



Analysis of School Principal's Leadership Strategies in Improving the Quality of Education at SMP Miftahul Huda Dzun Nurain Planggaran Timur Banyuates

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Abstrak

The quality of education in Indonesia remains a strategic issue that requires serious government attention due to its direct impact on the competitiveness of human resources in the global era. The active role of the Ministry of Education and Culture in formulating and implementing strategic policies reflects the government's commitment to addressing the complexity of national education challenges. This study aims to analyze the leadership strategies of the school principal in improving the quality of education at SMP Miftahul Huda Dzun Nurain Planggaran Timur Banyuates. The research focuses on: (1) the form of the principal's leadership in enhancing education quality, (2) the obstacles encountered in the process, and (3) the strategic efforts undertaken to overcome them. A qualitative method with a descriptive approach was employed, using observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation as data collection techniques. The research subjects consisted of the school principal and teachers. Data analysis was conducted through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data validity was ensured through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability criteria. The findings indicate that the principal applied a democratic leadership style, provided effective supervision, and showed concern for teachers. The main challenge faced was the lack of adequate facilities and infrastructure. Improvement efforts included teacher competency development, meeting stakeholder needs, and fostering collaborative problem-solving.

Keywords: Analysis; School Principal Leadership; Quality of Education.

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1. Introduction

Education holds a strategic position in fostering national progress, as enshrined in Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, which emphasizes the function of education in developing students' potential to become human beings who are faithful, morally upright, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent, and responsible citizens. In this context, the role of the school principal as an educational leader is not merely administrative, but also transformational (Ramdhani & Adawiyah, 2023; Tahili et al., 2021). The principal serves as a key agent in orchestrating educational change and innovation at the institutional level (Noviyanti et al., 2024; Uya, 2023). Through effective leadership, the principal is expected to create a conducive learning environment, promote character education, and ensure the alignment of school activities with national educational goals. Furthermore, the principal must be capable of managing human resources, developing curriculum, overseeing instructional practices, and fostering partnerships with stakeholders (Hilali, 2023; Ismail & Imawan, 2023). As such, the principal's leadership quality becomes a determining factor in achieving educational excellence, particularly in the face of complex challenges such as limited resources, shifting policy demands, and diverse student needs. Strengthening the leadership capacity of school principals is therefore essential in realizing an equitable, relevant, and high-quality education system that supports national development agendas..

Education is a fundamental human need that significantly influences various dimensions of life, including economic development, social mobility, and cultural advancement (Kania et al., 2023; Oktaviani et al., 2023). As a strategic instrument for national development, education plays a pivotal role in enhancing the quality of human resources. Therefore, efforts to improve education quality must be undertaken holistically, involving not only policy reforms but also the strengthening of institutional capacity and the empowerment of all education stakeholders. Despite various initiatives undertaken by the government, empirical studies conducted by the National Education Standards Agency (BSNP, 2020) and international institutions such as the World Bank (2021) consistently reveal persistent disparities in education quality across regions in Indonesia. These disparities are largely attributed to the uneven implementation of the eight National Education Standards (Standar Nasional Pendidikan/SNP), which encompass content standards, process standards, competence of educators and education personnel, facilities and infrastructure, management, funding, and educational assessment (Angraini et al., 2023; Marzano et al., 1993). Among these components, the competence of educators and education personnel emerges as a critical factor that determines the success of education quality improvement efforts. Without qualified and professionally empowered educators, achieving equitable and sustainable educational outcomes remains a significant challenge. Consequently, targeted interventions to enhance teacher and staff competencies are imperative to ensure uniformity in the realization of national education standards throughout the archipelago.

In an era marked by rapid global transformation and increasing interdependence among nations, education serves as a strategic instrument for fostering the development of human resources that are not only intellectually competent but also globally competitive. Within this framework, leadership at the school level becomes a critical determinant of educational success, particularly in contexts where systemic challenges still persist. As emphasized by Syafaruddin and Asrul (2013:87), education is a fundamental human right and a prerequisite for the realization of peace and sustainable

development, especially in countries grappling with the complexity of underperforming educational systems. In such settings, the school principal plays a central role as a catalyst for change, responsible for creating conditions that empower teachers and improve student learning outcomes. Effective school leadership is no longer limited to administrative oversight, but demands a transformational approach that can inspire, motivate, and guide all elements of the school community. Safirah et al. (2024) outlines three core strategies that principals must implement to foster a culture of academic excellence: (1) cultivating self-discipline among teachers as a foundation for professional responsibility, (2) delivering inspirational leadership that motivates continuous improvement, and (3) providing recognition and rewards to reinforce positive performance. These strategies, when applied consistently and contextually, can significantly contribute to enhancing the overall quality of education in schools.

2. Methods

The research employed is a qualitative study using a descriptive methodology. This means that information is collected qualitatively rather than numerically. The chosen methodology and research design are intended to present an issue, condition, or event as it naturally occurs; therefore, the main objective is to reveal reality (facts). Qualitative research, as explained by Strauss and Corbin in Afrizal, is research whose results do not come from statistical analysis or other forms of computation (Afrizal, 2014: 12).

Lexy J. Moleong (2012:25) defines qualitative research as a method that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words and observed behavior. Descriptive research aims to describe various actual phenomena, including human-engineered events and naturally occurring occurrences.

There are several considerations for using qualitative methods in this research, based on Moleong's statements:

1. Qualitative research is more easily adaptable when faced with various realities.
2. This method is more sensitive and better able to adapt to increasingly sharp mutual influences and diverse value patterns encountered.
3. It allows for a direct explanation of the nature of the relationship between the respondent and the researcher.

Data collection techniques are the most essential stage in research, as the primary goal of research is to obtain data. Without a clear understanding of data collection techniques, researchers cannot gather the required data that meets the set standards. According to Sugiyono, in qualitative research, data is collected in a natural setting, using primary data sources, and the techniques most often employed include observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation (Sugiyono, 2013).

In the data collection process, the researcher is responsible for identifying the situation that becomes the focus of the study. To obtain relevant and in-depth information, selecting informants is a crucial step that must be carried out carefully. According to Spradley, a good informant is someone who possesses deep knowledge and experience regarding the culture or condition being studied (Salim & Syahrur, 2015:143). In the context of this research, the selection of subjects is based on their relevance to the issue of school principal leadership in improving the quality of education at SMP Miftahul Huda Dzun Nurain, located in Planggaran Timur Village, Banyuates District, Sampang Regency. The data collected through interviews is descriptive in nature and involves three main respondents: the Principal and Vice Principal of SMP Miftahul Huda Dzun Nurain, as well as one key informant, namely the Chairman of the Ittihadut Thalibin Islamic Education Foundation

3. Results and Discussions

3.1 Results

3.1.1 *The Principal's Leadership at SMP Miftahul Huda Dzun Nurain in Improving the Quality of Education*

At SMP Miftahul Huda Dzun Nurain, the leadership of the principal plays a pivotal role in determining the direction and quality of educational processes. Principal leadership is not merely a function of administrative authority, but rather a dynamic force that mobilizes resources, empowers personnel, and creates a culture of continuous improvement. Effective leadership is reflected in the ability of the principal to articulate a clear vision, foster collective commitment, and optimize the potential of all school components—teachers, students, staff, and parents—to achieve shared educational goals (Ainah, 2023; Hasan, 2023; Suhartini & Nugroho, 2023). In this institutional context, the principal has demonstrated a strong capacity to lead both in managerial operations and in pedagogical supervision, contributing to the creation of a learning environment that is conducive, inclusive, and goal-oriented.

Nevertheless, the realization of optimal school performance is often challenged by limitations in leadership competence, particularly in areas such as innovation management, stakeholder engagement, and professional development (Rismayani & Kania, 2024; Suminar et al., 2024). Such constraints can hinder the full execution of the school's mission and reduce the impact of educational programs. Therefore, the principal's leadership must evolve beyond conventional administrative routines and adopt a more adaptive, collaborative, and transformative model.

Based on the results of interviews with Mr. AW, the principal of SMP Miftahul Huda Dzun Nurain, it was revealed that he conceptualizes his role not only as an administrative manager but also as a transformative leader who assumes multiple roles: innovator, educator, supervisor, and motivator. This multifaceted understanding reflects his awareness of the strategic responsibilities inherent in school leadership. According to Mr. AW:

“As a leader, I prioritize collaboration in exercising my leadership. I also introduce innovations in learning by promoting conceptual instruction, improving teacher competencies, assigning teachers based on their areas of expertise, and supervising instruction. All of these efforts contribute to enhancing the quality of education.”

This statement illustrates a clear commitment to distributed leadership, where collective decision-making and professional collaboration are encouraged to drive educational outcomes. His emphasis on teacher competency development and instructional supervision aligns with the national education standards and supports the premise that quality education is inseparable from professional teacher performance (Rosmalina, 2023; Maesaroh & Ansyori, 2025). Moreover, assigning teaching responsibilities based on expertise demonstrates a strategic use of human resources, ensuring that instruction is both relevant and effective. These practices signify an intentional and reflective leadership style oriented toward sustainable school improvement.

3.1.2 *Obstacles Faced by the Principal in Improving the Quality of SMP Miftahul Huda Dzun Nurain*

In the pursuit of educational quality, principals often encounter a range of systemic and contextual challenges that can inhibit optimal performance. At SMP Miftahul Huda Dzun Nurain, one of the most pressing obstacles faced by the principal in implementing quality enhancement initiatives is the

inadequacy of educational facilities and infrastructure. This constraint significantly hampers efforts to improve teaching standards, learning experiences, and student outcomes.

A major illustration of this issue is the lack of specialized spaces for practicum-based learning. The limited physical infrastructure forces the school to combine the practicum room with the library, resulting in suboptimal learning conditions (Yabanova & Demirkan, 2021). This spatial compromise not only disrupts the functionality of both facilities but also leads to the deterioration of practicum equipment due to improper storage and handling. Consequently, the effectiveness of science learning, which ideally involves active experimentation and hands-on engagement, is significantly reduced.

Based on the interview with Mr. AW, the principal of SMP Miftahul Huda Dzun Nurain, the challenge was articulated as follows:

“Indeed, there are challenges in improving education quality. Certain infrastructure and facility requirements have not yet been addressed, and these problems depend on the users. For example, a science teacher may want to conduct fieldwork in class, but the school still lacks the necessary equipment, making it difficult to carry out the practical activities effectively.”

This statement reflects the reality that educational innovation is often constrained not by the lack of vision or leadership, but by material and logistical limitations. The principal’s leadership capacity to drive change is inherently linked to the resources available at the school’s disposal (Damrongpanit, 2022; Efriani et al., 2023). Moreover, the dependency on limited facilities creates pedagogical rigidity, where teachers must adjust instructional strategies not based on student needs or curriculum demands, but on the feasibility of the learning environment.

Such challenges underscore the urgent need for collaborative action among stakeholders—government agencies, school committees, and the wider community—to invest in infrastructure development. Without sufficient facilities to support modern pedagogical practices, efforts to improve educational quality remain partial and vulnerable to stagnation. Thus, addressing infrastructural deficits must become a strategic priority in the broader agenda of educational reform at the school level.

3.1.3 The Principal’s Efforts to Improve Education Quality at SMP Miftahul Huda Dzun Nurain

The effectiveness of a principal’s leadership is fundamentally reflected in the capacity to translate vision into concrete actions that contribute to the continuous improvement of educational quality. At SMP Miftahul Huda Dzun Nurain, the principal demonstrates proactive leadership through the implementation of various strategic initiatives aimed at enhancing teacher professionalism, optimizing instructional practices, and fostering a culture of accountability within the school community.

One of the principal’s core strategies involves providing consistent support for teacher professional development. This is achieved by facilitating access to both internal and external capacity-building programs. Internally, the school organizes collaborative learning sessions, workshops, and mentoring activities that encourage peer-to-peer knowledge sharing (Susanto & Irsal, 2022). Externally, teachers are encouraged to participate in formal training, seminars, and educational development programs offered by governmental and non-governmental institutions. This dual approach ensures that teachers are continuously exposed to best practices and evolving pedagogical trends, thereby improving the overall quality of instruction.

In an interview, Mr. AW, the principal of SMP Miftahul Huda Dzun Nurain, elaborated on this commitment:

“We will utilize external resources to enhance the education and teaching abilities of our teachers in an effort to improve the quality of instruction they provide. Additionally, if there are extracurricular activities that can elevate educational standards, we will assign a teacher to participate. After completing the activity, the teacher will be asked to consider how they can contribute to the further development of the school.”

This statement highlights a leadership philosophy grounded in empowerment, strategic delegation, and reflective practice. By encouraging teachers to actively participate in development opportunities and contribute back to institutional growth, the principal reinforces a culture of shared responsibility and lifelong learning.

Moreover, the principal exhibits effective leadership through a combination of democratic communication, firm decision-making, and personal care for subordinates. These relational attributes help to foster trust, motivation, and mutual respect among teachers, staff, students, and the surrounding community. Supervision and routine monitoring of educational activities serve as additional mechanisms to ensure the alignment of instructional processes with the school's quality standards (Khan & Ammar Naveed, 2022). Through continuous assessment and constructive feedback, the principal is able to identify areas for improvement, facilitate targeted interventions, and sustain a trajectory of academic enhancement.

Collectively, these efforts represent a comprehensive leadership model that not only prioritizes administrative efficiency but also centers on human resource development as a critical lever for educational quality improvement.

3.2 Discussion

Based on the various leadership practices implemented, it can be concluded that the principal's leadership at SMP Islam Terpadu Nurul Fadhilah has been actualized effectively and strategically. This finding corroborates Wahyusumidjo's assertion that leadership constitutes a central force within educational management, wherein the leader's ability to influence, direct, and inspire becomes the fundamental determinant of organizational success (Wahyusumidjo, 2013). In this context, the principal not only functions as a manager but also as a catalyst for change who can mobilize all school components toward the achievement of shared educational objectives.

Furthermore, the leadership style demonstrated aligns with the theoretical framework proposed by Gaussel (2021), who emphasizes that effective leadership requires an integrative approach involving individual traits, observable behaviors, and responsiveness to situational dynamics. The principal's ability to adapt leadership strategies based on the needs of the school environment reflects this multidimensional perspective. It suggests that leadership is not a fixed set of attributes but a dynamic process requiring contextual intelligence and strategic decision-making.

E. Mulyasa (2013) further strengthens this argument by stating that an effective school leader must be able to formulate and implement strategies that optimize the use of educational staff, promote collaborative work culture, and facilitate continuous professional development. The principal's initiatives in providing opportunities for teacher training, fostering teamwork, and ensuring active participation in school programs illustrate a practical application of these principles (Rismayani & Kania, 2024).

Thus, the leadership practices observed are not only theoretically grounded but also empirically proven to enhance school performance. This affirms the view that transformative leadership—

characterized by collaboration, adaptability, and empowerment—is indispensable for achieving sustainable improvements in the quality of education.

4. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the leadership of the principal plays a central role in improving the quality of education at SMP Miftahul Huda Dzun Nurain. Through a collaborative and democratic leadership approach, the principal has successfully created a more innovative, adaptive, and responsive learning environment that addresses the needs of students. The strategies implemented include strengthening conceptual learning, enhancing teacher competencies, placing educators according to their expertise, and continuous instructional supervision. These practices align with transformative leadership theory, which emphasizes the importance of motivation, collaboration, and human resource development as key factors in the success of educational organizations.

However, the limited availability of educational facilities and infrastructure remains a major obstacle in achieving effective and high-quality learning processes. The lack of adequate practicum facilities, libraries, and classrooms directly impacts the effectiveness of teaching and learning and the achievement of national education standards. On the other hand, the principal has shown strong commitment to teacher capacity development through various training programs, supervision, and empowerment initiatives that are integrated with the school's needs. Knowledge-sharing practices among teachers and the implementation of supervision training are tangible examples of the strategies employed to improve teacher competence. By addressing stakeholder demands, fostering a collaborative work culture, and synergizing all school resources, the principal has been able to guide the institution toward continuous improvement. Thus, the success of improving educational quality at SMP Miftahul Huda Dzun Nurain heavily relies on the principal's leadership capacity to face challenges, manage resources, and drive change through a participatory and strategic approach.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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