



## **THE PRINCIPAL'S STRATEGIES IN ENHANCING COMPETITIVE EDUCATION QUALITY**

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### **Abstract:**

Competitive educational quality is the key to the success of an educational institution in producing graduates who are able to compete in the era of globalization. The role of the principal is very important in directing and improving the quality of education in schools. School principals must be able to manage school administration well so that educational goals are achieved, as stated by Edward Sallis that the element of leadership is an important aspect of Total Quality Management in the world of education. Therefore, every principal in an educational institution, from primary to secondary level. The principal has an important role in directing as a leader, but does not designate and strengthen the level of leadership integrity. Each educational institution has a different leadership style. Of course, the principal at Al Khairiyah Vocational School has its own leadership style in managing Al Khairiyah Vocational School in order to improve the quality of competitive education. The research method used was a qualitative method by directly interviewing the Principal of Al Khairiyah Vocational School.

**Keywords:** *Leadership, Strategy, Education, Principal, School.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The role of vocational education, particularly in Al Khairiyah Vocational School (SMK), plays a crucial part in equipping the younger generation with relevant skills and knowledge to face the rapidly changing world of work. In this context, the school principal's strategies become key in directing and enhancing the quality of education at SMK Al Khairiyah to effectively compete in the era of globalization. The school principal, as a leader, significantly contributes to the development and progress of the school. The progress and quality of the school depend on the principal's performance in effectively and efficiently utilizing available resources.

The advancement and quality of the school are determined by the principal, as they serve as a facilitator for educational development and a good role model, playing a crucial role in the institution they lead. As stated by Mulyono, "The progress of the school becomes more crucial when people pay attention to the principal's work for the following reasons. First, the principal is a central figure in education. The principal is a facilitator of educational development. The principal is also the executor of tasks in line with hopes and renewal. The realization of the dream of starting our education is indirectly entrusted to the principal. Similarly, parents' optimism conditioned by beliefs in enrolling their children in certain schools is dependent on their aspirations for the principal. Second, the school as a community that needs a leader utilizes the potential available in the school.

In facing the demands of improving the competitive quality of education at SMK

Al Khairiyah, the school principal can adopt various innovations and approaches, such as building closer partnerships with local companies or related industries, providing students with direct access to industry practices and real work experience. The principal can introduce integrated internship programs into the curriculum to provide a deeper understanding of the working world.

Efforts to improve the quality of education in a school, when related to the leadership of the school principal, involve ten keys to success in leadership. These keys include having a comprehensive vision, responsibility, exemplary behavior, delivering the best, developing the resources under their leadership, fostering unity and solidarity, focusing on students, prioritizing practical management, adjusting leadership styles, and utilizing expertise (Mulyasa, 2012).

According to the term, the word "strategy" comes from the Greek language, meaning a war commander or the science of war. The meaning of the word "strategy" in the Indonesian Dictionary is "a careful plan regarding activities to achieve specific desired goals." Another meaning of strategy is a framework that guides and controls choices, determining the direction of an organization. Strategy is the art of utilizing the human resources of an institution or organization to achieve desired goals under the most advantageous conditions by establishing effective relationships with the environment (Salusu, 2014).

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

The research method employed by the researcher in this study is qualitative. The data collection technique in qualitative research involves observation and interviews. This method aims to describe the strategies of the school principal in enhancing the competitive quality of education at SMK Al Khairiyah.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Leadership means a process of organizing and achieving performance to make decisions as desired. Leadership is a series of how to distribute arrangements and situations at a certain time. The definitions of leadership from several experts are as follows:

According to Harbani, leadership is the ability to influence others, through both direct and indirect communication, with the aim of moving people to willingly follow the leader's wishes. Leadership is defined as the process of influencing and directing various tasks related to the activities of group members. Leadership is also interpreted as the ability to influence various strategies and goals, the ability to influence commitment and obedience to tasks to achieve common goals, and the ability to influence the group to identify, maintain, and develop organizational culture.

According to Kadarusman, leadership (Leadership) is divided into three, namely: (1) Self Leadership; (2) Team Leadership; and (3) Organizational Leadership. Self Leadership means leading oneself so as not to fail in living life. Team Leadership is interpreted as leading others. The leader is known as a team leader who knows the responsibilities of leadership, delves into the conditions of subordinates, is willing to merge with the demands and consequences of the responsibilities carried, and has a commitment to bring each subordinate to explore their potential to achieve the highest performance. Meanwhile, organizational leadership is seen in the context of an organization led by an organizational leader who knows the breath of the business of the company he leads, creates a vision and mission for business development, is willing to merge with the demands and consequences of social responsibilities, and has a high commitment to make the company he leads a blessing for the community at the local, national, and international levels.

According to Crainer, there are more than 400 definitions of leadership discourse, some of which state that leadership is an activity to influence others. Leadership is a process of influencing group activities. Leadership is the ability to achieve agreement on common goals. Leadership is an effort to direct others to achieve specific goals. Leadership is a correlation that mutually influences between the leader and his

followers. Although it is relatively difficult to generalize, in principle, leadership is about someone influencing others for a purpose. But that doesn't mean that everyone who influences others for a purpose is called a leader.

According to Katz and Kahn, leadership can basically be classified into three large groups: "as an attribute or complement to a position, as a person's characteristic, and as a category of behavior."

According to Janda, "Leadership is a particular type of power relationship characterized by a group member's perception that another group member has the right to prescribe behavior patterns for the former regarding his activity as a group member."

According to Gibson, Ivancevich, and Donnelly, "Leaders are agents of change, persons whose acts affect other people more than other people's acts affect them," or leaders are change agents, people who act to influence others more than others influence them.

According to Sweeney and McFarlin, "Leadership involves a set of interpersonal influence processes. The processes are aimed at motivating subordinates, creating a vision for the future, and developing strategies for achieving goals," which means that leadership involves a set of influence processes between individuals. These processes aim to motivate subordinates, create a vision for the future, and develop strategies to achieve goals.

According to Watkins, "leadership is related to members who have the uniqueness of a group that can be distinguished positively from other members, both in behavior, personal characteristics, thoughts, or group structure." The definition of leadership according to Pancasila is:

Pancasila-based leadership is leadership that has the spirit of Pancasila, which has the authority and power to bring and lead its community into an awareness of community life and statehood based on Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution. The aspect of Pancasila leadership is a consistent and conscientious attitude in understanding and practicing Pancasila. The spirit of kinship is an essential element of Pancasila leadership.

Roles of Leadership, The role of leadership can be interpreted as "a set of behaviors expected to be performed by an individual according to his position as a leader." The desired role that goes with behavior. The fact that the organization identifies the jobs that need to be done and the desired role behaviors that go along with those jobs also implies that expectations about the role play a vital role in regulating the behavior of subordinates.

The role comes from the word role, meaning something that is part of or holds a leading position that is mainly. According to Levinson, roles are a concept about what individuals can do that is important for the social structure of society. Roles include norms developed with a person's position or place in society. In this sense, the role is a set of rules that guide a person in social life. According to Biddle and Thomas, a role is a set of formulations that limit the expected behaviors of a person holding a particular position. For example, in a family, the mother's behavior in the family is expected to give advice, give judgment, give sanctions, and so on. Adopting the opinions of these two experts, that the role of leadership is a set of expected behaviors of a leader in occupying a certain position is expected to play a role in influencing, guiding, evaluating subordinates towards the achievement of the goals of an organization. According to Nanus Komariah and Sujatno illustrate that there are 4 (four) important roles for effective leadership, namely:

Determining the direction, leaders must be able to make selections and set goals by considering the future external environment that is the goal of mobilizing all organizational resources to achieve the vision, leaders who can play a role as determinants are visionary leaders.

Change agent, leaders must be able to anticipate various changes and developments in the global environment and make predictions about their implications for the organization, able to prioritize changes indicated by his vision, and able to promote experimentation with the participation of people to produce the desired changes.

Spokesperson, leaders must be able to be negotiators and form external relationship networks, compile visions and communicate them, empower and make changes. Coach, leaders must inform others about the current reality, what their vision is or where the goal is, how to realize it. Always give encouragement to move forward and lead how to actualize potential to achieve the vision. Observing the leadership roles stated by Nanus, the author considers that these roles can be realized if leaders have adequate credibility and integrity in mobilizing followers to act, and in that arena of action, the organization will develop and progress. Because the organization must move forward, the role of vision in directing the organization forward cannot be ignored.

The strategies employed by the school principal in enhancing the competitive quality of education at SMK Al Khairiyah. The school principal serves as a central figure in improving the educational quality at the school. In our research, several factors significantly influence the enhancement of competitive education quality, including:

**Teacher Training:** Training sessions for teachers are conducted, such as sending productive teachers to SMKN 7 Malang's subject teachers' forum to practice and evaluate their capabilities. Activities like this make teachers more appreciated by students. When students enjoy a subject, they naturally become interested in the material.

**Parental Involvement:** Involving parents is a common strategy. Parental input, criticism, and constructive suggestions are considered essential. For instance, parents asking about the availability of tools led to innovation and seeking assistance from various sources, such as private entities or boards. Support from BLK Culinary Arts Community greatly contributed to the school, allowing students to receive direct knowledge from professional instructors.

**Practical Assessment:** To measure students' abilities, practical internships in various eateries are arranged, such as at C-Best and Warung Sultan. A written exam is then conducted using Google Drive, where students answer questions regarding their daily activities. The portfolios are shared with parents via class-specific WhatsApp groups. Competent students are encouraged to participate in competitions at district and provincial levels, aiming to continually enhance their competencies.

**Challenges Faced by the School Principal in Improving the Competitive Quality of Education at SMK Al Khairiyah.** The challenges include the significantly low learning interest and commitment among students in today's era. Teachers at SMK Al Khairiyah often face difficulties due to the prevalent trend where students are more engaged in other activities than in their studies. This, at times, poses challenges for the teachers.

## CONCLUSION

Conclusion from this research is that the principal's work program to enhance the competitive quality of education at SMK AL - Khairiyah includes 1) Improvement of teacher's human resources, 2) Involvement of parents in the success of their children, 3) Adequate practical equipment to ensure the achievement of competencies.

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