

## Conference Paper

# Strategies to Improve Education Quality at Junior High Schools

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**ORCID:***Dian Grace Puspita*: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2290-3468>**Abstract**

This study aimed to introduce education practitioners and the general public to the strategies that schools have undertaken to improve the quality of education. This research used qualitative methods to explore existing phenomena. The research was conducted at one of the junior high schools in South Sulawesi, Indonesia. The data were collected through semi-structured interviews whose questions were developed after being in the field. The data were processed using qualitative data analysis techniques. Source triangulation was carried out with three teachers. The results showed that there were strategies that were considered effective in improving the quality of education. This quality improvement was indicated by the good student output and the trust of the community who considered the school to be one of their favorite schools in the area; through this quality improvement, the school became an example for others. Some of the strategies that were considered effective were implementing student-centered learning, increasing the number of high achieving new student admissions, strengthening human resources, providing educational rewards, and learning outside the classroom.

**Keywords:** junior high school, education quality improvement

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## 1. Introduction

With the development of the era until now, quality education is a major concern because it is one of the main elements in economic development [1]. For secondary school, quality education needs to be improved because secondary education can be identified as a fulcrum for reform where the differences between countries are starting to become clear [2]. Contemporary thinkers contribute to seeing achievements in education as a major component of national competitiveness. Some countries measure the progress of how advanced education has been and how is the quality of their education. To maximize this education, certainly, need a strategy quality of education. So that quality is maintained and the quality improvement process is controlled, then there must be a standard set and agreed upon nationally to be used as an indicator for evaluating the success of the quality improvement [3]. Therefore, the 8 (eight) national education

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standards that have been established in Indonesia are the reference for this country in improving the quality of education.

South Sulawesi has 24 (twenty-four) districts, each of which has a different quality of education and until now the government continues to improve education quality assurance. South Sulawesi youth statistics in 2017, conducted by the South Sulawesi BPS, show that illiteracy rates are twice as common in rural areas as in urban areas (0.30 percent). It is estimated that there is an education gap between urban and rural areas because the development of education in cities is more rapid, both in terms of facilities, educational design, teaching, and other external and internal factors that support such as motivation from family and intellectual abilities, while in villages it is different [4]. This is of course is one of the factors causing the quality of education in the regions in South Sulawesi to be not fully even.

In the current decentralization era, the government should contribute to improving the quality of education in their respective regions by sticking to the national education program as summarized in 8 (eight) national education standards. This study answers basic questions about the effective strategies that schools are undertaking in improving the quality of education. The emergence of this strategy is indicated by the vision, mission, and goals of the school and still adheres to the strategic policies of the local government set out in the Medium Term Development Plan (RPJMD). Based on the RPJMD, the Education Office as a regional apparatus organization then determines a strategy in which there are priority and innovation programs that are elaborated from one of the pillars of development, namely "don't let my people be stupid".

In this regard, schools collaborate with the government in determining effective strategies by existing conditions in schools. The strategy implemented is considered effective because it can have a good impact on the school's output. This is evidenced by the achievement of rankings at every event and Olympics at the secondary education level, besides that school output is also seen from the acquisition of national examination scores and alumni received in favorite high schools.

Efforts to improve the quality of education also occur in other countries. In India, for example, improving the quality especially in secondary school is developing lifelong learning skills, which in turn will involve revamping the whole system. Teacher professional development is also important, this is done through in-service and pre-service training [5].

The purpose of this paper is to be able to open insights both for policymakers and the wider community in understanding the implementation of strategies in these schools and is also expected to become information material for practitioners and policymakers

to determine the right strategy in each region. However, this study was only limited to one school and it is hoped that there will be other studies that extend this theme to other schools.

## 2. Related Works/Literature Review

### 2.1. Education Quality Improvement Strategy

The definition of strategy in education reaps many points of view that have been formulated by several experts several years ago [6–8]. The strategy is a mechanism for aligning all aspects of school operations in achieving common goals [9]. A strategy can also be referred to as a specific pattern used to take decisions and actions in achieving organizational goals [8]. Commitment and consistency in carrying out the vision and mission must be carried out through a measurable program that becomes one of the guidelines in developing strategies for success [10].

Quality is used to distinguish between good and bad products, therefore the definition of quality cannot be separated from customer satisfaction [11]. Quality in education is associated with efforts to provide satisfying services to education service users and will be guaranteed if there is a synergy between leaders and all stakeholders in institution [12]. Therefore, education was considered quality if all components in it have the requirements and conditions that the customer wants and result in customer satisfaction [13]. The components are in the form of standards and curriculum, academic literature, teaching staff (professional skills), educational monitoring, moral and patriotic education, scientific research in education, management systems, materials, and technical basis [14]. In carrying out the strategy to improve quality, it is necessary to develop a quality management system in the form of inputs, processes, and outputs that are connected and measured in an integrated manner. Developing this quality management system includes planning, implementation, monitoring, measurement, and improvement [15]. Every organization needs to have a mechanism for conducting quality management that was used to determine what customers expect and need, and ensure whether expectations have been met or not [16].

## 3. Material & Methodology

The research was conducted using qualitative methods that are oriented towards exploration and discovery [17]. This research was conducted at one of the junior high

schools in South Sulawesi, Indonesia. The case that becomes the focus of research is an effective strategy to improve the quality of education. The main source in this study is the principal by collecting data through semi-structured interviews. Source triangulation is done by interviewing 3 (three) teachers with consideration because they are the ones who understand directly the learning process and the needs of the school in improving students. Technical triangulation is carried out in an unstructured manner by observing the situation and then recording the conditions experienced by the school which is then adjusted to the results of the interview. The data analyzed using the Milles & Huberman (1992) model which consisted of 1) data reduction in the form of sorting data, summarizing, focusing on important matters related to effective strategies in improving quality, and researchers summarizing field notes, both from initial notes, at the time of expansion or addition; 2) Presentation of data is done by combining information obtained from interviews and document studies. Presentation of the data is done to produce narrative text; 3) Conclusion drawing where the researcher verifies the data that has been obtained from the results of presenting the data by concluding the results of the interview.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1. Results

The results showed that this school has several strategies in improving the quality of education in which there are strategies set by the local government as well as strategies set in the school itself which are tailored to the needs of the school. The strategies that are considered effective are SCL learning, increasing the number of new student admissions presentations on the path of achievement, strengthening human resources, providing educational rewards according to school categories, and learning outside the classroom. This can be described as follows:

#### 4.1.1. Implementation Student-Centered Learning

The development of the learning process in the classroom which is oriented towards the Student-Centered Learning (SCL) approach means that teachers are always given directions to improve the learning process with a learning model that places students at the center of the learning process. According to one teacher who was interviewed

this learning process is expected to be able to make students active and competitive. He said:

“This learning process helps students to be active, independent, and competitive in the learning process, children can be responsible, and find new things and resources in one material” (W-1/SPSK/MS/ 6-2-2020).

Students are invited to be creative and active in the learning process with the hope that students can find new things and interpret learning personally. This is by the expression of the principal who said that:

“The learning process in the classroom that we always strive for is student center oriented, meaning that the learning process is student-centered, they can find new things, they are active and independent” (W-15/SPSK/HT/4-2-2020).

Thus, it is concluded that student-centered learning helps students interpret a lesson so that they find something new that can make them innovative and creative. This certainly influence improving the quality of education, because this learning can help schools to produce good output. After all, it is supported by creative and innovative learning and engages students' activeness in learning.

#### **4.1.2. Increasing the Percentage of Admission for Students with Achievement**

As a school that is a favorite among the community, the school provides opportunities for high-achieving students by trying to increase the number of achievement pathway presentations to 15-20% in new students admissions, which previously was only 5%. This is by the expression of the principal who said:

“There are a lot of enthusiasts to come here, so we open more space for achievement paths, from which so far the weight is only 5% of the path of achievement, we are opening wider so it does not fully refer to the ministerial regulations, so yesterday we took it up to 15-20% for the track of achievement (W-11 / SPSK / HT / 4-2-2020).

Students who are accepted through the achievement pathway are put together in several class groups called bilingual classes to see their progress but do not ignore the regular class which also has good potential even though it is not yet explored. It's just that the teacher tries to make the learning model slightly different from these two

classes because, from the perspective of acceptance, students who enter through the achievement path are seen as more responsive in receiving learning material. This is reinforced by the results of interviews with English teachers who reveal that there are slight differences in the learning model carried out in bilingual and regular classes.

“If I teach, bilingual classes digest lessons faster and tend to be creative. If in regular classes, most children need more guidance and attention, then they can catch the lessons given but not all of that (W / SPSK / MS / 6- 2-2020).

Furthermore, it was revealed that this was indicated by students dominating several favorite high schools both in South Sulawesi and in places outside Sulawesi. It is evident from the results of interviews with the principal which revealed that:

“The last alumni at this school who are bilingual programs become the vice president of students, who can speak in front of the president. Currently, many alumni also enter well-known universities, some even outside the country,” (W-26/SE/HT4-2-2020).

An increase in the path of achievement in new student admissions is considered capable of supporting quality improvement in this school because it produces good student output. This is indicated by the scores above average, the graduates who dominate the favorite high schools, and the winners in every Olympics and other events.

### 4.1.3. Improving Human Resources

Schools strengthen human resources for teachers in improving the learning process which ultimately affects quality. At the beginning of each semester, the school conducts a workshop for learning abilities. Then hold regular evaluation meetings, evaluate each other what obstacles are being faced, then the most important thing is to collaborate between teachers. It is hoped that through this a teacher can collaborate with other teachers who have open minds. The school principal provides an example in this regard. He says:

“For example, teachers who are young with teachers who are termed elders whose teaching methods are still old or who have limited IT. We create a collaborative team to share”(W-21 / SE / HT / 4-2-2020).

Strengthening human resources, in this case, providing workshops and direction to teachers related to innovative learning, means that teachers who still use monotonous learning are given an overview and invite them to think openly.

#### 4.1.4. Categorization of Schools in which there are Rewards of Outstanding Students

This strategy is a local government strategy that categorizes schools and provides reward programs for outstanding students. The number of students who are given rewards by the provisions of the school category. The fees used are also from the local government. The categorization of schools consists of 4 categories, namely ordinary schools, model schools, priority schools, and letting schools in each government category provide educational rewards for students who are ranked in the class. Each student is given a reward in the form of money in the form of savings which is transferred to each student's account that the school has created. The school which is the object of research in this study has been included in the priority school category where the provision of educational rewards for students who are ranked 1-7 people. This categorization is considered good because it can trigger students to be more active and competitive to get achievements which in turn produces good output for improving the quality of education. this was revealed in an interview by the principal. He says:

“I think this is effective because the impact can build children's competitive power, children can be more optimal and earnest in learning because there is a kind of motivation given” (W-12/SPSK/HT4-2-2020).

It was further strengthened by the teacher who said that this was a good innovation and had a positive impact. She says:

“I think it has a positive impact on children. Because by getting a reward from the government, in my opinion, children are motivated to get rankings.” (W-11/SPSK/KD/06-02-2020).

This school is still the only school that falls into the priority school category in the district, the rest are still at the model school stage. Until now, there have been no schools in the district that are included in the smart school category, but this categorization of schools is intended so that students can be motivated, to maintain class rankings and raise students' seriousness in learning.

#### 4.1.5. Learning Outside the Classroom

Several subjects such as English, cultural arts, science, and mathematics learning outside the classroom. For example, in English, there is narrative text learning. The teacher provides material about drama so that during the learning process students are

divided into several groups and take advantage of the school environment to practice in groups during class hours. Besides that, in learning mathematics, this strategy is also carried out. The learning strategy outside the classroom according to the teachers is very effective because students can explore their surroundings and find ideas and knowledge through practice outside the classroom. This was revealed by one of the teachers who implemented the learning process outside the classroom. She says:

“Sometimes I allow students to go outside the classroom to find meaning around them. no need to be far away. Enough in the school environment. For example, in a profit and loss lesson, they conducted interviews with sellers at school, what the capital was, they calculated the capital, then what price was sold. After that, they returned to the classroom and then they calculated the profit and loss. Sometimes learning like this alone makes students happy, and avoids feeling bored in this lesson” (W-9/SE/KD/06-02-2020).

This program is considered to be one of the supporters in improving the quality of education because it allows students to study outside the classroom in an orderly manner which is then expected from the learning outcomes to produce reflections for students to think critically and interpret the environment around learning topics.

## 4.2. Discussion

The findings above indicate that some of the programs implemented are considered to be effective strategies because they affect quality school. Every educational institution needs to determine strategies can help students think actively, critically, and creatively so that its implementation can be carried out optimally. The strategy developed needs to involve a mechanism to monitor this process. For example, if the school conducts learning outside the classroom, the teacher becomes a facilitator who invites and motivates students to find new things related to learning material besides that the teacher needs to be active in monitoring every student activity so that the learning process carried out outside the classroom can be controlled by good.

The results of this study are in line with the results of previous research which shows that improving the quality of education is supported by various strategies implemented. For example in Public Junior High Schools in Bandung City, which strives to improve teacher quality through the teacher learning climate to help teachers learning and adapt according to changes that occur in the education system [18]. Another thing happened in a junior high school in Malang. To improve the quality of education they maximize public relations management include planning, implementation, and



evaluation in designing school programs. Also, the principal motivates teachers and monitors teacher performances [19].

Not only in Indonesia, but other countries also provided views on several strategies that are considered to improve quality of education. In African countries, following democratic elections in 1994 that led to post-apartheid democracy, governments have invested in philosophies and inclusive education programs as a foundation for a broader societal transformation to correct past injustices in the provision of school [20]. One of the strategies undertaken is to increase resources and opportunities for learning for students from poor backgrounds [20]. Moreover, several years ago, India strived to continue to provide a trained workforce, empower individual students, and strive for equality to produce quality education [5]. Developed countries such as Italy develop quality and merit projects and implement training programs for teachers in junior secondary schools to support the school improvement plan [21].

Another strategy that supports this research is revealed by research in Malaysia which shows that learning methods outside the classroom help increase student motivation to learn [22]. The Department of Education Malaysia (2005) revealed various objectives for learning method outside the classroom, namely; strengthen students' understanding of the concepts taught in class, provide learning experiences, more meaningful and enjoyable learning, students can think and master knowledge through contextual experiences, increase student interest, skills and learning attitudes which are summarized in three domains namely knowledge, attitudes and skills [22]. This indicates that teachers need to realize the importance of the learning process with a variety of methods that can encourage each student to be active in the learning process which ultimately affects student learning output.

The improved learning process in improving the quality of education is one thing to note because the main factor is the school improvement process of active learning that is supported by learning facilities. The learning process is always subject to continuous updating to suit the student's situation. Supported by experts who conduct literature reviews by identifying and finding new learning starting points include an active learning environment with an emphasis on independent, meaningful learning, and students working together cooperative [23]. Also, teachers are required to be more creative, innovative, and not the only source in the learning process [24].

The same thing happened in Cambodia and Malawi where active learning was carried out. This activity provides positive results where students become more confident in expressing themselves, actively participate in discussions, increase motivation, and have greater interaction between students [25], [26]. Several schools in the Netherlands have

also carried out educational innovations, one of which is the “teaching-learning process.” In school, students are sufficiently supported and challenged and are actively involved in learning [27]. These various studies show that every educational institution has a strategy to implement to improve the quality of education.

Some of the components that are focus on the scope of education include improving the learning environment, focusing on quality teaching practices through teacher and supervisor training programs, and developing textbooks for each student [24] become one of the supporters and references in formulating various strategies to improve the quality of education. Moreover, in Morocco, they carry out educational reforms to fight against various pillars that hinder the development in the education sector. They believe that their strategic vision will help the reform movement advance education in the next few years [25]. It will be the points that help education practitioners and various strategies by the vision, mission, and environmental conditions at each school.

Every country always continues to effort improve the quality of education, including Indonesia, one of which is the implementation of “Merdeka Belajar, Guru Penggerak” which was promote by the Minister of Education and Culture of Indonesia. This innovation invites teachers to create a learning environment that is free of expression by sticking to the curriculum. The results of the literature reveal that this program has the main factors that are the key to success in improving the quality of education, namely the learning process, teacher independence and commitment, and the leadership of the school principal [28]. This could be one of the new reforms that support improving the quality of education for Indonesia. The hope is that each strategy is not just mere planning and only stops at the socialization stage but can be realized by involving a good strategic management system.

## 5. Conclusion

In the end, the various strategies implemented by each region down to the schools themselves are an effort to improve quality. Of course, there are always problems in improving quality, therefore innovation thinking is needed for education practitioners to determine strategies in overcoming this by the circumstances and environmental conditions. The school in this study carried out several strategies in improving its quality and there were 5 (five) strategies that were considered to be effective by the conditions experienced by the school, either determined by the school itself or in collaboration with strategies designed by the government. The strategy is in the form of SCL-oriented learning, increasing the number of new student admissions presentations

on the achievement pathway, strengthening human resources, providing rewards for outstanding students, and learning outside the classroom. This strategy may provide innovation for other schools as well as for policymakers in education. The need for research in other schools to become a further recommendation so that it becomes a consideration in determining strategies in improving the quality of education.

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