

Projecting a Good Image of School:

How can a Principal Achieve This Goal?

Elni Jeini Usuh^{1,2,*}, Jeffrey S. Lengkong², Henny N. Tambingon², Sherly F. Lensun³

¹ Faculty of Education and Arts, ² Education Management Postgraduate Study, ³ Faculty of Language and Arts
Universitas Negeri Manado
Tondano-Sulawesi Utara, Indonesia

*elni.usoh@unima.ac.id, jeffrylengkong@unima.ac.id, hennytambingon@gmail.com, sherly.yuki@yahoo.com

Abstract—There has been a tendency in most schools to become increasingly aware of their image in the community. The school principals are realising the need to work positively with community to ensure a good image of the school. It is conceivable that the leadership of the principal plays a significant role in promoting a positive image of the school. The aim of the study is to examine the importance of projecting a good image of a school and roles of the principal to accomplish this objective. This study utilised qualitative descriptive method. The data collected from observations, reports, literature, and documents. The results show that promoting a positive image for school, as a market-oriented activity, requires the principal to exercise highly-developed public relation skills. They need to have more interaction with the external community to promote the school, attract students as well as retain them. The study concludes that promoting a positive school image is a business-like effort in which school management should adapt some marketing approaches. Principal's role is a pivotal point in projecting a good image. The leadership of the principal is a key factor in gauging public opinion that contributes to the image of the school.

Keywords: *school image, school promotion, principal*

I. INTRODUCTION

From the perspective of schools and the school system, school image may be defined as the shared, subjective ideas of people about “the quality of the learning and social environment” as a result of their interpretation of the school system [1]. As an institution, the school has a corporate image which is defined as the form of people's perceptions which consist of corporate personality and corporate identity. Corporate personality is the culture developed by people within an institution and corporate identity is the collected works of actions and materials which constitute a company's performance [2]. Thus, school image can be justified as: corporate design (architecture of building, equipment of classrooms and other facilities, logo, advertising materials, school brochure), corporate culture (the values, norms and beliefs which characterize patterns of interaction, dress, speech and are shared by all members or, as sub-cultures by some groups of members), corporate identity (the philosophy of the organisation, own perception of school), and corporate communication (as the key task of public relations) [3].

II. METHODS

This study aimed at examining the importance of projecting a good image of a school and roles of the principal to accomplish this objective. This is a literature review with qualitative descriptive approach. The data collected from observations, reports, literature, and documents.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. *The Importance of School Image*

Building a good image of the school is more complex and distinctive with the business company. Image for educational institutions is more complicated compared to other types of enterprises for these several reasons: The environments where a school operates and performs its image are relying on more global and less local considerations, schools in the same area tend to project a collective image, (same province or district, for example) also projects a collective image, and a worldwide image about education that causes people to review school in general terms [2].

Hence, subjective opinions of people toward the school tend to adhere to the school for long periods of time. It needs a long-term effort to change such a perspective. Therefore, a school with a reputation for having poor relations with the community will not easily be able to overcome the stigma [1].

Some authors have argued that institutional positive image is most likely to bring about effective operations for an institution, compared with an institution which operates under low esteem. Thus, it is important to develop a planned and well-controlled image. The school with a positive institutional image is most likely to: be effective in gaining and maintaining community support; have the benefit of personal satisfaction and group involvement; achieve success continuously and have positive impressions which can be a source of inspiration for the school staff; possess a good chance of rising reciprocal esteem, clear expectation and superior self-concept among staff members and students; hold positive and continuing connections with their alumni who can disseminate the positive image of the school; own a foundation to cultivate less-stressful evaluation and supervision procedures for teachers and other staff; encompass opportunities to encourage professional activities, creativity, and autonomy of the staff while preventing territorialism and “them-

us” attitudes; and reflect maximum attention on school improvement [1]. Through development of positive expectations, image can help to create a satisfying environment that may lead to a quality educational program, both in content and in delivery [4].

Hence, students are the definitive beneficiaries of the positive institutional image of the school. Image has an influential impact on how well the child learns and studies, because the parent’s perception of the school has a direct impact on the child. Parent’s perspective can determine community and political support which can influence funding priorities of a district, provincial, or even national government or other non-governmental resources [2]. Even schools with ‘unfavourable’ characteristics can make some efforts to enhance their image and these have been shown to have positive influences on students, staff morale, exam performance and student behaviour [5].

There are certain characteristics that should exist in the schools which can lead them to have a positive image. The Centre for Research on Evaluation, Standards & Student Testing (CRESST) provides several qualities of successful schools, which are; strong and professional staff; curriculum available to meet all student’s needs; a belief that says all children can learn if taught, combined with high expectations for all students; a suitable environment to learn. A good school is safe, clean, caring, and well-organized; a set of good instructions and clear assessment system; a high rate of involvement and support of parents and community [6].

Schools with a positive image are characterized by excellent exam results, oversubscription, have many students which means they have well-resourced information of the school, superior staff morale, good awareness of the students about the school and encouragement for parents to take an active role in school improvement [5]. Consequently, a school with positive image can offer a quality academic program in a concerned and well-organized environment [4].

A good school is characterized by kindness, sincerity and concern in addition to its effectiveness. Parents intend to enrol their children to attend this kind of school that pays attention to both effectiveness and system improvement. Therefore, a good school is constantly aware of their positive image because their future depends on it.

B. Strategies in Improving School Image

Most schools now realize the need to promote a positive image for themselves to attract more students to enrol. The steps taken by most schools have been moved towards a more business-like approach, from the release of a simple prospectus to a wider range of marketing efforts. Promoting a positive image for the school should be a systematic analysis of marketing and development of an effective marketing strategy. This strategy must be a well-understood and supported by staff. It is important that the image promoted must be a realistic one, not deliberately in contrast with the facts. The stages of marketing policy are; perform market research and objective analysis of the strength and weakness of competitor schools, analyse the school’s strength and weakness and its improvement

needs, then formulate a strategic vision and finally, develop a budget plan [7].

Several steps to conduct the program of image development, comprises of: identify characteristics which are demanded by community; determine how the school must perceive those characteristics in demand; determine which characteristics are specific to the school; determine impressions held of your school by different groups associated with it; decide the kind of image that the school wishes to develop; select the efforts to be conducted; and monitor the results [1]. Moreover, there are also several important issues in promoting a positive image for the school such as: a planned strategic approach which is the key to successful marketing, the initiative should be reviewed by a member of the senior management team or by another qualified staff, good internal morale is the key for easier projecting a positive image, a good relationship with the local community is vital. It is good to conduct events where community can learn about the school and get involved in activities. Encourage them to see the school as a resource for them as well as their children and grandchildren, an excellent way to disseminate messages and celebrate the work of students by publishing a regular school newsletter or magazine as well as website. Sponsorship and advertising by local businesses can also be one of the sources to produce such media [5].

C. The Principal’s Role

Ultimately, a key factor in conducting various efforts for school improvement, including promoting a positive image for the school, is the role of the principal and the leadership that person provides. Developing a positive image very much depends on the ability of the school leader to perceive the perceptions of community, staff, and students accurately [1]. One of the best approaches to develop understanding of the community and raise their sense of ownership and commitment is school-based management. This approach needs the principal to have leadership which encourages more involvement of parents and the local community in school level decision making and activities [8].

Consequently, in a study to investigate the development of school image within the context of a new elementary school found that principal leadership is the most important factor in developing a positive school image. Respondents in the study, which consisted of teachers, parents, and administrators, highlighted that leadership issues were particularly prominent in the evolution of the school image. The principal has the responsibility to continually monitor and measure the image of the school, both formally and informally, through its stakeholders, and to endeavour the improvement of school image. They are required to perform cooperatively, collaboratively, respect their staff members, establish the quality of the school, be compassionate, exercise trusteeship or guardianship for the children, and present the cosmetic image (appearance) of the school [9].

Promoting a positive image for the school, as a market-oriented activity, requires the principal to exercise highly-developed public relation skills because they need to have more interaction with the external community in order to sell the

school, and attract students as well as retain them. Nevertheless, it is important for the principal to ensure that external relationships do not occur at the expense of time allocated for the internal leadership of the school [10].

IV. CONCLUSION

To sum up, most schools have been progressively more aware of developing a positive image in the community. They are realizing that a good image for their school could result in improved enrolments and financial support, both from community and private sectors, as well as the government. Promoting a positive school image is a business-like effort in which school management should adapt some marketing approaches. Principal's role is a pivotal point in projecting a good image. The leadership of the principal is a key factor in gauging public opinion and responding in a way that contributes to the image of the school.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

My gratitude goes to Universitas Negeri Manado, particularly for the Rector, Prof. Dr. Julyeta P.A. Runtuwene, the Head of Research and Community Service Centre, Prof. Dr. Revolson A. Mege, and the DRPM Dikti (Directorate and General of Higher Education), for their support and contribution to facilitate the research fund. Thank you very much for the great opportunity to present at the Asian Education Symposium 2019.

REFERENCES

- [1] F.I. Renihan and P.J. Renihan, Institutional image: the concept and implications for administrative action. *NASSP Bulletin*, 73. 1989.
- [2] H. Beare and B.J. Caldwell, *Creating an excellent school*. London: Routledge. 1989.
- [3] L. Eger, School image: what is image? Retrieved from http://juno.fek.zcu.cz/katedry/cecev/mes_mat/imangl/im_term.htm
- [4] R.T. Tauber, What Can We Learn from The Marketing of Independent Schools? *NASSP Bulletin*, 79. 1995.
- [5] B. Best, Building a positive image in the community. 2007. Retrieved from <http://www.schoolzone.co.uk/resources/articles>.
- [6] The Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards & Student Testing (CRESST). What makes a good school? A guide for parents seeking excellence in education. 2007. Retrieved from <http://www.cse.ucla.edu/resources>
- [7] J. English and T. English, *Creative management in schools*. Aldershot, England: Arena. 1997
- [8] D.T. Gamage, *School-based management: theory, research, and practice*. Colombo: Karunaratne and Sons. 1996.
- [9] M. Bolender, A study of the evolving image of a new school within the context of school effectiveness. *SSTA Research Centre Report #97-08*. 1997. Retrieved from <http://www.ssta.sasknet.com>
- [10] G.M. Crow, C.S. Hausman and J.P. Scribner, Reshaping the role of the school principal. In Murphy, J. (Ed), *The educational leadership challenge: redefining leadership for the 21st century, part 1*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. 2002.