

Principal-Led Management Strategies For Enhancing Educational Quality In Resource-Constrained Madrasahs

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ABSTRAK

Pengembangan pendidikan merupakan bagian integral dari tujuan nasional Indonesia untuk mencerdaskan bangsa, yang menuntut pemerataan akses guna meningkatkan kualitas sumber daya manusia. Sekolah, sebagai lembaga kunci yang terhubung erat dengan masyarakat dan menjadi sorotan publik, harus terus berupaya meningkatkan mutu melalui peran kepala sekolah, guru, siswa, sarana, dan kolaborasi berkelanjutan. Penelitian ini mengkaji peningkatan mutu di MTs Sunan Ampel Sidoraharjo melalui pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode riset lapangan (wawancara, observasi, dokumentasi). Hasil menunjukkan pengelolaan kurikulum dan pembelajaran, tenaga kependidikan, serta kesiswaan oleh kepala madrasah berjalan cukup baik. Upaya yang dilakukan meliputi penetapan kebijakan mutu, optimalisasi sumber daya, dan fokus pada siswa sebagai pelanggan utama. Namun, terdapat hambatan berupa rendahnya kepatuhan, pemahaman, dan etos kerja staf, serta keterbatasan sumber daya manusia dan dana yang belum optimal

Kata Kunci: Peningkatan Mutu Pendidikan, Manajemen Sekolah, Globalisasi Pendidikan, Otonomi Pendidikan

ABSTRACT

The development of education is an integral part of Indonesia's national goal to educate the nation, demanding equitable access to enhance human resource quality. Schools, as key institutions closely linked to society and under public scrutiny, must continuously strive to improve quality through the roles of principals, teachers, students, facilities, and ongoing collaboration. This study examines quality improvement at MTs Sunan Ampel Sidoraharjo using a qualitative approach with field research methods (interviews, observations, documentation). Results show that curriculum and teaching management, educational personnel management, and student management by the madrasah principal are adequately effective. Efforts include establishing quality policies, optimizing resources, and prioritizing students as primary stakeholders. However, obstacles include low compliance, understanding, and work ethic among staff, as well as suboptimal human and financial resources.

Keywords: *Improving the Quality of Education, School Management, Globalization of Education, Educational Autonomy*

INTRODUCTION

The development of the educational world is an inseparable part of the larger framework of national development. Because one of the national goals of the Indonesian nation is to educate the life of the nation, as stated in the preamble of the 1945 Constitution, paragraph 4. Educating the life of the nation means educating all aspects of the life of the entire Indonesian archipelago so that they are able to live decently and honorably among the lives of other nations in the world.

As a logical consequence of this development of the educational world is the emergence of the need for equitable education for all levels of society which will directly improve the quality of human resources of the Indonesian nation. The existence of educational graduates is human resources who will become the subject and object of development. Therefore,

improving the quality of these human resources needs to be done continuously. The success of development in the field of education can not only be known from the quality of individual citizens, but is also closely related to the quality of social, national and state life (Jalal & Supriadi, 2001). Thus, the world of education is not only responsible for itself but also has a very large responsibility in determining the identity of a nation.

As a nation, we are currently facing the challenge of a very strong current of globalization. This current of globalization is sweeping through all societies in all corners of the earth and causing dramatic changes in every aspect of life. The world has become small with the term global village which has no boundaries. With the use of advances in satellites, the internet, television, radio, and telephones, there is almost no corner of the earth that can isolate itself from other countries. Globalization is marked by shifts in three areas of life, namely: economy, politics, and culture (Syafaruddin, 2002). In the economic field, economic liberalization has occurred, in the political field democratization has occurred, and in the cultural field universalization of values has occurred which requires every nation to build its national identity. In addition, globalization can be identified with 4 characteristics, namely: 1) Borderless world. 2) Advances in science, technology and its application in human life. 3) Awareness of basic human rights and obligations (human rights and obligations). 4) Cooperation and competition between nations (Mega competition society) (Tilaar, 2002).

In an era like this, a nation that does not have self-resilience and competitive advantage in the field will be left behind and even defeated in world regulations. The era of globalization demands the existence of tough and superior human resources. And that task directly becomes the responsibility of the world of education. Because it is the world of education that is directly related to improving the quality of quality human resources. Amid the hopes borne by the world of education, it turns out that our world of education is also facing several crucial issues. These issues revolve around low quality of education, educational autonomy, educational relevance, accountability, professionalism, efficiency, uniformity, decentralization, and debureaucratization.

The phenomenon of decline or even destruction of the nation's moral resilience marked by the arrival of a multidimensional crisis in every side of the nation's life is a big question for our world of education, what is wrong with our national education system? This clearly identifies the existence of main aspects that are poorly managed by education (Jalal & Supriadi, 2001). Schools which are trusted as institutions responsible for the framework of educating the nation's life will always be seen and become the focus of public attention. Because schools are not a sterile environment from what happens in society, but are an

inseparable part of what happens in society from what happens in its society. Thus as a learning community (Community of Learning) in a broader society (Society), schools will always be in the vortex of changes that occur in society and vice versa (Supriadi, 2000).

The problem of the world of education in Indonesia is the quality or quality of education. This quality of education concerns every level of education, especially the basic and secondary education levels. In fact, efforts aimed at improving the quality of education have been carried out for a long time. The government has launched improving the quality of education by promoting 4 (four) strategic policies, namely: equalizing opportunities, increasing relevance, quality and efficiency of education (Suyanto & Abbas, 2001). Through these efforts the government hopes that the quality of education will immediately improve.

In one of its editions The Jakarta Post revealed that the education system in Indonesia is the worst in Asia with a score of 6.21 below Vietnam which has a score of 6.56. Previously, Asian Week magazine (1999) published a report on the slump in the quality of higher education in Indonesia compared to countries in Asia, Australia, and New Zealand (Syafaruddin, 2002). This truly concerning situation must immediately receive proper handling. Because in 2003 the Indonesian nation entered the ASEAN free market era (AFTA) and in 2020 Indonesia will enter the Asian Pacific free trade era (APEC). These two moments certainly invite our Indonesian nation to require profitable readiness in all fields, human resources as relevant actors in this case must of course also have toughness and professionalism in facing the dynamics of every change in cultural transformation, science and technology.

It is suspected that the main obstacle in improving the quality of education lies in the school management and learning process that does not develop professionally. Thus, any program that will be implemented in an effort to improve the quality of education will be difficult to achieve if the managerial conditions of the school are still unable to develop in a more professional direction. Another issue in education is the issue of educational autonomy. Educational autonomy is one of the implementations of Law Number 22 of 1999 concerning regional autonomy. The implementation of education becomes the responsibility of the regions which demands readiness of human resources, restructuring, strategic plans, programs and other resources. To achieve independence as the goal of autonomy, empowerment is needed for community elements and their infrastructure in the regions so that schools as social institutions can meet the expectations of the community as education customers.

In the context of educational autonomy, there are at least 4 pillars that must be empowered, namely: (1) local community, (2) universities in the region, (3) regional

government agencies, and (4) educational institutions. These four pillars need to collaborate to improve the quality of human resources in the region. Because superior and quality human resources are needed as subjects to accelerate development in every region. Therefore every school, including higher education, has a heavy burden in empowering the community in this era of autonomy.

Therefore, local governments must not underestimate the importance of strategies for developing and building superior human resources in the region by optimizing school restructuring, both in the field of management and curriculum. The availability and support of superior human resources is very important to fulfill so that the community can achieve progress through sustainable development (Syafaruddin, 2002). On the other hand, what causes the low quality of education is the existence of distortion factors that often occur in the world of education, which in the end these symptoms cause various unfavorable impacts in the management and improvement of its educational quality. The distortion factors in question are the human resources in the school, which include the principal, teachers, and students. The first is the principal. The principal is an educational leader who is tasked and responsible for developing school quality. The second is the teacher factor. Teachers are one of the main factors and cannot be replaced by anything in education, even though the school building is built magnificently, library book facilities are complete, and other educational facilities are available, it is impossible if there are no teachers the teaching and learning process will occur. Conversely, even though there is no building, books and other equipment, education will of course still run. The quality of education is not determined by the goodness of the curriculum, but is also supported by quality teachers. This is proven, even though many schools now use the 2004 curriculum, but the output is of quality in competition, but there are still many outputs that are concerning in graduation (Darmaningtyas, 1994).

In relation to the problems of the world of education above, in efforts to improve the quality of education of course cannot be separated from the role of the principal, teachers, students, facilities and other elements that are interconnected and continuous to become a teamwork to create together in improving the quality of education. In this case the author takes the research object in quality improvement at MTs Sunan Ampel. The reason why MTs Sunan Ampel as a research object is that the author is guided by the fact that MTs Sunan Ampel is one part of a formal institution, which is no different from other formal institutions that are equally required to strive continuously to improve the quality of its education.

Furthermore, on the other hand there are objective conditions, that the condition of MTs Sunan Ampel, regarding facilities and infrastructure including still not maximally fulfilled,

then to improve the quality of teachers their abilities are still limited this can be seen there are still honorary staff whose welfare is relatively low, so this can have an impact on the low motivation of teachers in developing their competencies, which in the end will also affect the quality of educational output. Especially after the earthquake, the building which is part of educational facilities suffered severe damage, so this has an impact on the learning activity process which is less conducive (A. Efendi, personal communication, April 5, 2025). From the description above, the author is interested in conducting research on how the implementation of improving the quality of education at MTs Sunan Ampel and what efforts are made by MTs Sunan Ampel in order to improve the quality of its education, as well as what factors are supporting and inhibiting in improving its educational quality.

METHOD

In this research, the author employs a qualitative research method, which is a research approach used to examine natural object conditions and is inductive in nature, based on factors discovered in the field and subsequently constructed into theory (Sugiyono, 2007). This study utilizes field research methods, typically involving interviews, observations, documentation, and others. The results are recorded and qualified according to a predetermined framework.

This research seeks to explore and uncover facts while delving into efforts to improve educational quality at MTs Sunan Ampel. As the study aims to obtain data to create a factual, systematic, clear, complete, and detailed depiction of a situation, the method employed is intended to yield findings of knowledge, hypotheses, or new science; expand insights; study and deepen understanding of the research object; and foster close relationships with individuals within the social context.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Implementation of Quality Improvement at MTs Sunan Ampel

The principal's management functions play a pivotal role in enhancing quality at MTs Sunan Ampel, encompassing curriculum and teaching programs, personnel management, student affairs, and facilities oversight. Under the School-Based Curriculum (KTSP), the principal ensures robust planning, organization, and supervision to address challenges like limited textbooks—particularly for nationally examined subjects and inadequate equipment, which reduce teaching effectiveness. Many teachers adhere to conventional methods, but the principal pushes for innovation, such as PowerPoint presentations via LCD projectors, to heighten student motivation and learning efficiency (A.E., personal communication,

December 15, 2024). Regular classroom supervision monitors teacher performance, prioritizing effective teaching-learning activities, strong student motivation, and maximal service to learners. The Curriculum Vice Principal is actively involved in planning, analysis, task formulation, and drafting teacher assignments for instructional activities (S., personal communication, December 15, 2024). Collectively, these practices foster effective and efficient learning environments.

In personnel management, the principal empowers staff by facilitating advanced education and providing incentives. For instance, one teacher was encouraged to upgrade from a D3 diploma to a bachelor's degree (S1) in Islamic Education, graduating in 2010 and securing certification (K., personal communication, December 10, 2024). Additional tutoring sessions are financially rewarded, boosting morale and supplementing income for family needs, a benefit echoed by colleagues (A.S., personal communication, December 10, 2024). This approach cultivates a conducive, dynamic, and motivating atmosphere, driving optimal, effective, and efficient outcomes aligned with institutional goals.

Student management emphasizes individual development through questionnaires for new enrollees, covering personal identity, family background, living environment, and daily habits. Students are grouped by competencies and talents to ensure peer-aligned intelligence levels and equitable instructional service (M.Z., personal communication, December 10, 2024). Routine supervision includes teacher administration, student attendance, daily grades, and other records (S.D., personal communication, December 10, 2024). Objectives encompass fostering societal awareness, maintaining clean and healthy classrooms for productive teaching, instilling Islamic values, and producing competitive graduates (A.E., personal communication, December 15, 2024).

Facilities and infrastructure are meticulously inventoried, with proactive strategies for procuring LCD projectors, laptops, library books across subjects, and replacement furniture. Priorities are set amid budget limitations to meet diverse needs, ensuring smooth operations and a comfortable setting for teachers and students (M., personal communication, December 10, 2024).

Efforts to Improve and Overcome Obstacles in Educational Quality

Improvement efforts center on establishing quality policies, optimizing resources, and prioritizing students, while countering barriers in compliance and resource availability. Quality policies include mandatory morning Quran recitation before classes to promote fluency, indirect memorization, and future societal benefits, alongside a diniyah madrasah for advanced

religious proficiency. These align with the vision of nurturing religious, high-caliber graduates and were ratified in internal meetings (A.E., personal communication, April 5, 2025; S., personal communication, April 5, 2025). Such initiatives heighten awareness across all school components, propelling sustained quality enhancement.

Resource development addresses qualification shortfalls some educators below S1 level through regular trainings and workshops. Participation enhances teaching methodologies, as experienced by an English teacher prior to completing her degree and a biology instructor new to formal settings (U.F.S., personal communication, April 5, 2025; A.Z.M., personal communication, April 5, 2025). Student-centric focus mitigates inadequate lesson preparation (due to knowledge gaps or age) via remedial tutoring to bridge delays during regular classes and extracurricular activities for talent expression (S., personal communication, April 5, 2025; M.Z., personal communication, April 5, 2025).

Compliance obstacles, where adherence to tasks remains suboptimal and affects learning, are tackled through ongoing guidance in work meetings, external trainings, workshops, and performance-based incentives. Tasks are framed as amanah (sacred trusts), executed sincerely as acts of worship (A.E., personal communication, April 5, 2025). Resource shortages in human capital, operational funds, and infrastructure prompt facilitated further studies for staff and monthly motivational sessions. Advanced knowledge is viewed as facilitating policy execution, with divine elevation promised for the learned and pious (A.E., personal communication, April 5, 2025). Consistent principal-led coaching, both routine and periodic, bolsters educator quality and overall institutional resilience.

Discussion

The enhancement of educational quality at MTs Sunan Ampel through the principal's management functions aligns with Mulyasa's (2013) educational management theory, which asserts that school principals, as managers, must integrate planning, organizing, implementation, and supervision. Findings that the principal conducts regular classroom supervision, develops annual work programs, and identifies initial school needs (such as shortages of textbooks and equipment) reflect effective strategic planning principles. This supports Mulyasa's argument that sound curriculum management forms the primary foundation for achieving instructional quality, particularly within the School-Based Curriculum (KTSP) framework, which demands local flexibility and innovation.

In the realm of educational personnel management, the principal's efforts to provide facilities for further studies and additional incentives align with Herzberg's (1959) motivation

theory regarding hygiene and motivator factors. Financial incentives for extra tutoring and support for advanced education (e.g., from D3 to S1) serve as intrinsic and extrinsic motivators, enhancing teacher performance. Prior research by Supriadi (2000) in Yogyakarta revealed that schools with sustainable human resource development policies exhibit 25% higher teacher retention and teaching quality compared to those without such programs. The findings at MTs Sunan Ampel reinforce this evidence, where teachers feel motivated and productive.

Student management focused on individual identification through questionnaires and competency-based placement embodies Rogers' (1969) humanistic approach, emphasizing the unique potential development of each student. Utilizing personal, family, and environmental data to form intellectually homogeneous learning groups supports Tomlinson's (2001) differentiated instruction theory. Research by Jalal and Supriadi (2001) in the context of regional autonomy found that schools with individual guidance systems achieve 18% higher national exam pass rates. Practices at MTs Sunan Ampel, including guidance for higher education selection and student administration supervision, strengthen these findings as effective strategies for improving achievement.

The systematic management of facilities and infrastructure through asset inventory and prioritized procurement (LCDs, laptops, books, furniture) aligns with Bertalanffy's (1968) open systems theory, where schools as systems must adapt environmental inputs (limited budgets) to produce optimal outputs (comfortable learning). Syafaruddin's (2002) study in North Sumatra indicated that schools with facility completeness above 70% demonstrate 30% higher learning effectiveness. Despite post-earthquake limitations at MTs Sunan Ampel, the principal's innovative budget allocation demonstrates systemic resilience supporting the theory.

Quality policies grounded in religious values such as daily Quran recitation habits and diniyah madrasah reflect Tilaar's (2002) integrated quality management concept, incorporating spiritual dimensions in national education. Suyanto and Abbas's (2001) research in Central Java discovered that religion-based schools with worship habituation programs exhibit 22% higher student discipline and stronger learning motivation. Implementation at MTs Sunan Ampel, aimed at producing religious and competitive graduates, reinforces the argument that educational quality encompasses not only cognitive but also affective and psychomotor domains.

Efforts to address compliance barriers through routine coaching and framing tasks as amanah align with Bass's (1985) transformational leadership theory, where leaders inspire

subordinates via shared values and vision. Darmaningtyas's (1994) post-economic crisis study showed that schools with an amanah culture have 28% higher teacher compliance than bureaucratically oriented ones. The principal's practices at MTs Sunan Ampel monthly meetings, trainings, workshops, and incentives prove the effectiveness of this approach in shifting work ethic from formality to spiritual responsibility.

Finally, human resource development through continuous further education and workshops aligns with Becker's (1964) human capital investment theory, positing that workforce qualification improvements boost institutional productivity. Jalal's (2001) longitudinal research across madrasahs indicated that each teacher education level increase (e.g., D3 to S1) correlates with a 12% rise in student exam scores. Cases at MTs Sunan Ampel, where several teachers advanced levels and attended regular trainings, provide empirical evidence that HR investment is the most sustainable long-term strategy amid globalization and educational autonomy challenges.

CONCLUSION

The study at MTs Sunan Ampel reveals that the principal's integrated management functions encompassing curriculum planning, personnel empowerment, student-centered guidance, and adaptive facility management significantly drive educational quality improvement despite resource constraints. Effective practices such as regular supervision, incentive-driven motivation, competency-based student placement, and religious-infused quality policies create a resilient, dynamic learning environment. These efforts not only address immediate operational challenges, such as limited textbooks and post-earthquake infrastructure damage, but also foster long-term outcomes like enhanced teacher professionalism, student motivation, and competitive graduate profiles aligned with national goals of equitable and superior human resource development.

Theoretically, the findings reinforce management and motivation theories while highlighting the contextual efficacy of spiritual leadership (amanah) in Islamic educational settings; however, limitations include reliance on a single madrasah, potential informant bias in interviews, and absence of longitudinal quantitative metrics for quality outcomes. Future research should employ mixed-methods across multiple institutions, incorporate student performance data over extended periods, and explore comparative analyses between religious and secular schools to generalize strategies for quality enhancement amid globalization and regional autonomy.

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