Multi-Site Study of Principal Leadership Management in Building Superior Junior High Schools

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This research examines the principal's strategy for building superior schools and how superior school service systems are built. **Method:** This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach, with a case study type and a multisite study design, where data collection uses in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation studies. The analysis uses data display, reduction, drawing conclusions, and verification. The subjects of this research were student guardians, administrators, school principals, and teachers. It was conducted at two Islamic boarding school-based private junior high schools in Lamongan Regency. **Results:** The principal's strategic management begins with a) School Self-Evaluation, strategic planning, strategy implementation, and strategy monitoring and evaluation; b) Formulating the Vision, Mission, and Goals of educational institutions involving all elements; c) Developing the quality of education begins with organizing teacher human resources starting from recruitment strategy, career development, improving welfare, further education as well as providing rewards and punishments, d) Creative and innovative learning management by the concept of an independent curriculum which is also modified with Islamic boarding schools curricula such as reciting the yellow book, tahfidz Qur'an program, and Dauroh, e) management of infrastructure facilities **Novelty:** The school principal's leadership strategy management will be effective if it is adjusted to the targets. This research is a community with a Santri background, so effective management of superior schools must also be based on Islamic boarding schools.

INTRODUCTION

In the current age of swift transformation, the capacity to adjust and create new ideas is crucial for the achievement of both an individual and a nation. An education of superior quality lays the groundwork for cultivating these skills. 21st-century learning encompasses the comprehension of concepts, the practical application of these concepts in real-life situations, and the cultivation of abilities (Ciarli et al., 2021). Hence, it is crucial to acknowledge that investing in high-quality education is imperative and obligatory. In order to accomplish this objective, it is imperative to engage all relevant stakeholders, including the government, educational institutions, and society. The impact of education on individuals and the nation as a whole is influenced by the level of its quality (Li, 2022).

Several factors might indicate a school's success, but one of the most crucial is the leadership style employed by the principal. "Leadership," defined by Alan Tucker (Arar, 2019), refers to the capacity to exert influence and motivate individuals or groups to pursue specific objectives or targets under particular circumstances and conditions. The success of school principals in fulfilling their obligations is seen in their capacity to establish a pleasant school culture, which in turn influences and motivates instructors, employees, and students to carry out their responsibilities wholeheartedly. The

principal's exceptional educational skills were critical in establishing a well-structured and productive school atmosphere that was aesthetically pleasing and disciplined. Educational institutions have a crucial role in delivering high-quality and competitive education nationwide in the contemporary day. Education in Indonesia will also improve in quality if it can develop. A school principal is an individual who serves as a leader, guiding and leading the school community with a vested interest in its success. The principal, as a school leader, must exert maximum effort. The selection of a leadership style by the school principal can have either a beneficial or detrimental effect on the business or institution (Hallinger, 2020). Consequently, clients prioritize human resources (HR) in their companies. Zhang (2021) stated that enhancing the standard of education is the objective of national education development and is a fundamental component of endeavors to enhance the overall quality of the Indonesian population.

The research on principal leadership management in constructing superior junior high schools is highly relevant and significant. Middle school bridges the gap between elementary and high school education (Louis, 2016). During this stage, students undergo a crucial transition phase in their cognitive, emotional, and social development (Ramadhani & Setyadi, 2022). Consequently, school principals must possess robust leadership skills to establish a favorable learning environment and motivate each student to reach their maximum potential. This research focuses on UKASA Lamongan Junior High School and Muhammadiyah 14 Paciran Lamonga Junior High School.

UKASA Lamongan Junior High School is an educational institution that follows the Islamic boarding school model and emphasizes "Excellence" in Lamongan Regency. UKASA Lamongan Junior High School focuses on implementing the tahfidzul Qur'an. It has achieved several notable accomplishments, such as placing in the top 55 of the 2021 Social Science Education Competition (SoSEC) held by HMP IPS Surabaya State University, winning the National Student Olympiad at the Junior High School level throughout Indonesia in 2022, and winning the Tahfidz Show Festival for Junior High School throughout the district in 2023. In addition, Muhammadiyah 14 Paciran Lamonga Junior High School stands out due to its specialized instruction in Tahfid and Arabic language skills for pupils. The education sector has 27 teachers, making human resources particularly important. Muhammadiyah 14 Paciran Lamonga Junior High School has conducted human resource development through seminars, workshops, education and training, formal education, and comparative research studies.

Research on the leadership management of school principals in the construction of superior junior high schools is highly relevant to Indonesia's efforts to enhance the quality of education. School principals who can apply effective and innovative leadership will be the key to creating a learning environment that supports maximum student development. Through a deep understanding of leadership theory, challenges, opportunities, and existing best practices, school principals can direct their schools toward superior and sustainable achievements.

RESEARCH METHOD
This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach, with a case study type and a multisite study design, where data collection uses in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation studies. The location of this research was UKASA Lamongan Junior High School and Muhammadiyah 14 Paciran Lamonga Junior High School. The research will be conducted for eight months, from June 2023 to January 2024. The data for this study was gathered through documentation, observation, and interviews

(Creswell, 2017). These three methods are used to gather mutually supportive and complementary information regarding the principals' resource development strategies to enhance the quality of teaching. A free-guided interview is the method employed, which allows the interviewee to express themselves freely. The author employs this approach to acquire pertinent information and avoid any form of rigidity between the interviewer and the source. The authors used this interview data collection method to conduct preliminary research to determine what problems must be investigated. The analysis uses the Miles and Huberman model with four research stages: reduction, data display, drawing conclusions, and verification (Miles et al., 2019). The subjects of this research were student guardians, administrators, principals, and teachers at the two schools.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Results
This research shows that the principal's strategic management begins with school self-evaluation, strategic planning, strategy implementation, and strategy monitoring and evaluation. School self-evaluation is a crucial first step in strategic management. The principals at UKASA Lamongan Junior High School and Muhammadiyah 14 Paciran Lamonga Junior High School carried out this evaluation by collecting internal and external data, such as student achievement data, teacher performance, facilities, and infrastructure, as well as feedback from parents and the community. In addition, SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) is used to identify the school's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. This is as stated by the principal of UKASA Lamongan Junior High School, "…It is also crucial to involve all stakeholders, such as instructors, staff, students, and parents, in the evaluation process to guarantee that all viewpoints are taken into account" (Informant 1, 2024).

After self-evaluation, the next step is strategic planning. The school principal sets a clear, measurable vision and mission for the short, medium, and long term. Next, goals and objectives are formulated using the SMART principle (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) to ensure that these goals can be achieved. In this planning,"… the school principal also prepares an action plan which includes strategic programs, resource allocation, and a detailed implementation schedule" (Informant 2, 2024). Strategy implementation is a critical stage where plans must be transformed into concrete actions. The school principal distributes duties and responsibilities to teachers and staff according to their skills and competencies. In addition, empowerment and development of human resources are carried out through training and professional development for teachers and staff to improve their performance and competence. Resource management is also optimized, using budget, facilities, and technology to support the learning process effectively.

Strategy monitoring and evaluation is the final step to ensure the plan runs according to the stated goals. This is as stated by the principal of Muhammadiyah 14 Paciran Lamonga Junior High School," …the school principal carries out regular monitoring of the implementation of programs and activities to ensure smooth running and conformity with plans" (Informant 2, 2024). Performance evaluation is carried out by measuring and assessing performance based on predetermined indicators from an academic and non-academic perspective. Based on the evaluation results, adjustments and improvements are made to increase the strategies' effectiveness, ensuring that goals and targets can be better achieved.

The following research finding is the formulation of educational institutions' Vision, Mission, and Goals involving all elements. Formulating educational institutions' vision, mission, and goals is essential in the principal's leadership management at UKASA Lamongan Junior High School and Muhammadiyah 14 Paciran Lamonga Junior High School. This process is not only the principal's responsibility but also involves all elements of the school, including teachers, staff, students, and parents. The involvement of various stakeholders aims to create a sense of shared ownership and commitment to the direction and goals of the school. Active participation from all parties also ensures that the vision and mission formulated reflect the aspirations and needs of the entire school community.

In formulating the vision and mission, the school principal held a series of discussions and workshops involving all elements of the school. These discussions aim to identify core values that will become the basis for the school's vision and mission. Apart from that, the principal of UKASA Lamongan Junior High School revealed that "…this workshop also serves to explore ideas and suggestions from various parties regarding the strategic direction that the school should take" (Informant 1, 2024). Thus, the resulting vision and mission result from a joint consensus and can direct all school activities and programs toward achieving the long-term goals that have been set.

After the vision and mission are formulated, the next step is to set specific and measurable goals. The principal, management team, and teachers set SMART goals (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound). These goals are then translated into concrete programs that can be implemented in daily activities at school. Through this participatory and comprehensive planning, schools have clear direction, measurable strategies, and action plans to achieve their vision and mission. Active participation from all school elements in this formulation process also increases their motivation and involvement in efforts to achieve common goals.

The following research finding is that developing the quality of education begins with organizing teacher human resources, starting from recruitment strategies, career development, improving welfare, further education, and providing rewards and punishments. This condition was expressed by the principal of Muhammadiyah 14 Paciran Lamonga Junior High School," … developing the quality of education begins with organizing teacher Human Resources (HR) in a comprehensive manner, which covers various essential aspects" (Informant 2, 2024). The first step is an effective recruitment strategy. Principals at leading junior high schools ensure that the recruitment process is carried out selectively with high standards to obtain quality teacher candidates. This process involves assessing prospective teachers' competencies, experience, and professional development potential. With the proper recruitment, schools can build a solid, high-quality teaching team from the start.

The following finding is that at UKASA Lamongan Junior High School and Muhammadiyah 14 Paciran Lamonga Junior High School, creative and innovative learning management is carried out, adapted to the Islamic boarding school concept, and effective and efficient infrastructure management. Implementing creative and innovative learning management through an independent curriculum is critical to establishing a dynamic and adaptive learning environment. The independent curriculum allows schools to design learning programs that suit student needs and potential. In superior junior high schools, this curriculum is modified by integrating the Islamic boarding school curriculum, which includes activities such as reciting the yellow book, the Qur'an tahfidz program, and Dauroh. This integration enriches

students' learning experience and strengthens their spiritual and moral aspects. Learning based on religious values balances academic and spiritual knowledge so that students develop into individuals with character and broad insight. This aligns with the statement provided by the informant.

> "We designed a balanced schedule between academic activities and religious activities. For example, the yellow book recites at certain times outside of main lesson hours. At the same time, the tahfidz Qur'an program is scheduled intensively with adapted methods so that students do not feel burdened. Dauroh activities, such as religious training or guidance, are held periodically to deepen students' understanding of religion. With this approach, students not only gain broad academic knowledge but can also internalize religious values in everyday life." (Informant 1, 2024)

In addition, the management of facilities and infrastructure plays a crucial role in establishing a favorable learning environment. Schools ensure that physical facilities, such as classrooms, laboratories, libraries, and sports facilities, are in good condition and adequate to support teaching and learning activities. Apart from that, the condition stated by the Principal of UKASA Lamongan Junior High School stated that" … schools are also investing in educational technology, such as computers, projectors, and fast internet connections, to support digital learning, which is increasingly relevant in this modern era" (Informant 1, 2024). Good management includes routine maintenance, periodic repairs of facilities, and the procurement of new equipment by developing curriculum needs.

The principal of UKASA Lamongan Junior High School and Muhammadiyah 14 Paciran Lamonga Junior High School work closely with the management team to oversee and plan the effective and efficient utilization of the budget for infrastructure management. They also seek support from external parties, such as donors or government programs, to improve the quality and quantity of existing facilities. With the support of adequate facilities and infrastructure, schools can provide a safe, comfortable, and inspiring learning environment for all students and teachers so that the learning process can take place optimally and achieve the expected results.

Discussion
The principal's strategic management at UKASA Lamongan Junior High School and Muhammadiyah 14 Paciran Lamonga Junior High School is crucial in determining educational institutions' direction and success. This process involves several critical stages that must be carried out systematically and continuously. The first stage in strategic management is school self-evaluation. This evaluation is essential to identify internal strengths and weaknesses and external opportunities and threats. According to Jacobsen (2022), comprehensive self-evaluation helps schools develop strategic plans that are more realistic and measurable. After evaluation, strategic planning is the next step, where the school sets short-term and long-term goals and strategies to achieve them. Implementation of the strategy is then followed by monitoring and evaluation to ensure that the implemented strategy goes according to plan and achieves the expected results (Febrianningsih & Ramadan, 2023).

Formulating a school's vision, mission, and goals is a crucial step in determining the direction and identity of an educational institution. This process not only functions as a guide for school policies and programs but also reflects the aspirations and values to be achieved. Therefore, the involvement of all school elements in formulating the vision, mission, and goals is significant. This includes teachers, students, parents, and the

surrounding community. Their involvement ensures that the resulting vision and mission are representative and relevant to the needs and expectations of all interested parties.

The vision and mission of UKASA Lamongan Junior High School and Muhammadiyah 14 Paciran Lamonga Junior High School are developed by actively engaging all stakeholders within the institution. The involvement of various parties in the vision and mission formulation process increases the sense of ownership and commitment to common goals. When (Cunninghame et al., 2020; Koskela, 2021; López-Roca & Traver-Martí, 2023; Merrick, 2020; Schmid & Garrels, 2021). This also fosters a robust sense of unity and cooperation among all components of the school, which is crucial for establishing a harmonic and efficient educational setting (Ford, 2019). The participation of all elements in formulating the vision and mission contributes significantly to the effectiveness of implementing school strategies. School institutions involving their communities in the strategic planning process are more successful in achieving their goals than those not. This active participation allows better adaptation of strategies to realities on the ground, increases acceptance and support from the entire school community, and minimizes resistance to change. Thus, the involvement of all parties in formulating the vision and mission is crucial from an inclusion perspective and an effective strategy to ensure the school's long-term success.

The principal at UKASA Lamongan Junior High School and Muhammadiyah 14 Paciran Lamonga Junior High School require teachers to carry out innovative and creative learning. Learning management must be creative and innovative, in line with the Independent Curriculum concept, which prioritizes flexibility and development of 21st-century competencies (Cholilah et al., 2023). The use of technology in learning to create a more interactive and exciting learning experience. This also includes using e-learning platforms and educational applications (Lindqvist, 2019). Integrating Islamic boarding school curricula such as reciting the yellow book, the Qur'an tahfidz program, and Dauroh adds to the richness of learning and provides a balance between general education and religious education. This approach can increase student engagement and enrich their learning experience.

Furthermore, career development is the main focus in developing teacher human resources. School principals design sustainable career development programs, including training and workshops relevant to the latest developments in education. This program improves teachers' skills and knowledge and motivates them to continue to innovate in teaching methods. In addition, schools provide opportunities for teachers to continue their formal education to a higher level, such as a master's or doctoral degree, which will further strengthen their competence in their respective fields (Karacabey, 2022).

Improving teacher welfare is also a significant concern. School principals work with various parties to ensure teachers receive adequate compensation, including competitive salaries, allowances, and other supporting facilities (Sebastian, 2019). The school also implements a fair and transparent reward and punishment system. Teachers who excel are given awards as a form of appreciation, such as bonuses, certificates, or opportunities to take part in professional development programs abroad (Onyefulu et al., 2022; Prahani et al., 2022; Ravago & Mapa, 2020; van Bruggen et al., 2020). On the other hand, school principals also apply sanctions for teachers who do not meet predetermined performance standards to increase discipline and professionalism at work. With this approach, the quality of education at UKASA Lamongan Junior High

School and Muhammadiyah 14 Paciran Lamonga Junior High School can continue to improve through optimal contributions from each teacher.

Adequate facilities and infrastructure management are critical to support the learning process. Adequate and well-maintained facilities can improve the quality of education and the comfort of teaching and learning. Good infrastructure management includes procurement according to needs, routine maintenance, and optimizing the use of facilities. When school facilities, such as classrooms, laboratories, libraries, and sports areas, are well managed, this creates a conducive learning environment and supports the achievement of optimal learning outcomes (Park, 2019).

Research shows a positive correlation between the condition of educational facilities and student learning achievement. Schools with complete and well-maintained facilities tend to have higher academic achievements than schools with inadequate facilities. In addition, the research also revealed that students who study in an environment with good facilities are more motivated and have lower absenteeism rates (Rahman et al., 2021; Sadrizadeh et al., 2022; Tajeri Moghadam et al., 2020; Van Der Feltz-Cornelis et al., 2020). This shows that adequate facilities directly impact the quality of education and influence aspects of student motivation and involvement in the learning process (Grissom, 2019). Furthermore, routine maintenance and optimizing the use of facilities are essential aspects of infrastructure management. According to research conducted by DeMatthews (2021), schools that implement a regular maintenance system for their facilities and infrastructure show a significant increase in the efficient use of facilities. They found that damage could be minimized with a regular maintenance schedule, and the facility's service life could be extended. Optimizing the use of facilities, such as rotating classrooms or sharing laboratories between classes, also helps maximize the potential of existing facilities without requiring significant investments in procuring new facilities (Chagnon-Lessard et al., 2021; Kapoor et al., 2024; Renaud et al., 2024). Therefore, managing these facilities and infrastructure effectively and efficiently is essential.

CONCLUSION

Fundamental Finding: The principal's strategic management is the key to achieving success in educational institutions. This strategy covers various essential aspects that must be managed effectively and efficiently. The principal's strategic management begins with a) School Self-Evaluation, strategic planning, strategy implementation, and strategy monitoring and evaluation; b) Formulating the Vision, Mission, and Goals of educational institutions involving all elements; c) Developing the quality of education begins with organizing teacher human resources starting from recruitment strategy, career development, improving welfare, further education and providing rewards and punishments, d) creative and innovative learning management following the concept of an independent curriculum which is also modified with Islamic boarding school curricula such as reciting the yellow book, tahfidz Qur'an program, and duroh, e) Effective and efficient management of infrastructure. **Implications**: a) improving quality, planning on targets, measurable implementation, and continuous monitoring and evaluation; b) involvement of all parties and shared spirit; c) selective recruitment, career development, increasing welfare, rewards, and punishment; d) enjoyable learning, flexible curriculum, integration of pesantren curriculum, and character development; e) optimal usage, cost savings, and a comfortable learning environment. **Limitations:** a) data and information limitations, resistance to change, and limited

resources; b) uneven involvement, time and coordination, and long-term commitment; c) the recruitment process is complicated, and teacher availability is not growing; d) adaptation of the curriculum, supporting facilities, and alignment with traditional values; and e) limited budget, less mature planning, and ineffective use. **Further research:** effectiveness of self-evaluation, strategic planning process, monitoring and evaluation system, participation and involvement, recruitment strategies, career development, implementation of the learning curriculum, specific Islamic boarding school programs, effective management models, use of technology, and the impact of infrastructure on learning. Through the implementation of this complete strategic management approach, school principals can guarantee the seamless coordination and alignment of all educational components, thereby fostering the attainment of the educational institution's vision and mission.

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