

Strategic Management Of School Principals In Improving The Achievement Of Islamic Religious Education

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Abstract:

The achievement of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in elementary schools continues to face various challenges, particularly due to the suboptimal implementation of principals' strategic management in improving the quality of learning and student achievement. This condition highlights the importance of strategic leadership that effectively integrates planning, monitoring, analysis, and continuous evaluation. This study aims to examine the principal's strategic management in improving Islamic Religious Education (PAI) achievement at SDN Jadimulya Cikalong. The study employed a qualitative method with a case study approach. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation and analyzed using descriptive qualitative techniques. The findings reveal that the principal implemented strategic management systematically and collaboratively through data-driven program planning, regular monitoring of program implementation, comprehensive analysis of program outcomes, and continuous evaluation involving teachers, students, and parents. These strategies have proven effective in improving both students' academic achievement and religious character, as evidenced by their accomplishments at the village and sub-district levels. The findings underscore that improving Islamic Religious Education achievement depends largely on the implementation of adaptive, collaborative, and sustainable strategic management. This study contributes to the literature on educational leadership by providing empirical evidence on the role of principals' strategic management in enhancing the quality of Islamic Religious Education in elementary schools.

Keywords: *strategic management, principal, Islamic Religious Education achievement, educational leadership, elementary school.*

Abstrak:

Prestasi Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) di sekolah dasar masih menghadapi berbagai tantangan, di antaranya belum optimalnya penerapan manajemen strategi kepala sekolah dalam mengelola program peningkatan mutu pembelajaran dan prestasi peserta didik. Kondisi ini menunjukkan pentingnya kepemimpinan strategis yang mampu mengintegrasikan perencanaan, pemantauan, analisis, dan penilaian secara berkelanjutan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji manajemen strategi kepala sekolah dalam meningkatkan prestasi Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) di SDN Jadimulya Cikalong. Penelitian menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan studi kasus. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi, dan dokumentasi, kemudian dianalisis secara deskriptif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kepala sekolah telah menerapkan manajemen strategi secara sistematis dan partisipatif melalui penyusunan program berbasis data, pemantauan pelaksanaan secara berkala, analisis terhadap capaian program, serta penilaian berkelanjutan yang melibatkan guru, peserta didik, dan orang tua. Implementasi strategi tersebut terbukti mampu meningkatkan prestasi akademik dan

karakter religius peserta didik, yang ditunjukkan dengan berbagai prestasi pada tingkat desa maupun kecamatan. Temuan penelitian menegaskan bahwa peningkatan prestasi Pendidikan Agama Islam sangat dipengaruhi oleh penerapan manajemen strategi yang adaptif, kolaboratif, dan berkelanjutan. Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi pada pengembangan kajian kepemimpinan pendidikan, khususnya mengenai implementasi manajemen strategi kepala sekolah dalam meningkatkan mutu pembelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam di sekolah dasar.

Keywords: *manajemen strategi, kepala sekolah, prestasi Pendidikan Agama Islam, kepemimpinan pendidikan, sekolah dasar.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) plays an important role in shaping the character, morality, and spirituality of students from an early age (Imamah et al, 2021). PAI not only transfers religious knowledge but also builds social behavior and ethics in accordance with Islamic teachings (Judrah et al, 2024). In the context of elementary schools, PAI functions as the main foundation for the formation of noble character that will determine the quality of future generations (Laila, 2025). Therefore, efforts to improve the quality of PAI learning become one of the priorities in the national education system, especially in areas with a strong religious base such as SDN Jadimulya Cikalong.

Although PAI holds a strategic position, the challenges faced by elementary schools in improving the quality of religious learning are still quite significant. Issues such as the limited number of PAI teachers, low innovation in learning methods, and minimal utilization of learning technology often become obstacles (Selmi, 2025). These conditions can have implications for low student learning motivation and difficulties in maintaining religious achievement at the elementary school level. Therefore, the role of school principal leadership becomes very decisive in designing strategies capable of improving the quality of PAI (Gafur, 2020).

Strategic education management becomes one of the approaches that has proven effective in addressing the complexity of educational challenges. According to Parmansyah. (2022), strategic management encompasses the processes of planning, monitoring, analysis, and continuous assessment to achieve long-term objectives. In the context of PAI, the school principal's strategy is not only oriented towards academic achievement but also towards strengthening the religious character of students (Kuswara, 2025). This approach enables schools to integrate religious vision with modern management practices that are adaptive to change.

Research by Ismayani et al, (2023) shows that school principal leadership is closely related to the improvement of student learning achievement, including in the field of Islamic Religious Education (PAI). Their research results affirm that participative and visionary leadership styles are able to create a conducive school climate for academic as well as religious development. This demonstrates that the quality of school principal leadership becomes one of the important factors in supporting the success of Islamic education in elementary schools.

However, most existing studies still focus on general aspects of school management, such as curriculum management, facilities and infrastructure, or teacher performance improvement, without discussing in detail the school principal's strategy in improving PAI achievement. Research by Arjuna et al. (2025), for example, emphasizes the importance of technology-based learning innovation but does not specifically discuss school principal leadership strategies in the context of PAI. Thus, there remains a research gap that has not been extensively explored.

In addition, Ujarwanto (2017) states that the role of the school principal in managing PAI is often limited to administrative aspects, such as arranging lesson schedules or checking teacher attendance. This view raises the hypothesis that the role of the school principal in the field of PAI is not yet fully strategic, but rather merely routine supervision. If this view is correct, then school principal leadership will not provide a significant impact on student achievement development. Therefore, this hypothesis is important to be further tested through case-based empirical studies.

SDN Jadimulya Cikalong is one of the elementary schools known for its achievements in the field of PAI, both at the village and sub-district levels. This school consistently wins championships in various religious competitions, such as the Musabaqah Tilawatil Qur'an (MTQ), speech contests, tahfidz, and even calligraphy. This success indicates the existence of planned, systematic, and participative school principal strategic management. However, how these strategies are designed, monitored, analyzed, and evaluated is still rarely revealed in academic studies. This is the research gap that needs to be studied in depth.

Based on the above description, this research focuses on the analysis of school principal strategic management in improving PAI achievement at SDN Jadimulya Cikalong. The research is directed towards four main indicators of strategic management, namely planning, monitoring, analysis, and continuous assessment. Thus, the results of this research are expected to provide theoretical contributions in the development of Islamic education management science as well as practical contributions for other elementary schools in developing strategies to improve PAI achievement.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses qualitative methodology with a case study approach. Qualitative research is an examination system that produces clear information in the form of composed words or expressed orally from individuals and real behavior (Sugiyono., 2013). Data collection techniques use observation, interviews, and documentation study. Direct observation at SDN Jadimulya Cikalong was conducted in May 2025. Observation is the process of collecting data using sensory tools that need to be recorded and noted systematically (Ela Fatmawati et al., 2025). Then, the author conducted direct interviews with Mrs. Laila as the School Principal and Mrs. Selmi as the PAI Teacher. Meanwhile, data analysis techniques were conducted through data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing (Miles,M.B, Huberman,A.M, and Saldana, 2014).

3. RESULTS

This research finds that the school principal's strategy at SDN Jadimulya Cikalong has been implemented systematically and participatively to improve Islamic Religious Education (PAI) achievement. The research results can be elaborated into four main indicators of strategic management, namely planning, monitoring, analysis, and continuous assessment.

A. Planning

The school principal designed PAI learning programs based on students' real needs. Planning was conducted through regular meetings with teachers, the school committee, and parents, so that the policies taken reflect shared needs (Laila, 2025). The flagship programs designed include coaching for religious competitions such as the Musabaqah Tilawatil Qur'an (MTQ), Islamic speech contests, Al-Qur'an tahfidz, and calligraphy (Laila, 2025). In

addition, planning also includes the development of Islamic extracurricular activities that support the strengthening of students' religious character (Laila, 2025). These findings show that the school principal's planning is oriented towards holistic development, both academic and non-academic aspects.

B. Monitoring

The implementation of PAI programs is monitored periodically by the school principal through classroom supervision, observation of religious activities, and evaluation of PAI teacher performance (Laila, 2025). Monitoring is conducted not only formally through written reports but also informally by engaging in direct dialogue with teachers, students, and parents (Laila, 2025). Every end of semester, the school principal holds a program evaluation meeting with the teachers' council and school committee to measure the achievement of predetermined targets (Selmi, 2025). The monitoring results show an increase in student motivation and the school's consistency in maintaining achievements at the village and sub-district levels.

C. Analysis

The school principal conducted a comprehensive analysis of student achievement development by referring to academic data, religious competition results, and daily records of students' religious behavior (Laila, 2025). This analysis functions to identify the strengths and weaknesses of PAI programs, as well as to become the basis for formulating new strategies. For example, student success in religious speech contests is analyzed as an indicator of the success of practice-based training methods, while low student participation in tahfidz activities becomes a concern for strengthening memorization coaching methods (Selmi, 2025). This data-based analysis enables the school principal to make strategy adjustments quickly and accurately.

D. Continuous Assessment

PAI program evaluation at SDN Jadimulya Cikalong is conducted continuously involving teachers, students, and parents (Laila, 2025). Assessment not only covers cognitive aspects but also attitudes and daily religious practices. The assessment results are used to provide feedback to teachers, students, and parents so that learning strategies can be continuously improved. This continuous assessment has proven effective in maintaining the quality of PAI learning, while ensuring that every student receives attention according to their individual needs (Selmi, 2025).

5. DISCUSSION

A. Planning

Planning is a basic management function that determines the direction and success of an educational institution (Jeka & Indriyani, 2024). Nababan et al, (2023) affirm that planning is the initial step in strategic management that ensures organizational activities run directionally. The findings of this research show that the school principal of SDN Jadimulya Cikalong designed PAI programs by involving teachers, students, and parents, so that the policies made reflect the real needs of the school.

Nor & Suriansyah (2024) emphasize that innovation in learning, including the utilization of technology, is one of the important factors in improving education quality. Although the utilization of technology in this school is still limited, the research results show that programs based on Islamic extracurriculars such as tahfidz and MTQ have already provided a real impact on student achievement. This strengthens the view that planning that is appropriate to the local context can be more effective than the adoption of innovation without mature strategy.

Sholihah & Khoiriyah (2024) reveal that educational planning that integrates religious character values will strengthen the spiritual foundation of students. The fact that the school emphasizes tahfidz, Islamic speech, and calligraphy activities proves the implementation of this principle. Thus, the school principal's strategy not only improves academic achievement but also internalizes Islamic values in students.

Good planning has implications for the creation of a religious school culture. Rohman et al, (2023) explain that visionary planning can create a learning environment oriented towards religious quality. This research shows that the religious culture built through planned programs at SDN Jadimulya Cikalong becomes one of the keys to the consistency of students' religious achievements.

For future development, school planning needs to adopt digital integration in PAI learning. This is in line with the view of Ardiansyah et al, (2024), Ilmi, I., & Saepurrohman, A. (2021). who emphasize the importance of school adaptation to the digital era so that religious education remains relevant. By combining conventional strategies based on religious activities and digital technology, schools can produce more adaptive and sustainable planning.

B. Monitoring

Sutiono et al, (2025) affirm that educational supervision is not only administrative in nature but must also be pedagogical to improve learning quality. The results of this research show that the school principal conducts classroom supervision, observation of religious activities, and routine evaluation with PAI teachers. This demonstrates the role of the school principal as an active supervisor in maintaining the quality of PAI learning.

Mulyasa (2022) found that some elementary school principals tend to only conduct monitoring limited to administrative reports without real involvement. However, the results of this research show different practices at SDN Jadimulya Cikalong, where the school principal is directly involved in discussions with teachers and students. These findings show that participative supervision is more effective in improving student motivation and achievement.

Hanapi et al, (2024) state that intensive supervision is able to improve the quality of religious learning because teachers feel supported in their professional development. The findings of this research strengthen that view, where PAI teachers are more motivated after receiving direct feedback from the school principal. The implication is that continuous monitoring can increase teacher confidence in teaching and have an impact on student achievement.

Monitoring also functions as an internal school control mechanism. Suaeb (2022) emphasizes the importance of continuous evaluation as part of the continuous improvement concept in education quality management. With monthly evaluation meetings, the school principal can identify obstacles in PAI activities and formulate quick solutions. This shows that monitoring is not only supervision but also a means of systematic quality improvement.

For the future, monitoring can be strengthened through the utilization of digital technology. Shelvia (2025) suggests the use of digital platforms for learning monitoring that enables more systematic evaluation. With web-based supervision applications, the school principal can conduct more structured, transparent, and well-documented supervision.

C. Analysis

Bloom in Marta et al, (2025) developed the concept of educational taxonomy that emphasizes the importance of comprehensive evaluation on cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects. The results of this research show that the school principal analyzes student achievement not only from academic grades but also from daily religious behavior (Laila, 2025). This comprehensive analysis strengthens the quality of PAI education strategy

at the school.

Susanto et al, (2024) emphasize the importance of data as the basis for decision-making in education management. This is proven in practice at SDN Jadimulya Cikalong, where the school principal uses competition data, teacher records, and student behavior to formulate follow-up strategies. In this way, the school principal is able to identify program weaknesses such as the lack of participation in tahfidz, then adjust the coaching strategy.

Data-based analysis is also in line with the SWOT method (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats). Suparman et al, (2023) state that the application of SWOT analysis in Islamic education can help schools adapt to environmental changes. The results of this research show that the school principal identifies strengths in the form of competition achievements, weaknesses in the form of limited teachers, opportunities in the form of community support, and threats in the form of limited facilities.

The implication of this analysis is the creation of continuous improvement in PAI learning. Hendrianty et al, (2024) emphasize that data-based reflection encourages teachers to be more active in seeking learning solutions. The fact that PAI teachers at this school are involved in analysis discussions strengthens a reflective culture oriented towards quality.

In the future, the use of big data and artificial intelligence technology can support more comprehensive analysis in education. According to Mustoip et al. (2023), the utilization of analytic technology enables schools to make strategic decisions more quickly and accurately. If applied, this can strengthen the quality of PAI management in elementary schools.

D. Continuous Assessment

The importance of holistic assessment that covers all aspects of student development, not only written test results (Yunus et al, 2024). The results of this research show that assessment at SDN Jadimulya Cikalong involves teachers, students, and parents in assessing religious behavior as well as academic achievement (Selmi, 2025). Thus, the continuous assessment applied is already in accordance with the holistic approach.

Sitorus et al, (2025) found that continuous assessment in religious education functions as a feedback mechanism to improve learning quality. The results of this research strengthen that view, because the evaluation conducted at the school not only improves learning strategies but also increases parent involvement. Thus, the synergy between school and family in PAI coaching becomes stronger.

Fayol in Farina (2024) mentions that the control function in management is to ensure every activity runs according to plan. In the context of this research, continuous assessment becomes a form of collective control conducted participatively. This shows that education quality supervision is no longer top-down but involves all school stakeholders.

The implication of this continuous assessment is the increasing community awareness of the importance of religious education. Research by Christia (2025) states that parent involvement in evaluation increases children's motivation in learning religion. The results of this research prove that parent support in PAI activities at SDN Jadimulya Cikalong is an important factor in maintaining the consistency of student achievement.

Overall, the results of this research affirm that school principal strategic management has a significant contribution in improving Islamic Religious Education (PAI) achievement. The four main indicators—planning, monitoring, analysis, and continuous assessment—complement each other and form a continuous managerial cycle. These findings are in line with Fayol's theory in Cen (2025) which states that management effectiveness is determined by the integration of main functions in the organizational process. With the application of systematic strategies, the school principal is able to create a conducive religious learning environment while improving students' academic and non-academic achievements.

An important implication of this research is the need to strengthen collaboration between schools, parents, and the community in supporting religious education. Previous research by Ningsih & Zalisman (2024) emphasizes that the success of PAI learning does not only depend on teachers but also on community involvement in building a religious culture. The results of this research confirm that view by showing that parent involvement in the continuous assessment process becomes a key factor in the school's success.

In addition, this research opens opportunities for integrating digital technology in PAI education management strategy. As emphasized by Nur & Junaris (2023), technology can strengthen the planning, monitoring, and evaluation of education programs. Thus, future research needs to examine digital-based strategic management models that are able to improve the effectiveness of religious learning while answering the challenges of the globalization era.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the research results, the strategic management of the school principal at SDN Jadimulya Cikalong has proven to play a significant role in improving Islamic Religious Education (PAI) achievement through the application of four main indicators, namely planning, monitoring, analysis, and continuous assessment. The strategies designed systematically, participatively, and based on data are able to create a conducive religious learning environment, increase student learning motivation, and produce academic and non-academic achievements in the religious field. This research also affirms that the success of improving PAI achievement is not only determined by school principal leadership but also by close collaboration with teachers, students, parents, and the community. Going forward, the integration of digital technology in PAI education strategic management needs to be developed to answer the challenges of the globalization era while strengthening the sustainability of Islamic education quality in elementary schools.

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