

Strategic Educational Management in Rural Public Schools: Driving Institutional Quality and Local Competitiveness

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the contribution of the principal's strategic management to improving educational quality and school competitiveness at SD Negeri 1 Wajak Lor. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, data were collected through semi-structured interviews, observations, and documentation, with the principal serving as the main informant. The findings indicate that effective strategic management is reflected in several key practices: (1) establishing a clear and measurable school vision as the basis for decision-making; (2) enhancing teacher competencies through continuous training and supervision to improve learning quality; (3) cultivating a positive school culture that encourages stakeholder engagement; (4) optimizing facilities and infrastructure to support teaching and learning activities; (5) strengthening partnerships with parents and external stakeholders to expand resource support; and (6) applying transformational leadership to address budget limitations and bureaucratic challenges. These strategies have contributed to increased student achievement, stronger community participation, and an improved school reputation. The study concludes that the principal's strategic management plays a crucial role in advancing educational quality and institutional competitiveness. Consistent implementation of strategic planning, execution, and evaluation leads to better educational services and sustainable school development. Therefore, strengthening principal mentoring programs and practical managerial competencies is essential for supporting continuous improvement and long-term transformation in elementary education.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Education is a fundamental aspect of nation building. The success of a country in developing the quality of human resources depends on the quality of education (Oyewole & Adegoke, 2018). Quality education creates a generation that is not only intellectually intelligent, but also has life skills, strong character, and adaptability in the midst of global dynamics (Rifa Hanifa Mardhiyah, 2021). Among all levels of education, basic education is the most important foundation. This is where the initial character and basic abilities of learners are formed, including the ability to read, write, count, think critically, as well as social and moral values (Chisunum & Nwadiokwu, 2022). Therefore, basic education must be managed seriously, systematically and strategically. In the context of basic education, schools have a great responsibility to provide quality education services. Schools are not only places of learning but also organizations that require professional governance, strong leadership and adaptive management. Within the school structure, the principal is the central figure in determining the direction, vision and strategy to be pursued (Nurafni, K., Saguni, F., & Hasnah, 2022). Principals are not just administrators, but strategic leaders who are required to have managerial skills, a vision of the future, innovative abilities, and assertiveness in making decisions that have a direct impact on educational processes and outcomes (Hanafie Das, St. Wardah, & Halik, 2021).

This phenomenon is more pronounced at the primary education unit level. Primary schools, both public and private, are competing with each other to show their excellence (Julie Bacak, Jonathan Wagner, 2023). In this situation, school principals are required to be able to respond appropriately to external and internal dynamics (Cengkas, dkk., 2024). It is not enough for principals to carry out administrative routines, but they must be able to develop long-term strategies, assess the school's internal strengths and weaknesses, and read opportunities and challenges from the external environment (María Carmen Lopez-Lopez, María Asunción Romero-Lopez, 2022). This is where the application of strategic management in education is important (Huda, 2022). Strategic management in the context of education means a systematic process of formulating the school's vision, mission and goals; conducting internal and external environmental analysis; designing long-term strategies; implementing work programs; and conducting continuous evaluation and improvement (Oki Dermawan, 2020). Principals as strategic leaders must be able to orchestrate all school components to run in harmony towards a common goal (Ibrahim Bafadal, 2004). Principals must think ahead, set clear priorities, and be able to manage limited resources effectively and efficiently (Peit Sahertian, 2010).

From a strategic management perspective, an organization's success is determined not only by the magnitude of its resources but also by its leaders' ability to identify, manage, and optimize available resources to create a competitive advantage (Prim Masrokan Mutohar & Hikmah Eva Trisnantari, 2014). The Resource-Based View (RBV) posits that an organization's competitive advantage can be achieved through the utilization of resources that are valuable, rare, difficult to imitate, and not easily substituted. In the context of public elementary schools, these resources are not always financial in nature but also include teacher competence, organizational culture, partnership networks, and the principal's leadership abilities (Mansur & Makherus Sholeh, 2024). Therefore, the principal's ability to orchestrate limited resources is a strategic factor that determines the school's success in improving educational quality and maintaining its competitiveness (Yinying Wang & Joonkil Ahn, 2023).

In the last few years, the head of SD Negeri 1 Wajak Lor began to apply a strategic management approach in managing the school. Various efforts have been made to improve the quality of education, such as the preparation of strategic work plans, teacher training, improving student

discipline, strengthening technology-based learning, and involving parents in school activities. However, the effectiveness of the strategies implemented is not yet known in depth. Not many studies have specifically examined how the real contribution of school principals through strategic management to improve the quality of education and school competitiveness, especially in public primary schools (Bernard M. Bass, 1999). The challenges in implementing strategic management in schools are many. Principals often face constraints in terms of budget availability, resistance from teachers or staff, time constraints and bureaucratic pressures. Not to mention if the internal monitoring and evaluation system has not run optimally. In addition, not all principals have adequate managerial training backgrounds (Sugunah Supermane, Lokman Mohd. Tahir, 2018). On the other hand, success in implementing strategies requires inclusive leadership, open communication, and the ability to build a conducive work culture (Julie Bacak, Jonathan Wagner, 2023). The contribution of school principals through strategic management cannot be measured only by outputs such as an increase in test scores or an increase in the number of learners (Faruq Trifauzi, Tobroni Tobroni, 2022). This contribution includes broader dimensions, such as the creation of a safe and comfortable learning environment, increased teacher and learner motivation, character development, and increased community participation in school activities (Fandy Tjiptono & Anastasia Diana, 2014).

This study is also important because it can fill the existing research gap. Many previous studies have discussed principals' leadership, but few have specifically examined the contribution of principals' strategic management in improving competitiveness, especially in public primary schools. This research does not only focus on the theoretical aspects, but also tries to explore the real implementation of the strategies carried out in the field (Lisa J. Cary, 2023). The urgency of this research is getting higher because changes in the world of education are accelerating. The industrial revolution 4.0, the development of digital technology, and post-pandemic challenges require schools to innovate and adapt. Principals must be agents of change who are able to navigate educational institutions in the midst of uncertainty. Adaptive and purposeful management strategies are key in maintaining school existence and excellence (Yinying Wang & Joonkil Ahn, 2023).

Although public elementary schools generally face budget constraints, complex administrative procedures, and relatively limited managerial autonomy, in reality there are a number of schools that are still able to demonstrate outstanding performance, maintain educational quality, and enhance their competitiveness (María Carmen Lopez-Lopez, María Asunción Romero-Lopez, 2022). This situation presents a paradox in educational management: how schools operating under resource constraints and within a rigid bureaucratic framework can still achieve sustainable institutional excellence. Wajak Lor Public Elementary School No. 1 is one example of this phenomenon. Therefore, the novelty of this study lies in the analysis of the principal's strategies for adapting to bureaucracy through the application of strategic management in the face of various structural constraints. Unlike previous studies, which have largely focused on the general leadership aspects of school principals, this study focuses on how the principal optimizes planning, resource management, the strengthening of stakeholder collaboration, and strategic decision-making to improve the quality of education and the school's competitiveness amid budget constraints and bureaucratic demands.

This study aims to: (1) Describe the form of strategic management implemented by principals at SD Negeri 1 Wajak Lor; (2) Analyze the contribution of principals' strategic management to improving the quality of education; (3) Examine the effect of strategic management on school competitiveness at the local and regional levels; (4) Identify supporting and inhibiting factors in the implementation of principals' strategies; and (5) Provide strategic recommendations for the development of basic education management. By presenting empirical data from the field, this study is expected to make a theoretical contribution to the development of education management science, especially in the field of strategic management at the primary school level. In addition, this study is

expected to make a practical contribution in the form of a strategy implementation guide that can be adopted by other school principals in similar contexts (Pepen Supendi & Aan Hasanah, 2018).

Based on this paradox, this study not only seeks to explain the relationship between school principals' strategic management and improvements in educational quality, but also to reveal how public elementary schools can maintain and even enhance their competitive edge amid budget constraints and a relatively rigid bureaucracy. Therefore, the novelty of this study lies in the identification and analysis of bureaucratic adaptation strategies implemented by school principals as mechanisms to optimize available resources, build collaboration with various stakeholders, and maintain the sustainability of school quality and competitiveness. This perspective is expected to enrich the field of educational management studies while providing a relevant model of practice for public elementary schools facing similar challenges. In addition, this study also employs the dynamic capabilities perspective to explain how school principals adapt to changes in the educational environment, budget constraints, and bureaucratic demands. This perspective allows for a more in-depth analysis of school principals' ability to integrate, build, and reconfigure school resources so that they can continue to deliver outstanding performance. Thus, the bureaucratic adaptation strategies identified in this study are understood not merely as administrative practices, but as strategic capabilities that contribute to the creation of a school's competitive advantage.

2. METHODS

This study used a qualitative approach with a descriptive research type. This approach was chosen because the research aims to understand and describe in depth the contribution of principals' strategic management in improving the quality of education and competitiveness of elementary schools. In a qualitative approach, researchers attempt to capture the meaning, processes and social dynamics naturally and deeply through direct interaction with research subjects, so that the data obtained are rich, contextual and meaningful. The descriptive type in this study means that researchers not only describe facts, but also analyze and interpret events based on the experiences, views, and actions of the main informants, in this case the principal. The research was conducted at SD Negeri 1 Wajak Lor, a public elementary school located in Boyolangu District, Tulungagung Regency, East Java. The location was purposively selected because the school is known to have implemented various quality improvement and competitiveness strategies that are quite prominent at the local level. The location was also chosen because the principal was active in developing strategic policies and demonstrated innovative leadership in various managerial aspects. The research implementation time was planned for May 2025, which was a strategic time because it coincided with the implementation of the final semester programs as well as the school's annual performance evaluation (Robert Bogdan & Steven J Taylor, 2000).

To ensure the consistency and validity of the research process, the study was conducted through several stages over a clear and systematic timeline. The preliminary stage, including literature review, preparation of research instruments, and obtaining research permits, was conducted from March to April 2025. Data collection activities, consisting of interviews, observations, and document analysis, were carried out intensively during May 2025. Subsequently, data organization, coding, thematic analysis, triangulation, and member checking were conducted from June to July 2025. The final stage involved interpretation of findings, report writing, and manuscript preparation, which was completed in August 2025. This timeline ensured that data collection and analysis were conducted systematically and provided sufficient opportunities for verification and validation of research findings.

The main subject in this study was the principal of SD Negeri 1 Wajak Lor, who was purposively selected because he has a central role in designing, implementing and evaluating strategic policies in

the school environment. The information provided by the principal is considered to represent the entire strategic management process in elementary schools, especially in terms of improving quality and competitiveness. In addition to the principal as the key informant, supporting data was also obtained through indirect interactions with teachers and relevant official documents. Data collection techniques were conducted through three main methods: semi-structured interviews, direct observation and documentation studies (Bogdan, R.C & Biklen, 1998).

The selection of informants was carried out using purposive sampling based on their relevance, experience, and involvement in school management and quality improvement programs. The principal was selected as the key informant because of his central role in strategic planning, decision-making, policy implementation, and evaluation processes within the school. Teachers were selected as supporting informants because they are directly involved in implementing school programs and can provide information regarding the effectiveness of leadership strategies in educational practices. School committee members were included to represent external stakeholders and provide perspectives on school performance, community participation, and institutional competitiveness (Lexy J. Meleong, 1996). The inclusion of these informants enabled the researcher to obtain comprehensive and balanced data from managerial, operational, and stakeholder perspectives, thereby enhancing the credibility and depth of the study (D. M. Mertens, 2010).

The main instrument in this research is the researcher himself who functions as a human instrument. To support the process, auxiliary instruments were also used in the form of interview guidelines, observation sheets, and document analysis formats. The interview guideline contains a list of key questions that can be developed according to the dynamics of the information that emerges. The observation sheet contains indicators of principal activities observed in the field. The document analysis format was used to record and categorize the contents of documents based on strategic categories (Sugiyono, 2018). The indicators used to assess the contribution of principals' strategic management cover several main aspects. In the strategic planning dimension, the indicators are the clarity of the school's vision and mission, the establishment of short-term and long-term goals, and the suitability of the work program to the needs of the school. In the implementation dimension, the indicators include the implementation of priority programs, the involvement of school members in the management process, the allocation of resources, and the supervision of activities. In the results dimension, the indicators include the improvement of students' academic and non-academic achievements, increased community satisfaction, school image in the surrounding environment, and the sustainability of excellent programs (Jonathan Sarwono, 2006). In the evaluation and control dimension, indicators include the use of data for evaluation, follow-up on evaluation results, and continuous improvement mechanisms (Ernest W. Burgess, 1998).

The data obtained were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, which consists of three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The interview data were analyzed using a thematic coding procedure adapted from qualitative data analysis principles (Ahmad Tanzeh, 2009). The analysis began with open coding, in which significant statements, phrases, and ideas from interview transcripts were identified and labeled. The next stage was axial coding, where related codes were grouped into broader categories reflecting dimensions of principals' strategic management, such as strategic planning, implementation, evaluation, leadership practices, quality improvement, and school competitiveness (Moh. Nazir, 2009). Finally, selective coding was conducted to integrate categories into overarching themes that explained the contribution of strategic management to educational quality and competitiveness. Throughout the coding process, the researcher continuously compared data across interviews, observations, and documents to identify recurring patterns and ensure consistency. The coding results were then organized into

thematic matrices that facilitated interpretation and conclusion drawing based on emerging themes (C. R. Kothari, 2004).

Data reduction was carried out by sorting, selecting, and simplifying the raw data obtained from interviews, observations, and documentation to focus on the research objectives. Data presentation was done in the form of descriptive narratives and thematic matrices to see patterns, trends, and relationships between data categories. Conclusions were drawn inductively by paying attention to the interrelationships between information that emerged in the field, which was then verified through a process of triangulation and repeated reflection (Yin, 1994). Data validity in this study was maintained through several techniques, especially triangulation. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing data from interviews, observations, and documents to ensure consistency of information. Technical triangulation was done by using various data collection methods simultaneously. Time triangulation was done by collecting data at different times to see the stability of the information. In addition, member checks were used to confirm the results of interviews with informants and peer debriefing with colleagues to assess the validity and interpretation of data by researchers (Sukardi, 2005).

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Icon of SD Negeri 1 Wajak Lor



Figure 1: Icon of SD Negeri 1 Wajak Lor

Mission and Vision of SD Negeri 1 Wajak Lor

Mission

The realization of students with imtaq, achievement, Pancasila student profile character, culture and environmental insight

Vision

1. Providing excellent service to all students based on faith and piety to God Almighty.
2. Using interesting, fun learning based on faith and piety with environmental insight.
3. Organizing student self-development according to their interests, talents, and potentials on an environmentally sound basis.
4. Accustoming students to love reading.
5. Instilling mutual respect and appreciation among school residents.
6. Developing an attitude of mutual cooperation and discipline.
7. Instilling an attitude of honesty and responsibility.
8. Getting used to clean and healthy living and love for the environment.
9. Preserving regional culture as a form of nationalism spirit with an environmental perspective.
10. Instilling the behavior of today is better than yesterday.

Description of SD Negeri 1 Wajak Lor

SD Negeri 1 Wajak Lor is one of the oldest public primary schools in Tulungagung Regency. Established on June 1, 1910, this school has been an important part of the educational journey in the Boyolangu Sub-district area, especially Wajak Lor Village. For more than a century, SD Negeri 1 Wajak Lor has been a place of learning for generation after generation who have now contributed in

various fields of community life, both at the local and national levels. Located in Wajak Lor Village, Boyolangu District, Tulungagung Regency, East Java, SD Negeri 1 Wajak Lor occupies an area of 784 square meters. Its strategic location and easy accessibility to the surrounding community make this school a top choice in the provision of basic education. As a formal education institution under the auspices of the central government, SD Negeri 1 Wajak Lor has a high commitment to the quality of education. This is evidenced by the achievement of A accreditation based on the certificate number 1263/BAN-SM/SK/2022, which was issued by the Provincial Accreditation Board for Schools/Madrassas on September 13, 2022. This accreditation reflects the quality of school management, the learning process, and the completeness of facilities and infrastructure that meet national education standards. Within the available land area, SD Negeri 1 Wajak Lor is equipped with facilities that optimally support the teaching and learning process. The school has been connected to the electricity network from PLN and has internet access that is used to support learning activities, both by students and educators. The existence of these facilities supports the integration of technology in education and provides wider access to information for all school members (Cahyadi Maseri, 2025).

Teaching and learning activities at SD Negeri 1 Wajak Lor are organized for six days a week, from Monday to Saturday, with learning time in the morning. The curriculum applied refers to the National Curriculum which has been adapted to local needs. Educators who teach are professional teachers who have competence in accordance with their fields. In addition to academic learning, students are also equipped with character education and various extracurricular activities that support the development of potential and personality (Seth B. Hunter & April Ege, 2021). Education at SD Negeri 1 Wajak Lor not only emphasizes academic achievement, but also instills moral and ethical values as part of character education. Every student is directed to have an attitude of discipline, responsibility, and concern for others and the environment. This is in line with the school's vision in forming the next generation of the nation that is smart, noble, and ready to face global challenges (María Carmen Lopez-Lopez, María Asunción Romero-Lopez, 2022). As an educational institution, SD Negeri 1 Wajak Lor has an active role in the social life of the community. The school is not only a place of learning for school-age children, but also the center of community activities related to education, such as teacher training, gotong royong activities, and local cultural activities. Through more than a century of experience, adequate facilities, professional educators, and a strong commitment to the quality of education, SD Negeri 1 Wajak Lor has become one of the best choices in providing quality basic education in Tulungagung Regency. The school continues to grow to meet the challenges of the times and to contribute in producing future generations who excel in science and are based on the noble values of the nation.

Strategic Vision and Mission of SD Negeri 1 Wajak Lor

At SD Negeri 1 Wajak Lor, the school vision and mission are the main basis for directing all educational activities. The drafting process involves various parties, especially stakeholders such as teachers, parents and the school committee. Their involvement is very important because each of them brings different perspectives and experiences, which in turn can refine and strengthen the formulation of the school vision and mission. Not just an administrative document, the vision and mission are truly designed to be relevant to the needs of the learners as well as the realities in the school environment. Stakeholder participation also opens up space for dialogue and collaboration. By

involving them in the process of formulating the vision and mission, the school has succeeded in fostering a high sense of ownership (Nuryanti et al., 2025). This is important because strategies formulated together tend to get more support, and their implementation becomes smoother. On the other hand, stakeholder involvement also helps in identifying risks or challenges that may arise, so that schools can anticipate and develop appropriate solutions (Simanjuntak & Siregar, 2024).

Functionally, the school vision becomes the long-term direction to be achieved. SD Negeri 1 Wajak Lor has a vision to create students who are faithful and pious, have achievements, have characters according to the student profile of Pancasila, cultured, and care for the environment. This vision is then derived into a more operational and concrete school mission, such as organizing religious activities, strengthening local culture, developing student achievement, and preserving the environment. The implementation of this vision and mission is evident through various programs. For example, through the "Pagi Religi" activity, students are accustomed to reading prayers, short letters, and asmaul husna every morning before learning begins. This program aims to instill spiritual values consistently. "Friday Blessing" activities are also part of religious character building through dhuha prayers, Yasin recitation, and tahlilan together.

In the area of interests and talents, the school organizes various extracurricular activities such as ICT, Class Math, Science Club, painting, dance, and hadrah, all of which support academic and non-academic achievements. Meanwhile, the "Kamis Kejawan" program is a means for students to get to know and love their regional culture. They wear traditional clothes and practice using manners, as a form of Javanese cultural preservation as well as ethical and polite education. Regarding the dissemination of the vision and mission, the school conducts socialization openly to all school members. In meetings with teachers and guardians, the school not only conveys the contents of the vision and mission, but also opens a question and answer session and discussion. This is so that each party understands and feels directly involved in achieving common goals. Overall, SD Negeri 1 Wajak Lor has shown a strong commitment in making the vision and mission not just a slogan, but a strategic direction that is implemented in the daily life of the school. With a participatory approach, relevant programs and open communication, the school's vision and mission become a strong foundation in supporting the continuous improvement of education quality (Irfan Budiono, 2019).

Strategic Planning at SD Negeri 1 Wajak Lor

Strategic planning at SD Negeri 1 Wajak Lor is an integral part of efforts to improve the quality of education. The school realizes that a successful educational strategy is not only determined by the written planning documents, but also by the extent to which the preparation process involves the participation of all parties and is able to adjust to the real conditions faced by the school. In preparing the strategic plan, both short-term and long-term, all school stakeholders are actively involved. These parties include the school committee, parent representatives from each class association, teachers and education personnel, and the school management team led by the principal. This involvement is not only symbolic, but is manifested in official forums such as meetings and planning discussions, where input from various parties is used as the basis for designing the direction of future school policies and programs (Lily Aprilyana Cengkas, 2024).

The presence of stakeholders in the planning process enables the development of strategies that are not only ideal on paper, but also realistic and applicable in the field. In practice, schools make systematic adjustments to various internal factors, especially human resources and available infrastructure. For example, to improve the quality of digital-based learning, schools realize that not

all teachers have sufficient technological competence. Therefore, the training designed is tailored to each teacher's initial ability, conducted in stages and practice-based, so that they can apply it directly in learning (Leonard Leonard, 2015). In addition, limited infrastructure is also a concern in strategic planning. Despite not having a complete computer laboratory, SD Negeri 1 Wajak Lor still runs a digital literacy program by utilizing Chromebooks and the school Wi-Fi network that is already available. The activities are carried out in class, at a time that does not interfere with the main teaching and learning process. This step shows how the school is able to implement strategies adaptively, without having to wait for perfect facilities first.

These findings can be explained through the Resource-Based View (RBV) perspective, which emphasizes that organizational advantage is not solely determined by the abundance of resources, but rather by the organization's ability to effectively utilize the resources it possesses. Although SD Negeri 1 Wajak Lor does not yet have a fully equipped computer lab, the principal was able to optimize Chromebooks, the Wi-Fi network, and teachers' competencies as strategic assets to support the digital literacy program. This situation demonstrates the practice of resource orchestration—that is, a leader's ability to combine and direct limited resources to generate greater value. Thus, the school's competitive advantage is not built on the availability of abundant resources, but rather on the principal's managerial ability to strategically manage the available resources.

The strategy for developing facilities and infrastructure was carried out in a gradual and planned manner, prioritizing the most urgent needs. This approach reflects efficiency and flexibility in the implementation of the strategic plan. The school not only focuses on achieving long-term goals, but also ensures that every step taken is tangible and has a direct impact on the education process. Overall, strategic planning at SD Negeri 1 Wajak Lor is designed based on the principles of collaboration, relevance and sustainability. An inclusive drafting process and a contextual approach are key in ensuring that the strategies are able to respond to current and future educational challenges and needs.

One of the most significant findings of this study is the principal's strategy in optimizing limited digital resources through the allocation and utilization of Chromebooks. Although the school does not yet have a fully equipped computer laboratory, digital learning activities continue to be implemented by utilizing available Chromebooks and the school's Wi-Fi network. As stated by the principal, "Although we do not yet have a complete computer laboratory, we maximize the use of Chromebooks and the school Wi-Fi network. Students can still access digital learning in their classrooms according to a scheduled rotation." This finding demonstrates that educational quality improvement does not always depend on the abundance of resources but rather on how existing resources are strategically managed and utilized. This result supports the Resource-Based View proposed by Barney (1991), which argues that organizational competitiveness is determined by the effective utilization of available resources. Furthermore, this finding aligns with international studies on digital leadership that emphasize the importance of school leaders' ability to optimize existing technological assets to support learning innovation. However, unlike schools in developed countries that generally possess comprehensive digital infrastructure, SD Negeri 1 Wajak Lor demonstrates that successful digital transformation can also emerge from resource-constrained educational settings through adaptive leadership and strategic resource allocation.

Strategic Implementation at SD Negeri 1 Wajak Lor

Strategic implementation is an important stage in implementing the plans that have been prepared by the school. The success of this implementation is highly dependent on the extent to which the strategies that have been designed can be effectively implemented by all elements of the school. At SD Negeri 1 Wajak Lor, the implementation of educational strategies faces various dynamics and challenges, but is also accompanied by solutive and innovative efforts. One of the main obstacles in implementing the strategy is the limited human resources. Not all teachers have sufficient competence to implement technology-based programs or innovative learning methods. Some teachers even show resistance to change, especially to the use of technology in teaching and learning activities. For example, there are teachers who are reluctant to utilize digital learning platforms because they are not used to or feel insecure about technological devices. In addition, obstacles also arise from the participation of parents and students. Parents, especially those who work all day, are busy and their attendance in school programs such as parenting school is low. This has an impact on the lack of support for educational activities at home. On the other hand, some students also experience a decrease in motivation to learn, especially if they come from family backgrounds that are less academically supportive (Shofiyah, 2018).

Nevertheless, SD Negeri 1 Wajak Lor continues to optimize teachers' involvement in the strategic decision-making process. Teachers are not only the implementers, but are also involved in the formulation of policies related to learning, curriculum and the development of student activities. This involvement increases the sense of belonging to the school program and makes the resulting policies more realistic and easy to implement. In terms of implementation, it can be said that the strategy is quite optimal. The school empowers teachers as strategic partners in school development and tries to adapt the program to the available funds and resources. Although not all targets have been achieved, the impact of strategy implementation has begun to be seen, especially in terms of improving teachers' competencies and students' participation in school activities. As part of the human resource development strategy, the school established a teacher learning community called "Mabes Dewalosa" (Let's Learn Together with Dewalosa). This community serves as a forum for teachers to share knowledge, discuss and develop effective learning practices. The ultimate goal is to create a culture of learning together to improve the quality of learning and student learning outcomes.

One of the school's flagship programs that supports the implementation of the strategy is "One Student One Achievement". This program is designed to explore and develop the potential of each student in the academic and non-academic fields. Through the guidance of Olympiads, literacy competitions, tahfiz programs, art and sports activities, the school provides opportunities for students to excel according to their respective interests and abilities. This program reflects the school's commitment to realizing an inclusive and individual potential-based education strategy. Overall, the strategic implementation at SD Negeri 1 Wajak Lor has shown positive progress. Although there are still obstacles, improvement measures continue to be taken to ensure that the strategies designed can be implemented effectively and have a real impact on all school members.

From the perspective of Dynamic Capabilities, the "Mabes Dewalosa" and "One Student One Achievement" programs demonstrate the school's ability to build, develop, and reconfigure internal resources to address changes in the educational environment. The principal not only performs administrative functions but also acts as a strategic agent who drives organizational learning by strengthening teachers' competencies and developing students' potential. These capabilities enable the school to continuously adapt to the demands of learning innovation, technological advancements, and rising public expectations regarding the quality of education. Therefore, the success of strategy

implementation depends not only on the programs carried out but also on the principal's ability to foster the organization's adaptive capacity on an ongoing basis.

Another important finding concerns the establishment of the "Mabes Dewalosa" teacher learning community as a strategy for strengthening teacher professionalism and organizational learning. The principal explained that "Through Mabes Dewalosa, teachers regularly share experiences, discuss classroom problems, and learn new teaching methods together." This initiative has become a collaborative platform where teachers exchange ideas, solve instructional challenges, and improve pedagogical competencies. The existence of this learning community reflects the principal's commitment to creating a sustainable culture of professional development within the school. This finding is consistent with the concept of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) developed by DuFour, R., & Eaker, (2000), which emphasizes collaboration, collective inquiry, and continuous improvement as key elements of school effectiveness. Similarly, Stoll et al. (2006) found that collaborative learning communities contribute significantly to teacher capacity building and student achievement. The present study extends these findings by showing that PLC practices can be effectively implemented even in public elementary schools with limited resources when supported by strong strategic leadership from the principal.

Strategic Evaluation of SD Negeri 1 Wajak Lor

Strategic evaluation at SD Negeri 1 Wajak Lor covers various important aspects related to efforts to improve the quality of education in a sustainable manner. Strategic evaluation is carried out with the aim of assessing the effectiveness of the implementation of school programs and policies, as well as the basis for decision-making in improving the learning process. First, the improvements in the quality of education that have been made cover several key areas. In the learning process, the school has implemented the Merdeka Curriculum, which provides flexibility for teachers to adjust learning methods according to student characters. In addition, the use of active and creative learning methods such as project-based learning and problem-based learning is an integral part of efforts to improve teaching quality. The application of differentiated learning is also carried out to accommodate the diverse learning needs of students. Secondly, improving teacher competence is the main focus. The school regularly conducts training through learning communities and Teacher Working Groups (KKG), and encourages teacher participation in the Merdeka Teaching Platform (PMM) program. Increasing teachers' digital literacy is also prioritized so that teachers can optimize the use of technology in learning. Third, improvements to facilities and infrastructure were also made to create a comfortable and supportive learning environment. The provision of digital learning media, comfortable classrooms, reading corners, and school Wi-Fi facilities are part of this effort. In addition, attention to sanitation and hygiene is also important to support students' health and comfort during the learning process.

In the strategic evaluation process, the teacher's role is central. Teachers are not only tasked with collecting data on student learning outcomes, but also providing feedback based on direct observation of learning. They analyze student achievement, identify weaknesses and strengths, and design more effective learning improvement strategies. In addition, teachers also act as collaborators in strategic decision-making and liaison between the school and parents and the community in conveying evaluation results and follow-up (Shofiyah, 2018). Evaluations in schools are conducted regularly and frequently so that the results can be immediately utilized for continuous improvement. Consistent implementation of evaluations enables schools to respond to challenges quickly and

appropriately so that the quality of education can be continuously improved. Finally, evaluation results are shared openly with all stakeholders, including teachers, parents and school committees. This openness aims to build transparency and encourage the active participation of all parties in supporting the education quality improvement program. With open communication, there is a shared understanding and strong synergy for school progress (Nurdin Usman, 2002).

The “One Student One Achievement” program emerged as a strategic initiative aimed at enhancing both educational quality and school competitiveness through the development of students’ individual potential. According to the principal, “Every student must have at least one area of excellence. Our role is to identify their strengths and facilitate their development through coaching and extracurricular activities.” Through academic competitions, Olympiad coaching, literacy programs, arts, sports, and religious activities, students are encouraged to achieve success according to their interests and talents. This finding illustrates the implementation of a student-centered educational approach that recognizes diversity in learners’ abilities and aspirations. The result supports Tomlinson, (2014) theory of differentiated instruction, which emphasizes the importance of adapting educational experiences to individual learner characteristics. It also aligns with Subotnik, R. F., Olszewski-Kubilius, P., & Worrell, (2011), who argue that talent development programs play a critical role in fostering student achievement and long-term educational success. The findings indicate that school competitiveness can be strengthened not only through institutional achievements but also through systematic efforts to develop the unique potential of every student.

The study also found that strategic evaluation at SD Negeri 1 Wajak Lor is conducted through a participatory and transparent approach involving teachers, parents, and school committee members. As expressed by the principal, “Evaluation results are shared openly with teachers, parents, and the school committee so that improvement becomes a shared responsibility.” This approach enables stakeholders to contribute actively to identifying strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for improvement. The openness of the evaluation process promotes accountability and strengthens stakeholder trust in school management. This finding is consistent with international literature on distributed leadership, which highlights the importance of stakeholder involvement in decision-making processes to improve organizational effectiveness. Research by Harris (2014) demonstrates that participatory leadership practices contribute positively to school improvement and innovation. In the context of this study, strategic evaluation serves not only as a monitoring mechanism but also as a collaborative process that supports continuous improvement and sustainable educational development.

Quality of Education and Competitiveness of SD Negeri 1 Wajak Lor

Improving quality and competitiveness at SD Negeri 1 Wajak Lor includes various aspects that show the school's progress in providing quality and competitive education services. First, the strategies implemented consistently have a positive impact on student learning outcomes. This is evident from the increase in academic grades, student achievements in various competitions, and the development of better critical and creative thinking skills. Students' learning motivation has also improved, which is reflected in their active participation in the learning process and extracurricular activities. Furthermore, principals play an important role in supporting the improvement of teachers' competencies through various training and professional development programs. These programs include regular training conducted internally and through the Teachers Working Group, participation

in the Merdeka Teaching Platform, and the establishment of a teacher learning community that encourages collaboration and skills improvement (Muhaimin, Suti'ah, 2012).

The principal also provides direction and assistance so that the results of the training can be implemented effectively in daily learning. In terms of facilities, the school's strategic management has led to significant improvements in facilities and infrastructure in the past year. The arrangement of more comfortable classrooms, the addition of digital learning media such as Chromebooks, improved Wi-Fi networks, and improved sanitation facilities are clear evidence of the school's commitment to creating a conducive learning environment and supporting student achievement (Sa'diyah, 2019). In addition, learning and school management innovations at SD Negeri 1 Wajak Lor are well received by the principal and all teachers. These innovations include the use of active learning methods and digital technology as well as the implementation of a transparent and participatory management system. The full support of the principal and the strong collaboration among teachers have made this innovation optimally implemented, thereby improving the overall quality of education. Thus, the dimension of quality improvement and competitiveness at SD Negeri 1 Wajak Lor shows that the school has implemented effective and sustainable strategies to move forward and provide excellent education that is relevant to the needs of the times.

The findings of this study contribute to the development of educational management theory by proposing a Constraint-Driven Strategic Management Model (CDSMM) for elementary schools. The model is based on the empirical evidence from SD Negeri 1 Wajak Lor, which demonstrates that school competitiveness is not primarily determined by the abundance of resources but by the principal's ability to strategically manage limitations and transform them into opportunities for improvement. The study found that various constraints, including limited digital infrastructure, varying teacher competencies, restricted financial resources, and fluctuating parental participation, did not hinder school development. Instead, these challenges became the basis for designing adaptive strategies such as Chromebook optimization, teacher learning communities (Mabes Dewalosa), participatory decision-making, and the One Student One Achievement program. This finding extends existing strategic management theories by emphasizing the role of leadership in converting operational constraints into organizational strengths.

Based on these findings, a conceptual model can be formulated in which school constraints become the starting point of strategic decision-making. The principal first identifies internal and external constraints, followed by resource mapping and stakeholder engagement. The next stage involves adaptive strategy formulation, collaborative implementation, continuous evaluation, and organizational learning. These processes subsequently generate educational outcomes in the form of improved teacher competence, student achievement, innovation capacity, stakeholder trust, and school competitiveness. Therefore, the proposed Constraint-Driven Strategic Management Model offers a theoretical framework for understanding how educational institutions in resource-limited contexts can achieve sustainable quality improvement and competitive advantage through adaptive and participatory leadership practices.

4. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that the principal's strategic management at SD Negeri 1 Wajak Lor plays a pivotal role in improving educational quality and strengthening school competitiveness. The success of strategic management is not merely reflected in administrative planning but in the principal's ability to transform existing constraints into opportunities for

innovation and continuous improvement. Through participatory planning involving teachers, parents, and school committees, the school has developed strategic programs that are responsive to local needs and supported by key stakeholders. This collaborative approach has strengthened organizational commitment and facilitated the effective implementation of school development initiatives.

The study identified several key strategic initiatives that significantly contribute to educational quality improvement. First, the Chromebook Allocation Strategy illustrates how limited digital infrastructure can be optimized through adaptive leadership and effective resource utilization. Second, the Mabes Dewalosa Teacher Learning Community functions as a professional learning platform that enhances teacher competence, collaboration, and organizational learning. Third, the One Student One Achievement Program promotes student-centered development by providing opportunities for every learner to excel according to their talents and interests. Fourth, the Participatory Strategic Evaluation system encourages transparency, stakeholder engagement, and continuous improvement in school governance. Collectively, these initiatives have contributed to improved teacher performance, increased student achievement, stronger stakeholder trust, and enhanced school competitiveness.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of educational management literature through the formulation of the Constraint-Driven Strategic Management Model (CDSMM). The model highlights that school competitiveness is not primarily determined by the abundance of resources but by the principal's ability to identify operational constraints, mobilize available resources, engage stakeholders, implement adaptive strategies, and foster continuous organizational learning. The findings extend existing strategic management and educational leadership theories by demonstrating that resource limitations can become catalysts for innovation when managed through adaptive, collaborative, and strategic leadership. Therefore, the proposed model may serve as a conceptual framework for understanding and improving educational quality and competitiveness, particularly in elementary schools operating under resource-constrained conditions.

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