Strategic Management in Developing Inclusive Teacher Career Paths: Optimizing Potential and Performance in Educational Institutions

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Abstract:
This study examines how to use strategic management to build inclusive teacher career paths. The aim of this research is to improve the potential, motivation, and performance of educators in educational institutions. Data were collected using descriptive qualitative methods through observations, interviews, and documentary research with principals, teachers, and management staff. The research shows that strategic management, which encompasses the steps of planning, implementing, evaluating, and adjusting strategies, has the potential to create a directed, equitable, and sustainable career system. Performance-based reward systems, mentoring, and training provide all teachers with equal opportunities to develop in inclusive career paths. This approach enhances the competitiveness and quality of educational institutions, in addition to improving teacher satisfaction and professionalism. Challenges such as lack of digitalization, limited resources, and fear of change still need to be addressed. Therefore, strategic management is an essential foundation for humanistic, inclusive, and sustainable standards-oriented teacher career management.

INTRODUCTION

In 21st-century education, teachers are no longer simply traditional learning participants; they are now strategic actors determining the path, quality, and sustainability of educational institutions (Jaya & Hambali, 2023). It's likely that highly talented teachers are being held back by disorganized and non-inclusive career paths in many workplaces. This leads to low motivation and engagement, as well as low teacher performance in supporting the school's strategic goals. Disorganization in career systems can reduce the competitiveness of educational institutions and hinder teachers' potential (Hamid Wahid et al., 2018).

This research is crucial because of the importance of building an inclusive career path. Such a system would provide all teachers with opportunities to develop their potential and improve their performance equitably (Nuriyah et al., 2024). The strategic management approach is highly relevant in this context as it provides a systematic framework for designing, implementing and evaluating teacher career policies to align

with the goals, vision and mission of educational institutions (Khozaini & Mundiri, 2024). Educational institutions can not only manage human resources effectively but can also create a productive, creative work environment that focuses on improving learning by implementing strategic management (Dwi Salma & Rizky, 2024).

Commitment to equity and sustainability of educational human resources is also demonstrated through the development of inclusive career paths (Fachri, Moch Rozi, 2022). In today's era of digital transformation and rapid social change, educational institutions must ensure that every educator has an equal opportunity to develop (Kunta et al., 2025). A career path is not just a promotion process; it also involves identifying potential, supporting them, providing ongoing training and mentoring, and providing fair compensation. This strategic approach can be used for teacher career development as an important tool for enhancing professionalism and strengthening character and loyalty to the institution.

However, many problems persist in managing teacher careers in various educational institutions. These include inadequate human resource management, a lack of institutional policy support, insufficient training budgets, and the lack of an organized career evaluation system. Many educational institutions still approach staffing management administratively rather than strategically ('Ilmi Azizah et al., 2025). As a result, efforts to improve teacher performance and competence have not been fully focused. Consequently, teachers do not have equal opportunities to develop and often do not fully utilize their abilities to achieve the institution's goals.

This study aims to examine how educational institutions can use strategic management to build inclusive teacher career paths, given these conditions. The focus of the study is to find the best way to maximize teacher potential and improve their performance through structured, equitable, and sustainable career policies. It is hoped that the research results will provide a better understanding of strategic structures, best practices, key challenges, and how the implementation of teacher career management impacts the overall quality of education. Therefore, strategic management is expected to become the foundation for building a career system that will encourage teacher professionalism and increase the competitiveness of educational institutions in the contemporary era

RESEARCH METHODS

Using descriptive qualitative methods, this study selected informants based on their direct involvement in the planning and implementation of teacher career development. The informants included school principals, teachers, and management staff who play a role in decision-making regarding human resource development policies in educational institutions.

Three main methods were used to collect data: in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation study. In-depth interviews explored informants' perspectives and experiences regarding teacher career development strategies, and observations tracked the implementation of strategic management policies and practices in the field. Meanwhile, documentation study reviewed various documents, including school policies, training programs, and teacher performance evaluation results.

Data analysis was conducted interactively and iteratively in three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. This process continued until data saturation reached the point where no new information was found. To ensure data

validity, the researchers compared the results of interviews, observations, and documentation. By using these methods, the study is expected to provide a clear and accurate picture of the use of strategic management in creating inclusive, efficient, and sustainable teacher career paths in educational institutions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Implementation of Strategic Management in Developing Teacher Career Paths

The research results show that the application of strategic management in developing teacher career paths in educational institutions serves as the main framework to ensure that human resource management is carried out systematically, measurably, and oriented towards long-term goals. The principal serves as a strategic leader who manages administration and directs teacher career development policies and visions (Mudarris & Rizal, 2023). Four main stages comprise the strategic management process in practice: (1) strategic planning; (2) policy implementation; (3) monitoring and evaluation; and (4) strategic adjustment (Tasbih et al., 2018). The following table for "Implementation of Strategic Management in Developing Teacher Career Paths" with columns for Observed Aspects, Observation Findings, and Sources/Documentation,

Observed Aspects	Observation Findings	Sources / Documentation
Career Path Framework and Policy Alignment	A career path framework for teachers exists, but some guidelines are not detailed enough to support consistent implementation.	Teacher Career Development Policy, School/Institution Regulations
Professional Development Programs	Training and workshops are available, though participation varies and follow-up evaluations are not consistently conducted.	Training schedules, Attendance lists, Professional development reports
Performance Appraisal System	Teacher evaluations are conducted regularly, but not all performance indicators are measurable or linked to career progression.	Performance appraisal forms, Evaluation reports
Mentoring and Coaching Practices	Mentoring is provided for new teachers, but structured coaching for senior teachers is limited.	Mentorship guidelines, Mentor–mentee reports
Promotion and Advancement Mechanism	Promotion criteria exist, yet transparency and communication about promotion requirements need improvement.	Promotion policy documents, Promotion committee minutes
Talent Identification and Succession Planning	Talent identification is informal, with no structured system to map high-potential teachers for leadership roles.	HR records, Leadership development plans
Workload and Job Assignment Management	Workload distribution is generally fair, but alignment between teacher expertise and assigned roles is not always optimal.	Teaching schedule, Workload distribution documents
Teacher Motivation and Retention Strategy	Incentives and recognition are available, but their impact on retaining high-performing teachers has not been evaluated.	Reward

At the planning stage, the school analyzes the need for teaching staff based on the abilities, experience, and development potential of each person (Amon et al., 2021). Relevant career paths and training programs are created based on this data. For example, teachers with strong pedagogical and technological skills are targeted to become digital curriculum developers, and teachers who excel in leadership are given opportunities to participate in future principalship programs.

Ongoing training programs, coaching, and mentoring between teachers enable the implementation phase (Silva et al., 2025). Additionally, the organization creates a performance-based reward system to encourage teachers to achieve their professional goals. During the evaluation phase, the institution uses measurable indicators such as instructional supervision results, student feedback, and teacher training achievements to evaluate effective career strategies.

Field findings indicate that institutions implementing strategic management principles have higher levels of teacher job satisfaction than those without a clear career system. This suggests that clarity of career direction and opportunities are important factors that motivate teachers to improve their performance in the workplace.

Inclusive Career Path Development: Equal Opportunity and Recognition of Potential

Inclusivity in career paths means giving all teachers equal opportunities without differentiating them based on age, length of service, or educational background (Syafrina et al., 2025). Interview results showed that many educational institutions previously adopted an exclusive career development pattern that only focused on senior teachers or those considered "favorites".

This practice not only demotivates young teachers but also makes them unfairly treated (Hafiduddin et al., 2024). Organizations today use strategic management to monitor teacher potential through classroom observations, self-reflection, and competency assessments. Each educator has a career development plan that includes annual goals, training objectives, and career direction (Aini et al., 2024). This indicates a paradigm shift towards data- and potential-based career management.

Furthermore, teacher involvement in the career planning process demonstrates inclusion. There is now a collaborative discussion between management and teachers that addresses all decisions regarding human resource development (Laibur Rohman, 2025). This method fosters a sense of ownership within the institution and encourages commitment to growth. Teachers believe that their desires are recognized in the strategic decision-making process.

Furthermore, this inclusive policy takes into account teachers with disabilities or special needs. For example, senior teachers unfamiliar with technology are not excluded; instead, they are provided with digital mentoring programs. This demonstrates that the school's success and social and moral sustainability are a strategic management focus.

Optimizing Teacher Potential through Training and Professional Development

One of the research's key findings is that continuing professional development strategies, also known as continuous professional development, are a critical component in maximizing teacher potential. Schools that use a strategic management approach typically have training systems designed to meet individual needs and organizational goals (Mubarok et al., 2024).

The training not only focuses on improving teachers' skills; it also covers leadership, communication, technology, and learning innovation (Akhyar et al., 2024). For example, the organization provides a "Digital Learning Design" course for teachers who want to improve their skills in creating technology-based learning media.

In addition to formal training, instructors also have the opportunity to participate in peer-to-peer education programs. This program allows them to share their best

teaching experiences. This program has been shown to boost self-confidence and strengthen professional networks within the school.

Thus, strategic management based on needs analysis has proven effective in driving continuous teacher performance improvement. Observations show that teachers who receive training tailored to their interests and potential demonstrate increased work motivation, creativity in teaching, and improved student learning outcomes.

Evaluation and Reward Systems as Performance Drivers

In a strategic management system, career evaluation is very important (Pratiwi et al., 2025). The educational institution that was the subject of the study uses a key performance indicator-based evaluation system. This system is intended to transparently and honestly assess teacher contributions. Attendance, academic supervision results, involvement in school activities, learning innovation, and involvement in professional development are all indicators of this.

The organization conducts regular evaluations as well as reward systems to increase internal and external motivation. (Sholeh, 2023). Rewards can take the form of public recognition, job promotions, or the opportunity to participate in advanced training programs (Siregar et al., 2022). Leaders provide direct rewards to teachers who demonstrate significant performance improvement. This creates a work environment where people collaborate and compete with one another.

Findings show that teachers who feel valued and recognized are more loyal to the institution. Conversely, employee turnover and dissatisfaction tend to increase in companies without a clear reward system. This suggests that evaluation and reward strategies should be incorporated into strategic career path management systems.

Challenges and Obstacles in Implementing Strategic Management

Despite the fact that research shows a lot of progress, the application of strategic management in teacher career development faces many problems. Human resources for management are limited (Anggraini et al., 2023). Many teachers do not understand the concept of strategic HR management, so its implementation is often administrative and short-term.

Ongoing professional training and development programs are also hampered by financial issues (Subrata, 2024). There are some organizations that only have the capacity to conduct internal training with limited scope (Risman, 2024). This situation creates a disparity in quality among teachers. There's no digital system for teacher careers, making it difficult to monitor teacher progress and achievements. Evaluation and reporting processes are lengthy because some educational institutions still use manual records.

However, organizations that can implement creative approaches such as digital career monitoring systems or the development of teacher e-portfolios show better results in career management. Organizational cultures show resistance to change, especially from senior teachers accustomed to legacy systems. The increasing need to convey messages effectively amidst the rapid and competitive flow of information demonstrates the dynamics of communication strategies (Jannah & Baharun, 2025). To address this, the institution implemented a participatory approach and persuasive communication strategies.

The Impact of Strategic Management on Improving Institutional Performance and Quality

In developing teacher career paths, the application of strategic management has a significant impact on improving individual and institutional performance (Fajriansyah & Ubaidillah, 2025). According to documentation and interview data, teachers with clear career paths tend to be more productive, consistent, and dedicated to their organization.

This strategy can improve the quality of learning, lead to more efficient human resource management, and enhance the school's reputation within the community at the institutional level. Some organizations have even been recognized as "Moving Schools" or "Innovative Institutions" for implementing systematic and inclusive teacher career strategies.

Organizational culture also improves; this creates a work environment that is mutually respectful, collaborative, and open to innovation. Strategic teacher career management not only helps with administration but also builds a work culture focused on sustainability and quality (Dwi Salma & Rizky, 2024).

CONCLUSION

According to this study, the application of strategic management in developing inclusive teacher career paths helps improve the potential, motivation, and performance of educators while enhancing the competitiveness of educational institutions. Educational institutions can build a focused, fair, and diverse human resource management system through strategic steps such as needs analysis, career planning, ongoing training, and performance-based evaluation. By providing equal opportunities for all teachers regardless of age, experience, or background, inclusive career paths foster professionalism, loyalty, and a spirit of collaboration in the workplace.

Research shows that institutions that implement strategic management principles have better learning quality, institutional efficiency, and a better reputation in the community. To address issues such as resource constraints, lack of digitalization of career systems, and fear of change, an adaptive and participatory approach is crucial. Therefore, strategic management is not merely an administrative tool but also crucial for building a welcoming, professional, and quality-oriented organizational culture. In this way, educational institutions can maximize the potential of teachers as strategic assets in the contemporary era.

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