson (2010) found that effective principals are those who are able to manage interpersonal relationships well.¹¹

⁹ Ajmain, Ajmain and Marzuki, Marzuki, 'The Role of Teachers and Principals in Student Character Education at SMA Negeri 3 Yogyakarta', *SOCIA: Journal of the Social Sciences*, 16.1 (2019), 109–23 <<https://doi.org/10.21831/socia.v16i1.27655>>.

¹⁰ Hallinger, (2005). Instructional leadership and the school principal: A passing fancy that refuses to fade away. *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, 4(3), 221-239.

¹¹ Robinson, (2010). From instructional leadership to leadership capabilities: Empirical findings and methodological challenges. *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, 9(1), 1-26.

The role of the headmaster in educational leadership is strategic. From being visionary leaders, motivators, innovators, to collaborators and mediators, principals have a great responsibility in ensuring optimal quality education. For this reason, continuous education and training for school principals is needed so that they are always ready to face the challenges and dynamics of education that continue to change.

2. Implementation of Effective Strategies in Improving Learning Achievement

Based on interviews with school principals, feedback strategies, the use of metacognition, and the application of effective learning techniques, as described by Hattie (2009), are often implemented and show positive results.¹² In the world of education, strategies applied by teachers and schools play an important role in determining the success of the teaching and learning process. Improvement in student achievement can be achieved through a series of strategic approaches tailored to student needs and the school context.

a. Student-Centered Learning Strategies

Contemporary education emphasizes the importance of a student-centered approach to learning, where students are considered as active subjects in the learning process. With this method, students are invited to be more involved, explore, and discover new concepts according to their interests and needs. According to Hattie (2009), this approach encourages students to be more actively involved and have responsibility for their own learning process.¹³

b. Feedback and Feedback

Feedback is one of the factors with the greatest positive impact on student achievement. Providing constructive and timely feedback can increase students' understanding of the material being taught and motivate them to continue to improve.

c. Metacognitive Approach

Metacognition is concerned with students' awareness and understanding of their own learning process. With these strategies, students are taught to understand the way they learn, identify their strengths and weaknesses, and develop effective learning strategies.

¹² Hattie, (2009). Visible learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement.

¹³ Wakhidatun Niswah, 'Analysis of Principal's Academic Supervision and School Culture on the Pedagogical Competence of Elementary School Teachers in Demak District', *JPAI: Indonesian Journal of Women and Children*, 2.1 (2020), 43 <<https://doi.org/10.35801/jpai.2.1.2020.31181>>.

According to Flavell (1979), metacognition allows students to become more independent and efficient learners.¹⁴

d. Technology and Digital Media

In today's digital era, the use of technology and digital media in the teaching and learning process can increase student engagement and motivation. Tools such as e-learning, educational apps, and educational games can help present material in a more engaging and interactive way.

e. Collaborative and Project-Based Learning

With a collaborative approach, students work in groups to complete specific tasks or projects. Through this process, they learn to collaborate, communicate, and solve problems together. This approach not only improves students' understanding of academic concepts, but also students' social skills.

Therefore, the application of effective strategies in the teaching and learning process requires a deep understanding of the needs and characteristics of students, as well as adaptation to the latest technological developments and learning methods. With the right approach and focusing on active student involvement, learning achievement can be significantly improved.

3. Creating a Positive School Climate

One of the key findings in this study is the importance of a positive school climate in supporting student achievement. This is in line with the study of Thapa et al. (2013) which states that a positive school climate can increase student learning motivation.¹⁵

School climate refers to the quality and characteristics of school life. This includes how school members perceive the quality of their social interactions and the norms or expectations that will influence their behavior. According to Cohen, McCabe, Michelli, & Pickeral (2009), a positive school climate will support students' learning and personal development.¹⁶ A positive school climate has a profound impact, not only on students' academic achievement, but also on their well-

¹⁴ Flavell, (1979). Metacognition and cognitive monitoring: A new area of cognitive–developmental inquiry. *American psychologist*, 34(10), 906.

¹⁵ Thapa, & Higgins-D'Alessandro, (2013). A review of school climate research. *Review of educational research*, 83(3), 357-385.

¹⁶ Cohen, & Pickeral, T. (2009). School climate: Research, policy, practice, and teacher education. *Teachers College Record*, 111(1), 180-213.

being. According to Thapa et al. (2013), a positive school climate is associated with reduced bullying rates, increased learning motivation, and better psychological well-being.¹⁷

4. Collaboration as the Key to Success

In the school context, collaboration between various stakeholders is the key to success. Epstein (2001) emphasizes the importance of partnerships, and these findings are corroborated by this study. School principals who are able to collaborate well with teachers, parents, and the community tend to succeed in improving student achievement.¹⁸

5. Challenges and Opportunities

During the research process, several challenges were identified, including resistance to change from some parties, limited resources, and frequently changing dynamics of education policy. However, with strong leadership and effective collaboration, many schools are able to overcome these challenges.

6. Application of Technology in Learning

In today's digital era, the use of technology in the learning process is one of the factors that affect student achievement. The research found that schools with principals who proactively adopt technology tend to have more dynamic and engaging learning innovations, thus contributing to improved student achievement. This is in line with Prensky (2001) which states that today's students are "digital natives" who require a different approach to learning.¹⁹

7. Teacher Professional Development

The quality of teachers greatly affects the quality of learning. From this study, it was found that principals who emphasized teacher professional development tended to have better student achievement. This is in line with Darling-Hammond (2000) who posited that investment in teacher professional development significantly impacts student achievement.²⁰

8. Parental Participation in Education

Educational success is not only the responsibility of the school, but also of parents. This research shows that schools with active participation from parents have better student achievement.

¹⁷ Thapa, & Higgins-D'Alessandro, A. (2013). A review of school climate research. *Review of educational research*, 83(3), 357-385.

¹⁸ Epstein, (2001). *School, family, and community partnerships: Preparing educators and improving schools*.

¹⁹ Prensky, (2001). *Digital natives, digital immigrants part 1*. *On the Horizon*, 9(5), 1-6.

²⁰ Darling-Hammond, L. (2000). *How teacher education matters*. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 51(3), 166-173.

This supports the opinion of Henderson and Mapp (2002) who state that parental involvement in children's education contributes to students' academic success.²¹

9. School Culture as a Support for Achievement

A positive and supportive school culture, which includes values, norms, and expectations held by all school members, is one of the determining factors for student achievement. This is in line with the findings of Deal and Peterson (1999) who emphasize the importance of a strong school culture in supporting student success.²²

Conclusion

The principal's strategy plays an important role in improving student achievement. With deep theoretical understanding and effective collaboration between all stakeholders, the potential for improving student achievement can be maximized. Effective headmaster leadership, supported by a positive school culture, the application of technology, teacher professional development, and active parental involvement, is key in improving student achievement. To achieve optimal success, the integration of all these factors is very important.

The leadership of the headmaster plays a very central role in improving student achievement. Some of the key factors that support this success include: *Visionary Leadership*: Visionary and collaborative principals tend to create a school climate conducive to improved student achievement. *Effective Learning Strategies*: The application of strategies such as feedback, use of metacognition, and other learning techniques contributes significantly in improving the quality of learning. *Positive School Climate*: A supportive school climate, both emotionally, socially, and physically, is one of the main drivers of student learning motivation. *Collaboration*: Active involvement from various stakeholders, including teachers, parents, and communities, strengthens the foundation of quality education. *Technology Adoption*: The use of technology in the learning process shows a positive impact on the dynamics and quality of learning, according to the needs of students of the digital era. *Teacher Professional Development*: Investment in teacher ability and knowledge development directly impacts teaching quality and student achievement. *Parent Participation*: Active involvement and participation of parents in the educational process of students contributes to the academic success of students. *Strong School Culture*: A school culture

²¹ Henderson, (2002). A new wave of evidence: The impact of school, family, and community connections on student achievement.

²² Deal, & Peterson, (1999). Shaping school culture: The heart of leadership. Jossey-Bass.

that emphasizes positive values, norms, and constructive expectations plays an important role in shaping student character and achievement.

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