



SWOT-Based Strategic Management in Islamic Education: A Case Study of School Leadership in Muara Badak

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats, Analysis, Quality, Education, Integrated Islamic Primary School (SDIT)

Received : 19, February

Revised : 20, March

Accepted: 30, April

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the strategic management practices of a principal at an Integrated Islamic Primary School in Muara Badak through the lens of SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats). Employing a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. Findings reveal that the principal effectively leveraged internal strengths such as strong foundation governance, structured Islamic character education, and a supportive learning environment. Internal weaknesses, including the absence of traditional lesson planning and limited digital technology use, were addressed through pragmatic strategies that aligned with the school's vision. External opportunities were capitalized upon by positioning the school as the only integrated Islamic institution in the region, while threats such as geographical distance were mitigated through innovative services like school transportation. Regular evaluations, external partnerships for Qur'anic education, and spiritual well-being initiatives further enhanced institutional performance. This study highlights the importance of SWOT-based strategic thinking in educational leadership and offers theoretical and practical contributions to school development. The findings provide valuable insights for policymakers, school principals, and education managers aiming to implement sustainable, values-driven strategies in Islamic school settings.

INTRODUCTION

Quality education is a vital foundation for the development of individuals and society, influencing both students' academic trajectories and personal growth (Juma et al., 2023). It encompasses not only academic knowledge but also life skills, ethical values, and social competencies. In the context of primary education, quality learning shapes students' critical thinking, problem-solving, and interpersonal abilities. These early years are pivotal in building foundational attitudes and skills that learners will carry throughout life. The impact of quality education extends beyond the classroom and significantly affects parental perceptions and involvement. Parents increasingly seek educational environments that offer not only academic excellence but also holistic development for their children. Studies indicate a strong correlation between education quality and parental satisfaction. Muhith et al. (2023) found that schools implementing strong educational practices experienced higher student engagement, which in turn enhanced parental satisfaction. Similarly, Prabawati et al. (2024) noted that schools employing effective strategies demonstrated increased parental involvement and improved student outcomes, thereby reinforcing parental trust. Komariyah et al. (2024) further emphasized that parental perceptions of school quality are closely linked to their children's academic achievements.

However, not all school leaders are fully aware of their institutions' internal strengths and weaknesses or possess the necessary strategies to leverage them for school improvement. A lack of comprehensive understanding regarding internal and external dynamics can hinder institutional development. Therefore, effective strategies, especially through SWOT analysis, which stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats, are critical for identifying and evaluating a school's competitive position (Saihul and Pakkanna, 2024).

SWOT analysis provides a systematic framework for school leaders to assess assets such as quality human resources, innovative curricula, or adequate facilities, while also identifying challenges like insufficient funding or low teacher motivation. Moreover, it allows principals to recognize external opportunities, such as supportive education policies, community engagement, and emerging trends that can enhance school quality (Rahman, 2019). Concurrently, potential threats, such as policy changes, competition, and economic instability, can be anticipated and strategically managed (Utomo and Melaningsih, 2023). As such, SWOT analysis supports not only self-assessment but also long-term strategic planning for educational excellence.

In a dynamic and competitive educational landscape, particularly in rapidly growing regions such as Muara Badak, the strategic role of school principals is increasingly vital. Principals capable of formulating adaptive strategies based on SWOT analysis are more likely to sustain and improve educational quality while fostering innovation to strengthen their institution's position (Sodikin and Gumiandari, 2022). Hence, mastering SWOT analysis is an essential competency for school leaders committed to delivering quality

education that meets stakeholder expectations and contributes positively to community development.

The case of an Integrated Islamic Elementary School in Muara Badak, established in 2020, illustrates the importance of strategic leadership in achieving educational excellence. Despite being newly founded, the school quickly attracted a significant student body and earned notable academic achievements. Preliminary interviews with teachers and staff attribute much of this success to the visionary leadership of the principal, whose forward-thinking approach emphasizes future readiness over short-term outcomes. This leadership strategy, which integrates Islamic values with modern education, has been central to the school's rapid growth and appeal.

Accordingly, this study aims to analyze the strategic management practices of the school principal at an Integrated Islamic Elementary School in Muara Badak through the lens of SWOT analysis to enhance school quality. Specifically, it investigates how internal strengths and weaknesses are identified and addressed, how external opportunities and threats are strategically anticipated, and how these insights are utilized to formulate effective school development strategies.

This article contributes to the growing body of knowledge on strategic leadership in educational management by offering empirical insights into how school leaders in emerging regions apply SWOT analysis in practice. It also highlights the unique integration of Islamic values into strategic decision-making processes, a perspective that is rarely explored in mainstream educational leadership literature. The findings are expected to inform policymakers, educators, and school leaders about the practical benefits and challenges of using SWOT analysis in school-based strategic planning to promote sustainable educational quality.

A comprehensive review of the literature on strategic management underscores that strategy is a fundamental component in guiding organizations toward long-term goals within dynamic environments. Qudsiyyah et al. (2024) define strategy as a series of decisions and actions designed to achieve sustainable competitive advantage by offering unique value. Muhith et al. (2023) emphasize that effective strategy should create a distinctive market position through clear value differentiation. Similarly, Sidiq et al. (2024) highlight the need for coordinated steps aligned with the organization's vision and mission to achieve strategic goals.

Further, Sihombing (2023) focuses on the use of sustained competitive advantages through unique resources and capabilities. Suriyok (2022) presents strategy as an evolving pattern of action shaped by learning and environmental adaptation, rather than solely a formal plan. This perspective is supported by Sodikin and Gumiandari (2022), who introduce the concept of dynamic capabilities—an organization's ability to adapt and innovate in response to environmental change. Therefore, an effective strategy comprises planning, implementation, and continuous adaptation as an integrated process.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the context of school management, strategic thinking plays a critical role in enabling school leaders to develop and execute long-term plans aimed at enhancing educational quality (Rohmah, 2022). According to Saihul and Pakkanna (2024), strategic planning helps institutions set clear directions and priorities. Meanwhile, successful implementation depends on strong leadership, resource coordination, and organizational commitment (Utomo and Melaningsih, 2023). Equally important is the capacity for continuous adjustment, which allows schools to respond to internal and external dynamics in an adaptive manner (Juma et al., 2023).

From the various definitions and perspectives explored, strategy can be understood as a deliberate and adaptive set of coordinated actions designed to achieve long-term goals through competitive advantage and continuous learning. This concept is highly relevant for school principals seeking to improve educational quality, particularly amid the challenges posed by globalization, policy shifts, and evolving societal expectations in the school environment.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative case study approach to explore the strategic management practices of the school principal at an Integrated Islamic Primary School in Muara Badak. The case study method was selected to enable an in-depth investigation of how the principal utilized SWOT analysis namely strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to enhance school quality. As noted by Sugiyono (2023), the case study approach allows researchers to understand complex phenomena within their natural settings, making it particularly suitable for examining the unique and contextualized leadership strategies in educational environments.

The research was conducted at Sekolah Dasar Islam Terpadu Insan Mandiri, located in Muara Badak, East Kalimantan. Data were gathered over five months, beginning in November 2024, to allow for a thorough exploration of school activities and decision-making processes. Data sources included both primary and secondary information. Primary data were obtained through direct engagement with the principal, vice principals, teachers, parents, and students. These diverse perspectives helped the researcher understand how strategic decisions were formulated and implemented at different levels of the school. Secondary data were derived from observations and school documents such as strategic plans, evaluation reports, and internal meeting records.

Data collection techniques included in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. The interviews were semi-structured and aimed to capture detailed information regarding the implementation of SWOT-based strategies and their perceived impact on school improvement. Observations were carried out throughout the school day to record leadership behavior, school operations, and classroom practices. Document analysis involved reviewing key materials that reflected the school's strategic directions and policy decisions. The researcher served as the primary instrument, supported by interview guides, observation protocols, and digital tools such as

a voice recorder and camera to enhance documentation validity (Sugiyono, 2023).

The data analysis followed Miles and Huberman's interactive model as cited in Sugiyono (2023), involving four interconnected stages: data collection, condensation, display, and conclusion drawing. Thematic coding was used to identify patterns related to how the principal addressed internal and external challenges through strategic planning. To enhance the credibility of findings, the study applied triangulation by cross checking data from multiple sources and using various techniques. Source triangulation involved gathering input from different stakeholder groups, while technique triangulation ensured consistency through the combination of interviews, observations, and document reviews. This comprehensive methodological design was crucial to generate trustworthy insights into the principal's strategic leadership practices aimed at continuous school improvement.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal that the principal of the Integrated Islamic Primary School in Muara Badak applies SWOT-based strategies effectively to enhance school quality. One of the school's most significant strengths lies in its solid foundation, supported by a well-organized and proactive foundation board. This structural support has ensured access to financial and human resources that empower the school to implement continuous improvement initiatives. Additionally, active parental involvement through class and school committees provides substantial moral and financial contributions. These efforts reflect a collaborative management model that aligns with the transformational leadership framework (Shao et al., 2020; Palah et al., 2020), fostering a strong sense of ownership among all school stakeholders.

Another major strength is the school's strong Islamic identity and character education practices, such as daily prayer routines, Quran memorization, and value-based instruction. This integration of religious and academic education helps differentiate the school from nearby institutions and aligns with the school's vision of producing morally upright and academically excellent graduates. These practices support character development and are deeply valued by the parent community, who view Islamic education as the school's core strength. According to Shao et al. (2020), moral and spiritual values embedded in education significantly contribute to holistic student development and long-term institutional identity.

The school also benefits from a physically and emotionally conducive learning environment. A clean, well-organized, and aesthetically appealing school setting fosters a positive learning atmosphere that enhances student motivation and engagement. As noted by Suliswiyadi (2019), such environments support both academic and socio-emotional learning. This strategic focus on maintaining a welcoming physical space also helps strengthen the school's branding and appeal, especially as it is the only integrated Islamic primary school in the area.

In terms of addressing weaknesses, the principal has taken an unconventional yet effective approach. Instead of relying on traditional administrative documents such as RPP (lesson plans), the school uses a practical learning guidebook with clearly defined targets and outcomes. This shift allows teachers to focus more on delivering impactful lessons rather than being burdened by administrative paperwork. While this may diverge from standard supervisory expectations, the system emphasizes actual student outcomes and learning quality, which, according to Yuhdi et al. (2024), can serve as a reliable indicator of teaching success when properly monitored.

Additionally, the principal exercises caution in adopting information technology (IT) within the school. Concerns about unmonitored gadget use and limited parental support for online learning have led to a selective and conservative use of digital tools. While acknowledging that technology holds potential, the principal prefers a human-centered learning environment that maintains face-to-face interaction and avoids distractions often associated with digital platforms (Satria & Shahbana, 2020; Suyatmika et al., 2022). This reflects a thoughtful, values-based approach that prioritizes the school's educational philosophy over trends.

The school also strategically capitalizes on external opportunities, particularly its position as the only integrated Islamic primary school in the region. This unique status allows for strong branding and word-of-mouth marketing. The school builds trust with parents by maintaining high academic and religious standards, which increases its appeal among families even from outside the immediate area (Khoiriah & Zulmuqim, 2021). Teachers also lead by example, especially in Quranic memorization, reinforcing the school's Islamic values in practice and strengthening community confidence.

Regarding threats, the school's distant location initially posed a barrier. In response, the principal introduced school bus transportation to address access issues and ensure student attendance. Although not all logistical challenges could be fully resolved, the focus shifted to enhancing service quality as a competitive advantage. By prioritizing academic performance and religious development, the school positioned itself as a reputable institution despite geographic constraints. This initiative demonstrates an example of "service excellence" in education as described by Ya'cub and Ga'a (2021), highlighting how logistical solutions contribute to school sustainability and community trust (Sidik et al., 2024).

Finally, the principal implements various continuous quality improvement strategies, including weekly evaluations across departments and collaboration with certified institutions like UMMI Bontang for Quran education. These evaluations enable responsive decision-making, while routine gatherings and spiritual development programs build cohesion and commitment among teachers. The integration of spiritual and professional growth creates a values-driven school culture. This holistic approach supports long-term institutional growth and exemplifies how visionary, SWOT-informed leadership can align school management with community values, resulting in

an inclusive and high-performing learning environment (Ping et al., 2022; Rohmah, 2022).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study concludes that the application of SWOT analysis by the principal of an Integrated Islamic Primary School in Muara Badak played a pivotal role in enhancing school quality. The principal effectively identified and leveraged internal strengths, including strong foundation governance, active parental involvement, structured religious character education, and a supportive school climate. At the same time, the school addressed internal weaknesses such as the absence of traditional lesson planning and limited use of digital technology by implementing practical alternatives aligned with the school's vision. External opportunities were optimized through branding the school as the only integrated Islamic institution in the region, while geographical challenges were mitigated through service innovations like transportation. These strategies were reinforced through consistent evaluation mechanisms, external collaboration for Qur'anic learning, and holistic efforts to support the mental and spiritual well-being of staff and the broader school community.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that school leaders strengthen their analytical capacity to continuously assess internal and external conditions through SWOT analysis. This competence is essential in formulating relevant, adaptive, and sustainable strategies for school development. The study contributes theoretically by enriching the literature on educational management in the context of Islamic schooling and offers practical insights for policymakers, school administrators, and training providers. These findings may serve as a strategic guide for other Islamic schools with similar characteristics and inform leadership training programs focused on evidence-based planning and institutional improvement.

FURTHER STUDY

This research still has limitations so further research is still needed on this topic.

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