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Strategy Leadership in School Development: A Case Study of SDN 4 Kaliaman, Jepara

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ABSTRACT

School development requires strategic leadership to ensure continuous improvement in educational quality and sustainability. However, many elementary schools still face challenges related to instructional quality, teacher capacity, and resource management. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the leadership strategies implemented by the principal in developing SDN 4 Kaliaman, Kembang Subdistrict, Jepara Regency. This research employed a qualitative case study approach, with data collected through observations, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The findings reveal that the principal implemented strategic leadership through participative school planning, teacher empowerment via continuous professional development, integration of technology in learning, and collaboration with parents and the local community. In addition, effective infrastructure development and efficient budget management supported the successful implementation of school programs. The study concludes that strategic leadership characterized by participatory planning, teacher capacity building, and optimal resource utilization plays a crucial role in fostering a conducive learning environment and supporting sustainable school development.

1. Introduction

The principal plays a central role in the development of schools, as they hold strategic authority in directing the school's vision, managing resources, building school culture, and ensuring the quality of educational services. In the current era of educational change and complexity, schools are required to be adaptive and innovative in developing learning programs, management systems, and services that cater to the needs of students. Modern education demands the strengthening of 21st-century competencies, which include critical thinking, collaboration,

creativity, and communication (Relitawati et al., 2024). Therefore, the effectiveness of school leadership is a determining factor in the development of schools.

School development strategies cannot be separated from the ability of the principal to lead change. Numerous studies indicate that the use of technology, innovative teaching media, and constructivist approaches can improve the quality of learning and teacher performance (Yuanta et al., 2024; Sulthon et al., 2022; Putri et al., 2022). Additionally, the integration of local cultural contexts and active learning methods has been shown to enhance student motivation, creativity, and engagement in the learning process (Pratiwi et al., 2024; Mulyawati et al., 2024). Thus, the principal's strategy is not solely based on managerial aspects but also on pedagogical skills that create a relevant learning ecosystem for students' needs.

In the context of elementary school management, principals are expected to develop systematic strategic planning through the preparation of the RKJM (Middle-Term School Development Plan), RKT (Annual School Work Plan), and RKAS (School Budget Plan) as required by national education policies. Previous studies emphasize that the success of school development is highly influenced by the quality of planning, program implementation, and continuous evaluation mechanisms (Lestari & Gunawan, 2023; Purnama et al., 2024). However, challenges often arise in practice, such as limited facilities, students' low critical thinking abilities, and teachers' readiness to develop innovative learning (Hayati & Setiawan, 2022; Amalia et al., 2021; Firdausi et al., 2021).

SD Negeri 4 Kaliaman, located in Kembang Subdistrict, Jepara Regency, is a school with unique characteristics, especially its strong reading culture and stable academic and non-academic achievements year after year. Preliminary observations indicate that this school has a strong commitment to developing students' potential, evidenced by students' works and the implementation of active learning. This success is closely related to the principal's strategies in utilizing the school's potential, providing space for teacher creativity, and fostering collaboration with the school community and society. The principal's ability to design, implement, and evaluate school development strategies is crucial in ensuring the achievement of the educational vision. The principal at SDN 4 Kaliaman has made efforts to update curriculum management, align middle-term and annual planning, and strengthen the learning process to meet the demands of the Merdeka Curriculum and the evolving needs of students. This is consistent with the findings of Indartiwi et al. (2022), Roosita et al. (2022), and Ramadhani et al. (2022), which emphasize that learning innovations and data-based management are key factors in improving educational quality.

Based on these conditions, in-depth research is needed to explore how the principal's strategies in developing the school are structured, from planning and implementation to evaluation. Research on the strategies employed by principals remains relevant, as their role is a decisive factor in school transformation, particularly in the face of new curriculum demands, technological advancements, and the need for continuous improvement in educational quality. Therefore, this

study is essential to provide an empirical overview of the school development strategies at SD Negeri 4 Kaliaman, Kembang Subdistrict, Jepara Regency, and to contribute to the enhancement of quality in elementary education.

2. Methodology

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach, as it aims to describe the principal's strategy in school development through in-depth descriptions in the form of words, behaviors, and documents that are directly observed. Qualitative research seeks to understand phenomena in a naturalistic setting through a data collection process that generates detailed and meaningful verbal descriptions (Moleong, 2017). This approach is relevant because school development is a complex managerial process that requires contextual understanding, thus data is collected in narrative form to gain broad and deep insights. This research adopts a case study design, which, according to Creswell (2014), is used to explore a phenomenon in depth within a specific case in real-life contexts. A case study allows the researcher to examine the principal's action patterns, decision-making dynamics, and interactions among school members holistically. This study was conducted at SD Negeri 4 Kaliaman, located in the Kembang Subdistrict, Jepara Regency, on Jalan Kaliaman Jerukwangi. The research period spans from July 2025 to November 2025, which includes several stages: pre-fieldwork activities such as defining research focus and preparing instruments, followed by fieldwork involving data collection through interviews, observations, and documentation, and culminating in data analysis. This timeline ensures a comprehensive approach to understanding the strategies implemented by the school principal in school development.

Referring to Moleong (2017), qualitative research is carried out through three main stages: (1) Pre-Fieldwork Stage. This stage includes determining the research focus, preparing initial instruments, conducting preliminary studies, submitting proposals and conducting seminars, as well as obtaining research permits. In this stage, the researcher conducted an initial observation at SD Negeri 4 Kaliaman to understand the context of school development. (2) Fieldwork Stage. During this stage, the researcher enters the field to conduct in-depth observations, interviews, and data collection related to the principal's strategies in school development. The researcher interacts directly with the principal, teachers, school committee, and educational staff. (3) Data Analysis Stage. Analysis is conducted simultaneously with data collection in the field. The data is analyzed using the interactive data analysis model of Miles & Huberman (Silalahi, 2017), which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing.

The main subject of this research is the principal of SD Negeri 4 Kaliaman, as the school development strategy revolves around the leadership of the principal. Other data sources include: (1) Teachers and educational staff, (2) School committee and parents, (3) School supervisors, (4) School documents (RKS, RKJM, RKAS, meeting minutes, evaluation reports, and other supporting documents). In

qualitative research, the researcher is the primary instrument who plans, collects data, analyzes, interprets, and reports the findings (Moleong, 2017). The supporting instruments include interview guidelines, observation guidelines, and documentation guidelines.

Data Collection Techniques: (1) Observation. Observations are conducted in a participatory and transparent manner, where the researcher is involved in school activities such as meetings, supervision, and learning activities. Observation is used to obtain data on the planning, implementation, and evaluation of school development. The observation follows the basic principles of scientific observation as described by Nasution in Sugiyono (2017). (2) Interviews. Interviews are conducted in both structured and unstructured formats to gather in-depth information about the principal's strategies. The respondents include the principal, teachers, committee members, supervisors, educational staff, and parents (Achmadi, 2015; Moleong, 2017). (3) Documentation. Documentation refers to written documents, photos, and official archives such as RKS, RKJM, RKAS, meeting minutes, school self-evaluation reports, and policy documents such as Law No. 20 of 2003, Government Regulation No. 19 of 2005, and Ministerial Regulation No. 19 of 2007 as the basis for education management (Sugiyono, 2017; Haris, 2016).

Data validity is ensured through four techniques according to Moleong (2017): (1) Credibility (Confidence Level). This is achieved through source triangulation, technique triangulation, and time triangulation, as well as member checking with informants. (2) Transferability (Applicability). The researcher presents a detailed contextual description so that the research findings can be considered for application in other contexts. (3) Dependability (Reliability). Reliability is tested by examining the consistency of the research process from the beginning to the end. (4) Confirmability (Objectivity). Ensuring that the research results are entirely based on the data found and not influenced by researcher bias.

Data analysis in this study follows the interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman (Silalahi, 2017), which emphasizes a continuous and cyclical process of analysis. The first stage is data reduction, in which the researcher selects, focuses, and simplifies data obtained from interviews, observations, and documentation to highlight information relevant to the research objectives. The second stage is data presentation, where the reduced data are systematically organized and displayed in the form of narrative descriptions, tables, matrices, and charts to facilitate interpretation. The final stage is conclusion drawing and verification, involving the identification of patterns, relationships, and meanings, while continuously validating the findings to ensure their accuracy, consistency, and credibility..

3. Results and Discussion

This study aims to analyze the strategies implemented by the principal in the development of SDN 4 Kaliaman, Kembang Subdistrict, Jepara Regency, with a

particular focus on leadership practices that support school improvement. Based on systematic observations, in-depth interviews, and comprehensive documentation analysis, the findings reveal that the principal applies integrated development strategies oriented toward enhancing educational quality. These strategies emphasize improving the quality of learning through instructional innovation, strengthening teacher capacity through continuous professional development, and optimizing the utilization of local resources. Such approaches demonstrate the principal's commitment to fostering sustainable school development and creating a supportive learning environment that aligns with the school's contextual needs.

This research employed a qualitative case study approach, with the principal of SDN 4 Kaliaman serving as the main informant, supported by teachers and school staff as additional informants. This approach was deliberately selected to obtain an in-depth and comprehensive understanding of the leadership strategies implemented in school development. By focusing on a single school context, the study was able to explore leadership practices, decision-making processes, and interactions among school stakeholders in detail. Data were collected directly in the natural school setting to ensure the authenticity and credibility of the findings, allowing the researcher to capture real conditions, behaviors, and experiences related to the implementation of school development strategies.

The interview process was conducted using semi-structured interview techniques, allowing the researcher to explore informants' perspectives in depth while maintaining flexibility to follow emerging issues during the interviews. This approach enabled the researcher to ask predetermined questions while also probing further based on informants' responses. Interviews focused on leadership strategies, participatory planning processes, teacher development programs, infrastructure improvement, and school budget management. Each interview was audio-recorded with the informants' consent, then transcribed verbatim to ensure data accuracy. The transcribed data were subsequently analyzed thematically to identify recurring patterns, meanings, and insights related to the implementation of strategic leadership in school development. Several questions used in this study are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Interview Questions

No	Interview Fokus	Interview Questions
1	Leadership Strategy	How does the principal plan and implement strategies for school development?
2	School Development Plan	How are teachers, parents, and the community involved in preparing the RPS?
3	Teacher Development	What programs are implemented to improve teachers' professional competence?
4	Learning Quality	How does the principal encourage innovation and technology integration in learning?
5	Infrastructure Development	What efforts are made to improve school facilities and infrastructure?
6	Budget Management	How is the school budget managed to support development programs?

School Development Strategies

The principal at SDN 4 Kaliaman implements several development strategies, which include improving the quality of learning, strengthening teacher professionalism, and integrating technology into the teaching process. The principal's primary focus is to create a conducive environment for educational quality improvement through continuous guidance for teachers. One of the strategies implemented is the use of technology in the learning process, which allows both teachers and students to access various learning resources more easily and effectively. Additionally, the principal also strives to improve the relationship between the school and the community. One of the efforts made is involving parents and the community in the planning and implementation of school programs. This way, the school can gain broader support from various stakeholders.

Principal's Role in Developing the School Development Plan

The development of the School Development Plan (RPS) at SDN 4 Kaliaman involves the participation of all school members. The principal invites teachers, parents, and the community to participate in the planning process, allowing each party to provide valuable input in determining the steps to be taken for school development. The RPS developed focuses not only on improving academic aspects but also on character development, enhancing facilities, and empowering the community. This shows the principal's commitment to creating a school that is not only academically excellent but also socially and culturally strong.

Improving Education Quality through Teacher Development

Teacher development is one of the main focuses of the school development strategy at SDN 4 Kaliaman. The principal recognizes that teacher quality is a key factor in improving educational quality. Therefore, various training and workshops are held to enhance teachers' teaching skills, particularly in using technology and innovative teaching methods. The training provided covers mastery of educational technology, engaging teaching strategies, and improving communication skills for teachers when interacting with students. The results of this development show significant improvement in teacher performance, particularly in the application of more creative and interactive teaching methods.

Strengthening School Infrastructure Capacity

In addition to developing human resources, the principal also pays close attention to strengthening the school's infrastructure. Funds obtained through the School Operational Assistance (BOS) are focused on improving facilities that support teaching and learning activities. Some of the improvements made include classroom renovations, adding teaching tools, and upgrading sanitation facilities. These infrastructure improvements are expected to create a more comfortable and safe learning environment for students, allowing them to learn more optimally.

Furthermore, the principal encourages the active role of the community in maintaining and taking care of the school's facilities.

Budget Management for School Development

The principal also demonstrates excellent budget management skills. The budget is used efficiently to support various development programs, both related to improving educational quality and maintaining school facilities. Budget management is carried out transparently, ensuring that every use of funds is clearly accountable. Through good budget management, SDN 4 Kaliaman has been able to optimize available resources to achieve the planned school development goals. This success is also supported by the active participation of all school elements in planning and implementing the various programs. A summary of the research findings is presented in Table 2 below:

Table 2. Research Findings

No.	Aspect Examined	Findings
1	School Development Strategy	Focus on improving the quality of learning, technology use, and collaboration with the community.
2	Development Plan Preparation	Active participation of teachers, parents, and the community in the planning process.
3	Teacher Development	Improving the quality of teaching through training in technology use and innovative teaching methods.
4	Strengthening School Infrastructure	Renovation of classrooms, teaching tools, and sanitation facilities.
5	Budget Management	Transparent and efficient budget management for school development.

Thus, the findings of this research indicate that the principal of SDN 4 Kaliaman has successfully implemented comprehensive and well-coordinated strategies to enhance the quality of education. These strategies encompass the development of human resources through continuous teacher training, the improvement of school facilities to support effective learning, and transparent and efficient school budget management. The integration of these elements demonstrates strategic leadership that aligns planning, implementation, and evaluation processes. As a result, the school has been able to create a more supportive, safe, and conducive learning environment for students. Such conditions not only improve academic outcomes but also foster student engagement, teacher performance, and sustainable school development.

Discussion

School Development Strategy

The finding that the principal prioritizes improving the quality of learning through the use of technology is consistent with recent literature. For example, studies show that the implementation of digital tools in elementary schools can enrich learning interactions, improve administrative efficiency, and simplify the evaluation of the

teaching and learning process (Dahlan et al., 2025). Furthermore, research by Masinambowa et al (2025) on digital school management innovation reveals that digital management systems support the effectiveness of teaching, administration, and communication between teachers, students, and parents (A'yun, 2025). Therefore, the principal's initiative at SDN 4 Kaliaman to utilize technology is a relevant and contextual strategy in the digital era.

In addition to technology, the collaborative strategy between the school, parents, and the community as part of school development demonstrates an understanding of the importance of multi-party involvement. This collaborative leadership model supports consensus-building and participation in the school development process, thereby strengthening the sense of ownership and shared responsibility for the school's progress. A study by Retnawati et al. (2025) strengthens the idea that community participation in education positively impacts the achievement of quality education in schools (Rusdin et al., 2023).

Formulation of the School Development Plan (RPS)

The participatory approach in formulating the RPS engaging teachers, parents, and the community shows a democratic and participatory school management approach. This approach is consistent with findings in literature on effective school leadership. For example, Nurlaili's (2025) study in elementary schools in Balaraja-Tangerang emphasizes that transformational leadership creates a conducive school climate, enhances teacher and staff involvement in decision-making processes, which ultimately improves the quality of education (Setiyadi, 2025). This supports the finding that the RPS at SDN 4 Kaliaman is developed inclusively and holistically, focusing not only on academic aspects but also on character development, facilities, and community empowerment.

Improving Education Quality through Teacher Development

Teacher development as a key strategy shows that the school recognizes teachers as key actors in the process of improving educational quality. This is aligned with literature findings that effective school leadership fosters professional development for teachers, which in turn improves overall school performance. For example, in a literature review by Pitriani (2024), it is mentioned that educational leadership models such as distributed leadership and professional learning communities emphasize collaboration, ongoing support, and professional development for teachers as key factors in school success (Sukmadewi, 2022). Furthermore, research on other elementary schools by Frisila et al. (2025) shows that the principal's role in providing facilities, motivation, and training significantly contributes to improving teaching quality (Lestari, 2021). Thus, teacher development at SDN 4 Kaliaman is not just an administrative formality but an essential part of the education quality improvement strategy.

Strengthening School Infrastructure

On the other hand, the principal at SDN 4 Kaliaman also pays significant attention to strengthening the school's infrastructure. Good infrastructure is an essential supporting factor in creating an effective learning environment. By efficiently using funds obtained through the School Operational Assistance (BOS), the principal has successfully made improvements to facilities such as classrooms, teaching tools, and sanitation facilities. These infrastructure improvements not only support learning activities but also create a comfortable and safe environment for students. This finding is consistent with research from the JSWSE Study, which found that school infrastructure significantly affects teachers' effectiveness and the quality of the learning environment in elementary schools (Ramadhani, 2025). Therefore, investment in physical facilities at SDN 4 Kaliaman supports the creation of a conducive learning environment and comprehensive school development.

Budget Management for School Development

The finding that the school's budget is managed transparently and efficiently supports the optimization of resources to support development programs, both for education, facilities, and teacher development. Conceptually, good budget management is part of effective school management, enabling the sustainability of development programs. This is a crucial foundation for ensuring that the designed strategies can be implemented consistently and responsibly. A study by Ramadhan (2025) underscores the importance of efficient budget management in achieving optimal educational goals (Setiyadi, 2025).

Overall, the findings of this study demonstrate that the principal of SDN 4 Kaliaman has effectively implemented a range of strategic initiatives aimed at improving educational quality. These initiatives include strengthening teacher professional development through continuous training, integrating technology to support more innovative learning processes, enhancing school infrastructure, and managing the school budget efficiently and transparently. Moreover, the adoption of a participatory approach in school planning and development has increased the active involvement of teachers, parents, and the wider community. This collaborative strategy not only reinforces shared responsibility but also supports sustainable school development, ultimately contributing to the creation of a higher-quality educational environment.

4. Conclusion

This study reveals that the principal at SD Negeri 4 Kaliaman plays a highly strategic role in school development by implementing various strategies, including improving the quality of learning, teacher development, infrastructure strengthening, and efficient budget management. The research findings indicate that the principal has successfully created a conducive environment for enhancing educational quality by integrating technology into the learning process, which

enables both students and teachers to easily and effectively access a variety of learning resources. Additionally, the principal has successfully built strong relationships with parents and the community, thereby gaining greater support for school management and development.

The participatory formulation of the School Development Plan (RPS), which involves teachers, parents, and the community, is one of the key successes in achieving the school's development goals. The active participation of various stakeholders in this planning process strengthens their engagement with the school's progress. Furthermore, the teacher development efforts led by the principal through training and workshops continue to improve the quality of teaching at the school, particularly in the use of technology and innovative teaching methods. On the other hand, the strengthening of school infrastructure through the utilization of BOS (School Operational Assistance) funds for classroom renovations, teaching tools, and sanitation facilities has created a comfortable learning environment that supports optimal teaching and learning. Transparent and efficient budget management also ensures the sustainability of school development, where every fund managed can be accounted for clearly.

Overall, the strategies implemented by the principal at SD Negeri 4 Kaliaman can serve as an example for other schools in managing the development of quality education. The focus on teacher development, the use of technology, infrastructure strengthening, and efficient budget management are key factors contributing to the creation of a better and more conducive learning environment for students. The participatory approach in planning and school development further strengthens the involvement of various stakeholders, thus creating a higher-quality and sustainable school.

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