# Education Quality Management: Communication Management and the Principal Strategy in Improving the Quality of Education at SMPN Medan

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## Abstrak

Ketika ingin meningkatkan standar pembelajaran siswa, dua variabel terpenting adalah manajemen komunikasi yang efektif dan taktik yang digunakan oleh para pemimpin sekolah. Teknik deskriptif digunakan dalam penelitian ini, yang bersifat kualitatif. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara, studi dokumenter, dan observasi. Hasil penelitian ini menujukkan, pertama, kepala sekolah membuat semua orang tetap dalam lingkaran ketika datang ke strategi dan rencana manajemen peningkatan kualitas. Kedua, kepala sekolah memastikan bahwa guru memiliki banyak kesempatan untuk berpartisipasi dalam perencanaan mutu, bekerja dengan komite untuk membuat anggaran sekolah, menjadi pendidik yang lebih kompeten, mengikuti kurikulum, dan mendapatkan bantuan dan saran ketika mereka membutuhkannya. Ketiga, pendekatan kepala sekolah untuk peningkatan kualitas adalah untuk membimbing pembelajaran dan pengajaran sekolah melalui penggunaan strategi kelompok dan individu. Terakhir, kepala sekolah mengarahkan dan mengendalikan sekolah dengan menetapkan kebijakan, tujuan, rencana, dan prosedur mutu, dan memastikan keberhasilan yang berkelanjutan. Kepuasan pemangku kepentingan dan kualitas pendidikan yang terus meningkat adalah tujuan akhir dari manajemen mutu, yang berupaya menjamin kesesuaian proses dan produk.

**Kata Kunci:** Manajemen Mutu Pendidikan; Manajemen Komunikasi; Strategi Kepala Sekolah

## Abstract

When it comes to raising the bar for student learning, the two most important variables are influential communication management and the tactics used by school leaders. A qualitative descriptive technique is used in this study. Data is gathered via interviews, documentary studies, and observation. First, the principal kept everyone in the loop regarding quality improvement management strategies and plans. Second, the principal ensured that teachers had plenty of chances to participate in quality planning, work with committees to create school budgets, become more competent educators, follow the curriculum, and get help and advice when needed. Third, the principal's approach to quality improvement guided the school's learning and teaching through group and individual strategies. Lastly, the principal directed and controlled the school by setting quality policies, objectives, plans, and procedures and ensuring their ongoing success. Stakeholder satisfaction and ever-improving educational quality are the end goals of quality management, which seeks to guarantee process and product conformance.

**Keyword:** Education Quality Management; Communication Management; Principal Strategy.

## 1. Introduction

Strategy is an overall approach to implementing ideas, planning, and activities within a specific time. Strategies include several: teamwork, theme, identification of supporting factors according to the principles of rational implementation of ideas, efficiency in funding (budgeting), and having tactics to achieve targets and objectives effectively. The strategy concept supports activities appropriately implemented for the company's future progress. The preparation of this concept is needed to maintain competitiveness with other companies through performance performance, service innovation, and company excellence (Azizah *et al.*, 2010).

As the vanguard in encouraging activities and setting school goals, school leaders always make important decisions that significantly impact the schools that follow them (Alfiyanto *et al.*, 2022). Therefore, it is essential to study, design, and develop the presence of school principals to meet the community's expectations by creating quality educational institutions. The principal is a staff member responsible for running the school, hoping to influence and guide his subordinates and be a good role model for others (Mariam & Nurachadijat, 2023).

Professionally, the administrator oversees the school's resources and works closely with instructors to help students reach their academic potential. (Abdullah, 2018; Alfiyanto *et al.*, 2021). With the professional skills possessed by the principal, it will be easy to develop the professional skills of his teaching staff because, according to his mission, the principal understands the needs of the school he manages so that teacher qualifications are not limited to his abilities (Darmadi, 2018). Skills alone before, but grow and develop sufficiently so that teacher professionalism is realized (Alfiyanto & Hidayati, 2022).

Being a school principal is a leadership position, which is a unique position because the leader of an organization is required to have different advantages in terms of knowledge, behavior, attitudes, and skills compared to others (Utaminingsih, 2014). In general, humans have certain advantages, but they also have certain disadvantages. The ideal leadership figure is highly sought after in society because the leader is the best example in all words, actions, and habits, including dressing (Sutikno, 2021).

One definition of a *principal* is a professional educator who oversees the daily operations of a school as a whole, including the classrooms where students and instructors work together to acquire knowledge. A school's capacity to mobilize all of its resources to accomplish its objectives is shown by the formulation's term "lead," which has a broad connotation.

As educational institutions, schools organize the academic, teaching, and learning processes to educate the nation's life (Gazali, 2013). In this context, the role of the principal is to oversee the daily operations of the school and be responsible for achieving the school's goals. Management is an activity to achieve goals or objectives determined in advance by using others. Inferred from this concept are the following four components of management: goal-setting, leadership, followership, and collaboration. (Arifin, 2022; Kadarsih *et al.*, 2020).

Management can be interpreted as managing or organizing something to achieve specific goals (Suawa *et al.*, 2021). On the contrary, education management can be explained as business and management efforts applied in education, including teaching, development, business management, and practice to achieve educational goals effectively and efficiently (Usman, 2019). *Education management* is also defined as a collaborative process carried out systematically, systematically, structurally, and thoroughly to achieve national education goals, both short-, medium---, and long-term (Muflihah & Haqiqi, 2019).

Implementing education quality management in schools or madrasahs has gone poorly (Suranto *et al.*, 2022). The cause of not achieving good education quality management is because the program is not good or inappropriate, the program is not implemented correctly, or the prerequisites have not been appropriately met (Muflihah & Haqiqi, 2019). In the National Education System Law No. 20 of 2003, it is stated that education is a conscious and planned effort to create a learning atmosphere so that students actively develop their potential to have religious, spiritual strength, self-control,

personality, intelligence, social attitudes, and skills needed by themselves, society, nation and state (Law on National Education and Education, 2003).

Based on empirical observations made at SMPN Medan, the study's subject, the biggest obstacles to student learning progress were lack of prioritization of skills, value-oriented thinking, low enthusiasm for learning, and poor mindset of parents attitudes in learning. Indifference to their children's achievements and inadequate learning opportunities. This requires school leaders to pay special attention to finding solutions that encourage students and parents to provide and use learning opportunities as needed.

The principal's ability to carry out his responsibilities is affected by several elements, such as the level of involvement from the school community and the assistance from various sources. The principal will have much less work if the community and teachers work together to raise the bar on education at the school. However, teachers' quality still needs to improve in practice improvement, so principals can only sometimes rely on them to do assigned tasks (Anwar, 2012; Kemala & Ulum, 2023). Furthermore, there still needs to be more community involvement in enhancing the standard of education in schools. As a result, the principal must act autonomously in carrying out his responsibilities.

Additionally, the headmaster needs government assistance through coaching and material support to fulfill his obligations. Even though the administrator is pivotal in a school's performance, the government prioritizes supporting teachers. School administrators have a more difficult job because of this government's lack of support (Ismiatun *et al.*, 2023).

What makes a school good at educating its students is how well it uses its resources to help students learn (Nandia, 2024). According to this point of view, for a school to be considered high-quality, it must use its instructional resources efficiently (Na'im *et al.*, 2022). Education policymakers will never stop debating how to raise the bar on classroom instruction. If we want our education system to meet the standards for quality and relevance that society has come to demand, we must never stop working to improve it. Management education is critical for the successful launch of any firm. Organizations that practice the heresy of goods management require competent leadership. Unlike organizations that manage things, educational institutions manage people and strive to produce excellent people.

Within national education policy, a new paradigm in madrasah management or school quality improvement grants extensive authority to the madrasah level (Community Engagement) (Pasaribu, 2017). Providing madrasahs with autonomy allows them to better respond to local needs by managing their resources and funding sources and assigning them based on priority (Santoso, 2023). Involving the community will help them better understand, help, and control education management. Involving the community is included in quality improvement management in educational institutions because it can approach the surrounding community so that programs or activities carried out by institutions or madrasahs can be accepted and supported by the surrounding community (Pito, 2018).

There must be criteria or indicators to evaluate the quality of education. Sallis found that schools had a lot of solid quality indicators. First and foremost, a school that upholds solid moral principles has excellent test scores, has the backing of local businesses and families, has an abundance of resources, uses cutting-edge technology, has solid and purposeful leadership, cares deeply about its students, has a balanced and demanding curriculum, and so on (Sallis, 2006). This point of view lays forth the criteria that an excellent school must have: one, strong moral principles; two, stellar academic performance; three, encouragement from family, friends, and neighbors; four, ample supplies of materials; five, cutting-edge tech integration; six, visionary leadership; seven, a focus on each student's individual needs; and eight, a well-rounded and current course of study (Sutikno, 2021).

Thus, based on initial observations and interviews that researchers have conducted, researchers found data that in SMPN Medan, there needs to be a better quality of education. Researchers stated that this was because educators could not create an active and creative learning atmosphere for students at SMPN Medan during the learning process. The lessons given by the teacher in the classroom are only limited to theoretical material without practice to further hone students'

knowledge and creative value. The provision of such material causes classroom learning to be monotonous and boring for students at SMPN Medan.

## 2. Research Methods

Qualitative descriptive research was used in this study. By detailing what took place, descriptive qualitative research sheds light on study-related events, facts, phenomena, factors, and contexts (Sugiyono, 2019). The qualitative paradigm believes that in society, there is order. Regularity is formed naturally. Therefore, the research task is to find that order is formed instead of creating or creating its boundaries based on existing theories. On that basis, qualitative research is a systematic activity that seeks to find theories from the scene, not test theories or hypotheses. Therefore, researchers are expected to go directly into the field. There are several reasons why qualitative research needs to be applied to research the principal's strategy for improving education quality management in SMPN Medan. Namely, this research data is obtained directly based on in-depth observation, direct interviews, and documentation studies that support the research in getting accurate data, and researchers are directly involved in this study. Data accuracy is more guaranteed. After all, it is directly obtained from informants without interference from the researcher and a very close emotional connection with the subject under study because it demands the full participation of the researcher.

## 3. Results and Discussion

Organization and management of staff, buildings, and financial resources are a school principal's fundamental responsibilities in their role as a leader in achieving the school's objectives. The ability to effectively manage people and possess the necessary qualifications are essential for the Director's role as a supervisor. This skill is invaluable When managing the school's human resources (Saroni, 2016). The principal is trusted and empowered by many people (subordinates) to lead the school towards achieving goals. The trust of subordinates is based on several aspects of the principle and is expected to be a capital for mutual success (Rianae *et al.*, 2020). The principal is a leadership position that can only be filled with thinking. The person appointed as Director must be determined through specific procedures (Sumidjo, 2012). As leaders, school principals have a dominant influence in improving the quality of learning outcomes and are responsible for the success of the schools they manage in achieving educational goals (Hamid *et al.*, 2024).

The principal's strategy for education quality management is to hold books together with teacher guidelines; teachers understand and describe educational objectives which include general, instructional, curricular, and specific objectives; teachers develop curricular programs and other additional activities, including various annual programs; teachers develop learning tools and media, compile schedules and distribution of tasks, develop learning evaluation systems,  supervise teaching and learning activities, compile norms for class increases, and develop libraries as science and place of learning (Nasution *et al.*, 2023).

Principals are pivotal in determining whether or not educational quality improves, making them an essential player in this effort. Work in school administration and work connected to educational professional development make up most of a principal's responsibilities. According to the general public, the quality of schools is often reflected in the size of luxurious buildings. Some argue that the quality of a school is reflected in the number of admissions to the next level of education. To understand the quality of formal education in schools, it is necessary to see how it occurs as a system. In addition, the system's quality depends on the quality of the components that make up the system and the processes that produce results.

In implementing quality improvement management, the principal must always understand the school as an organizational system. Principals build human resources through personnel management (Suwardi & Samino, 2014). In general, Slamet explained the characteristics of authoritarian principals, namely:

1)  Have the ability to make decisions, mobilize existing resources, tolerate differences, and
2)  The ability to resist the enemies of the principal, namely indifference, doubt, lack of judgment, mediocrity, mimicry, arrogance, arrogance, rigidity and ambivalence, converges in attitude and action.
3)  You have the foresight, know what actions must be taken, and fully understand the methods used.
4)  You can coordinate and align all available limited resources.
5)  In improving education quality management, school principals include their roles as educators, leaders, managers, supervisors, leaders, reformers and motivators (Muflihah & Haqiqi, 2019).

The interview with SMPN Medan's principal revealed that, among other things, the principal works hard to ensure that the school's physical facilities are up to par with the instruction demands. This ensures that the school's instructional programs support students' learning objectives and provide them with high-quality education. Academic and non-academic outcomes may be used to gauge education quality, guiding educators and their students. By making classroom visits, the headmaster guides both instructors and pupils. Teacher professionalism will be enhanced by the class visit, which will reveal the areas where students and instructors face difficulties in the classroom learning process.

According to this interview with the principal of SMPN Medan, we need to be careful with the facts when we intend to execute the school's vision and purpose if we want to raise the bar on teaching here. The school's vision is a reference used as a common goal of the school community. In contrast, the school's mission is an overview containing several directions to implement the school's vision according to the goals of national education. The task is a description of the goals to be achieved within a specific time and is used as the main program of the school.

"In preparing the vision and mission, of course, we are guided by the Regulation of the Minister of Education Number 19 of 2007 concerning Education Management Standards. We also manage strategically to develop the school's vision and mission. We involved all school interest groups because, to formulate the vision and mission of the school, we held a learning board meeting, where I, as the school director, chaired the meeting, and all stakeholders participated. We analyzed the school using a SWOT analysis (strengths), *weaknesses*, *opportunities*, and *threats*). Based on the SWOT analysis, we formulate the vision and mission of the school so that the design results are by the community's wishes and are approved by all school stakeholders (interview with the principal).

The Director manages the school not only in a static sense but also exerts all potentials directly or indirectly related to the benefits of the learning process. All school communities require leadership and direction from school principals to create effective learning (Sudarwan & Suparno, 2009). To improve the quality of teaching, school leaders first start with teaching staff, involve teachers in training, education, and public seminars, such as seminars on improving the quality of student learning, collaborate with other educational institutions, be it private or informing, work professionally, divide tasks clearly and transparently."

The principal plays a vital role in improving the quality of education, and his duties are to organize educational activities, manage schools, develop teaching staff, and use and maintain facilities and infrastructure. As a vision of the role of the school director, the Director has challenges on how to carry out education in schools in a directed, planned, and sustainable manner, make guidelines, and conceptualize the quality of teaching in the implementation of the vision and mission, goals and objectives of the school so that the school can function optimally according to the program that has been set.

In interviews with teachers, it was also confirmed that the teachers who take care of the field of study are all by their professional paths. The principal also always empowers teachers by providing opportunities for teachers to participate in training. School principals also give teachers broader authority in teaching classes. The most important key to quality improvement is the teacher. Good education must be supported by teachers with the ability, loyalty, integrity, and responsibility to carry out their duties. School leaders must commit to developing, improving, and maintaining teacher professionalism through regular supervision. At the same time, the Director also analyses the suitability of student learning outcomes with the school vision and goals, student needs, and further education needs. He directs teachers to adjust learning: programs and learning. The achievement of this vision and various variables of students with the needs of postgraduate studies adapt to social life and various rapid changes. Education quality management has three essential terms that must be understood: quality assurance, quality control, and quality improvement.

1) Education Quality Assurance

Quality assurance is all planned and systematic activities in the quality system. Quality assurance as part of a quality system is a quality improvement based on prevention and problem-solving. Quality assurance aims to ensure production produces products that meet predetermined requirements. Quality assurance is a way to make products that are free from defects. The education quality assurance system is not the same (or there are others) as the quality of education itself. The quality of education is precisely the best form created by the optimal learning process of educational units. Quality education focuses on the quality of a person created according to expectations. Meanwhile, the education quality assurance system is a management cycle for implementing education, which includes measuring, evaluating, and controlling the quality of academic and non-academic practices and traditions of educational units. *Quality Assurance* aims to improve quality because quality assurance measures the degree of service perfection compared to standards and systematic and continuous improvement actions to achieve optimal service quality by existing standards and resources.

2) Quality Control

Control is a broad term for people, situations, objects, and organizations. In organizations, control involves various planning and control processes. The most important part of this process is management control, that is, actions to direct people, machines, and activities to achieve organizational goals and objectives. Several important terms are used in the discussion of management control (Anthony, Dearden, and Bedford, translated by Agus Maulana), as follows.
a) Organization
b) Strategy
c) Policy
d) Programming
e) Strategy control
f) Organizational control
g) Management control
h) Management control system.

The fundamental principle of every control process is to guide a variable or group of variables to accomplish an objective. Humans, machines, or organizations may all constitute this variable. People are only a variable in an organization's equation; to get things done, they need to be inspired, mentored, and directed.. The people who do the briefing are called management. While management performs its other functions, management control runs in the organization. The control system in the organization directs and guides the organization to the desired goals. This is done by gathering information about the actual state of the organization, comparing it to the desired state, and initiating actions to change the organization's performance. Different systems require different actions.

Control systems are intended for certain parts of an organization, are automated, orderly, repeated at any time, and grouped into task control systems.

3)   Quality Improvement

Identifying service indicators, monitoring them, and measuring the results of quality indicators that lead to outcomes is all part of quality improvement. With a constant focus on quality, you can improve the process and achieve higher-quality results. Quality improvement is carried out by starting with quality assurance (quality assurance) and then with proactive quality improvement. Thus, low quality can be improved by making improvements proactively and continuously. According to Usman, quality improvement is an activity to improve quality to be by standards by making inputs, processes, and outcomes even better.

4)   Education Quality Assurance System

A quality assurance system (SPM) is the process of determining and fulfilling quality management standards consistently and continuously so that the organization fulfils its ideals and stakeholders get satisfaction. SPM is good governance, accountability and quality improvement consisting of planned and systematic steps to meet customer expectations for services and products/services provided. With the Quality Assurance System, a quality culture will grow, establish and own standards, implement standards, evaluate the implementation of standards, and Continuous *Quality Improvement*. The Education Quality Assurance System (SPMP) in Permendiknas Number 63 of 2009 is a subsystem of the National Education System whose main function is to improve education quality. Implementing a quality assurance system in education quality management is expected to narrow the quality gap between various regions. Educational institutions as service or service institutions must provide quality assurance to their external customers, namely the community, the business world, and the industrial world. Historically, schools are modern educational institutions developed to assist families and communities in meeting educational needs. Schools are expected to provide educational services that families and communities cannot afford. Assessment of feasibility and performance carried out continuously to improve school quality cannot be separated from management, especially school quality management. All management functions performed by school education managers are geared towards satisfying customers. All of this is done so that education providers can guarantee to their customers that the education they hold is of a high quality.

## 4.   Conclusion

The strategy carried out by the principal at SMPN Medan to improve education quality management is to plan quality improvement management by involving all school staff, the Director provides opportunities for teachers to do quality planning, the Director collaborates with the committee in preparing school budgets, the principal's quality improvement strategy is that teacher educators must be qualified, learn according to the curriculum, help and advise teachers,  As well as passing the examination when accepting students, the principal's strategy in directing quality improvement is to direct teaching in schools with group techniques and techniques for individual quality improvement activities, management efforts to direct and control an organization/institution in setting quality policies, targets, plans and processes/procedures and their continuous achievement (continuous improvement). Stakeholder satisfaction and the steady enhancement of educational quality are the end goals of quality management, which seeks to guarantee process and product compliance. These initiatives to raise the bar on education quality are not aimed at achieving it simultaneously but at enhancing it piece by piece. Educators, leaders, administrators, supervisors, managers, innovators, and motivators can benefit from better school infrastructure, higher academic and extracurricular student achievement, and higher scores on the National Examination (UN) and the School Examination (US). Strategies are complex, so the principal must thoroughly monitor and

evaluate the vision, mission, and programs implemented. This will help you design and analyze future programs to be more optimal. On the other hand, the principal, as the primary leader, continuously evaluates the activities of teachers, staff, and the school environment to attract the community's attention.

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