



## The School Principal's Management Strategies for Improving Students' Academic Achievement

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### ABSTRACT

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This research was conducted at SMAN 1 Tanjungbalai, the type of research carried out was qualitative research methods. This research approach uses a descriptive approach. The subjects in this study were principals, teachers/employees, and students. In collecting data, researchers used observation, interview, and documentation methods, while data analysis was carried out by means of data reduction, data presentation, and triangulation. This study aims to find out how the planning, organizing, implementation, and supervision are carried out by school principals and to find out how the process of implementing and evaluating school principals in improving student achievement at SMAN 1 Tanjungbalai. The results of the research carried out are: the management function carried out by the principal is to use planning, organizing, implementing, and supervising. Furthermore, the strategy carried out by the principal is to plan programs for students starting from the lesson plans and extracurricular activities, while for teachers to make guided activities and guidance. In the process of implementation, the principal determines school policies, motivates educators and staff performance personnel, allocates human resources, and develops a culture of local school wisdom. Then in the evaluation process the principal monitors all the results of activities that have been carried out from the predetermined plans, measures individual and school performance, takes corrective steps. The strategy also contributed to strengthening the values of Islamic Religious Education

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## INTRODUCTION

Schools are educational institutions that organize the teaching and learning process as an effort to educate students and promote their intellectual and personal development (Muslimin & Kartiko, 2020). Behind this process, the school principal plays a crucial role as the person responsible for ensuring the achievement of the school's educational goals (Zulaikhah et al., 2020). The school principal is an educational leader at the operational level who is primarily

responsible for managing efforts to improve the quality of education. Although the principal is not the sole determinant of a school's effectiveness, as many other factors also influence educational outcomes, the principal's role remains highly significant (Najmi et al., 2021). As the driving force behind school policies, the principal determines how educational objectives and institutional goals can be effectively realized to achieve the desired quality of education (Ikramullah & Sirojuddin, 2020). Furthermore, school principals are expected to demonstrate democratic leadership by maintaining close relationships with the school community, exercising strong authority to guide and supervise staff effectively, fostering a family-oriented leadership approach, and embracing all members of the school community (Karim et al., 2021).

School principals are expected to serve as leaders, innovators, and motivators within their schools. Therefore, the quality of school leadership has a significant influence on the overall success of the institution. In addition, principals must possess the ability to empower existing human resources to achieve the school's goals. A strong and collaborative relationship between principals and teachers is also essential, as principals are expected to enhance teachers' performance through effective human resource empowerment. Within the educational process, students are regarded as active subjects who develop through meaningful learning experiences (Azizah & Apdila, 2021; Fathih et al., 2021; Arif, 2018).

Teachers play a greater role as facilitators and motivators who encourage students and provide meaningful learning experiences. In their instructional role, teachers are also responsible for managing the classroom by creating a conducive learning environment in which the teaching and learning process can take place effectively. Classroom management is therefore one of the teachers' primary responsibilities, making them the key managers of the learning process within their respective classrooms (Kholili & Rokhman, 2021; Khosyi'in, 2021). Many expectations regarding students' academic achievement remain unmet, which may contribute to high levels of anxiety. Such conditions may also lead to a decline in students' intellectual abilities as well as their interests and talents (Kango et al., 2021). Given the strategic nature of their roles and responsibilities, school principals are expected to demonstrate a high level of creativity in transforming ideas and innovative thinking into practices that inspire both teachers and students (Arif & Sulistianah, 2019). To improve the quality of educational institutions, school principals must formulate and implement appropriate strategies aimed at enhancing educational quality, both in terms of teacher performance and students' academic achievement (Ilmanto et al., 2021).

Based on the researcher's empirical observations at SMAN 1 Tanjungbalai, which served as the research site, students were found to exhibit high learning motivation and outstanding achievements in both academic and non-academic fields. These accomplishments are supported by the school principal's management strategies and the active role of teachers in fostering students' success.

Although the implementation of educational programs continues to face several challenges that contribute to fluctuations in students' academic achievement, both teachers and the school principal remain committed to improving learning outcomes. One of the principal's key strategies is to consistently monitor the programs implemented by school staff and teachers while conducting regular evaluations to assess changes in students' academic achievement and determine whether the planned programs have been successfully implemented. These evaluation activities facilitate the learning process and help ensure that students achieve optimal academic performance. In addition to overseeing classroom instruction, the principal also pays close attention to extracurricular activities as a means of developing students' interests and talents, thereby supporting their holistic development.

From the perspective of Islamic Religious Education, the success of education is not merely measured by students' academic achievement but also by the development of individuals who possess faith (*iman*), piety (*taqwa*), noble character (*akhlaq al-karimah*), and the ability to develop their potential optimally. This objective is in line with the goals of Indonesia's national education system, which recognizes character development as an integral component of the educational process. Therefore, the principal's management strategy plays a crucial role in creating an educational environment that integrates academic excellence with the cultivation of students' religious character.

In the perspective of Islamic Religious Education, principal management is understood not only as a process of planning, organizing, implementing, and supervising but also as a form of leadership stewardship (*amanah*) that should be carried out based on the principles of justice (*'adl*), consultation (*shūrā*), responsibility, and exemplary leadership (*uswah hasanah*), as emphasized in Islamic teachings. Accordingly, the principal's management strategy is expected not only to improve students' academic achievement but also to foster the development of a religious school culture that supports students' holistic growth.

Despite these positive efforts, several expectations remain unmet, potentially contributing to concerns regarding the quality of the educational process. Some teachers have not consistently fulfilled their professional responsibilities as educators in accordance with the management strategies established by the school principal. This situation highlights the need for continuous professional development and capacity-building programs to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Considering these conditions, the researcher was motivated to conduct a study entitled "**The School Principal's Management Strategies for Improving Students' Academic Achievement at SMAN 1 Tanjungbalai.**"

## METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design. Descriptive qualitative research aims to provide a comprehensive description of events, facts, phenomena, conditions, variables, and situations occurring during

the research process as they naturally exist. Research is generally defined as a systematic, organized, critical, data-driven, objective, and scientific activity conducted to obtain answers to research questions or to develop a deeper understanding of a particular problem.

Regarding qualitative research, Creswell (2012) defines it as an approach to exploring and understanding a central phenomenon. To gain a thorough understanding of the phenomenon, researchers collect data by interviewing research participants using broad and open-ended questions. The information provided by the participants is then compiled and organized, typically in the form of words or textual data. These qualitative data are subsequently analyzed to generate descriptions or identify emerging themes. Based on the findings, the researcher interprets the data to uncover their underlying meanings. This interpretive process is followed by critical self-reflection and the integration of the findings with relevant previous studies. Finally, the results of the qualitative research are presented in the form of a written research report.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Result

#### **The School Principal's Management Strategies for Improving Students' Academic Achievement**

The school principal plays a pivotal role in formulating and implementing management strategies to achieve the school's educational objectives. These strategies encompass planning, organizing, implementation, and supervision, while fostering effective communication and collaboration between school leaders and staff. At SMAN 1 Tanjungbalai, the school principal, Mr. Yogi Santoso, who has served in the position for the past three years, demonstrates firm, intelligent, and prudent leadership in managing the school.

As the leader of the educational institution, the school principal is expected to work effectively to maximize the school's available resources and potential. Serving as a school principal requires comprehensive managerial competence, as the position involves not only understanding educational management but also conducting continuous monitoring to ensure that all planned programs and activities are implemented effectively. Without proper management and supervision, the school may face significant challenges in achieving its educational goals. One of the principal managerial responsibilities is planning, which constitutes a fundamental function of educational management. To facilitate this process, the school principal collaborates with teachers and administrative staff in developing and implementing strategic plans. These plans are documented in written form to provide clear guidance for program implementation, enabling both the school principal and other school personnel to understand their respective responsibilities and ensure that the planned activities are carried out systematically and effectively (Mulyasa, 2003).

Furthermore, in implementing the school principal's management strategies for improving students' academic achievement, the principal assumes

substantial responsibility for ensuring the effective implementation of the school's programs and activities.

Based on an interview with the school principal, Mr. Yogi Santoso, regarding his role at SMAN 1 Tanjungbalai, he stated:

*"As the school principal, my role is to further develop the school's vision, mission, and objectives. I also focus on strengthening religious education, improving the quality of education, and enhancing extracurricular programs at SMAN 1 Tanjungbalai. Since assuming this position, I have initiated several changes and improvements to the school's existing systems and practices in order to support its continued development."*

The interview findings indicate that one of the school principal's primary roles upon assuming office was to introduce strategic changes and continuous improvements following the previous principal's tenure. These initiatives were intended to ensure that SMAN 1 Tanjungbalai maintains its position as one of the leading schools in the region.

To obtain additional perspectives, the researcher also interviewed the Vice Principal for Curriculum, who commented on the school principal's leadership as follows:

*"As the Vice Principal for Curriculum, I have observed that the school principal has implemented the school's work programs effectively. He demonstrates firm, wise, and professional leadership while continuously guiding teachers and students in carrying out their respective responsibilities."*

The interview with the Vice Principal for Curriculum indicated that the school principal had implemented the school's work programs effectively and carried out his responsibilities in a professional manner. In addition to improving students' academic achievement, the school principal initiated changes in the school's culture and implemented strategic programs aimed at encouraging teachers and staff to perform their duties more professionally.

To gain a more comprehensive understanding of the school principal's role and the implementation of these management strategies, the researcher also interviewed one of the students at SMAN 1 Tanjungbalai, who stated:

*"The school principal is very firm, wise, and disciplined. Alhamdulillah, under his leadership, the school places greater emphasis on religious values, which have become more prominent in our daily school activities. The school facilities have also been improved, and extracurricular as well as other school activities are now more active and well organized."*

#### **Monitoring Teachers' Performance.**

Teachers are the primary focus of the school principal's monitoring activities. As part of this process, teachers are required to submit monthly reports in the form of classroom records and instructional reports. These reports serve as the basis for joint evaluation meetings involving the school principal and teachers to identify areas for improvement and enhance the effectiveness of teaching and learning programs implemented in the classroom.

#### **Monitoring the Performance of Administrative Staff.**

The school principal also monitors the performance of administrative



personnel, including financial and administrative staff. For example, the school treasurer is responsible for preparing periodic financial reports detailing all income and expenditures. Likewise, administrative staff are required to maintain reports on incoming and outgoing correspondence as well as other official records and archives to ensure effective school administration.

### **Monitoring Students' Activities.**

Another important management strategy involves supervising students' activities to ensure that they are carried out in accordance with the guidance provided by the appointed supervisors. These activities include congregational prayers, arts and cultural programs, the weekly flag-raising ceremony held every Monday, and other school programs. Following these activities, the supervisors evaluate their implementation and provide feedback to improve future student activities.

### **Monitoring Students' Academic Achievement.**

To improve students' academic achievement, the school principal continuously monitors the implementation of academic programs designed to support students' learning outcomes. These programs include daily assessments, mid-semester examinations, and final school examinations. Monitoring the implementation and outcomes of these assessments enables the school principal to evaluate the effectiveness of educational programs and identify opportunities for continuous improvement in students' academic performance.

To further examine the implementation of the school principal's management strategies for improving students' academic achievement, the researcher interviewed the Vice Principal for Curriculum regarding the effectiveness of these strategies at SMAN 1 Tanjungbalai. The Vice Principal stated:

*"As the Vice Principal for Curriculum, I have observed that the management strategies implemented by the school principal have been highly effective. These strategies have brought about positive changes among students, such as improved attendance and the practice of praying together before classroom instruction begins. In addition, teachers have received continuous guidance and motivation, enabling both teachers and administrative staff to carry out their responsibilities and implement school programs effectively."*

The interview findings indicate that the implementation of the school principal's management strategies has contributed to observable improvements in students' learning motivation, talents, and classroom participation. To gain a broader perspective, the researcher also interviewed one of the students regarding the impact of these strategies on students' academic achievement.

The student commented:

*"As a student, I believe that the school principal has made significant efforts to improve students' academic achievement. Since the current principal assumed leadership, I have felt more proud to be part of this school because many positive changes have taken place. For example, the school now recognizes students' accomplishments through an award"*

*system, which did not exist previously. Moreover, whenever the school faces challenges, the principal addresses them wisely. I remember a serious incident involving a student, and the principal handled the situation with great wisdom by emphasizing that the school also shared responsibility for providing proper guidance and education to its students."*

Based on the interview findings, it can be concluded that the school principal's management strategies have contributed positively to improving students' academic achievement by creating a learning environment that supports the development of students' interests, talents, and academic potential. Furthermore, these strategies have strengthened teachers' and administrative staff's professionalism, enabling them to perform their responsibilities more effectively and ensuring that school programs are implemented successfully.

### **Implementation of the School Principal's Management Strategies for Improving Students' Academic Achievement**

The implementation of the school principal's management strategies for improving students' academic achievement at SMAN 1 Tanjungbalai represents the execution of strategic plans that had previously been formulated. Therefore, the implementation process must be aligned with the established plans, as effective implementation is one of the key determinants of achieving the school's educational objectives. The implementation of these management strategies includes the following aspects.

#### **School Policies.**

School policies consist of rules, values, and regulations that guide the implementation of educational activities. These policies are established by both the school and the government and include the implementation of the 2013 Curriculum (\*Kurikulum 2013\*), the promotion of religious values, the integration of character education, and professional development programs designed to enhance teachers' competencies.

#### **Allocation of Human Resources.**

An effective teaching and learning process requires the appropriate allocation of human resources according to their respective roles and responsibilities. This allocation is intended to support the improvement of students' academic achievement by ensuring that teachers, students, administrative staff, and the school principal contribute effectively to the educational process.

#### **Development of School Culture.**

Every school develops a set of shared values and cultural norms that are embraced by all members of the school community. These values are integrated into daily school life and become part of the school's identity. The consistent practice of these values is expected to foster a positive school culture that supports students' academic and personal development.

With regard to the implementation of the school principal's management strategies for improving students' academic achievement at SMAN 1 Tanjungbalai, the researcher interviewed the school principal, who explained: "The implementation of our programs is carried out gradually because the School Work Plan (RKS) consists of both planning and phased implementation. For example, I have developed 39 program items, but they cannot all be implemented within a single year because their implementation involves various stakeholders, including parents. When I first assumed this position, I identified the school's strengths and weaknesses by listening directly to the Student Council (OSIS) rather than relying solely on teachers. I wanted to understand what students actually needed, and I documented their aspirations carefully. As a result, the programs we developed were based primarily on students' needs rather than teachers' preferences, because the ultimate beneficiaries of education are the students. In some cases, we adapted the national curriculum to accommodate local wisdom, which is permitted within the educational framework. As the school principal, I believe it is essential to understand the local characteristics of the school and integrate them into educational programs, including activities related to arts, culture, and religious education. Furthermore, regardless of students' backgrounds or organizational affiliations outside the school, once they enter SMAN 1 Tanjungbalai, they are united under the school's identity. Alhamdulillah, this approach has contributed to the absence of student violence or mass fights, which are often difficult to control. Effective implementation of the National Education Standards requires courage and firm leadership. Ultimately, the school's mission is to serve students' needs and aspirations, not to expect students to serve us. My duties and responsibilities, as mandated by national law, are to contribute to educating the nation's future generations."

Based on the interview with the school principal, it can be concluded that the implementation of the school principal's management strategies has been carried out effectively. Improving students' academic achievement requires close collaboration between the government and the school, as both parties share responsibility for developing students who meet the educational, social, and moral expectations of the nation. To achieve this objective, the school principal has implemented policies that address the school's needs while strengthening the school's culture to ensure that all educational activities remain aligned with the school's vision, mission, and goals.

To gain a deeper understanding of the implementation of the school principal's management strategies, the researcher also interviewed the Vice Principal for Curriculum, who stated:

*"From my perspective, the school principal has implemented the management strategies effectively. The first step in the implementation process is to prepare a comprehensive educational plan, beginning with curriculum development. The curriculum is designed to align with the school's vision, mission, and objectives. It is developed by identifying the school's existing potential, particularly the characteristics of its students. We first analyze students' academic and non-academic abilities, and these findings become the*



*foundation for curriculum development. Once students' characteristics have been thoroughly identified, the curriculum is adjusted to reflect the school's objectives as well as its available resources, including the qualifications and educational backgrounds of the teaching staff. Through this process, we develop a curriculum that is appropriate for our school and capable of helping students achieve their educational goals. The primary function of the school is to educate students and equip them with life skills that will enable them to contribute positively to society. In principle, our strategy is similar to that of other schools: we identify our existing potential and develop appropriate strategies that enable us to carry out daily educational activities effectively while achieving the school's vision and mission."*

The interview findings indicate that the school principal has implemented the school's programs effectively, resulting in significant improvements compared with previous conditions. One of the principal's primary strategies has been careful planning across all areas of school management. In addition, the school principal has promoted teachers' professional development through continuous guidance and mentoring, enabling teachers to improve their performance and carry out their professional responsibilities more effectively.

To obtain the students' perspective on the implementation of these management strategies, the researcher also interviewed one of the students, who explained:

*"As a student, I believe that the school principal has implemented these strategies effectively, and we have experienced many positive improvements. The principal does not focus only on classroom learning but also gives considerable attention to extracurricular activities that match students' interests and talents. Students' academic achievement is influenced by the motivation and guidance provided by teachers and mentors. However, success cannot be attributed solely to teachers or students because both play equally important roles. If students are unwilling to learn, teachers' efforts alone will not produce optimal results. Likewise, if students are motivated but receive insufficient support from teachers, their achievements may also be limited. Therefore, strong collaboration between teachers and students is essential for achieving excellent academic performance."*

Based on the interview findings, it can be concluded that the implementation of the school principal's management strategies for improving students' academic achievement does not depend solely on the efforts of the school principal. Rather, it requires the active collaboration of all members of the school community, including vice principals, teachers, extracurricular supervisors, administrative staff, and students. Through effective cooperation among these stakeholders, the school is better positioned to achieve its educational goals and support students in attaining excellence in both academic and non-academic fields.

### **Evaluation of the School Principal's Management Strategies for Improving Students' Academic Achievement**

Evaluation is a fundamental component of educational management because it enables schools to assess the effectiveness of implemented programs and identify areas requiring improvement. At SMAN 1 Tanjungbalai, the evaluation process is intended to support continuous improvement in students'

academic achievement. The evaluation of the school principal's management strategies encompasses all school activities, including program planning, program implementation, supervision of teachers' and administrative staff's performance, and the outcomes of implemented programs.

To gain an understanding of the evaluation process, the researcher interviewed the school principal, who explained:

*"As the school principal, the first step in the evaluation process is to review the programs implemented during the previous year. Every month, and at least once every three months, I analyze the strengths and weaknesses of each program to determine whether it has been implemented successfully. I evaluate each program individually because every issue requires a different approach. For matters related to the teaching and learning process, I meet directly with the teachers and the Vice Principal for Curriculum and personally monitor classroom activities. Regarding staff performance, I conduct daily monitoring of teachers, administrative staff, and other employees through both administrative and non-administrative methods, such as attendance records and direct observation. I also pay close attention to the discipline of both teachers and students because discipline is an essential part of our school program. Before evaluating others, I always reflect on my own performance and ask myself what improvements I should make first."*

The interview findings indicate that evaluation plays a crucial role following the implementation of school programs. Through evaluation, the school principal is able to identify the strengths and weaknesses of each program and develop appropriate improvement strategies to enhance their effectiveness.

To obtain additional perspectives regarding the evaluation process, the researcher also interviewed the Vice Principal for Curriculum, who stated:

*"From my perspective, the school principal has implemented the evaluation process effectively across all school programs and activities. Every program – including curriculum, student affairs, school facilities and infrastructure, and public relations – is evaluated regularly. Most of the planned programs have been implemented successfully, although several areas still require improvement. For example, we need to increase the number of graduates who are admitted to higher education institutions and further improve students' achievements in both academic and non-academic fields. To strengthen teachers' performance, the school principal continuously provides guidance by reminding all members of the school community about the school's vision and goals. We also hold coordination meetings three times each semester – at the beginning, middle, and end of the semester – to evaluate planned activities, review completed programs, and discuss the outcomes that have been achieved. In addition, routine monitoring is conducted to ensure that all planned activities are implemented as intended. As the school manager, the principal establishes specialized teams with clearly defined responsibilities to monitor classroom instruction, evaluate teachers' performance, and assess the condition of school facilities and infrastructure. This systematic approach enables all school activities to be managed effectively. A comprehensive annual evaluation is also conducted before the beginning of each new academic year. Furthermore, the school principal ensures that teachers fulfill their instructional responsibilities effectively, while the performance of administrative staff is evaluated thoroughly and systematically."*

Based on the interview with the Vice Principal for Curriculum, it can be concluded that the school principal has implemented the evaluation process

effectively by identifying areas that require improvement and developing appropriate follow-up actions. As a result, the school continues to experience annual improvements that contribute to enhancing students' academic achievement at SMAN 1 Tanjungbalai.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that evaluation is an essential component of the school principal's management strategies. Through systematic evaluation, the school principal and all members of the school community are able to identify program strengths and weaknesses, implement continuous improvements, and ensure that school programs remain aligned with the objective of improving students' academic achievement.

### **Monitoring the Outcomes of Planning and Implementation**

Evaluating planning is a process undertaken to determine whether the implementation of school programs is consistent with the plans that have been established. Based on the interview with the school principal, this evaluation is conducted through continuous monitoring of school programs and the systematic assessment of issues that arise during implementation. The evaluation is carried out over three time frames: short-term, medium-term, and long-term. Short-term evaluations are conducted monthly, medium-term evaluations are conducted once every semester, and long-term evaluations are conducted annually. This process involves all members of the school community, including the school principal, vice principals, teachers, extracurricular supervisors, administrative staff, and other school personnel. According to the findings, these evaluation activities are conducted intensively and implemented effectively.

### **Measuring Individual and School Performance**

Measuring individual and school performance constitutes an integral part of the evaluation of the school principal's management strategies for improving students' academic achievement at SMAN 1 Tanjungbalai. The purpose of this activity is to determine the extent to which the implemented programs have achieved the objectives established during the planning stage. When problems or obstacles are identified, corrective actions can be taken promptly to ensure continuous improvement. Individual performance evaluation includes teachers, administrative staff, and students, whereas school performance evaluation encompasses the teaching and learning process, students' activities, school facilities and infrastructure, and other aspects that contribute to the overall effectiveness of the school.

### **Implementing Corrective Actions for Continuous Improvement**

The evaluation of the school principal's management strategies inevitably identifies various challenges and obstacles encountered during program implementation. Therefore, appropriate corrective actions are undertaken to address these issues and improve subsequent implementation. These improvement efforts are intended to maintain consistency in the teaching and

learning process while supporting the continuous improvement of students' academic achievement. Through ongoing evaluation and refinement, the school ensures that all educational activities remain aligned with its vision, mission, and objectives, ultimately contributing to the development of high-quality students who achieve excellence in both academic and non-academic fields.

## Discussion

This discussion aims to explain and interpret the research findings in relation to the theoretical framework adopted in this study. SMAN 1 Tanjungbalai is a school that continuously strives to improve students' academic achievement through systematic and sustained efforts. The school principal recognizes that enhancing students' academic achievement is essential for developing high-quality graduates who are capable of making meaningful contributions to society.

Based on the findings of this study, the school principal's management strategies for improving students' academic achievement can be discussed as follows. The school principal serves as the instructional leader who plays a central role in influencing the overall performance of the school. In carrying out managerial functions, the school principal is expected to develop effective planning that addresses the six fundamental elements of planning: **what, why, where, when, who, and how**. Such planning enables the school principal to identify and implement the most appropriate programs to achieve the school's educational objectives (Rofifah et al., 2021).

In addition to planning, the school principal must also establish an effective organizational structure. Effective organization enables teachers, administrative staff, and other school personnel to collaborate efficiently and perform their respective responsibilities in accordance with the school's vision, mission, and planned programs (Sirojuddin, 2020). Furthermore, the school principal is responsible for ensuring that the school's vision, mission, and objectives are translated into practical educational programs that effectively support the improvement of students' academic achievement (Tajudin & Aprilianto, 2020).

The findings indicate that the school principal fulfills several essential leadership roles. First, as a **planner**, the principal formulates strategic plans and educational policies to support the teaching and learning process. Second, as an **organizer**, the principal establishes an effective organizational system that coordinates teachers and educational personnel to implement school programs systematically in accordance with the school's vision and mission (Abusin et al., 2021). Third, as a **supervisor**, the school principal continuously monitors school activities to identify weaknesses and areas requiring improvement. Supervision is conducted across various aspects of school management, including the implementation of the National Education Standards, teachers' performance, administrative staff's performance, and students' development. Through systematic supervision, the school principal is able to identify implementation

challenges, provide constructive feedback, and introduce corrective actions that contribute to improving the quality of the teaching and learning process and, ultimately, students' academic achievement.

The findings further demonstrate that, in addition to performing managerial responsibilities, the school principal also functions as a strategic planner. The management strategies implemented at SMAN 1 Tanjungbalai to improve students' academic achievement include:

1. Developing programs that address the eight National Education Standards.
2. Promoting and integrating local wisdom into school activities.
3. Strengthening religious education and spiritual development programs.
4. Providing extracurricular activities that accommodate students' interests and talents.
5. Cultivating discipline among all members of the school community.
6. Optimizing the performance of teachers, administrative staff, and other educational personnel through empowerment and professional development.
7. Strengthening collaboration between the school and students' parents.

These policies were formulated through collaborative discussions involving the school principal, teachers, and administrative staff. Consequently, the policies represent strategic management decisions designed to improve students' academic achievement at SMAN 1 Tanjungbalai. The implementation of the school principal's management strategies represents the practical realization of the plans that have been developed. These strategies are translated into concrete educational programs and management practices intended to improve students' academic achievement through systematic planning, effective organization, continuous implementation, and ongoing evaluation.

### **Establishing School Policies**

School policies consist of rules, principles, and values that guide the implementation of educational activities within the school. These policies are formulated based on both government regulations and school-level decisions, and their implementation must comply with the established standards and regulations.

Based on the researcher's analysis, SMAN 1 Tanjungbalai has implemented a number of school policies derived from both government directives and internal school initiatives. These policies include: (1) implementing the 2013 Curriculum (Kurikulum 2013); (2) promoting a religious school culture; (3) integrating character and cultural education into the educational process; (4) providing professional development and training programs to enhance teachers' competencies; (5) strengthening collaboration with students' parents; (6) optimizing teachers' performance through effective empowerment and support; (7) fostering a culture of discipline throughout the school community; and (8) promoting local wisdom as an integral component of



school culture.

The research findings, supported by the researcher's observations, indicate that these policies have been implemented effectively and have contributed to the achievement of the school's educational objectives, particularly in supporting the school principal's management strategies for improving students' academic achievement.

### **Motivating Teaching and Administrative Staff**

As the leader of the school, the school principal is expected to inspire and enhance the performance of both teaching and administrative staff. At SMAN 1 Tanjungbalai, the school principal regularly provides guidance, motivation, and direction to teachers and educational support staff to encourage continuous professional development. These activities are primarily conducted during official staff meetings (Zami & Suyanto, 2021). Based on the researcher's observations, the school principal consistently provides intensive guidance, recognizes outstanding performance through certificates of appreciation and other forms of recognition, offers individualized motivation according to teachers' needs, and conducts ongoing mentoring for both teaching and administrative staff. The researcher concludes that these motivational practices are intended to maintain staff commitment, improve professional performance, and strengthen the quality of educational services provided by the school (Maptuhah & Juhji, 2021; Wasyik & Muhid, 2020).

### **Allocating Human Resources**

Creating an effective teaching and learning environment requires the appropriate allocation of human resources according to the specific needs of each area of responsibility. This allocation is an essential component of the school principal's management strategies for improving students' academic achievement. At SMAN 1 Tanjungbalai, the school principal begins the allocation process by conducting a comprehensive assessment of the school's human resource needs. This process includes staff selection, reviewing candidates' educational and professional backgrounds, evaluating their competencies, and examining relevant professional certifications. These procedures ensure that teachers and educational personnel are assigned to positions that match their qualifications and the school's operational requirements.

### **Developing a School Culture that Supports the School Principal's Management Strategies**

School culture consists of the shared values, beliefs, and norms embraced by the school principal, teachers, administrative staff, other school personnel, and students. Based on the researcher's analysis, the school principal has cultivated a school culture that emphasizes the preservation of local wisdom, the strengthening of religious values, and the promotion of discipline throughout the school community. These cultural practices play an important role in supporting

the implementation of the school principal's management strategies for improving students' academic achievement.

The implementation of these cultural initiatives results from collaborative discussions involving all relevant stakeholders within the school. Such collaboration is intended to ensure that efforts to improve students' academic achievement are carried out effectively and efficiently in accordance with the school's vision, mission, and strategic plans (Ciptaningsih & Rofiq, 2022; Latipah & Awalliyatunnisa, 2021).

The implications of the principal's management strategy for strengthening the values of Islamic Religious Education at SMAN 1 Tanjungbalai extend beyond improving students' academic achievement. The findings indicate that the principal's policies have contributed to strengthening Islamic values through the cultivation of a religious school culture, including the habituation of collective prayer before classroom instruction, the regular performance of Dhuha prayer, and various other religious activities. These programs have become an integral part of creating a religious and conducive learning environment. Furthermore, the principal's management strategy has encouraged the development of discipline, responsibility, and cooperation through continuous supervision of all school activities. Such practices not only enhance the effectiveness of the learning process but also instill character values that are consistent with the objectives of Islamic Religious Education, namely to develop students who possess faith (iman), piety (taqwa), and noble character (akhlaq al-karimah).

The successful strengthening of these values is closely related to the principal's exemplary leadership. The principal's firm, wise, disciplined, and committed approach to promoting a religious school culture serves as a positive role model for teachers, educational staff, and students. From the perspective of Islamic Religious Education, the principal functions not only as a manager but also as an *uswah hasanah* (exemplary role model) who guides the entire school community through exemplary conduct and leadership. Therefore, the principal's management strategy contributes not only to improving students' academic achievement but also to fostering a religious school culture and reinforcing the values of Islamic Religious Education through the habituation of religious practices, discipline, character building, and exemplary leadership.

### **Evaluation of the School Principal's Management Strategies for Improving Students' Academic Achievement at SMAN 1 Tanjungbalai**

To determine whether the implemented programs have achieved their intended objectives, the school principal conducts a comprehensive evaluation process. Evaluation represents the final stage of the school principal's management strategies for improving students' academic achievement at SMAN 1 Tanjungbalai. Based on the researcher's observations, the evaluation process can be described as follows.

Evaluation within strategic management is a systematic process intended

to determine whether the planned strategies have been implemented effectively and whether their implementation is consistent with the established objectives. At SMAN 1 Tanjungbalai, the school principal conducts evaluation through continuous monitoring of school activities (Ansori, 2020). The findings indicate that the school principal holds monthly meetings with all members of the school community as part of the short-term evaluation process and conducts annual meetings for long-term evaluation. These meetings are designed to provide guidance, monitor the implementation of school programs, conduct academic supervision, and evaluate individual and organizational performance on a continuous basis (Solechan, 2021).

Performance measurement is another essential component of the evaluation process. The assessment of both individual and school performance is conducted according to the objectives established by the school. Based on the research findings, this process aims to determine the extent to which school programs have achieved their intended outcomes while identifying any problems that require immediate corrective action. Individual performance evaluation includes teachers, members of the school committee, and students, whereas school performance evaluation encompasses school facilities and infrastructure, educational programs, and the overall teaching and learning process. These evaluations are conducted through classroom supervision, assessment of learning outcomes, evaluation of teachers' professional performance, and comprehensive school evaluation activities (Huda & Rokhman, 2021).

The evaluation process is followed by the implementation of corrective actions designed to improve programs that have not yet achieved the expected outcomes. These improvements ensure that all school programs remain aligned with the strategic plans that have been established. Based on the researcher's analysis, SMAN 1 Tanjungbalai begins this process by reviewing the implementation of programs from the previous academic year. The evaluation findings are then considered alongside developments in school facilities and infrastructure to formulate strategic plans for the upcoming academic year.

The comprehensive school evaluation is conducted annually under the leadership of the school principal and the school development team. During this process, the team identifies existing problems and the factors that hinder program implementation, develops solutions that correspond to the school's needs, reaches consensus on the most appropriate improvement strategies, and formulates new programs for the following academic year. The researcher concludes that every educational program has both strengths and areas for improvement. Therefore, continuous evaluation and corrective action are essential to ensure that school programs remain aligned with the school's vision, mission, and objectives. Through this continuous improvement process, the school principal's management strategies for improving students' academic achievement at SMAN 1 Tanjungbalai can be implemented effectively and produce optimal educational outcomes.

## CONCLUSION

The implementation of the school principal's management functions for improving students' academic achievement at SMAN 1 Tanjungbalai is based on the four fundamental management functions: planning, organizing, implementation, and supervision. The planning function includes designing academic programs for students, such as lesson planning and extracurricular activities, while also developing professional guidance and mentoring programs for teachers. The organizing function focuses on coordinating all members of the school community into an integrated organizational system. During the implementation stage, the school principal mobilizes all stakeholders to work collaboratively in achieving the school's vision, mission, and educational objectives. The supervision function is carried out through continuous evaluation of school programs, teachers' performance, and the performance of administrative and support staff.

The school principal's management strategies for improving students' academic achievement at SMAN 1 Tanjungbalai include conducting daily monitoring of all school activities, developing programs for students and school personnel, implementing the eight National Education Standards in accordance with the school's needs, strengthening religious values throughout school activities, providing extracurricular programs that accommodate students' interests and talents, cultivating a culture of discipline, promoting local wisdom, and strengthening collaboration with students' parents.

The implementation of these management strategies encompasses the formulation of school policies, the motivation and professional development of teachers and administrative staff, the effective allocation of human resources, and the development of a school culture that promotes local wisdom. These strategies have contributed to improvements in human resource performance, students' academic achievement, and the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process.

The evaluation of the school principal's management strategies is conducted through continuous monitoring of the implementation of planned programs, assessment of both individual and school performance, and the implementation of corrective actions based on the evaluation findings. At SMAN 1 Tanjungbalai, evaluation serves as a critical component of continuous school improvement, ensuring that management strategies are implemented effectively and consistently support the enhancement of students' academic achievement.

The findings indicate that the principal's management strategy not only contributes to improving students' academic achievement through the functions of planning, organizing, implementing, and supervising, but also supports the creation of an educational environment that is aligned with the values of Islamic Religious Education. The strengthening of a religious school culture, discipline, responsibility, and character habituation constitutes an integral part of the

implementation of the principal's management in achieving holistic educational goals.

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