

Principal's Strategy in Improving Educational Quality

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Article History: Received on 25 November 2022, Revised on 30 December 2022

Published on 1 February 2023

Abstract: This qualitative study investigates the principal's strategy in improving educational quality at SD Negeri 19 Gelumbang by using observations, interviews, and documentation. The results showed that the principal's strategy includes empowering teachers' competencies, and complete learning resource centers, working together to develop learning models, attempting to foster good cooperation with teachers and staff, and improving teachers' discipline, including requiring teachers to participate in every school. The school environment at SD Negeri 19 Gelumbang is supportive of teaching and learning activities. The main source of strength is students' eagerness to learn. Close family relationships among students are also practiced in the school environment.

Keywords: Education, Principal, Quality, Strategy

A. Introduction

Education is the process of preparing students for the future through various guidance, teaching, or training activities (Eisner, 2004). Education is the fundamental capital for improving the quality of good human resources and achieving success in all areas of national development. The low quality of human resources is a fundamental issue that frequently stymies national economic development (Hughey, & Hughey, (1999).

Along with developments that continue to change in the direction of progress, schools that are able to survive in the millennial era, which is full of increasingly competitive global competition as it is today, are schools that have certain qualities and characteristics (Friga, et. al., 2003). Unqualified educational institutions will not be able to survive and will be eliminated by themselves, abandoned by people because they lack the competitiveness to compete.

The Government of the Republic of Indonesia, through the Minister of National Education, launched the "Education Quality Improvement Movement" on May 2, 2002, and is even more focused after the stipulation and enactment of Law Number 20 of 2003 Article 35 and Government Regulation Number 19 of 2005 concerning

National Education Standards. National Education Standards are required as part of an effort to improve educational quality, particularly those related to human resource development, in order to prepare the entire Indonesian nation for the millennial era. With the standardization of education, no one teacher will interpret the same basic competency in the curriculum unit in the same way. Similarly, during the course of the learning activities, the teacher's attention will be more focused on the achievement of results rather than on administrative matters contained in manuals, implementation instructions, and technical instructions (Mulyasa, 2013).

The achievement of national education goals, as stated in Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, is closely related to educational quality. Furthermore, education can be said to be of high quality if it meets the National Education Standards. Fulfilling the Minimum Service Standards for Education, also known as the National Education Standard, is the primary prerequisite for schools as educational institutions seeking to improve quality.

Furthermore, the school is a complex and unique educational organization made up of various human characters who must work together to realize the vision and mission, necessitating a high level of coordination. Human resources (HR) are becoming increasingly important in achieving school objectives. HR is a factor that can effectively and efficiently drive the achievement of school goals, but it can also be a source of obstacles in achieving school goals. This is due to the fact that humans are both policymakers and direct implementers of school goals. Given the importance of human resources, the principal, as a leader and policymaker, must pay closer attention to the school environment and the people who work in it. Even though school is a universal phenomenon in human life, that does not mean that schools can grow indefinitely. The school is subject to internal and external changes from time to time. Thus, schools require a good management system to ensure their continued existence, quality, and achievement of educational objectives. According to the viewpoint of (Udin, 2012), successful organizations are those whose levels of effectiveness continue to rise. Customers, both internal and external to the organization, will sense the organization's meaningfulness.

As a result, the principal must work hard to ensure that the school he leads is effective, of high quality, and of choice (Blankstein, 2004; Hawley, 2006). The principal is a critical educational leader because he or she is directly involved in the implementation of programs in schools. The achievement of a school's declared educational goals is inextricably linked to the existence of the principal as an educational leader with skills, policies, and wisdom in the school. As a professional official in the school organization, the principal is in charge of managing all aspects of the organization and collaborating with the entire academic community to achieve the desired educational goals.

It is hoped that under the leadership of a professional school principal, teachers will be able to present and develop themselves according to their potential, thereby improving the quality of education in their institutions. As a result, public trust in formal educational institutions is growing.

The role of the school principal in developing educational quality is critical because it can affect the success or failure of educational quality in the school. Anderson, (2009) added that the level of school quality is determined by the school principal's leadership. Furthermore, as the backbone of educational quality, the school principal must act as a spirit generator, encourager, pioneer, and stabilizer, as well as administrator (Mulyasa, 2007).

School principals must be professional in carrying out their primary tasks and functions in order to improve educational quality. Because the principal is directly involved in the school management process, the principal is a component that occupies a central and strategic position in the education system.

The principal's personality, professional preparation and experience, and school decisions regarding the principal's role in the teaching field all influence how he works and views his role. Administrators can benefit from in-service education services that clarify the principal's expectations.

One of the paradigms for increasing the professionalism of education staff in schools must be continuous quality improvement. It is hoped that by implementing a quality improvement strategy that does not rely solely on traditional approaches, but also on optimizing resources and funding sources, the problem of low-quality education will be solved (Mulyasa, 2007).

It is felt that it is necessary to increase the professional ability of school principals in order to make government programs related to improving educational quality roll out. For goals, the principal must understand what must be accomplished (vision) and how to accomplish it (mission). The principal's character must be one of integrity. All forms of school activities are always aimed at increasing a leader's professionalism and education to improve education quality so that it can develop and advance in accordance with the development needs and developments of the times.

School principals' efforts aim to improve the quality of education in schools through school program implementation activities (Epstein, et. al., 2004). Education quality is dynamic and can be studied from various angles. In accordance with the parties' agreement, the agreement on the concept of quality is returned to existing formulas or references such as educational policies, learning processes, teaching, curriculum, infrastructure, learning facilities, and educational staff.

According to the preliminary research, SD Negeri 19 Gelumbang has a principal with a high level of professionalism, as evidenced by the efforts made in the school environment. Efforts have been made to ensure that: (a) school principals can set a good example for teachers and students (Louis, & Wahlstrom, 2011); (b) comparative studies are conducted to broaden teachers' perspectives; (c) school facilities and infrastructure are changed in response to technological developments; and (d) students have a comfortable learning environment (Hutchinson, 2003). Based on the explanation of the problem's background, we conducted study on the Principal's Strategy in Improving Educational Quality (Irawati, et al, 2022; Zaleha et. al., 2022; Kurniati, at. al., 2022).

B. Methods

We select a qualitative research method. Qualitative research is a research method that generates descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from people and observed behavior (Mohajan, 2018). Qualitative research is a research method that employs descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from observable people and actors (Abdullah & Raman, 2001). The purpose of qualitative research is to explain and analyze phenomena, events, social dynamics, attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of a person or group of things. As a result, the qualitative research process begins with compiling the fundamental assumptions and thought rules that will be used in the research. The information gathered during the research is then interpreted. The data examined and reported in this article are the results of observations, interviews, and documentation about the role of the school principal in improving educational quality at SD Negeri 19 Gelumbang.

The process of finding and compiling data regarding the principal's strategy in improving the quality of education at SD Negeri 19 Gelumbang, systematically based on the results of participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation techniques to further examine the implementation of the learning process carried out by the teacher, is referred to as data analysis in this study.

C. Results and Discussion

Principal's Strategy in Improving Educational Quality of SD Negeri 19 Gelumbang

The principal may play an important role in the development of a professional teacher (Gumus, 2013; Sebastian, 2016). A teacher plays an important role in directing and assisting students in determining their goals. Part of the principal's task and role as a leader and supervisor is to assist teachers in schools in developing their profession while also assisting teachers in seeing the problems, they face both inside and outside the classroom. The abilities of a school principal in empowering educators and education staff have an impact on the quality of professional development of

educators and education personnel, building collaboration between teachers and staff, reviewing and evaluating the performance of teachers and staff, all of which are done in an effort to support excellent service to all students. If the principal possesses these abilities, he or she will be able to effectively manage and empower teachers.

The principal must have a good plan or strategy in place to improve the quality of school education. Thus, the success or failure of an educational program and educational goals is highly dependent on the principal's skills and policies as an educational leader.

Before taking action, a person who fights in setting strategy will consider the strength of the troops he has, both in terms of quantity and quality. After determining everything, he plans the actions that must be taken, including tactics and warfare techniques, as well as the best time to launch an attack. Thus, when developing a strategy, various factors, both internal and external, must be considered. Similarly, school principals require a strategy in order to compete with other schools.

The principal comes from the word "head" and "school". The term head can refer to the head or leader of an organization or institution. While a school is a place or institution where educators and students meet to receive and give lessons. In general, the principal is a leader in an institution that receives and gives lessons.

The principal is a functional educator tasked with leading a school institution where the learning process takes place or where educators who give lessons interact with students who receive lessons. According to Nawawi (2005), a formal institution leader is someone who leads a formal institution out of duty and based on a decision letter from a higher body.

The ability of a school principal who is appointed to lead a formal institution and occupy a structural position in the school based on a higher body decision to develop a strategy in developing the school to compete with other schools or madrasas is referred to as the principal's strategy.

The following is the Principal of SD Negeri 19 Gelumbang's strategy for improving educational quality in the schools he oversees: He stated that his strategy for improving educational quality was to empower teachers' abilities, which is currently being implemented, including involving teachers in the Teacher Working Group (KKG) and training/seminars/workshops, where this training is a way to add insight and provide opportunities for teachers to improve their knowledge and skills, empowering teachers to continue their education to a higher level (S2, and S3). Then there is special coaching, specifically empowering teachers to participate in the Teacher Education Program (PPG) in order to gain recognition as a professional teacher, where there is a fit and proper test that a teacher must undergo, ideally

against ideally set criteria. Professional teachers can be said to help improve student achievement, which ultimately improves the quality of education at SD Negeri 19 Gelumbang.

Schools provide media and complete learning resource centers for the smooth operation of learning activities, collaborate to develop learning models, try to foster good cooperation with teachers and TU staff, improve teacher discipline, and award teachers and employees who excel. According to Respondent 1, the principal's strategy for improving the quality of education at SD Negeri 19 Gelumbang was to empower the abilities or competence of teachers. Professionally competent teachers can optimally encourage or improve their ability (student achievement) and thus become a benchmark for the quality of education at SD Negeri 19 Gelumbang. Furthermore, the Principal works to foster positive relationships with the school community, to provide learning resources, and to recognize and reward teachers who excel. While the researcher's interview with the Deputy Head of School (Curriculum Field) yielded the following results: The principal plays a significant role in improving the quality of education in schools. The quality of school principals can have a variety of effects on school members (teachers, staff, and students), including the development of morale, solid cooperation, and a pleasant working environment.

Furthermore, the principal is very supportive of increasing teacher professionalism, namely the principal is making efforts to empower the competence of teachers or the Teacher Working Group (KKG) to improve the quality of learning or solve problems in learning. School principals understand the importance of efforts to improve teacher performance and competency in various active activities, one of which is the KKG. As a result, the KKG plays a role in shaping teacher competence in order to improve the quality of education in schools.

The principal then develops a school policy for the distribution of teacher tasks, ensuring that both the teaching task load, the teacher's administrative burden, and other additional task loads are appropriate for the teacher's abilities.

It can be concluded that the strategy implemented by the Head of SD Negeri 19 Gelumbang is quite good; as stated by the Vice Curriculum, the Principal plays an important role in fostering friendly relationships among school members, and the principal is very concerned about teacher professionalism and the quality of school education. School principals should provide policies for the distribution of teacher assignments and additional assignments based on the teacher's ability to improve educational quality.

Furthermore, an interview with one of the senior teachers about the principal's strategy for improving educational quality revealed that the principal has provided enough comfortable workplaces, varied and complete learning tools and media,

cleanliness and beauty of the school, then provides opportunities for teachers to grow in increasing knowledge, improving teaching skills, and acquiring new skills, realizing and maintaining the comfort and safety of the teacher's work.

Furthermore, the Principal, according to the Head of TU SD Negeri 19, stated that providing incentives in school activities motivates TU teachers to work hard, fostering commitment to schools, and ultimately leading to an increase in educational quality. According to the teacher, improving educational quality entails providing adequate facilities for teachers and students to carry out teaching and learning activities, maintaining a clean and beautiful school environment, and providing incentives to teachers in school activities. The quality of education at SD Negeri 19 Gelumbang is influenced by providing comfort to school residents.

Aspects of Principal Support and Obstacles to Improving Education Quality

The teacher is a profession that prepares human resources to meet the nation's development in achieving independence. Today, there are a number of issues affecting the world of education that require the attention of all parties. Starting with the issue of educator quality that has not met the target and progressing to the issue of teacher welfare. As a result of being perceived as unbalanced, the principal is hesitant to make policy. Other considerations include the presence or absence of community and parental support. In the field, it is frequently discovered that the community and parents have not fully supported school programs, causing schools to underperform. In our educational environment, problems are far more complex.

The following are the findings of the author's interview with the head of SD Negeri 19 Gelumbang about the supports and barriers to improving education quality at SD Negeri 19 Gelumbang. He stated unequivocally that the work done was inextricably linked to obstacles or challenges, including improving educational quality. Obstacles in schools, such as inadequate infrastructure, are followed by factors within the teacher himself who are hesitant to develop their potential. Teachers must be more active and productive in responding to technological advancements. Concerning the supporting aspects, the government is very concerned about school activities; supporting books are provided; school members' discipline is sufficient to maintain school facilities; and the school environment is quite clean and beautiful.

Based on the findings of the interviews, it is possible to conclude that the obstacles that school principals face in improving educational quality are inadequate infrastructure and teacher self-development motivation, which is still relatively low. The availability of government assistance in the form of supporting books and the discipline of good school members are two of the supporting factors.

In addition, the author conducted an interview with the Deputy Principal about the supporting and inhibiting factors in SD Negeri 19 Gelumbang. According to the Deputy Headmaster, the supporting aspects of SD Negeri 19 Gelumbang are students who are disciplined in their learning and have a good enthusiasm for learning but require guidance, as well as the school's learning environment, which is quite beautiful and calm. However, in terms of obstacles, specifically inadequate infrastructure, there are still many teachers who lack the necessary competencies for their field of work. Some teachers teach subjects that do not correspond to their qualifications or educational background. Because they are so busy teaching, the teachers at SD Negeri 19 are still unmotivated to improve their skills.

The school environment at SD Negeri 19 Gelumbang is quite comfortable, and the students' enthusiasm for learning is high. On the contrary, the obstacles described are inadequate facilities and infrastructure, low teacher motivation to improve skills, and a large number of teachers who teach outside of their subject areas.

An interview with a senior teacher at SD Negeri 19 Gelumbang follows. The principal is quite fair in giving incentives to all TU teachers and staff, as well as awards to teachers or staff who excel, which is a positive aspect at this school. The work environment at school is also quite comfortable; the TU teachers and staff have a fairly good relationship; however, the teacher occasionally stutters with technology, which greatly hinders the teaching and learning process as well as administrative tasks. The teacher considers learning as well, so that his teaching abilities become monotonous. It is possible to conclude that the supporting aspects at SD Negeri 19 are the principal, who is fair in giving incentives and is interested in awarding TU staff who excel. According to him, the obstacle is the teacher's lack of motivation to learn, which causes difficulties in teaching and learning activities.

The role of human resources in the school is critical to an organization's success in achieving educational goals and realizing its vision and mission. Human resources also play a strategic role in adding value to organizations in order to gain a competitive advantage.

Aside from that, the success of schools in the process of providing education is primarily determined by the principal's efficiency and effectiveness in carrying out his leadership. The principal's role as a leader in the school is critical in efforts to move the ranks of teachers toward high work performance with leadership that is in sync with the work environment and mature coordination. Principals are expected to be able to include teachers in order to optimize the learning process. Quality formal education requires foresight and accuracy in identifying, formulating, packaging, and elaborating strategic policies and educational operational programs.

As a result, the management of educational activities in schools must also have good planning, effectively and efficiently organize human resources, deploy teachers and school personnel according to their fields so that their performance improves, and carry out continuous control and supervision (Offem, et. al., 2018). This means that school principals' managerial abilities and educational staff's professional services must be developed and optimized. As a result, schools, as frontline work units directly related to real needs in the field of education, it is time to have work autonomy in managing their schools.

It is hoped that under the leadership of a professional school principal, teachers will be able to present and develop themselves according to their potential, thereby improving the quality of education in their institutions. As a result, public trust in formal educational institutions is growing.

Furthermore, Bamburg, & Andrews, (1991) defines the principal's duties and responsibilities as managing the school, collecting, utilizing, and mobilizing all of the school's potential optimally to achieve goals. To perform this task as effectively as possible, the principal as an educational leader must possess three types of skills: technical skills, communication skills, and conceptual skills (Pepper, 2010).

Principals must be capable of planning school programs, implementing school work plans, supervising and evaluating schools, mobilizing and utilizing existing resources, motivating their subordinates, and becoming a source of information for their subordinates. The principal must play at least seven roles in the success of SBM, namely educator, manager, administrator, supervisor, leader, innovator, and motivator (Grissom, et. al., 2015).

The primary duties and functions of school principals have become increasingly complex since the implementation of SBM. This complexity can be seen in the many tasks and demands that must be met by the principal, including the principal as a leader, who must be able to influence and mobilize all of his subordinates to be willing and able to carry out their respective duties properly, so that the school goals can be met effectively, effectively, and efficiently. Not only that, but school principals must be able to perform administrative and managerial tasks, and in this era of autonomy, school principals face demands to improve student achievement in their role as educators. All of these are the duties and roles of the principal, and performing them requires skills. The imbalance between the number of tasks and demands made on the principal and the availability of working hours demonstrates the complexity of the principal's duties. Another factor that makes the principal's job more difficult is the difficulty of delegating his duties due to the low quality of teachers, as well as the lack of guidance to the principal, which makes it difficult for the principal to carry out his duties.

Based on the findings of interviews with the Principal, Deputy Principal, and Senior Teachers of SD Negeri 19 Gelumbang regarding strategies to improve educational quality, it can be stated that things are going well. This is evident from researcher observations, interviews, and authentic evidence that schools exist. The principal's annual program documents and direct observations of researchers demonstrate that he has adequately carried out his duties and responsibilities. However, some challenges remain in its implementation. This discussion is guided by a research question about the principal's strategy for improving educational quality at SD Negeri 19 Gerlumbang.

There must be dynamics in carrying out their duties and responsibilities as educators who act as professional learning agents as an educational institution under the auspices of the Banyuasin District education office. Guidelines for teachers in carrying out their duties and responsibilities are reflected in Law Number: 20 of 2003, Republic of Indonesia Law Number 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers, and Republic of Indonesia Government Regulation Number 19 of 2005 concerning National Education Standards, which state that teachers are professional educators. As a result, teachers must be more empowered to welcome changes in the educational paradigm from teaching to the learning process.

Various efforts must be considered and implemented in order to improve educational quality, specifically by improving the teaching and learning process, which is heavily reliant on the professionalism of teachers as human resources. Teachers must have a variety of skills in order to help students achieve their goals. In accordance with the various demands made for each teacher, as well as the various academic requirements for a teacher, its existence is highly anticipated to provide learning based on competencies that must be possessed, as well as the demands for the development of the child's abilities and psyche. Teachers must be competent in three areas: pedagogical competence, personality competence, social competence, and professional competence, which is demonstrated through the process of achieving quality education based on the Minimum Completeness Criterion.

As the person in charge of administrative and technical management of learning, the school principal is expected to be able to act in an effort to develop teacher competence by providing learning support facilities and infrastructure, providing fairness of learning hours to teachers, empowering teacher competence through forms of appreciation such as providing opportunities for teacher certification, professional education and training, and giving incentives based on performance.

The Principal of SD Negeri 19 has the necessary communication skills to ensure that what is desired is followed correctly and on purpose. Finally, the heavy tasks and responsibilities that are carried out by the principal can be appropriately delegated to

the teacher, which means that the teacher can carry out the task according to his abilities and what we expect.

Furthermore, the findings of observations, interviews, and authentic evidence regarding aspects that support and hinder the principal in improving the quality of education at SD Negeri 19 Gelumbang. As we all know, the principal is directly responsible for the implementation of the school's educational program. The skills and policies of the school principal, as one of the educational leaders, are critical to the achievement of educational goals.

SD Negeri 19 Gelumbang has several supporting aspects that contribute to the school's strengths. According to the results of observations and interviews with the school, the supporting aspects of SD Negeri 19 Palembang are a large and beautiful school environment, which allows the learning process to run smoothly, high student enthusiasm for school and learning, as evidenced by good class attendance, family relationships with fellow teachers and TU staff that run harmoniously as evidenced by their attitudes and behavior while at school, and the principal's behavior, which is quintessential.

Furthermore, the main obstacles at SD Negeri 19 Gelumbang are the level of quality and competence of teachers, ranging from teachers who do not have the appropriate competence to pursue certain subjects to the teachers' own lack of professionalism. Then there are some teachers who are less motivated to develop their own professionalism or continuously update their knowledge. Many teachers become engrossed in their daily teaching routines and other activities. According to the author's observations, the main issue in every school is teacher salaries. To meet the rising demand, some teachers are looking for part-time work. If this issue can be resolved, teachers will be able to thrive and devote more time to learning about the teaching profession.

D. Conclusion

The principal's strategy for improving the quality of education at SD Negeri 19 Gelumbang includes empowering teachers' competencies, involving teachers in Teacher Working Groups and Subject Teacher Consultations, providing media and complete learning resource centers, working together to develop learning models, attempting to foster good cooperation with teachers and staff, and improving teachers' discipline, including requiring teachers to participate in every school. The teacher's administrative burden, as well as other additional task loads, must be adjusted to the teacher's abilities. The school environment at SD Negeri 19 Gelumbang is supportive of teaching and learning activities. The main source of strength is students' eagerness to learn. Close family relationships among students are also practiced in the school environment; in terms of challenges, SD Negeri 19 Gelumbang

struggles with inadequate infrastructure, and some teachers continue to have low competence.

E. Acknowledgement

Thanks to the respondents, principal of SD Negeri 19 Gelumbang, Rector of Universitas PGRI Palembang and all friends who have helped us in this valuable project.

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