

Principal's Leadership Strategy in Improving the Quality of Education

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Abstract. This study explores the leadership strategy of school principals in improving the quality of education at State Junior High School 1 Bua Ponrang. The research method used was in-depth interviews with the principal, vice principal for curriculum, and teachers at the school, as well as documentary studies to gain a thorough understanding of the implementation of the leadership strategy. The study results show that school principals implement democratic Leadership by holding various trainings and workshops to improve the professionalism of teachers. In addition, he is also active in managing the school curriculum to suit the needs and latest developments. The interpretation of the results shows that this approach has created a conducive learning environment, improved teacher performance, and improved the overall quality of education at State Junior High School 1 Bua Ponrang. The conclusion of this study is the need for continuity in developing educational human resources, strengthening responsive curriculum management, and the importance of participatory Leadership to achieve better educational goals.

Keywords: Leadership Strategy, Quality of Education, Educational Improvement.

1. Introduction

In an educational institution, the principal of a school or madrasah is a top manager responsible for carrying out his duties by mastering good leadership traits to carry out his duties effectively and efficiently (Juliantoro, 2017). The responsibilities of school principals are very broad and cover various fields, not only limited to the smooth process of teaching and learning activities but also cover all aspects of education (Farida & Jamilah, 2019).

According to (Mulyasa, 2022), the head of the madrasah is one of the important components in the education system that plays a significant role in improving the quality of education. The principal is the highest leader in the school, and his leadership pattern is highly influential and determines the school's progress. As a leader, the head of the madrasah must be aware that its success is highly dependent on cooperation with teachers and other education personnel. Therefore, the principal's characteristics play an important role and are part of his or her success or failure in school.

There are three main types of Leadership. First is autocratic Leadership, in which the leader acts as a dictator and makes decisions independently without involving members (Mardia & S, 2022). Second, laissez-faire leadership gives full freedom to members to act without organization (Nugroho et al., 2024). Third, democratic Leadership is where the leader invites members to work

cooperatively, prioritizes the group's interests, and involves them in decision-making (Zubaida et al., 2024).

According to (Wahjosumidjo, 1999), Leadership, in general, is an influence, art, or process of influencing others so that they willingly strive to achieve organizational goals. "Leading" means providing guidance, leading, directing, and walking ahead. Leaders behave to help the organization achieve its goals to the fullest extent.

Based on the explanation above, Leadership is the ability to influence the behaviour of a person or group of people to achieve certain goals in a certain situation. Leadership is a social problem involving interaction between the leading party and the leading party to achieve a common goal by influencing, persuading, motivating, or coordinating. The principal is the spearhead of the success of educational goals, so every process of daily activities requires review from the principal, both from the problem of teaching and learning activities and educational ones, to realize the goals of education (Mariani, 2022).

This theoretical fact is supported by leadership theories that show that effective leaders can influence and direct their subordinates to achieve organizational goals (Sayydi, 2019). The situational leadership theory put forward by (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969) emphasizes the importance of adapting leadership styles according to the situation and conditions faced.

As an educational leader, the principal must recognize and understand the various positions, circumstances, and needs of teachers, administrative employees, and other assistants (Astuti, 2017). Good cooperation will produce harmonious thinking in efforts to improve schools. The failure reflects the lack of success in a school principal's behaviour and leadership role (Anita et al., 2022). All of this needs to be considered by the principal when mobilizing all members he leads. The head of the madrasah, as the commander in the school institution, must be able to make policies and decisions that facilitate and improve the quality of education (Sign and Fitria, 2019).

The school's vision must be an attribute of the current and future principal's Leadership because a principal with a shallow and unclear vision will bring about the school's decline and will only produce a bad school and is not liked by the community (Values, 2022, p. 23). Therefore, the principal needs to have and understand a complete vision of his school to lead the school towards progress and independence.

Good Leadership has a great impact on the achievement of organizational goals because leaders have a great influence on the performance of their subordinates (Veliu et al., 2017). The ability to influence a group to achieve goals is the essence of Leadership. A principal must be able to lead the school as a whole (Said, 2019). Deep (Permendikbud No. 13, 2007, p. 13), explained that the competence of the principal of a school or madrasah must be reflected in his daily activities, which include: personality competencies such as having noble morals, an open attitude, being able to control himself, and having talents and interests as educational leaders; managerial competencies that include the ability to carry out duties and functions as school principals, including planning, developing school organizations, managing school resources, facilities and infrastructure, developing curriculum and learning, and conducting monitoring, evaluation, and reporting; entrepreneurial competence, namely the ability to create innovation and have a strong motivation to succeed in managing learning resources; Supervision competence is the ability to provide guidance to teachers, education staff, and students to improve teacher professionalism; and social competence which includes the ability to establish cooperation with related agencies and organizations as well as the community for the advancement of the school.

Empirical facts that support the importance of school principal leadership in improving the quality of education can be seen from various studies that show a positive relationship between the

principal's leadership style and the quality of education in the school. For example, research conducted by (Widodo, 2008; Lutuilean et al., 2023) shows that schools with principals who have democratic leadership styles tend to have better academic performance compared to schools led by principals with autocratic or laissez-faire leadership styles.

The quality of education includes the degree of excellence in the results of work or efforts, both in the form of goods and services, both tangible and intangible (Sayuti, 2022). Tangible quality can be observed in the form of the quality of an object or activity, for example, a quality television because it is durable, clear images and sounds, and parts that are easy to obtain (Na'im, 2019). At the same time, intangible quality is a quality that cannot be observed directly but can be felt, such as discipline, familiarity, and cleanliness (Kuntoro, 2019). The quality of education is dynamic and relative, often changing with the times.

The quality of education in schools must be considered and improved for the better. It is a challenge that educational institutions must respond positively to. Quality in education includes the quality of inputs, processes, and outputs (Rafsanjani et al., 2024). Education is said to be of high quality if the input is ready to process according to the minimum national standards, the educational process can create an active, creative, innovative, and fun atmosphere, and the output is in the form of high academic and non-academic learning outcomes (Santika et al., 2024).

The researcher's curiosity encouraged him to research educational institutions as part of the preparation of his thesis. Based on the researcher's observations, Bua Ponrang 1 State Middle School is a state institution in Luwu Regency whose quality always improves yearly, as evidenced by participation in competitions such as poetry, speeches, and lectures throughout Luwu Regency. It is known from an initial interview with Mrs. Nursaini, the Bua Ponrang 1 State Middle School principal, who stated that the principal must have the personality, ability, and skills to lead an educational institution. School principals have a great responsibility to improve the quality of education. This research was conducted to understand more deeply how the type and model of school principal's Leadership can affect the improvement of the quality of education at State Junior High School 1 Bua Ponrang, as well as to provide recommendations that can be applied in other educational institutions.

2. Method

This study uses a qualitative approach to describe the research object (Hermawan, 2019). This approach describes the principal's Leadership in supervising administrative work discipline at State Junior High School 1 Bua Ponrang. This qualitative descriptive research aims to reveal the meaning behind the data collected about the Leadership of school principals in improving the quality of education at State Junior High School 1 Bua Ponrang. This research focuses on "Principal Leadership in Improving the Quality of Education at State Junior High School 1 Bua Ponrang," which includes the type of principal Leadership and the quality of education.

This study uses a qualitative method with data collection techniques through observation, interviews, and documentation. The research instrument is the researcher himself, with data analysis through three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and verification (Miles et al., 2013). The data in this study consists of primary data obtained directly from the source through observations and interviews with Islamic Religious Education teachers, school principals, and other related parties at State Junior High School 1 Bua Ponrang, as well as secondary data obtained from various existing sources, such as books, reports, and other documents.

The key instrument in qualitative research is the researcher, who must be able to track, process, and analyze data and adapt to the environment (Majid, 2017). In addition, interview guidelines and

checklists for observation are also used. The data collection technique is carried out by direct observation in the field to observe the leadership situation of the principal, interviews to get in-depth information from relevant informants, and documentation from records, transcripts, books, newspapers, magazines, and other documents (Murdiyanto, 2020).

Triangulation techniques are used to ensure accurate and credible research results, which involve using various data sources and data collection methods. Data analysis is carried out throughout the study with three stages: data reduction to summarize and select important points, data presentation to compile information that allows concluding, and verification or drawing conclusions to look for meaning from the data collected by identifying relationships, similarities, or differences (Danuri & Maisaroh, 2019). This research was conducted to understand more deeply how the type and model of school principal leadership can affect the improvement of the quality of education at State Junior High School 1 Bua Ponrang and provide recommendations that can be applied in other educational institutions

3. Result

Types of Leadership of School Principals in Improving the Quality of Education

The principal is a formal leader whose position cannot be filled without certain considerations. The principal is responsible for carrying out leadership functions related to achieving educational goals and creating a conducive school atmosphere to foster the enthusiasm of educators and students. The principal's Leadership is expected to be able to provide encouragement, convenience, progress, and inspiration in the process of achieving educational goals.

Based on an interview with the principal about Leadership in improving the quality of education at State Junior High School 1 Bua Ponrang, the principal stated: "The type of Leadership I do is the type of democratic Leadership. First, I do a school self-evaluation to know what I should do as a principal. The policies I take are based on the conditions and needs of the school. We conduct a school self-evaluation with the team so that the existing obstacles can be overcome together in future school activities."

The results of the interview with the Waka Curriculum also revealed that: "In my opinion, Mrs. Nurhaeni's Leadership is very good. He set many good examples for teachers, was responsible for his work, and was disciplined. It made us, especially the curriculum team, enthusiastic about working and happy to help with his work. His Leadership makes it easier for us to carry out our task of improving the quality of education, both in terms of administration and academics."

In addition, an interview with the Waka Kesiswaan showed, "In my opinion, the quality of education at State Junior High School 1 Bua Ponrang has made significant progress. Among the schools in this area, State Junior High School 1 Bua Ponrang shows good development in the quality of education."

A teacher, Mr. Bambang Hermato, stated: "The principal is very good at improving our institution's education quality. He often held training and invited us to participate in subject-teacher deliberations. We also often participate in activities that aim to improve the quality of education, such as tutoring and bringing in supervisors or experts. The principal is very enthusiastic about improving the quality of teachers because he believes that good teacher quality will improve teaching and learning activities in schools."

The principal also builds positive communication between the staff and teachers. He tries to be open and create a family atmosphere so that staff, teachers, and other employees feel comfortable putting forward ideas, inputs, or problems. This good and open communication helps the principal

explore existing motivations and complaints and uphold togetherness without discriminating status.

As stated by the principal about efforts to improve the quality of education through positive communication, he said: "Efforts made in improving the quality of school education are with good management. I carry out the main duties and functions of all elements of the school, both teachers and administrative officers. I give an assessment and provide guidance or solutions based on which ones do not qualify."

Based on the results of interviews corroborated by observations and documentary studies, the principal's Leadership type in improving the quality of education at State Junior High School 1 Bua Ponrang is a democratic leadership type. It begins with an evaluation, then plans steps to improve the quality of education, assigns tasks to personnel to achieve these goals, and mobilizes them to achieve the predetermined plan.

Principal's Leadership Strategy in Improving Quality

The principal of Bua Ponrang 1 State Middle School stated that various trainings and workshops were held to improve the quality of educators. Good training and development management aims to improve educational professionalism, which refers to a set of functions and tasks in education that are based on specialized expertise. In addition, Bua Ponrang 1 State Middle School also has several programs to improve the professionalism of employees and employees at work.

Mr. Bambang Hermanto stated, "The solution for school principals to overcome problems in improving the quality of education in our schools is to hold training or workshops for teachers and administrative officers. In addition, we will open new educator vacancies according to the needs of existing subjects. We always coordinate with foundation teachers and guardians to answer all problems so that the school can run well and realize the expected school goals. Regarding facilities and infrastructure, Bua Ponrang 1 State Middle School is adequate, from classroom facilities, toilets, computer labs, to libraries that meet government standards."

The existence of a school principal is very influential in educational institutions, so this position occupies a key position as a leader. The school's back and forth highly depends on the principal's Leadership. Various efforts have been made by the principal of Bua Ponrang 1 State Middle School to improve the quality of education during his tenure. However, obstacles are often challenges that must be faced. As an influential leader, the principal does not remain silent in overcoming these obstacles.

Simon Sulaeman, Deputy Head of Curriculum, added about the principal's leadership model in improving the quality of education at State Junior High School 1 Bua Ponrang: "The principal often assigns me to participate in workshops or training related to the preparation and improvement of the curriculum. He is very enthusiastic about managing the development of the curriculum because the curriculum is the heart of the school's progress. Curriculum management must be well-arranged and neat and based on the characteristics of students, teachers, and the school environment."

From the explanation above, it can be seen that there are several significant advances in Bua Ponrang 1 State Middle School. The principal's efforts to improve the quality of education include training and workshops for teachers and administrative officers, the admission of new teachers on the needs of the subject, coordination with foundation teachers and guardians, and the addition of infrastructure facilities to support learning activities.

Based on the results of interviews strengthened by observations and documentary studies, the principal's leadership strategy in improving the quality of at State Junior High School 1 Bua Ponrang is as follows:

- a. The principal's leadership strategy in improving the quality of education uses an effective leadership model, such as controlling daily teaching activities, conducting evaluations, and holding training for the teacher council. The principal has a democratic nature when leading its members.
- b. Improving the quality of education at State Junior High School 1 Bua Ponrang has been quite maximum, starting from meeting the needs of school residents, implementing the vision and mission, preparing programs, implementing program evaluations, to facilitating students' talent interests through extracurricular activities such as Scouts, PMR, language speeches, table tennis, MTQ, and support in competitions at various levels.

Improvements in facilities and infrastructure have also been maximized, with new rooms such as laboratories, canteens, computer laboratories, and other rooms. A comfortable working climate and good communication with stakeholders make teachers better in terms of administration, including learning equipment.

4. Discussion

Types of Leadership of School Principals in Improving the Quality of Education

The results of this study illustrate the importance of the role of school principals as formal leaders in an educational institution. The principal is responsible not only for the achievement of educational goals but also for creating a conducive school environment to arouse the enthusiasm of educators and students. By practising democratic Leadership, the principal at State Junior High School 1, Bua Ponrang, conducts regular self-evaluations to understand the school's conditions and needs. The policies he took were based on the results of this evaluation and involved the team in overcoming the obstacles faced in school activities.

This research aligns with the findings of several previous studies that show that democratic Leadership can contribute significantly to improving the quality of education. According to (Shepherd-Jones & Salisbury-Glennon, 2018), democratic Leadership tends to encourage the active participation of all school members in the decision-making process, which positively impacts the motivation and performance of teachers and students. Research (Ed, 2018) also found that principals who used participatory or democratic leadership styles tended to produce a more positive and productive school climate.

The interpretation of the findings of this study shows that the democratic Leadership applied by the principal at State Junior High School 1 Bua Ponrang allows the creation of a positive and collaborative work climate. By involving all school stakeholders in the evaluation and planning process, the principal can facilitate various efforts to improve the quality of education, both in terms of administration and academics. Through open communication and building family, the principal can explore potential, motivation, and solutions to problems that arise in the school environment. It not only improves the quality of teaching and learning but also strengthens the commitment of all school members to achieving the educational vision and mission that has been set. Overall, this study makes an important contribution to the understanding of how democratic Leadership can be an effective strategy for improving the quality of education in schools, with a focus on active participation, continuous evaluation, and the development of inclusive and empowered educational communities.

Principal's Leadership Strategy in Improving Quality

The results of this study highlight the efforts of the principal of Bua Ponrang 1 State Middle School to improve the quality of education through various strategies. One of them is through the development of educators by holding trainings and workshops that aim to improve their professionalism. The principal is also active in managing curriculum management, which includes preparing and improving the curriculum according to the needs and characteristics of the school.

This study is in line with the findings of several previous studies that show that developing teacher professionalism through training and development is an effective strategy for improving the quality of education. According to (Garzón Artacho et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2021), continuous training for teachers not only improves their teaching skills but also motivates them to innovate and adapt to the latest developments in education. It is important because professional teachers can play an important role in improving student learning outcomes and creating a conducive learning environment.

The interpretation of the findings of this study indicates that the principal of Bua Ponrang 1 State Middle School has successfully implemented an effective leadership model in managing teacher professional development and curriculum management. Through democratic Leadership, the principal can encourage the active participation of all school members in the decision-making process and implementation of educational programs. By establishing good communication and a comfortable work climate, principals open space for the collaboration and innovation necessary to achieve the desired educational goals.

Overall, this study makes an important contribution to understanding how principal Leadership can influence and direct efforts to improve a school's education quality. The strategy implemented includes aspects of teacher professional development and the improvement of adequate infrastructure and supporting facilities. Thus, the principal at State Junior High School 1, Bua Ponrang, has created an inclusive and achievement-oriented learning environment that encourages success for teachers and students at the school.

5. Conclusion

Based on this study, it can be concluded that the Leadership of the principal at State Junior High School 1 Bua Ponrang has a very important role in improving the quality of education. Through a democratic leadership strategy, the principal actively develops teacher professionalism through various trainings and workshops and manages the school curriculum by paying attention to the characteristics of students and the latest educational needs. It improves the competence of teachers and school employees and creates a conducive learning environment. The recommendations of this study include the need for continuity in teacher training, strengthening responsive curriculum management, and encouraging participatory Leadership at all levels of schools. Thus, this research has the potential to significantly contribute to efforts to improve the quality of education at State Junior High School 1 Bua Ponrang and can be a model for other schools to achieve better educational goals.

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