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PRINCIPAL'S STRATEGY IN IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION LEARNING AT MUHAMMADIYAH 2 SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL IN SURAKARTA

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to: (1) Identify the strategies used by the school principal to improve the quality of Islamic Religious Education learning at SMA Muhammadiyah 2 Surakarta, (2) Identify the factors that support and hinder the strategies used by the principal of SMA Muhammadiyah 2 Surakarta. This type of research employs qualitative research. The design of this study is a case study. The research subjects include the principal, Islamic religious education teachers, and students. Data collection techniques with an interactive model include data collection, reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The validity of the data is ensured through triangulation of data sources and triangulation of methods. The results of the study indicate that: (1) the principal of SMA Muhammadiyah 2 Surakarta implements various efforts to enhance the quality of Islamic Religious Education learning, such as training for educators, the use of technology, strengthening Islamic values, and routine guidance. These steps play a role in improving teacher competence and students' enthusiasm for learning. (2) The success of this strategy is supported by the active role of teachers, the availability of facilities and infrastructure, and the commitment of school principals. However, there are several challenges, such as lack of student participation, budget limitations, and obstacles in the application of learning technology.

A. INTRODUCTION

As an institution that plays a role in the implementation of education at the micro level, schools have a crucial role in shaping the quality of human resources. In it, students acquire learning that aims to equip them with various insights and skills. Thus, schools are the main place in producing competent individuals in accordance with the vision and mission of national education. As stated in Law No. 20 of 2003 pasal 3 regarding the functions and objectives of national education, education has a role in developing competence and shaping the character and civilization of the nation which contributes to efforts to educate people's lives (Gunawan et al. 2021) .

One of the important characters that a person must have to develop is a strong character in the face of changing times and moral decline which has recently become a concern in the world of education in Indonesia. In building the character of the nation, a good ethical and moral foundation is needed in children as a guide for their lives. Well-embedded character values will provide a strong basis for action. Character building through education has long been considered an important foundation in shaping human behavior in order to be able to filter actions that are in accordance with social and ethical norms, so as to avoid moral decline. The awareness of the importance of character education makes SMA Muhammadiyah 2 Surakarta one of the institutions that instill character values in its learning system (Khafid et al. 2024) .

Educational institutions under the auspices of moral and ethical foundations are increasingly in demand by parents and the community, as they believe that the formation of strong character is an important aspect of a child's life. For some people, character education is considered more crucial than academic achievement alone, as it can be a provision in facing the challenges of life in the future. In Islamic teachings, the formation of good character in accordance with moral and ethical values is also emphasized in the Qur'an. One of the relevant verses is QS. Al-Qalam verse 4, which emphasizes that the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ has great morals, being an example in behavior. This shows that noble morals are an important part of an individual's life and must be instilled from an early age. In addition, in QS. Luqman verse 17, teaches that humans must always uphold goodness, prevent evil, and be patient in facing various life tests. Therefore, character education based on moral values is the main key in building a generation that is integrated and ready to face the changing times (Dewi and Putra 2024).

The main goal of education is to optimize the potential of students to become individuals who are faithful and devoted to God Almighty, have noble character, are physically and mentally healthy, knowledgeable, skilled, creative, independent, and able to play a role as democratic and responsible citizens. With a good education, students can plan a better life in the future. The quality of education is the main factor that determines the progress and success of a school in facing the dynamics and competition in the world of education that continues to grow (Septiana, Bafadal, and Kusumaningrum 2018) . This quality improvement can only be achieved if educational institutions have leaders who are capable of managing and optimally utilizing all available resources. Therefore, to create and run a quality school, good collaboration is needed between principals, educators and administrative staff in managing various aspects of education effectively (Sriwahyuni, Kristiawan, and Wachidi 2019) .

Strategy is a comprehensive plan that is planned to increase effectiveness, efficiency, and productivity in achieving predetermined goals. Strategy is long-term and

developed in detail through various operational tactics and systematic steps (Dowansiba and Hermanto 2022) . In the context of education, strategy can be interpreted as an effort to optimize all available resources in the school environment through structured planning that includes a series of activities designed to realize the goals of educational institutions. Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that the progress or decline of a school is highly dependent on the quality of the principal's leadership management and the active role of stakeholders (St. Maemunah, Ahmad Hakim 2023) .

The principal has the main responsibility in managing the entire learning process, starting from the input, process, to the output produced by the school he leads. To carry out their duties effectively, a principal should understand, master and be able to carry out various activities related to their functions as a professional administrator and manager, and have adequate skills. In addition, the principal must have a clear vision and mission, as well as a comprehensive education management strategy, which focuses on improving the quality of education (Malaikosa 2021) .

According to Danim Sudarwan (2010: 149), achieving high achievement in a school is a challenge that is not easy. To create a quality school, there are several things that must be considered by principals, teachers, and administrative staff, including: a) Setting firm standards for every aspect of teacher teaching. b) Determining clear criteria related to student learning behavior. c) Setting firm rules for interactions between teachers and students. d) Providing textbooks and other supporting books. e) Designing co-curricular and extracurricular activities that can support the main school program. f) Conducting continuous evaluation of learning effectiveness. g) Establishing competitive programs systematically. h) Involving parents or guardians in monitoring student learning behavior at home. i) Encourage the development of a positive learning culture. j) Invite resource persons who can be role models for students, such as school alumni who have succeeded in their future and others (Asiva Noor Rachmayani 2015) .

The process of implementing the principal's strategy into a school needs to have a competent coordinator and have adequate skills. The principal, as the highest leader in an educational institution, has full authority in managing and developing various aspects of the school he leads. The success of a school in achieving educational goals is strongly influenced by the effectiveness of the system implemented, especially in improving the quality of learning. However, the quality of learning will not have a significant impact if its implementation towards students is not done optimally. The low quality of learning that occurs in a school is inseparable from the strategies and policies implemented by the principal in developing teaching methods and the existing education system. Therefore, the role of the principal is crucial in ensuring that the learning process runs effectively and in accordance with the standards applied. In addition, good coordination between educators and school officials is also an important factor in creating a conducive learning environment and being able to improve the academic potential and Islamic character of students (adar BakhshBaloch 2017) .

SMA Muhammadiyah 2 Surakarta is a private school in Solo, Central Java. The school places great emphasis on developing students' potential, both in the academic and non-academic fields. In the academic field, the school offers additional study time, both at the beginning and at the end of the meeting, to deepen the subject matter, especially those related to the National Exam and Islamic Religious Education (Vienty and Ajepri 2022) .

SMA Muhammadiyah 2 Surakarta continues to improve the quality of education by optimizing existing potential, maximizing available resources, and encouraging students to contribute to efforts to improve school quality. As an Islamic-based school, learning Islamic Religious Education (PAI) is one of the main focuses in improving the character and spiritual quality of students. To improve the quality of Islamic Education learning, SMA Muhammadiyah 2 Surakarta implements various strategies aimed at strengthening Islamic values in the school environment (Ariyadi 2019) .

Various religious programs such as Islamic studies, daily worship habits, as well as religious-based extracurricular activities such as Tahfidz Qur'an, spiritual brotherhood, and routine religious discussions, are an important part in shaping students' spiritual character. In addition, the Islamic values-based approach is not only applied in PAI subjects, but also integrated into all aspects of education (Irawan, Asiah, and Iqbal 2023) . With this strategy, schools create an environment that supports the formation of students' moral and spiritual character, so that they not only excel academically, but also have a strong Islamic character as a provision for social and religious life (Mamlukhah 2014) .

In order to ensure that the quality of PAI learning at SMA Muhammadiyah 2 Surakarta remains optimal, the principal has a strategic role in designing and implementing policies that can improve the quality of PAI learning. This study aims to explore "The Principal's Strategy in Improving the Quality of Islamic Education Learning at SMA Muhammadiyah 2 Surakarta" in order to find out the strategies as well as factors that can support and hinder the principal in carrying out his duties and analyze their impact on the effectiveness of learning and the formation of student character.

B. METHOD

This research uses a qualitative method with a descriptive approach. The strategy applied was a case study, with the data collected being qualitative in nature. Data collection techniques included interviews, observation and documentation. To ensure data validation, this research applied source triangulation as well as method triangulation. The data analysis process followed an interactive model consisting of the stages of data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing and verification, as described by Miles & Huberman in Sugiyono (2014). In addition, this study used the theories of transformational and instructional leadership approaches, educational quality management, and constructivism and character-based learning models, the combination of which became the basis for explaining the principal's strategy in improving the quality of PAI learning. The synergy of these various theories provides an overview of how principals can design a more optimal PAI learning system, while contributing to shaping students' Islamic character.

This research was located at SMA Muhammadiyah 2 Surakarta, Jl. Yosodipuro No.95 Pasar Baling Surakarta. The subjects involved in the study included the principal, PAI teachers, students, and other parties related to the PAI learning process. With this method, the research is expected to provide a comprehensive insight into the principal's strategy in improving the quality of PAI learning at SMA Muhammadiyah 2 Surakarta (Badriyah and Supriyanto 2024)

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

SMA Muhammadiyah 2 Surakarta is led by a highly competent principal. This is evidenced by his success in implementing several main aspects that are the responsibility of a principal. These managerial aspects include all aspects of school management, from planning, implementation, to evaluation, which includes student affairs, curriculum, infrastructure, and community relations. This activity is carried out every Monday after the ceremony. Meanwhile, personality refers to being trustworthy, honest, and able to be a role model for subordinates and students (Suryani 2021)

Based on the results of the study, the principal implemented various strategies to improve the quality of PAI learning. One of the main strategies is improving teachers' competencies, which is done through various training programs, workshops, and seminars to improve their pedagogical skills. Another strategy is the use of innovative learning methods, where teachers are encouraged to adopt technology and interactive approaches in teaching (Muh Idris 2022) .

Methods such as group discussions and project-based learning are applied to improve students' understanding of PAI materials. This approach helps students to be more active in learning and increases their engagement in the classroom. In addition, the principal also implements regular evaluation and monitoring of the learning process (Waston and Taryanto 2019) . This evaluation is conducted through classroom observation and assessment of student learning outcomes to measure the effectiveness of the strategies that have been implemented. With continuous evaluation, schools can adjust the strategies used to better suit the needs of students and school conditions (Fitriana, Handayaningrum, and Roesminingsih 2021) .

This research is in line with research conducted by mamlukhah (2014), who said that all strategies implemented by school principals in supporting Islamic Religious Education teachers show good effectiveness, because it is not just a theory. The strategy is a real step based on a deep understanding of the problems in the field, so as to identify existing obstacles and design appropriate solutions. With this approach, education teachers, especially in Islamic education subjects, can continue to be optimally improved in the school (Amrullah 2018) .

The principal ensures that the available facilities and infrastructure can support the teaching and learning process, such as the provision of comfortable classrooms and relevant teaching materials. Adequate facilities are an important factor in creating a conducive learning environment for students and teachers (Ya'cub and Ga'a 2021) .

The impact of this strategy can be seen in several aspects, one of which is the increase in students' interest in learning. with more interesting and interactive learning methods, students show higher enthusiasm in participating in PAI learning (Haryana 2018) . Increased learning motivation contributes to a better understanding of the teaching material. In addition, there is also an increase in student learning outcomes, which can be seen from the increase in students' average scores after the implementation of more innovative learning strategies. The implemented strategy helps students to understand the material more deeply and apply it in everyday life (Oktiani 2017) .

Not only did the principal's strategies impact students, they also increased teacher satisfaction. Teachers felt more support from the school in improving their professionalism and teaching effectiveness. With this kind of support, teachers can be

more confident in teaching and apply various methods that suit the needs of students (Amri and Suwandi 2023)

Thus it can be concluded that the principal's strategy in improving the quality of PAI learning at SMA Muhammadiyah 2 Surakarta has a significant impact on the effectiveness of the teaching-learning process. The implementation of appropriate strategies not only improves student motivation and learning outcomes, but also provides benefits for teachers in improving their professionalism (Andriani 2011) .

This research is in line with research conducted by Vera Putri (2014). based on the results of the study revealed that the principal's efforts in fostering teacher professionalism in SDN in Bondoworo sub-district, Kebumen district, were classified in the good category with a percentage achievement of 7.61%. This achievement is caused by the consistency of principals in coaching teachers, especially through supervision, as well as their support in encouraging teachers to actively participate in teacher working groups (KKG), seminars, workshops, and various training (Hayudiyani et al. 2020) .

D. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research that has been conducted, it can be concluded that the principal's strategy in improving the quality of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning at SMA Muhammadiyah 2 Surakarta plays an important role in creating a conducive learning environment. Various strategies implemented, such as improving teachers' competence, using innovative learning methods, as well as periodic evaluation and monitoring, have had a positive impact on the teaching and learning process in this school.

One of the main strategies implemented by the principal is the improvement of teacher professionalism through various trainings, workshops, and seminars. This step aims to improve teachers' pedagogical competence so that they are able to teach more effectively and in accordance with the needs of students. with the development of teacher professionalism, the quality of PAI learning can be improved continuously (St. Maemunah, Ahmad Hakim 2023) .

In addition, innovation in learning methods is also an important factor in improving the quality of PAI learning. The principal encourages the use of interactive approaches, such as group discussions, project-based learning, and the utilization of technology in learning. These methods not only increase students' involvement in the learning process but also help them understand the material more deeply.

Regular evaluation and monitoring contribute to improving the quality of learning. Through classroom observations and analysis of student learning outcomes, principals can identify strengths and weaknesses in the learning process. from these evaluation results, learning strategies can be adjusted to be more effective and in line with student needs.

Adequate learning facilities are also a supporting factor in improving the quality of PAI learning. Principals strive to provide facilities and infrastructure that support the teaching and learning process, such as comfortable classrooms, relevant textbooks, and technology-based learning media. Good facilities help create a conducive learning environment for students and teachers.

The impact of the principal's strategy can be seen in the improvement of students' motivation and learning outcomes. Students show greater interest in participating in PAI learning, which is shown by their increased participation in

discussions and other learning activities. In addition, the increase in academic grades is also an indicator that the strategies implemented are effective.

The principal's strategy not only affects students, but also teacher satisfaction and professionalism. With support from the school, teachers feel more confident in teaching and applying various methods that suit the needs of students. This creates a more positive working atmosphere within the school.

Although the strategies implemented have shown good results, there are still some challenges that need attention. One of them is the need for improvement in the utilization of technology in PAI learning. Maximum integration of technology can help create a more interesting and effective learning experience for students.

In addition, the sustainability of the teacher development program also needs to be a concern. The training and workshops provided must continue to be evaluated and adapted to curriculum developments and learning needs in the digital era. Thus, teachers can continue to improve their competence and provide quality teaching.

As a recommendation, the school is expected to continue to support the development of innovative and technology-based learning strategies. In addition, collaboration between principals, teachers, students, and parents needs to be improved to make the PAI learning process more effective. With the right strategy and support from various parties, the quality of PAI learning at SMA Muhammadiyah 2 Surakarta can continue to improve and have a positive impact on all students.

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