



# Principal's Strategy in Improving Student Learning Achievement

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**Abstract.** This study aims to find out and analyze the principal's strategy to improve student learning achievement at SMP Muhammadiyah 8 Surakarta through (1) the principal's strategic planning at SMP Muhammadiyah 8 Surakarta, (2) implementation of the principal's strategy in improving student achievement at SMP Muhammadiyah 8 Surakarta, (3) evaluation of the results of the implementation of the principal's strategy at SMP Muhammadiyah 8 Surakarta, and (4) student achievement at SMP Muhammadiyah 8 Surakarta. This study used a qualitative approach with descriptive methods and a case study research design. Data collection techniques were interviews, observation, and documentation. Data analysis consisted of data reduction, data presentation, and data verification. Checking the validity of the data was then done with credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The study results revealed that: (1) the principal's strategic planning in SMP Muhammadiyah 8 Surakarta used short-term, medium-term, and long-term strategic plans, (2) implementation of programs carried out by schools included the Olympic coaching program, extracurricular coaching programs, complementary programs infrastructure, and peer tutoring program, (3) evaluation of the results of the implementation of the strategy was divided into two parties, namely external and internal parties, and (4) student achievement is a report book as a result of evaluating student learning and a certificate or charter of appreciation as student appreciation.

**Keywords:** Strategy · Principal · Learning Achievement

## 1 Introduction

Education is essential in national development and determines a country's development and economic growth. Education is also an investment in the development of human resources, where the importance of improving and developing human resources sustainably is one of the keys to the quality of education. Specifically, junior secondary education is held to continue and expand primary education, prepare students to become members of society who can establish reciprocal relations with the surrounding natural, social, and cultural environment, and develop more capabilities in the world of work or higher education [1]. As a manifestation of the government's seriousness in dealing with education, Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System

in Chapter II Article 3 states that “national education aims to develop the potential of students to become human beings who believe and fear God Almighty, who has a noble character, is healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent, and becomes a democratic and responsible citizen” [2].

The implementation of the goals of the national education system must go through a systematic, directed, and sustainable process in a forum, whether formal, informal, or non-formal. Considering that the burden carried by education or school developers is so heavy, schools must be managed professionally to achieve educational goals as expected. For that, a leader who can anticipate the changes in the education world is needed. The principal is a leader in the world of education with a vital role in developing an educational institution, i.e., as the holder of control in an educational institution [3]. The principal is also defined as a functional teacher entrusted with the mandate to lead a school where the teaching and learning process takes place or a place where the relationship between the teacher giving the lesson and the students receiving the lesson occurs.

As the highest leader in an educational institution, the principal largely determines the progress or withdrawal of a school and the course of the teaching and learning process and provides direction, guidance, and good service to all personnel in the school, especially teachers, because the teacher is the principal’s accomplice with the task of the central role in guiding students [4]. The principal is also responsible for maintaining and motivating teachers, students, and administrative staff school to be willing and able to enforce the rules and regulations at school [5]. Not only that, but teachers are required to work professionally in teaching, fostering, and guiding students, so teachers need special training in improving the quality of performance to reach a professional level, and the principal provides opportunities for teachers to take part in coaching in achieving performance professional [6].

In this case, Islamic education must be able to compete amid changing times. Several problems exist in Islamic education. First, human resources are inadequate. Secondly, many teachers are of advanced age. Third, the infrastructure is incomplete. Fourth, the methodology of teaching Islam runs conventionally traditionally [7]. However, in coaching teachers, schools face many obstacles, including work discipline, because work discipline violations often occur. These violations included teachers arriving late, often leaving class due to matters outside of school, returning home early, not coming to work without notification to superiors, not using learning tools in teaching, such as lesson plans (RPP) or modules, carrying out evaluations learning tools without reference to assessment, not participating in training activities, training or workshops, and the like [8].

In these conditions, the principal’s ability is required to arrange so that the position of the principal as the top leader reflects maximum competence. One of the principal’s efforts in promoting schools to perform well is to coach teachers to carry out their duties honestly, responsibly, effectively, and efficiently [9].

## **2 Literature Review**

Explanation in strategy education is an arrangement of learning activities related to student management, teacher management, management of learning activities, management of the learning environment, and management of learning resources so that learning

becomes more active and efficient following the expected learning objectives. Fundamentally, strategy is action about what is done and what should be achieved, not what is achieved [10]. Strategy is also a process of planning activities designed to achieve the learning process.

As a professional school principal, he has his strategy for creating programs to improve his students' achievement culture. If there is no strategy, there will be no achievement. Therefore, school principals must have initiative and innovate in making strategies to improve student achievement culture at school [11].

### 3 Methodology

This study used a descriptive-analytical method using a qualitative approach because this research requires exploration to understand and explain what is being studied through intensive communication with various data sources so that it can give meaning in depth to what can be seen in the existing phenomena [12].

This research was conducted at SMP Muhammadiyah 8 Surakarta. In the research process, the researchers carried out field studies to ascertain how management improved the quality of education and students' learning achievement at SMP Muhammadiyah 8 through the school's superior programs. Data were collected through observation, interviews with relevant informants, and documenting what was needed. The data analysis technique used in this study was a non-statistical method, namely descriptive data analysis. It indicates that the data obtained through researchers regarding the implementation of learning strategies in improving learning achievement by school principals were then analyzed descriptively to get an overview of the facts. Then, the steps for presenting data comprised 1) data reduction, 2) data presentation, and 3) drawing conclusions.

### 4 Results and Discussion

#### **Principal's Strategic Planning in Improving Student Learning Achievement at SMP Muhammadiyah 8 Surakarta**

Strategy is applied by someone, in this case, the school principal, to achieve the desired goal. The strategy provides understanding as a strategy, tips, tricks, and methods. Meanwhile, according to the term, strategy is an outline of a course in acting to achieve predetermined goals [13].

Related to that, a leader in leading an institutional organization must have intelligence in mastering the situations and conditions owned by the organization to implement a development program in mobilizing the organizational resources. It is one of the factors determining the effectiveness of program implementation and the accuracy of strategy selection. As conveyed in the thoughts of Pupuh Fathurrohman and M. Sobry, the use of various strategies lies in a leader understanding various strategies; in the application, a leader can choose and determine which strategy will be prioritized to achieve goals [14].

The research findings showed that it is necessary to have a plan or strategy formulation up to the implementation stage to make an effective program. As Rachmat

(2014) asserted, strategy formulation involves establishing a series of appropriate actions to achieve company goals. Besides, a plan also has steps, namely formulating the vision and mission of the organization, creating an organizational profile, identifying external opportunities and threats to the organization, analyzing alternative strategies, establishing long-term goals, and mastering strategy [13].

Apart from that, planning requires strategic management that uses systematic approaches. Ansoff stated that strategic management is “a systematic approach to a major and increasingly important responsibility of general management; to position and relate the firm to its environment in a way which will assure its continued success and make it secure for surprises” [15].

Most planning of programs to increase student achievement at SMP Muhammadiyah 8 Surakarta was carried out by all school members who were committee members in each program formed at a school strategic planning meeting held at the beginning of the new school year. Sagala (2011: 113) explains that “planning activities in schools are usually carried out by the principal, with people who are trusted by the principal, or willing to work with the principal.”

From this opinion, it can be concluded that the planning process is the task of a school principal, and those who participate in making school plans are the school principal’s authority to determine it (bin Nordin et al., 2019). Hence, the principal can determine which parties participate in planning school programs. Moreover, parties not appointed or who do not get assignments from the school principal do not have the authority to carry out the school program [16].

Meanwhile, formal planning was carried out only once a year at the meeting to prepare the Budget and School Activity Plans (RKAS), held once a year at the start of a new school year. Aside from that, there were also meetings at the beginning before the implementation of activities, carried out conditionally and as needed if needed to hold a meeting to discuss methods of implementing school programs. However, a formal meeting to discuss the Draft School Budget and Activities (RKAS), which was attended by deputy principals, teachers, parents, and school committees, was held at the beginning of the new school year to carry out activity planning not only as a formality [17]. Because there is written evidence in the form of documents, it proves that the activity is carried out once a year. The existing planning was limited to non-formal meetings held suddenly or conditionally according to the school’s needs. Meetings were used as the most effective means of planning. Mulyasa says, “Meetings are the most effective and efficient means of making joint decisions democratically.”

The meeting for preparing the strategic plan involved parents of students. Banghart and Trull (1973: 97) suggest that “educational planning must be participatory planning that provides socially integrated educational experiences,” which means that planning must involve many people who must produce student-centered programs [18].

Then, for planning, activity programs must be under the vision and mission of the school because some strategies contain activities to realize the school’s vision and mission. However, it also cannot be denied that the best program planning is tailored to the school’s needs. Pidarta (1990:67) states that “planning cannot be made the same but must be different to fit the situation, conditions, and needs of each.” Because each school’s needs are different, only the school itself understands its needs better.

Based on the description of research findings and existing theories related to strategic planning to improve student learning achievement, according to the researchers, SMP Muhammadiyah 8 Surakarta needs to carry out more structured activity planning, and its activities must be documented.

### **Implementation of the Principal's Strategy to Improve Student Learning Achievement at SMP Muhammadiyah 8 Surakarta**

The study findings uncovered quite a number of programs carried out by SMP Muhammadiyah 8 Surakarta to improve student learning achievement, starting from programs in the form of activities, among others, peer tutoring activities carried out by students outside of class hours to form groups. Students discuss subjects, and some children with more abilities in specific subjects act as tutors for their friends.

Then, school programs in the form of making facilities and infrastructure to support moving classes include classrooms equipped with learning infrastructure or media related to specific subjects to support the implementation of the Moving Class Program.

There were also school programs in the form of fostering student organizations in the form of OSIS or IPM and extracurricular coachings, such as Student Cooperatives, PMR, Music, Dance, Drama, Mosque Youth (Remas), KIR, Literature, Sports, and Paskib. According to Narmoatmojo (2010), there are four types of extracurricular activities: (1) Krida, which includes scouting, basic student leadership training (LDKS), youth red cross (PMR), heritage and flag-raising troops (PASKIBRAKA); (2) Scientific work, including youth scientific activities (KIR), scientific mastery activities and academic abilities, and research; (3) Talent/achievement training/competition, which includes the development of sports, arts, and culture, love of nature, journalism, theatre, and religion; (4) Seminars, workshops, and exhibitions/bazaars with substance, including career, education, health, protection of human rights, religion, arts, and culture.

In addition to implementing these programs, the school community's participation is also needed. It aligns with what was stated by Sudjana (2004: 1) that "programs are activities carried out by individuals, groups, and/or organizations (institutions) that contain program components." Aside from the programs described, there were also school programs that have not yet been implemented. In fact, the results of Djafri's research (2008) showed that extracurricular activities at school could improve student achievement. In addition, education of democracy in the school environment means creating what is happening in the school to support and score students to possess knowledge and intelligence democracy and to have a democratic attitude and soul [19]. In this case, extracurriculars are essential to increase interest and talent, so many schools invest significant resources in extracurricular activities [20].

It is already good based on the description of research findings and existing theories related to implementing the principal's strategy. Nevertheless, SMP Muhammadiyah 8 Surakarta needs to (1) create a specific goal for each activity or program to be implemented so that each program has a particular function and purpose, (2) socialize programs

to all school members, and (3) have available facilities and infrastructure supporting the implementation of activities.

### **Evaluation of the Results of the Principal's Strategy to Improve Student Learning Achievement at SMP Muhammadiyah 8 Surakarta**

The research findings revealed that the evaluation of the implementation of the principal's strategy at SMP Muhammadiyah 8 Surakarta was divided into several parts. First, the strategy implementation ran smoothly and orderly because, in terms of strategy formulation, the principal detailed the schedule, method of implementation, costs, and resources supporting the program implementation, both material and non-material. On the other hand, the weakness in implementing the school's strategy is that the principal paid less attention to programs related to learning. The principal was more concerned with other programs.

Nevertheless, implementing school activities to improve student learning achievement runs orderly and smoothly. Meanwhile, external parties took corrective action to implement the principal's strategy, namely the school committee and student guardians. These parties are the most critical aspects of the activity implementation process. As stated by Mulyasa (2011), "Quality education will only emerge if all components support the implementation of education, including parents of students and the community" [21].

From this statement, it can be explained that education in schools will be of high quality if all school education policies and programs support all supporting components and the community. Therefore, all components or parties related to the school must participate in achieving school goals. As stated in Law No. 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System Chapter III Article 4 Paragraph 6, "education is organized by empowering all components of society through participation in the implementation and quality control of educational services" [22].

Hence, the participation of the community in the development of the concept of community-based education can be seen through several criteria as follows: (1) Community participation is not only in the form of giving money or physical assistance but also in the form of academic matters; (2) Obligations of senior high schools (monitoring and accountability) for government and society; (3) Providing broad opportunities for the community to participate in institutional participatory education management decision-making; (4) The school program is prepared and implemented by prioritizing the interests of educational goals, not only for administrative or bureaucratic purposes; (5) Education programs are per the community's current and future needs, oriented towards quality improvement, not for bureaucratic benefits; (6) The accountability report is open to all concerned [23].

Expected to get support from all components and stakeholders of education, the program of activities to improve student learning achievement run smoothly. Based on research findings from existing theories regarding evaluating the results of implementing the principal's strategy, SMP Muhammadiyah 8 Surakarta needs to take corrective actions from external and internal parties and follow up on the evaluation results.

## 5 Conclusion

As the highest leader in an educational institution, the principal largely determines the progress or withdrawal of a school and the course of the teaching and learning process and provides direction, guidance, and good service to all personnel in the school, especially teachers, because the teacher is the principal's accomplice with the task of a significant role in guiding students. Based on the research findings described previously, the researchers could draw the following conclusions:

- a. The school strategic plan at SMP Muhammadiyah 8 Surakarta was prepared to develop the school's vision and mission.
- b. The program conducted by the school to improve student achievement at SMP Muhammadiyah 8 Surakarta was divided into several types of programs.
- c. Evaluation of the principal's strategy results to improve student achievement at SMP Muhammadiyah 8 Surakarta was divided into several parts, i.e., the strategy's implementation ran smoothly and orderly.
- d. For student achievement at SMP Muhammadiyah 8 Surakarta, the principal supported competition activities, both academic and non-academic competitions, starting at the sub-district, district, provincial, national, and even international levels.

Furthermore, education in schools will be of high quality if all school education policies and programs have the support of all supporting components and the community. Therefore, all components or parties related to the school must participate in achieving school goals. As stated in Law No. 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System Chapter III Article 4 Paragraph 6, "Education is organized by empowering all components of society through participation in the implementation and quality control of educational services."

**Authors' Contributions.** Recommendations from existing research and theories related to strategic planning to improve student learning achievement are the need to plan more structured activities, and the activities must also be well documented to be measured.

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