

Improving the Competitiveness of Educational Institutions through the Implementation of Educational Management Strategies

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ABSTRACT

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This study aims to examine the implementation of educational management strategies to enhance the competitiveness of educational institutions. The focus of the study is directed at how the processes of strategic planning, program implementation, and managerial evaluation can strengthen the competitive advantage of educational institutions. The research method used is a descriptive qualitative approach, with data collection techniques through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation studies at several educational institutions. The results indicate that the implementation of a targeted and sustainable management strategy can improve the quality of educational services, organizational effectiveness, and the institution's reputation in the eyes of the public. Successful implementation is strongly influenced by visionary leadership, teacher participation, and innovation in the learning process. The implications of this study emphasize the importance of strengthening a culture of quality, collaboration between stakeholders, and the use of technology as key strategies in enhancing the competitiveness of educational institutions in the global era.

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INTRODUCTION

Theoretically, strategic educational management is considered a crucial instrument for enhancing the competitiveness of educational institutions through targeted planning, organization, implementation, and evaluation (Alfaridli et al., 2024). However, in reality, many educational institutions still face challenges in implementing this strategy effectively (Diana & Sain, 2025). This is evident in their weak ability to respond to changes in educational policy, minimal learning innovation, and weak human resource and technology management (Romzy et al., 2025). Strategic management theory emphasizes the importance of adaptability and competitive advantage, but in practice, many institutions focus solely on administrative aspects without fostering a strategic culture. This fact indicates a gap between the ideal concept of strategic management and its practice in the educational world. Therefore, an in-depth study is essential to understand why the implementation of strategic educational management has not been optimal in enhancing competitiveness, and how institutions can bridge this gap between theory and practice.

In the context of Indonesian education, competition among educational institutions is intensifying with the increasing demands of globalization and digital transformation. Many private schools and universities face difficulties maintaining their existence due to weak competitiveness in terms of service quality, curriculum, and reputation. In some regions, educational institutions still rely on conventional management methods that are not results-oriented (outcome-based management).

Furthermore, educational leaders' ability to formulate a strategic vision that adapts to changing times remains low. Evidence from the field shows that institutions that successfully increase their competitiveness are those that are able to integrate strategic management with learning innovation and information technology. Therefore, implementing a comprehensive educational management strategy is an urgent need to enable institutions to face the challenges of global competition, improve the quality of internal management, and adapt to social changes and the needs of today's students.

Several previous studies have revealed the importance of strategic management in the development of educational institutions. One study found that implementing a quality-based management strategy can improve the effectiveness of school organizations. Furthermore, it was found that the success of educational institutions depends on the managerial ability of leaders in designing long-term strategies. However, most of this research focuses on the conceptual level; few have examined how these strategies are practically implemented in the field to build institutional competitiveness. This research aims to fill this gap by empirically reviewing the process of implementing educational management strategies at various institutional levels. Thus, this research not only confirms the relevance of strategic management theory in education but also broadens understanding of the factors for successful implementation in the real world.

The novelty of this research lies in its approach, which highlights the comprehensive implementation of strategic management, from planning, implementation, to evaluation, based on institutional competitiveness. While previous research has only emphasized the importance of managerial strategy as a normative theory, this study focuses on how such strategy is implemented in a dynamic educational context oriented toward competitive quality. Furthermore, this study integrates the concepts of educational innovation and visionary leadership as supporting variables in building competitiveness. This approach provides a new perspective, emphasizing that the competitiveness of educational institutions is determined not only by written strategies but also by organizational culture, adaptive leadership, and the ability to innovate in response to change. Therefore, this research is expected to provide theoretical and practical contributions to the development of a strategic management model for education that is more relevant to the demands of the 21st century.

This research seeks to answer the primary question: How can the implementation of educational management strategies improve the competitiveness of educational institutions? Sub-questions addressed include: what strategies are most effectively implemented, what factors support or hinder implementation, and how the results of implementation contribute to improving the quality of the institution. The fundamental argument of this research is that the success of educational institutions in facing global competition depends heavily on the effectiveness of strategic management oriented toward quality, innovation, and collaboration. Through a systematic strategic approach, educational institutions can optimize resources, build a positive image, and increase competitiveness in a sustainable manner. Thus, research.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study design to deeply understand the implementation of educational management strategies in enhancing institutional competitiveness. This design was chosen to allow researchers to describe the phenomenon contextually and holistically, and to explore the strategies, policies, and managerial practices implemented by educational institutions. The research was conducted at a secondary and higher education institution in East Java that was undergoing a managerial transformation based on quality and educational innovation, making it a relevant location for comprehensively describing management strategy practices.

The research data sources included the institution's leadership, the deputy head of curriculum, teaching staff, administrative staff, as well as strategic planning documents and annual reports. Data were collected through desk reviews, observations, in-depth interviews, and closed- and open-ended questionnaires, with triangulation of sources and methods to ensure the validity of the findings. Data analysis was conducted through stages of condensation, presentation, and drawing conclusions using content analysis and interpretative approaches to understand the relationship between managerial strategies and increased institutional competitiveness.

The results of the study revealed three main findings. First, strategic planning has been implemented quite well administratively and is participatory, but is still dominated by the leadership and not fully based on performance data. Its effectiveness depends on the synergy between visionary leadership and the participation of organizational members. Second, the implementation of an innovation- and collaboration-based strategy has successfully improved teacher professionalism and the quality of learning through the use of technology and external collaboration, although there remains a gap in technological skills among educators. The strategy's success is largely determined by the readiness of human resources and supporting facilities. Third strategy evaluation has become a routine for the institution through monitoring meetings and annual reports, but its implementation remains formal and administrative. Collaborative and reflective evaluation is considered more effective in driving sustainable improvements in institutional competitiveness.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The first finding regarding the effectiveness of strategic planning in determining the direction of institutional development indicates that educational institutions with a clear vision and mission and involving various parties in the planning process tend to have a more measurable development direction. This finding aligns with Wheelen and Hunger's view that strategic planning serves as a roadmap for achieving organizational goals. However, in some institutions, strategic planning remains a formality without consistent implementation, thus hampering the institution's competitiveness. This indicates a gap between the ideal theory of strategic planning and managerial practice in the field, where management participation and commitment are key factors for successful implementation.

Furthermore, findings regarding the implementation of innovation- and collaboration-based management strategies show that institutions that integrate innovation into the learning process and organizational management experience significant improvements in reputation and public interest. This aligns with Schumpeter's (1934) theory, which emphasizes innovation as the primary driver of institutional progress. However, contrary to this theory, innovation in the field often arises not from leaders, but from the creative initiatives of teachers and staff. The implications of these findings suggest that a collaborative culture and an environment that supports new ideas are crucial elements in maintaining the sustainable competitiveness of educational institutions.

The findings on strategy evaluation and its impact on improving institutional competitiveness indicate that institutions that regularly evaluate their strategic programs have better adaptability to external changes. These results support Mintzberg's (2017) research, which emphasizes the importance of the evaluation process in the strategic management cycle to ensure alignment between strategy and environmental dynamics. However, in practice, some institutions still view evaluation solely as an administrative activity, rather than as a reflective process for strategic renewal. This misalignment leads to dysfunctional consequences, where institutions miss opportunities to improve the effectiveness of their programs.

In terms of functional implications (so what), the results of this study indicate that consistently implemented strategic management not only strengthens an institution's position amidst educational

competition but also improves the quality of governance and stakeholder satisfaction. Conversely, if a strategy remains only a formal document without concrete implementation, the institution's managerial structure becomes rigid and unresponsive to change. The implications of why, or the cause and effect, lie in an organizational structure that is not fully adaptive and a work culture that remains conventional, thus hampering strategic transformation towards sustainable competitiveness.

Thus, this study confirms that the effectiveness of educational management strategy lies in the integration of planning, implementation, and evaluation, oriented toward innovation and collaboration. These findings enrich the educational management literature by demonstrating that institutional competitiveness is determined not only by written strategies, but also by how those strategies are internalized and collectively implemented. The emerging pattern confirms that dynamic, reflective, and participatory strategic management is a key foundation for educational institutions facing global competition in the modern era.

CONCLUSION

Research on the Implementation of Educational Management Strategies to Enhance the Competitiveness of Educational Institutions provides important lessons: the success of educational institutions in facing competition is determined not only by the existence of a written strategy, but also by commitment and consistency in its implementation. The key lesson learned is the importance of synergy between strategic planning, innovation, and continuous evaluation in building an adaptive and competitive organizational culture. This research teaches that effective management strategies emerge from the participation of all institutional components, visionary leadership, and the ability to innovate in response to changes in the external environment.

The scientific contribution of this research lies in renewing the perspective on strategic management in the educational context. This research enriches the literature by demonstrating that strategic management concepts are not simply applied mechanistically but must be understood as a dynamic process involving values, collaboration, and innovation. Methodologically, a qualitative approach with interpretive analysis provides a deeper understanding of managerial practices that have previously been difficult to explain through quantitative approaches. Thus, this research not only broadens theoretical horizons but also provides a relevant empirical foundation for developing educational policies.

However, this research has limitations due to its conduct in the context of a specific educational institution, with a limited number of informants and a narrow regional focus. Furthermore, this study did not accommodate variations in gender, age, and institution type. Therefore, further research is needed with a broader approach, such as using surveys or mixed methods, to obtain a more comprehensive picture of the implementation of educational management strategies in various contexts. The results of this further research are expected to form the basis for more targeted strategic policies to improve the competitiveness of educational institutions nationally..

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