

Optimizing Learning Excellence: Exploring the Role of School-Based Management in Islamic Middle Schools

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ABSTRACT. This study aims to gather insights on implementing school-based management (SBM) in Islamic middle schools and analyze its impact on fostering superior learning environments. Data was collected from necessary parties using a qualitative research design, such as the school treasurer, deputy principal, and three instructors in charge of student affairs, curriculum, and public relations. The research was conducted at Al Azhar 29 Islamic Middle School in Semarang. Data collection methods included observations during learning activities, interviews with research subjects based on their roles and responsibilities concerning the management and implementation of the learning system, and document reviews related to the research topic. The collected data was analyzed using qualitative data analysis techniques, which involved identifying, organizing, describing, rearranging, and interpreting the data to derive meaningful insights. The findings reveal that SBM plays a crucial role in effectively, productively, and efficiently empowering resources within the school. Optimal management through the school management system is essential for effectively utilizing school resources. Critical components of creating quality and superior learning include financial management, curriculum development, educator and staff proficiency, infrastructure, community relations, pupil management, and school resilience. These findings suggest optimizing SBM can significantly create a superior learning environment. Therefore, further research is recommended to develop and refine effective and efficient SBM models.

Keywords: *Islamic middle schools, qualitative research, school-based management, superior learning environments*



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INTRODUCTION

Enhancing the standard of instruction and learning outcomes requires effective school management (Sanusi, 2019; Tabroni & Ismiati, 2021; Wardhani, 2022). Schools encounter several obstacles in their quest to promote high-quality learning, such as issues with students, teachers, facilities, and community involvement. However, implementing school-based administration gives schools more autonomy, which can enhance instruction by allowing for more flexibility and better resource management (Lazwardi, 2018). All operational components of a school can be guided and optimized to run as effectively and efficiently as possible with appropriate coordination of personnel and resources (Irsyadiah, 2021). For this reason, to attain an excellent and superior learning process, every educational institution must use a school-based management system.

Implementation of a quality and superior learning process can be achieved by implementing a dynamic and complex management system. School-based management (SBM) provides opportunities for school principals, teachers, and students to innovate and improvise curriculum, learning, and management and overcome problems during teaching and learning activities. Apart

from that, SBM also increases productivity and professionalism, indicators of educational quality (Mutirawati, 2021). SBM can minimize schools' problems, such as sub-optimal resource management, and increase teacher efficiency and accountability in student-centred learning. In this way, the curriculum's teaching and learning activities can be regulated and optimized through an excellent and centralized management system.

Implementing school-based management systems shows varying effectiveness in achieving educational outcomes. However, it faces challenges such as a lack of stakeholder empowerment and low compliance with transparent and measurable accountability principles (Anif, 2023). At Al Azhar 29 Islamic Middle School Semarang, challenges in creating quality and superior learning include non-optimality in resource management and teacher accountability, which need to be improved to increase teaching efficiency in the classroom so that learning outcomes are not optimal. Implementing SBM aims to improve the learning process to make it more progressive and produce quality graduates. In addition, SBM aims to increase the efficiency of educational quality by providing flexibility and independence in managing resources and improving the quality of teaching and learning and operational efficiency of education in schools (Lazwardi, 2018).

Any schools have successfully implemented school-based management to improve the quality of education. Previous research has explored the implementation of SBM in creating superior Islamic schools by focusing on four main issues: factors, principles, objectives, and implementation methods (Nur et al., 2016). Other research analyzes school policies related to student management, school relations with the community, curriculum management, personnel, special services, facilities and infrastructure, and school budgets (Setyaningsih et al., 2021). However, research analyzing the implementation of SBM in creating superior learning by optimally empowering school resources still needs to be completed. This research aims to fill this gap by providing information regarding the effectiveness of educational management models and their contribution to achieving educational quality and school progress. The findings can be used as a basis for developing a school management system and optimizing all aspects supporting student learning achievement.

School-based management aims to empower schools, especially their human resources, including school principals, teachers, education staff, parents, and the surrounding community, to overcome various problems schools face (Suryana & Fadhli, 2021). Comprehensive implementation of SBM can improve the quality of learning through planning, organizing, implementing and monitoring good management processes, with full support from the community, parents and school committee (Mutirawati, 2021). SBM aspects such as classroom management, learning management, curriculum, infrastructure, educators, and education personnel play a role in creating harmonization and good interaction between teachers and students during teaching and learning activities. Adequate facilities and infrastructure are also needed to create a conducive learning climate (Chusniyah & Akhmad, 2023). Thus, effective implementation of SBM can improve the quality of education and achieve educational goals in schools. This achievement starts from the learning process where schools, as educational institutions, must provide valuable educational services and create a superior learning atmosphere through a thorough understanding of the basic concepts of SBM.

Based on the problem analysis above, it is necessary to implement a complex SBM system to optimize learning excellence in schools. This research formulates the main problem: the role of SBM in optimizing superior, quality and integrated learning. Therefore, this research aims to obtain information regarding the implementation of SBM at Al Azhar 29 Islamic Middle School Semarang and to analyze the role of SBM in creating superior learning. It is hoped that this research can positively contribute to the progress and development of the quality of education in educational institutions through a superior learning process oriented towards producing quality graduates. This study aims to gather insights on implementing SBM in Islamic middle schools and analyze its impact on fostering superior learning environments

METHOD

This research uses qualitative methods to obtain data from informants, with research subjects, namely the deputy principal and teachers at SMP Islam Al Azhar 29. The research was carried out for 30 days, from January 9 2024 to February 6 2024, at SMP Islam Al Azhar 29 BSB Semarang. Data was collected through observation, interviews and documentation. In qualitative research, the researcher acts as the main instrument, which requires direct interaction with sources or informants through observation and in-depth interviews. This qualitative method allows researchers to see interactions between variables interactively, where variables influence each other, and there is no clear separation between independent and dependent variables (Murdiyanto, 2020).

The data collection process is carried out through observation, including recording and analyzing the data obtained to understand the observed context (Arikunto, 2010). Researchers used this method to collect information from direct observations of activities at SMPI Islam Al Azhar 29, including observations of teachers while teaching and carrying out administrative tasks and observations of students undergoing school programs. Researchers also observed the effectiveness of the school management system in supporting student learning. Apart from observation, interviews were also used to strengthen the data. Questions were asked of informants, including the deputy principal, school treasurer, head of curriculum, and teachers, to obtain direct information regarding the capabilities of the school-based management system at SMP Islam Al Azhar 29 BSB Semarang. This interview technique allows researchers to collect comprehensive data regarding the condition and effectiveness of the existing school management system. Qualitative data analysis was carried out through several stages. The first stage is the identification and compilation of raw data into an orderly and methodical database format. The second stage, data description, involves further data analysis in the database. The third stage is data reorganization, which is reanalyzed and interpreted to obtain significant results (Yin, 2011).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Based on the results of an interview with Mr. H, Deputy Principal of SMPI Al Azhar 29 BSB Semarang, it was found that: *"the school manages components through a school-based management system. The principal focuses on external affairs, such as coordinating with the school committee, student parents, and the community, as well as overseeing school financial management by requesting financial transparency reports for school program operations. The principal is also involved in the process of recruiting educators and educational staff. Meanwhile, the deputy principal coordinates internal components, including curriculum, infrastructure, community relations, religion, discipleship, school resilience, and teachers."* Information from this interview describes the primary duties of the principal and deputy principal in coordinating all aspects of the school for optimal operational effectiveness and efficiency of school management.

Operational school activities require an influential financial management role in managing the budget so that the allocation of financial resources can be appropriately on target, according to the needs to finance educators, educational staff, and administrative staff, as well as repair and improve educational infrastructure (Pusvitasari & Sukur, 2020). Financial management is tasked with managing financial resources by planning, collecting, and using funds efficiently to achieve the organization's financial goals (Bilgies et al., 2023). Good financial management is necessary to manage the income and expenditure of school funds so that they can finance learning activities optimally, according to the needs of the student learning process.

Based on the results of an interview with Mrs. M, Treasurer of SMPI Al Azhar 29 BSB Semarang, it is known that: *"the mechanism for using funds begins with the submission of a proposal by the teacher who plans activities for students. This proposal includes a budget plan and is submitted to the financial administration section, then forwarded to the secretariat Dikdasmen who are representatives of the foundation that*

manages units in schools." Information from this interview shows that effective financial management is essential to support the operational success of school activities. Efficient financial management support ensures that student learning programs and activities can run smoothly and according to plan.

Curriculum Management

The school curriculum plays a vital role in planning teaching and learning activities, so curriculum management at SMPI Al Azhar 29 is given great attention to ensure that the quality of learning meets student needs and educational goals. Based on the results of an interview with the Deputy Principal of SMPI Al Azhar 29, *"curriculum management includes forming a curriculum development team, preparing student activity plans that are in accordance with the school's vision and mission, managing teaching and learning activities, planning special activities such as school exams, as well as organizing academic schedule discussed and agreed upon in work meetings."* Implementing the curriculum requires systematic management, direction, and coordination to achieve educational goals. It involves regular reviews and active participation from all school stakeholders to ensure the curriculum remains relevant to developments in science, technology, and human personal development (Naibaho & Silalahi, 2022; Amalia & Hasanah, 2023; Wiyani et al., 2023). Curriculum management includes designing, implementing, and evaluating the curriculum and setting policies determining duties, authority, and responsibilities in developing school educational curricula (Triwiyanto, 2022).

According to Mrs. N, Curriculum Coordinator at SMPI Al Azhar 29 BSB Semarang, *"The curriculum used at this school has been developed and designed to meet the learning needs of Al Azhar students. The curriculum is adapted to the conditions of the educational unit and is integrated with the central curriculum of the Al Azhar Islamic Boarding School Foundation in Jakarta. SMPI Al Azhar combines the government curriculum with the Al Azhar curriculum and elaborates faith and piety education with science and technology. This approach produces curriculum management that supports the student learning process through fun learning and learning by doing methods, emphasizing courtesy, respect, and affection."* Based on the results of interviews, creating a superior learning atmosphere is closely related to implementing curriculum management, which is managed through a SBM system. The curriculum, which is prepared according to student needs, is implemented and managed by teachers for each subject, with the principal and deputy principal monitoring to ensure curriculum development in teaching and learning activities at school.

Curriculum integration is an educational approach that aims to develop students' abilities to face the challenges of the 21st century by combining various concepts, fields of study, skills, and abilities into integrated learning (Suyanto, 2017). This integration aims to develop student autonomy and create compelling and meaningful learning activities by paying attention to flexibility, inclusivity, collaboration, authenticity, and relevance and providing a rich learning experience to achieve superior education (Yuksel, 2010). Thus, curriculum integration prepares students for the future by combining various disciplines and skills and providing autonomy and meaningful learning experiences. At SMPI Al Azhar 29, curriculum integration is carried out through innovation and design of integrated learning activities, which provide a holistic and contextual learning experience helpful in preparing students for their future lives.

Management of Educators and Education Personnel

According to Mr. H, Deputy Principal of SMPI Al Azhar 29, *"management of educators and education personnel at this school involves coordinating and empowering all school coordinators, such as finance, infrastructure, religion, curriculum, student affairs, and school coordinators. Evaluation of monthly activities, coordination with all teachers and staff through monthly meetings, and announcements of upcoming activities are part of this management process. The principal acts as a manager, providing motivation, messages, and guidance to teachers and staff so that all activities run according to plan and achieve the school's vision and mission. In teacher recruitment, selection is carried out by the school principal, who then assigns teachers according to their qualifications and abilities. Teachers at SMPI Al Azhar 29 are also required to take part in training related to teaching according to the characteristics of students of Al Azhar, following the guidelines used throughout Al Azhar schools to maintain*

teacher professional competence." Information from these interviews shows that good management and effective coordination are critical to optimizing all school components. Any obstacles must be immediately coordinated with the principal and deputy principal to avoid negative impacts on the learning process. The productivity of the performance of educators and education personnel depends on effective and efficient management to create a conducive learning environment and support optimal learning.

Educators and educational staff in educational organizations, such as schools, are potential human resources (HR) who play an essential role in realizing educational goals. Management of educators and education personnel involves activities ranging from HR planning, recruitment, selection, placement, compensation, rewards, education, training, and development to dismissal (Amon et al., 2021). The availability of educators and educational staff who work together and support each other based on their fields is the key to achieving student academic excellence. To carry out their duties and functions effectively, educators and education personnel must have minimum standards or competencies determined by the appropriate education unit or educational qualifications. Educator management and personnel coordinate all school human resources by planning, organizing, directing, and controlling to achieve predetermined goals (Rais et al., 2024). It ensures that all aspects of HR management in schools run efficiently and effectively, supporting a conducive and quality learning environment.

Facilities and Infrastructure Management

Based on the results of an interview with the Deputy Principal of SMPI Al Azhar 29 Semarang, *"the school's facilities and infrastructure management are carried out well and regularly. The facilities available at the school are managed so that students can use them according to their needs in the teaching and learning process. The facilities and infrastructure coordinator's infrastructure duties include managing, maintaining, deleting, organizing, and recording inventory. The workflow of the facilities and infrastructure coordinator is based on the school's annual program. It includes making reports on the condition of available facilities, including items that are damaged or need repair, and procuring new items to ensure that the development and condition of facilities and infrastructure can provide an optimal contribution to supporting the educational process in schools."*

Facilities and infrastructure management aims to ensure that school facilities are used effectively and efficiently, supporting the learning process's success. Good facilities and infrastructure management create a clean, neat, and pleasant school environment for teachers and students. It is expected to provide learning tools and facilities that are adequate and relevant to students' needs, which can be utilized optimally for education and teaching (Hidayat Ginanjar et al., 2023). Based on the results of researchers' observations at SMPI Al Azhar 29, teaching and learning activities have been facilitated with technology that supports ease of learning and development of students' technological abilities. Therefore, facilities that support school activities must be managed optimally. The school facilities and infrastructure coordinator is vital in ensuring these facilities' availability and optimal use so that the educational process and all school activities can run effectively and efficiently to achieve educational goals.

Student Management and School Resilience

Based on the results of interviews with SMPI Al Azhar 29 teachers, *"student management and school resilience (tanse) are essential aspects of SBM. At SMPI Al Azhar 29, student management is referred to as student management, which functions the same as student management in other schools but with different terms. Studentship and school resilience coordinators have different duties but aligned goals in supervising and controlling student activities."* According to the Deputy Principal of SMPI Al Azhar 29, *"student management focuses on managing extracurricular activities and guiding student achievement. Meanwhile, school resilience management focuses on managing positive student activities and handling problems related to students. Apart from that, school resilience is also responsible for carrying out preventive activities such as enforcing rules and discipline and educational guidance regarding students' moral attitudes."*

Student management is managing aspects related to various student problems, providing services from the time they enter school until graduation, and helping to resolve problems that arise during the learning process at school. Student management plays a role in improving student discipline and providing opportunities for students to develop optimally according to their personality, social desires, needs, and other aspects related to student privacy (Nupusiah et al., 2023). Educational institutions with quality student management help students achieve their maximum potential through developing academic and non-academic quality (Muawanah, 2021). From this explanation, student management is critical in implementing education to support the smooth and successful implementation of effective learning. Therefore, the management of studentship and school resilience at SMPI Al Azhar 29 effectively creates a superior learning atmosphere.

Discussion

Implementing effective and efficient school management to improve the quality of education must be supported by all aspects or components of the school. Schools that develop and achieve progress are supported by successfully managing all aspects to produce quality student learning. To create a conducive and enjoyable learning climate and atmosphere, school-based management (SBM) is needed, which can significantly impact the quality of learning (Jamiludin et al., 2021). However, despite the potential of school resources, challenges such as student, educator, infrastructure, and community participation problems need to be addressed by implementing SBM (Lazwardi, 2018). By focusing on managing learning programs and available resources, SBM can improve the overall quality of learning (Dewi, 2023). Overall, the success of SBM in improving the quality of education depends on effectively integrating various school components and addressing challenges that arise in the educational process.

The school management system at SMPI Al Azhar 29 BSB Semarang, which uses the SBM concept, aims to maximize all existing factors or aspects in the school to support the utilization of available resources and potential to achieve school goals. SBM plays a role in empowering schools to create an optimal learning atmosphere to improve student learning outcomes and increase school independence in managing its potential. The successful implementation of SBM in creating superior learning at SMPI Al Azhar 29 is supported by a professional workforce who carries out their duties and responsibilities and optimal coordination through an integrated SBM system in the school. School progress can be achieved with flexibility and independence in school management and the involvement of all school components. Apart from that, the success of implementing SBM is also influenced by the supporting components and the ability of the school principal to encourage collaboration between school stakeholders through various educational activities (Pangesti, 2021).

The involvement of all components in the school is essential in creating learning excellence that features a dynamic learning atmosphere, enabling the development of student potential and learning outcomes at SMPI Al Azhar 29. The SBM concept prioritizes students who excel academically and emphasizes methodological and psychological aspects of learning so that all students can experience quality and valuable learning experiences according to their abilities. Critical factors for achieving school goals include student activity, enthusiasm for learning, and teacher creativity in managing the learning process. According to Zohriah et al. (2023), the approach to implementing SBM involves political aspects to redesign the school's organizational structure by giving authority to all school members to advance the institution, including the principal, teachers, counselors, curriculum developers, administrators, parents, the surrounding community, and the students. Alone. Therefore, optimal learning management involves the SBM concept, which gives principals and teachers the freedom to manage schools while complying with government policies and authorities. This strategy includes the preparation of an inclusive curriculum, effective teaching and learning processes, a supportive school environment, equitable

use of resources, sure standardization, and monitoring, evaluation, and testing activities (Achadah, 2019).

In creating a superior learning environment, the effectiveness of the school management process plays a key role. This process must align with the direction of achieving the goals and commitment of all stakeholders, including school principals, deputy principals, teachers, administrative staff, and Jamiyyah support. At SMPI Al Azhar 29 BSB Semarang, collaboration and integration of efforts from all parties is crucial, where each element contributes according to its role to improve school performance and productivity. The SBM (School Based Management) approach empowers all school resources. A superior and appropriate learning environment can be created by implementing SBM, helping students achieve high levels of learning.

CONCLUSION

School management systems, especially those implemented in SBM, are crucial in creating a superior learning environment at SMPI Al Azhar 29 BSB Semarang. Through SBM, the management of school resources, including finances, curriculum, infrastructure, pupillage, and school resilience, as well as educators and education personnel, can be optimized to support the achievement of school goals. This SBM concept prioritizes superior students and emphasizes the methodological and psychological aspects of learning so that every student can experience quality and potential learning experiences. The success of superior learning also depends significantly on the teacher's creativity in managing the learning process and the student's enthusiasm for learning. In order to accomplish this goal, collaboration and coordinated efforts to enhance school performance are required from all parties involved, including Jamiyyah's support, teachers, administrative personnel, and school principals and deputy principals. Therefore, research recommendations include expanding teacher training in innovative teaching strategies, increasing student involvement in the learning process, and strengthening stakeholder collaboration to ensure optimal school management by SBM principles.

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