



## Principal Strategies in Strengthening School-Based Management to Improve Madrasah Quality

Jufri<sup>1\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Faculty of Islamic Studies, Muhammadiyah University of Buton, Indonesia

### ABSTRACT

*This study examines the principal's strategies in strengthening School-Based Management (SBM) to improve madrasah quality at MAN 1 Baubau. The research is positioned within contemporary educational governance debates that emphasize decentralization, accountability, and continuous quality improvement in school organizations. Using a qualitative case study approach, the study focuses on how leadership practices translate SBM principles into operational programs and routines, and how these practices shape instructional quality and organizational capacity. Data were generated through semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders (madrasah principal, vice principals, teachers, administrative staff, and committee representatives), direct observations of managerial and instructional routines, and document analysis of planning and evaluation records. Data analysis followed an interactive model involving data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, supported by triangulation and member checking to enhance trustworthiness. The findings indicate that SBM strengthening is pursued through: (1) strategic alignment of the vision-mission with measurable annual targets and prioritized quality programs; (2) participatory governance structures that distribute roles and responsibilities through functional teams and routine coordination forums; (3) evidence-informed planning and managerial control through monitoring, evaluation, and follow-up mechanisms consistent with continuous improvement logic; (4) instructional leadership practices, including formative academic supervision and teacher professional learning activities; and (5) resource governance and student service strengthening to improve process reliability and learning conditions. Persistent challenges include uneven staff engagement, administrative workload pressures, and limited digital integration of data systems that affect responsiveness. Overall, the study suggests that SBM can operate as a sustainable quality improvement mechanism when leadership integrates direction (targets), systems (routines), and people (capacity and culture), thereby moving implementation beyond document compliance toward measurable improvements in madrasah quality.*

**Keywords:** Strategy, Madrasah Principal, School-Based Management, Madrasah, Quality Improvement

### 1. Introduction

Improving the quality of madrasahs is a strategic agenda in Indonesia's educational development because madrasahs function not only as institutions for knowledge transmission, but also as spaces for character formation, spirituality, and the cultivation of an academic culture. In the context of twenty first century demands marked by rapid social change, global competition, and the digitalization of educational services madrasahs are required to provide educational services that are relevant, adaptive, and accountable. In practice, however, quality improvement efforts often face persistent challenges: planning that is not fully data-driven, governance that is inconsistently implemented, uneven stakeholder involvement, and variations in teaching quality across teachers and classrooms. (Di & Dasar, 2023) These conditions indicate that the quality of a madrasah cannot be supported merely by curriculum availability and infrastructure; rather, it is

*Korespondensi:* Jufri, Email: [jufriwabula1987@gmail.com](mailto:jufriwabula1987@gmail.com)

strongly determined by the effectiveness of management and the leadership of the principal in mobilizing all resources in a coherent direction. (Lestariningsy, 2024)

One approach widely considered effective for driving quality improvement is School Based Management (SBM), a governance paradigm that grants greater autonomy to educational institutions to manage and develop themselves based on actual needs, local potential, and students' characteristics. In the madrasah context, SBM emphasizes strengthening internal capacity through participatory planning, collective decision-making, transparent resource management, and continuous evaluation mechanisms. The main logic of SBM rests on the assumption that schools understand their own needs and problems best; therefore, context-based decisions are more likely to be effective than standardized, one-size-fits-all policies. Nevertheless, SBM does not succeed automatically. Autonomy without strong leadership may lead to fragmented policies, programs that remain merely administrative, or stakeholder engagement that becomes symbolic rather than meaningful. Thus, the madrasah principal becomes the key actor in determining whether SBM genuinely functions as an instrument for quality improvement or remains merely policy rhetoric. (Arista et al., 2023)

In educational management literature, the leadership of school or madrasah principals serves as a driver of vision, a manager of change, and a builder of a quality-oriented culture. Transformational leadership highlights the capacity of leaders to inspire, build commitment, and foster collective innovation, while instructional leadership emphasizes ensuring the quality of teaching and learning through academic supervision, teacher professional development, and monitoring of learning outcomes. Both perspectives are relevant for examining the principal's strategies in strengthening SBM, because SBM requires consistency of direction (vision and mission), disciplined governance (systems), and empowerment of human resources (teacher and staff performance). In addition, Total Quality Management (TQM) in education stresses continuous improvement, responsiveness to students' needs, and evidence-based decision-making. This framework helps assess whether the principal's strategies have moved beyond program-based actions toward a sustainable quality system. (Lestariningsy, 2024)

This study focuses on MAN 1 Baubau, a state Islamic senior secondary madrasah that plays an important role in providing upper-secondary education with a distinctive Islamic character. The focus on MAN 1 Baubau is relevant because state madrasahs commonly stand at the intersection of public accountability demands, institutional performance targets, and the need for management innovation based on local conditions. At the same time, madrasah dynamics are shaped by organizational culture, teacher capacity, curriculum governance, and support from parents and the wider community. Therefore, the principal's strategies for strengthening SBM at MAN 1 Baubau are worth investigating to understand how autonomy, participation, transparency, and a quality orientation are translated into concrete managerial actions. This study does not merely examine "what programs exist," but rather "how those strategies are designed, implemented, and evaluated," and how they influence indicators of madrasah quality, both in terms of process (learning, supervision, school culture) and outcomes (student achievement, service satisfaction, and institutional reputation). (Hasan & License, 2023)

Empirically, many educational institutions have adopted the term SBM, yet the quality of implementation varies considerably. (Khaidir, n.d.) In some cases, SBM works effectively because it is supported by collaborative leadership, a solid management team, and clear planning and evaluation systems. In other cases, SBM becomes trapped in document compliance: meetings are held, plans are prepared, and reports are written, but these activities are not consistently linked

to improvements in teaching and measurable quality enhancement. This variation strengthens the urgency of research that examines the principal's strategies in depth, particularly those strategies that address the core dimensions of SBM: (1) strengthening the vision and quality goals; (2) data-driven and needs-based planning; (3) capacity building for teachers and educational staff; (4) transparent management of resources and budgets; (5) meaningful involvement of committees and the community; and (6) monitoring and evaluation systems for continuous improvement. By mapping strategies across these dimensions, this study is expected to produce a systematic account of how SBM can become a driving force for madrasah quality improvement. (S. M. Hasibuan, 2022)

Based on the background above, the research questions are as follows: (1) how does the principal of MAN 1 Baubau strengthen School-Based Management to improve madrasah quality; (2) how are these strategies implemented in planning, organizing, implementing, and controlling quality programs; (3) what factors support and hinder the strengthening of SBM at MAN 1 Baubau; and (4) what are the implications of the principal's strategies for quality culture, learning quality, and educational services at MAN 1 Baubau. These questions position the principal as the central unit of analysis while still acknowledging strategic relationships with teachers, staff, committees, students, and the surrounding community.

The objectives of this study are: (1) to describe and analyze the strategies employed by the principal of MAN 1 Baubau in strengthening SBM; (2) to explain how these strategies are implemented in madrasah governance practices, particularly in program planning, human resource development, resource management, and instructional supervision; (3) to identify supporting and inhibiting factors in strengthening SBM; and (4) to formulate context-specific recommendations for strengthening SBM to improve madrasah quality. With these objectives, the study is expected not only to provide description, but also to generate analysis that can inform improvement efforts.

The significance of this study includes theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, it enriches scholarship on Islamic educational management by connecting SBM, madrasah principal leadership, and quality culture within the context of a state Islamic senior secondary madrasah. The findings can clarify relationships between leadership strategies and the effectiveness of SBM as a quality improvement system. Practically, this study benefits the principal and management team of MAN 1 Baubau by providing reflective input for strengthening data-driven planning, internal collaboration, and continuous quality control. For teachers and educational staff, it offers insights into collaborative practices and professional development aligned with quality targets. For the madrasah committee and parents, it may encourage more meaningful participation in supporting madrasah programs. More broadly, for policymakers in madrasah education, this study can serve as a reference for designing development programs that move beyond administrative compliance to strengthen leadership capacity and quality governance. (Ahmad Ridwan, Abdul Azis, 2024; S. M. Hasibuan, 2024)

In conclusion, the study titled "The Principal's Strategy in Strengthening School Based Management for Madrasah Quality Improvement (A Study at MAN 1 Baubau)" is important for addressing both academic needs and practical demands. By focusing on strategy, the study captures the change process more comprehensively from how the principal builds direction, mobilizes resources, structures systems, to ensuring the quality of implementation. Ultimately, this research is expected to contribute to strengthening participatory, transparent, and quality-oriented madrasah governance, enabling MAN 1 Baubau to continuously improve the quality of its educational services in line with contemporary challenges and local characteristics.

## 2. Methods

This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study design focusing on MAN 1 Baubau. This approach is selected because the study aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the madrasah principal's strategies in strengthening School-Based Management (SBM) and the dynamics of its implementation within the real context of the madrasah. A case study design enables the researcher to explore managerial processes, policies, and practices comprehensively, including supporting and inhibiting factors as well as their implications for improving madrasah quality. (EKOWATI, FERIANSYAH, 2022; Nur Amelliany Rosadi & Riva'i, Fuad Ahmad Riva, 2024)

The data sources consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data are obtained through in-depth interviews and observations. Semi-structured interviews are conducted with key informants, including the madrasah principal, vice principals (curriculum, student affairs, facilities and infrastructure, and public relations), the head of the quality assurance team/TPM, teachers, administrative staff, and representatives of the madrasah committee. Observations are carried out to examine managerial practices and the quality culture within the madrasah, such as program planning meetings, the implementation of instructional supervision, student service management, and program monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Secondary data are collected through document analysis, covering the madrasah's vision and mission, school/madrasah work plans, quality improvement programs, evaluation reports, supervision instruments, meeting minutes, and other supporting documents. (Adzhar & Yasin, 2025)

## 3. Findings and Discussions

### 3.1 Findings

They describe how the principal of MAN 1 Baubau, Rusli, S.Pd., M.A., strengthens School-Based Management (SBM) to improve madrasah quality by focusing on strengthening quality direction, consolidating governance systems, improving instructional quality, and reinforcing a culture of participation and accountability. SBM strengthening is understood as an effort to organize madrasah autonomy toward measurable quality improvement through needs-based planning, disciplined program implementation, periodic monitoring and evaluation, and systematic follow-up actions. The findings are organized into six major themes: (1) sharpening the vision-mission and quality priorities; (2) participatory governance and organizational structure; (3) data informed planning and program control; (4) instructional supervision and teacher professional development; (5) resource management and student services; and (6) enabling factors, barriers, and implications for quality improvement.

First, the principal sharpens the quality direction by translating the vision mission into annual targets and priority programs. In practice, the principal emphasizes that SBM is not merely the delegation of authority, but rather the reinforcement of the madrasah's responsibility to provide high-quality educational services. Priority programs are determined based on core issues that most strongly influence quality, such as consistency in instructional planning, learning mastery, discipline in administrative services, and the strengthening of an achievement oriented culture. This prioritization strategy is reflected in the madrasah work plan, which contains targets, indicators, responsible persons, and an evaluation schedule. From a management perspective, this step indicates an effort to shift the work orientation from "carrying out routine programs" to "achieving quality targets" that can be monitored and traced over time.

Second, strengthening SBM is pursued through participatory governance by building a clear organizational structure. The principal establishes program implementation teams in each area and strengthens coordination through leadership meetings, divisional meetings, and monthly evaluation forums. This pattern functions as a mechanism for integrating work, because each unit has agreed-upon roles, tasks, and indicators. As a result, cross unit coordination improves, especially in programs requiring collaboration, such as assessment implementation, student affairs activities, counseling services, and learning facility management. Nevertheless, variations in participation still emerge: some teachers and staff actively propose solutions, while others tend to wait for direction. To address this situation, the principal reinforces work culture through intensive communication, clarification of service standards, and recognition of teams that meet their targets.

Third, data informed planning and program control become key strategies in strengthening SBM. The findings indicate that the madrasah uses internal data such as attendance records, mastery achievement, assessment outcomes, disciplinary reports, and supervision results as a basis for designing interventions. Data are used to determine priorities, for example identifying classes or subjects requiring reinforcement, teachers needing mentoring, and student programs requiring restructuring. Program control is carried out through implementation monitoring, progress reporting, and periodic evaluation. Within a quality framework, this mechanism aligns with a continuous improvement cycle: problem identification–planning–implementation evaluation follow up. However, it is also noted that data management has not been fully digitalized, so compiling information still takes time and may reduce the speed of decision-making, especially when rapid responses are needed for disciplinary issues or delayed program implementation.

Fourth, the strategy for strengthening SBM intersects directly with improving instructional quality through academic supervision and teacher professional development. The principal encourages supervision as a coaching process rather than merely an assessment procedure. Supervision focuses on the consistency of lesson planning documents, alignment between learning objectives and assessment, variation in instructional methods, and the use of formative assessment to monitor student progress. Follow up is conducted through reflective discussions, lesson sharing, and assignments to revise instructional plans. The findings suggest that teachers experience supervision as helpful for clarifying instructional standards and improving teaching preparedness, especially in planning and evaluation aspects. The challenges include limited time for intensive follow-up with all teachers and different levels of readiness among teachers to adopt instructional innovations. To address this issue, the madrasah strengthens peer-support approaches through internal working groups and collaborative learning among teachers.

Fifth, resource management and student services are also part of the SBM strengthening strategy. The principal emphasizes providing learning facilities aligned with classroom needs, organizing learning spaces, and strengthening administrative services to be more orderly and responsive. In student affairs, the strategy focuses on reinforcing school rules, character development, extracurricular program management, and achievement enhancement. As a result, student activities become more structured due to the assignment of supervisors, a clear activity calendar, and systematic evaluation. On the other hand, parental and committee involvement still needs to be expanded so that program support becomes more consistent. Involvement is conducted through coordination meetings and program communication, but participation remains uneven due to differences

in parents' available time and varying levels of understanding regarding quality priorities.

Sixth, the study identifies enabling factors and barriers to strengthening SBM. Enabling factors include the principal's leadership orientation toward quality targets, a relatively clear organizational structure, an emerging evaluation culture, and the commitment of some teachers to improve instructional practices. Barriers include variations in commitment among madrasah members, administrative workload that consumes time, limitations in digital system-based data management, and challenges in strengthening follow-up supervision comprehensively. The implications of the strategy for quality are reflected in more orderly programs, more systematic coordination, and increased attention to instructional quality through supervision and evaluation. The impact on quality outputs can be seen through indicators that are increasingly monitored routinely, such as on-time program implementation, improved compliance with instructional planning standards, and a strengthened achievement culture through more structured student coaching.

### 3.2 Discussions

This discussion interprets the findings as an illustrative account of how the principal of MAN 1 Baubau strengthens School-Based Management (SBM) to improve madrasah quality. Conceptually, the findings reinforce the argument that SBM is most effective when autonomy is accompanied by strong instructional and managerial leadership. The principal's emphasis on translating the vision mission into operational targets suggests a move from symbolic policy adoption toward strategic alignment. In SBM literature, such alignment is critical because decentralized authority can produce fragmented initiatives if the institution lacks a coherent performance framework. The articulation of measurable priorities, responsible units, and evaluation checkpoints indicates the adoption of results-oriented governance, which is consistent with quality management perspectives emphasizing clarity of standards and systematic execution. (Nugraha et al., 2025)

The institutionalization of participatory structures through functional teams and periodic coordination forums demonstrates an effort to build organizational capacity and internal accountability. This aligns with distributed leadership theory, which views school improvement as a collective enterprise rather than an individual leader's agenda. However, uneven staff engagement highlights a common limitation in SBM implementation: participation may remain compliance driven unless supported by capacity-building, shared norms, and professional trust. Therefore, the findings imply that strengthening SBM requires not only structural decentralization but also cultural work to develop collaborative professionalism and psychological ownership among teachers and staff. (Yuda, n.d.)

The use of internal performance data for planning and program control resonates with evidence informed decision-making and continuous improvement models. The pattern of diagnosing problems, implementing interventions, monitoring progress, and conducting follow-up reflects a PDCA like logic. Yet, limited digital integration of data systems suggests that information latency can constrain responsiveness. This indicates that strengthening SBM in contemporary settings increasingly depends on data infrastructure that enables timely analysis and feedback loops, particularly for instructional monitoring and student support.

A notable contribution of the findings is the explicit connection between SBM strengthening and instructional quality through formative academic supervision and professional learning. This supports the view that SBM should not be reduced to administrative decentralization; rather, its legitimacy is realized when governance mechanisms reshape the "core business" of education teaching and

learning. The use of peer support and collegial learning communities further reflects an attempt to build collective efficacy and sustainable improvement beyond top down supervision. (S. Hasibuan, 2023)

Finally, the findings suggest that resource governance and student services operate as enabling conditions for quality improvement, while stakeholder engagement remains a domain requiring deeper consolidation. In sum, the discussion indicates that effective SBM strengthening at MAN 1 Baubau depends on the integration of direction (quality targets), systems (planning–implementation–evaluation), and people (capacity and culture). This integration provides a plausible pathway for madrasah quality improvement that is both context-sensitive and sustainable.

#### 4. Conclusion

This study concludes that strengthening School-Based Management (SBM) at MAN 1 Baubau is most effective when the principal's strategy integrates three mutually reinforcing elements: strategic direction, systemic governance routines, and human capacity development. The findings suggest that translating the madrasah's vision and mission into measurable annual targets and prioritized programs helps ensure coherence and prevents fragmented implementation. In addition, participatory governance structures such as functional teams and routine coordination and evaluation forums support shared responsibility and internal accountability, although the depth of participation may vary across staff groups. Evidence-informed planning and program control practices, implemented through continuous monitoring and follow up, indicate an emerging quality assurance orientation consistent with continuous improvement principles. Importantly, SBM strengthening is shown to be closely linked to instructional quality through formative academic supervision and professional learning activities, positioning teaching and learning as the central focus of governance reform. Resource governance and student services further contribute to quality improvement by enhancing the reliability of educational processes and learning conditions, while stakeholder engagement remains an area that requires more consistent consolidation. Overall, the study affirms that SBM can function as a sustainable quality improvement mechanism when leadership moves beyond administrative compliance to build a coherent quality culture grounded in targets, routines, and collective professionalism.

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