

PRINCIPAL MANAGEMENT IN OPTIMIZING TEACHER POTENTIAL TO IMPROVE LEARNING QUALITY AND SCHOOL BRANDING AT SD NEGERI KARANGDUKUH, KLATEN REGENCY

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Abstrak. This study aims to describe the principal's management in optimizing teachers' potential and school resources to improve the quality of learning and school branding at SD Negeri Karangdukuh. This research employed a qualitative descriptive approach, with data collected through interviews, observations, and documentation. The research subjects included the principal and teachers. Data analysis was conducted through the stages of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings indicate that the principal implements potential-based management through four main stages: planning, organizing, implementation, and evaluation. The principal is able to identify teachers' potential and assign them according to their competencies, effectively manage school facilities and infrastructure, and foster a collaborative working culture. The impact of this management is reflected in the improvement of learning quality, the achievement of school accomplishments that had not previously been attained—at least at the sub-district level—and the increase in student enrollment. Therefore, potential-based principal management has been proven to significantly contribute to improving educational quality and strengthening the school's image.

Keyword: principal management, learning quality, teacher potential, school branding

I. INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Education has a strategic role in improving the quality of human resources and determining the direction of a nation's progress. In the context of formal education, schools serve as the primary institutions responsible for creating quality learning processes. The quality of learning is determined not only by teachers' competencies, but also by the managerial abilities of principals in managing all resources owned by the school.

As educational leaders, principals play an important role in planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating various school programs. In addition, principals also function as managers, educators, supervisors, innovators, and motivators for all members of the school community (Pratiwi & Mulyasa, 2021). The managerial competence of principals in managing existing resources, both human resources—particularly teachers—and school facilities and infrastructure, is a determining factor in realizing quality education. Teachers, as the main implementers of learning activities, need to be positioned and developed according to their potential and competencies so that the learning process can run optimally.

Educational quality cannot be separated from the quality of school management. A quality school is one that is able to optimize all of its potential, including the potential of teachers as the spearhead of learning. Minsih et al. (2019) emphasize that principal leadership oriented toward comprehensive quality improvement is the key to achieving quality schools at the elementary school level. One of the challenges often faced by principals is how to place teachers according to their competencies and interests so that the teaching and learning process can take place effectively and pleasantly for students (Tanjung et al., 2021).

In the era of increasingly intense competition among educational institutions, schools cannot merely focus on improving internal quality. Schools need to build a positive image or strong branding within the community as an attraction. School branding is closely related to how the community perceives and trusts the educational institution as the appropriate place to educate their children (Septian, 2022). This public trust is reflected in the number of applicants enrolling each new academic year. However, in reality, many schools are still unable to optimize teachers' potential maximally. The placement of teachers that does not match their competencies, inadequate management of facilities and infrastructure, and weak management strategies have an impact on the low quality of learning and weak school branding, which in turn affects the school's attractiveness within the community. This condition results in low student enrollment and a lack of school achievements.

SD Negeri Karangdukuh is one of the public elementary schools in Klaten Regency that, over the past two years, has experienced significant changes under the leadership of a new principal. Previously, this school faced challenges in the form of a low number of newly enrolled students, averaging fewer than 20 students per year, as well as minimal achievements both at the school and sub-district levels. However, with the presence of adaptive leadership oriented toward potential development, the school has begun to demonstrate tangible improvements.

This phenomenon indicates that potential-based principal management plays an important role in improving the quality of learning while simultaneously building a positive image of the school within the community. By employing a qualitative descriptive approach, this study seeks to explore in depth how principal management at SD Negeri Karangdukuh contributes to improving school quality and branding.

II. METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach, namely a type of research aimed at describing and analyzing phenomena, events, social activities, attitudes, beliefs, perceptions, and people's thoughts individually as well as collectively (Sugiyono, 2022). This approach was selected because the researcher intended to gain an in-depth understanding of the principal's management practices at SD Negeri Karangdukuh, Klaten Regency, within their natural and actual context.

The research was conducted at SD Negeri Karangdukuh during the 2025/2026 academic year. The selection of the research site was based on the consideration that the school had experienced significant managerial changes relevant to the focus of the study. The research subjects consisted of the school principal, teachers of SD Negeri Karangdukuh, as well as representatives of parents and the school committee. The subjects were selected purposively, namely by choosing informants who were considered to possess the most knowledge and direct involvement in the school managerial processes.

The research procedure comprised three stages. First, the preparation stage, which included designing the research framework, obtaining research permits, selecting informants, and preparing the research instruments. Second, the implementation stage, which involved data collection through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation study. Third, the analysis and reporting stage, which included systematic data processing and the writing of research findings.

Data were collected through three primary techniques, namely in-depth interviews with the school principal, teachers, and parents; observation of managerial and learning activities at the school; and documentation study of planning documents, activity reports, and school achievement data. The instruments employed included semi-structured interview guidelines, observation sheets, and documentation checklists.

Data analysis was conducted using an interactive model consisting of three components, namely data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification (Sugiyono, 2022; Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2020). To ensure data validity, the researcher employed source triangulation and method triangulation techniques, namely by verifying the accuracy of information from various sources and through various data collection techniques.

III RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Human Resource Management Based on Teachers' Potential

The main findings of this study indicate that the principal of SD Negeri Karangdukuh implemented a human resource management approach based on teachers' potential. The first step taken by the principal was conducting

comprehensive observations and mapping the potential of each teacher. Through interviews, direct observation of teachers’ performance in the classroom, as well as reviews of teachers’ educational backgrounds and professional experiences, the principal obtained a comprehensive understanding of the strengths and interests of each teacher.

The results of this mapping were then used as the basis for assigning duties and distributing teachers’ roles. Teachers who possessed abilities in the arts were assigned to coach arts competitions, teachers who were competent in sports were empowered as supervisors of the school sports team, and teachers who had an interest in information technology were facilitated to lead learning digitalization programs. Young ASN teachers were placed in certain classes in which various psychological transitions, character formation, cognitive transitions, improvement of students’ basic abilities that must be mastered, efforts to enhance emotional maturity, and mental preparation for entering the next educational level took place.

This approach is aligned with the principle of principals’ managerial competence in managing human resources to improve the performance of elementary school teachers (Tanjung et al., 2021). Musrinih (2023) also demonstrated that strong principal managerial competence, combined with high work motivation, significantly influences the improvement of teacher performance, enabling each teacher to work with optimal motivation and performance.

The principal of SD Negeri Karangdukuh also consistently provided opportunities for teachers to develop themselves through training, workshops, teacher learning community activities (KKG), and further studies. The principal’s support in the form of coaching and mentoring (rather than merely administrative evaluation) created a positive and conducive working climate. This finding is in line with Walean et al. (2023), who found that principals capable of acting as instructional leaders are able to encourage sustainable improvement in teacher quality.

Optimization of Facilities and Infrastructur

In addition to managing human resources, the principal also conducted periodic analyses of facilities and infrastructure needs. With the existing budget limitations, the principal prioritized fulfilling the most urgent needs that directly affected the quality of learning. The principal of SD Negeri Karangdukuh initiated proposals for assistance to the local government (village head and local education office) and established collaboration with the school committee and students’ parents for the procurement of supporting facilities. Nurafni et al. (2022) demonstrated that the effective performance of school committees combined with strong principal leadership synergistically contributes to improving the quality of learning. This finding is consistent with the research results of Maryani & Saputra (2020), which concluded that effective management of facilities and infrastructure significantly contributes to improving learning quality.

The utilization of existing facilities was also optimized through regular scheduling and consistent supervision. Classrooms were arranged to become more comfortable and conducive to learning, unused rooms were utilized as libraries and subsequently reactivated through the provision of new books, and the school yard was utilized for outdoor learning activities. The limited budget available was appropriately allocated for the maintenance of classrooms and school buildings, thereby encouraging the enthusiasm of students and teachers to learn and perform their duties. This efficient management of facilities and infrastructure proved to increase students’ learning motivation and support the creation of an enjoyable school environment.

Improvement of School Achievement

The tangible impact of the principal’s planned and potential-based management can be seen from the school’s achievements. Over a period of two consecutive years, SD Negeri Karangdukuh successfully achieved several accomplishments at the sub-district level, an achievement that had previously rarely been attained by this school. These achievements covered various fields, ranging from academic competitions, arts, to sports. The following is a list of student achievements of SD Negeri Karangdukuh Klaten over the past two years:

Table 1 List of Student Achievements of SD Karangdukuh

No.	Competition Name	Category	Year	Achievement
1	National Student Arts and Literature Competition Festival (FLS3N) at Sub-district Level	Storytelling	2025	1st Place

2	National Student Arts and Literature Competition Festival (FLS3N) at Sub-district Level	Solo Singing	2025	1st Place
3	National Student Arts and Literature Competition Festival (FLS3N) at Sub-district Level	Creative Dance	2025	2nd Place
4	Mother Tongue Festival (FTBI) at Sub-district Level	Nembang Macapat	2025	3rd Place
5	Regional Student Sports Week (POPDA) at Sub-district Level	Athletics (Girls' 60-meter Sprint)	2026	2nd Place
6	Regional Student Sports Week (POPDA) at Sub-district Level	Athletics (Girls' 60-meter Sprint)	2026	3rd Place
7	Regional Student Sports Week (POPDA) at Sub-district Level	Swimming (Breaststroke and Freestyle)	2026	1st Place
8	National Student Sports Olympiad (O2SN) at Sub-district Level	Men's Singles Badminton	2026	1st Place
9	National Student Sports Olympiad (O2SN) at Sub-district Level	Women's Singles Badminton	2026	2nd Place
10	National Student Sports Olympiad (O2SN) at Sub-district Level	Athletics (Girls' 60-meter Sprint)	2026	2nd Place

This success cannot be separated from the strategy of the principal of SD Negeri Karangdukuh in identifying students' talents from an early stage and providing intensive coaching through teachers who were competent in their respective fields. The principal of SD Negeri Karangdukuh also developed a healthy competitive culture within the school environment, in which achievement was appreciated and used as motivation for all school members. This is consistent with the concept proposed by Mulyasa (2022), stating that professional principals are capable of creating the collective capacity of school members that encourages comprehensive performance improvement.

Branding as School Attraction and Increasing Number of Applicants

The achievements attained by the school automatically built a positive image in the minds of the surrounding community. The principal of SD Negeri Karangdukuh consciously utilized these moments of achievement to strengthen the school's branding, among others through the dissemination of information to the community, documentation of activities and achievements distributed through school information boards and social media, as well as active involvement in community activities around the school environment

These efforts to build public trust proved to be effective. Previously, the number of new student applicants averaged below 20 students per year; however, after the implementation of management oriented toward quality and attractiveness, the number of applicants increased to a minimum of 20 students every new academic year. This increase indicates that the community has begun to perceive SD Negeri Karangdukuh as a quality and trustworthy school option.

This finding is relevant to the concept of school branding proposed by Septian (2022), stating that effective school branding is built not merely through promotion, but through consistency in providing positive experiences to all stakeholders, ranging from students and parents to the wider community. Similarly, Budiarti et al. (2023) argued that sustainable and consistent branding strategies have been proven to increase public trust in educational institutions in Indonesia. Meanwhile, Azizah & Halwati (2023) emphasized that public awareness of schools can only be developed through tangible achievements communicated strategically. Rizkiyah et al. (2020) added that the success of building school branding is highly determined by the institution's ability to communicate its strengths and values authentically to the community. The principal of SD Negeri Karangdukuh successfully integrated efforts to improve internal quality with the development of external image synergistically.

IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings and discussion, it can be concluded that the principal's management at SD Negeri Karangdukuh, which is oriented toward the development of teachers' potential and the optimization of resources, has had a significant impact on improving school quality and branding. The principal implemented potential-based human resource management by mapping the abilities and interests of each teacher, assigning teachers according to their competencies, and providing continuous professional development support. Efficient management of facilities and infrastructure, as well as the development of a collaborative and achievement-oriented school culture,

also supported the attainment of tangible outcomes in the form of achievements at the sub-district level and an increase in the number of new students from below 20 to a minimum of 20 students per new academic year. This increase simultaneously reflects the strengthening of the school's branding in the eyes of the community. This study confirms that adaptive, data-based, and potential-oriented managerial leadership is the key to success in improving the quality and attractiveness of elementary schools. As formulated by Efendi & Sholeh (2024), structured educational management centered on improving learning quality will generate comprehensive positive impacts for all school components. Furthermore, broader-scope future research is needed to explore other factors contributing to the success of elementary school management in diverse contexts..

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