

# Leadership of the Principal in Planning the Internal Quality Assurance System at Islamic Elementary School

Zaenab Hanim<sup>a</sup>, Kaolan<sup>a</sup>, Adam Juit<sup>b</sup>, Jati Kesuma<sup>b</sup>, & Rahmat Soe'oad<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Universitas Mulawarman, Samarinda, Kalimantan Timur, Indonesia

<sup>b</sup>University Islam Syarif Ali Brunei, Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei Darussalam

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## Abstract

The purpose of this research is to describe the principal's leadership in planning the internal quality assurance system (IQAS) of Al Azhar School in terms of content, process, and assessment standards. This research used a qualitative approach with a case method. The subjects of the research were principal, teachers, students, and parents of students. Data were collected by using in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. The validity of the research data was done through triangulation. The data analysis model used was an interactive data analysis developed by Miles and Huberman through several stages, starting from data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and data verification or conclusion. The research findings showed that the principal's leadership in planning the internal quality assurance system was indicated by his School Income and Expenditure Budget Plan (SIEBP) carried out through school meetings by involving different school development teams such as curricular, exclassical, religious, and support teams as well as school committee. He carried out quality improvement through comparative studies and collaboration with other institutions stated in the memorandum of understanding. He also made a special team to carry out internal quality improvements related to content standards, educational processes, performance assessments, giving certificate of award and salary increase for teachers who achieve work performance. In addition, he also ran academic and nonacademic activities as a continuous internal quality improvement for achieving National Education Standards (NES).

**Keywords:** *Principal Leadership, Planning, Internal Quality Assurance System.*

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## 1. Introduction

Using NES, it was found that school quality problems still became a strategic issue in the development of human resources including teachers' qualifications and competencies, education staff, and the fulfillment of educational facilities and infrastructure. The achievement of NES refers to the Government Regulation number 57 of 2021 according to article 3 that NES include several standards such as graduate competence, content, process, educational assessment, education staff, facilities and infrastructure, management, and financing standards. NES was not optimally implemented in schools that should comply with the standards of education quality assurance. Different definitions of quality assurance in higher education and school were still debatable among academics, schools and students to understand what the quality assurance is (Seyfried & Pohlenz, 2018). The standards of content, process, and learning assessment in particular were still under national education system.

The problems of implementing curriculum content standard in accordance with the NES were caused by the fulfillment of competency achievement and formulation of learning objectives without attention to the demands of basic competencies such as competence of analysis and understanding attitude competence and conducting knowledge and skills separately (Warman, Harliansyah, et al., 2021). While the teachers' problems of implementing the standard of learning process in accordance with the NES were caused by several things such as lack of learning tools, teachers' inability of choosing and using appropriate learning media and models and that of making use of learning outcomes to improve the quality learning process. In addition, the teachers had to understand and appreciate the diversity of student characteristics (Azainil et al., 2021).

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\* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: [zaenab.hanim@fkip.unmul.ac.id](mailto:zaenab.hanim@fkip.unmul.ac.id)

In order to improve the competences of school graduates and quality human resources, the standard of learning assessment had to be in accordance with the NES (Azainil et al., 2018). Unfortunately, the learning assessment standard used to determine the learning achievement criteria had not been in accordance with the NES. For examples, the preparation of the instrument assessment did not refer to the basic competence of truth worthiness indicators; most of the questions administered by the teachers did not contain higher order thinking skills (HOTS); and the skill assessment rubric was not maximized either.

Quality improvement of the NES in schools had to be in line with the preparation of the School Income and Expenditure Budget Plan (SIEBP) and the School Activity and Budget Plan (SABP) carried out by the school principal. The SIEBP and SABP had to be under control of the school's internal quality assurance system so that all of the programs made by the principal can achieve the national educational standards in realizing the vision, mission, and goals of the schools. In other words, the principal's leadership may actualize the SABP been set through the involvement of all school residents and stakeholders (Usman, 2016).

As a school manager, the role of principal's leadership to perform an administration and management is to improve the school quality (Noor et al., 2020). The principal has to be responsible for planning, implementing, and assessing changes and improvements in school teaching programs especially principal policies in the implementation of educational management in the school (Hanim & Wazir, 2021). Leadership policies in education are always expected to have a dynamic influence upon the attention to school quality improvement (Soe'loed et al., 2021). Of the policies is the enactment of zone-based system for new student admissions. As a consequence of the policies, schools have to compete to improve their qualities to achieve the NES in the hope that a quality school could be the choice of prospective students.

Following the mandate of the Education Law Number 20 of 2003 Article 5, paragraph 1, every citizen has the right to get a quality education. Therefore, all schools are to implement an education quality assurance system, 8 standards of NES. They are standards of curriculum content, processes, assessments, teaching, educational staff, graduate competencies, infrastructure, management, and financing. School internal quality assurance is a stage of continuous quality improvement to achieve NES of the schools. The education quality assurance system is carried out based on the principles of 1) sustainability, 2) systematic plan, 3) respect of the autonomy of formal and non-formal education units, 4) facilitation for informal community learning sustainability with minimal state regulations, and 5) a continuous quality improvement (Barnawi & Arifin, 2016; Warman et al., 2022).

For the purpose of implementing internal quality assurance (IQA), the leadership of school principal should be able to mobilize and empower school residents to develop the SIEBP for the purpose of improving school IQA. Considering the school principals as educational leaders with their authority, power, and competence to organize and develop their staff professionally, they have to be able to act as educators, managers, administrators, supervisors, leaders, innovators, and motivators (Lorensius et al., 2022) Principal's leadership is the ability to influence a group of people to achieve a vision and goal and improve quality education. In addition, the principals are also expected to support various school aspects including the school vision, strategic plan development, and implementation of continuous school quality improvement (Asrat, 2020).

The success of the school principals' leadership in achieving its vision and IQAS cannot be separated from the principals' leadership role in preparing SIEBP which involves all school citizens and school committees to achieve quality school in accordance with customers' expectations. School activity plan is jointly prepared by the school and the school committee in designing intra-curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular activities used for measuring the school success and the needed budget allocation (Bush & Sargsyan, 2020). Thus, this research is limited to the principal's leadership in planning the IQAS at Islamic Elementary School Samarinda concerning the achievement standards of content, process, and assessment to realize NES in Indonesia.

## **2. Research Methods**

The research used a qualitative approach with a case study method. It described the data through document, observation, and in-depth interviews to obtain information or data for the research. The researcher used purposive sampling technique to represent the needed information. The main and key research instrument is the researcher himself. In-depth interviews with the principal, teachers, students, and students' parents were conducted using interview protocol. Because of the Covid-19 pandemic, they were conducted online using a recording device. A part from the interviews, supporting the collected data of the interviews, data of documentation was also collected. Data analysis was carried out using an interactive model of Miles and Huberman including data collection, data reduction,

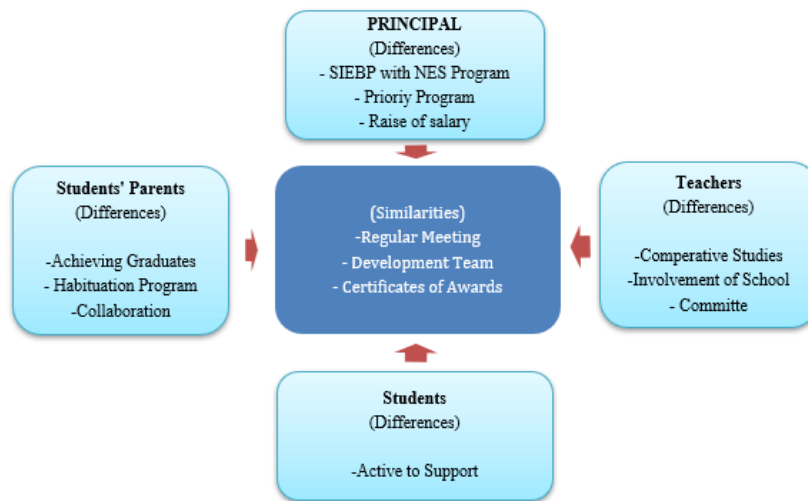
data display, and verification or conclusions. (Miles & Huberman, 2014) The research was conducted by examining its object as a complex and holistic problem. In order to have the validity of the collected data, triangulation which includes source, techniques, and time was carried out.

### 3. Results and Discussion

While conducting research, the researcher explored the required data by carefully listening to the informants for the purpose of achieving NES program at Al Azhar Islamic Elementary School Samarinda. The collected data was then analyzed based on the research objectives.

#### 3.1. Triangulation of the Data

According to interviews from the all-research informants, the triangulation of data collected from the informants was intended to find out some similar and different statements of the informants as stated in the following chart:



**Figure 1.** The Principal Leadership in IQAS at Al Azhar Islamic Elementary School Samarinda

#### 3.1.1. Similarities

All informants responded that the preparation of SIEBP through the process of the school meeting was chaired by the principal either meeting with the development team and along with foundations. The principal gave award certificates to the teachers who had successfully achieved quality improvement.

#### 3.1.2. Differences

From the interviews with the four informants, it was found that there was a difference that the principal in the preparation of SIEBP included the NES by taking the priority scale of activities into account and how to give the teachers certificates of appreciation and increase the teachers' salaries. According to the teachers, in making planning programs, the principal employed comparative studies with Al-Azhar Schools in Jakarta in terms of school budgeting and implementation of school quality improvement. From the students' point of view, the principal always supported the school activities but he did not involve the students' parents in making planning programs. In order to achieve quality school graduates, he followed up on the plans by familiarizing the students with positive and fun activities.

#### 3.2. Findings and discussion on Principal Leadership in Planning IQAS Programs of Al- Azhar Islamic Elementary School Samarinda

Findings of the interviews with the four informants had shown that the principal's leadership in making planning programs based on IQAS included the followings 1) preparing school programs; 2) follow-up on the implementation of school planning; 3) the implementation of the quality improvement of IQAS program; 4) involvement of the school community in implementing quality improvement planning; and 5) the appreciation for those involved in the preparation of quality assurance. The following is a quotation of the interview with the Principal of Al Azhar Islamic Elementary School Samarinda:

For the new year program of Al Azhar Islamic Elementary School Samarinda, we held annual evaluation program carried out from January to February usually after entering semester 2. After the evaluation, some teachers make a certain program usually called a school work meeting. (W-KS 14-22).

In addition, the principal also built a partnership or cooperation to improve school internal quality through some memorandums of understanding with Briton International English School; Al Munawwar Foundation Samarinda; Tilawati Center Samarinda, a Joint Understanding with a Research Center of East Kalimantan Agricultural Technology, and collaboration with Shin Kyokushin Indonesian Karate.

Based on the triangulation of sources with the three informants- principal, teachers, and students- about educational leadership in internal quality assurance planning (IQSP) of the school, they stated that school planning was carried out through a school meeting by involving the development team and teachers. However, the students' parents did not know the school planning process except good services provided to their children. They were also involved in giving the students' support and motivation. These findings are different from Hanim, et. al (2020) where the planning and policy-making process involved school foundation and students' parents as stakeholders. In other words, togetherness and responsibility were very important in improving school quality. However, they are in line with Wiyono et al., (2019) who found out that school principals had to arrange strategic planning in the implementation of minimum quality improvement stated in the NES and understood by all stakeholders as stated in school documents. They are also relevant to the research findings of Kelkay, (2020) stating that the development and progress of schools can be seen from the performance of professional principals in utilizing human resources and facilities of schools.

The planning stages for improving the school internal quality through school meetings were to involve the whole school residents to participate in the process of school programs prepared by the principal. The principal should be able to influence the teachers, school development teams, and administrative staff to carry out school activities together. The findings of this research were relevant to the research of Kelkay, (2020) that the development and progress of schools can be seen from the performance of professional principals in utilizing human resources and facilities by schools. The principal performed his work professionally by involving and empowering human resources who could support and carry out the school programs. The principal's leadership strongly influenced his plans of the school organization to achieve the school's vision, mission, and goals.

The interview with school principal also showed that he influences school organizations by his direction through work meetings to prepare school programs together with the teachers and development team. The school work programs were already included in SIEBP that contains NES regulations to perform the 8 standards of NES in Indonesia. However, this research was only limited to the standards of curriculum content, processes, and educational assessments as a priority program of the principal's leadership in preparing the school programs to evaluate the program together with the development team to obtain approval from the school foundation and the Education Office. The programs in SIEBP contained activities carried out to achieve competent graduates with good conducts and character, faith in God, physically and mentally healthy, and lifelong learning.

To improve the quality education of Al-Azhar, the principal built a national collaboration and coordination with the center of Al-Azhar Islamic Education Foundation in Jakarta through regular national meetings of all Al-Azhar school principals throughout Indonesia for sharing of knowledge, experience, and innovation by which he could meet and exceed school expectations. He also conducted a benchmarking to other Al-Azhar favorite schools which have digital classes and information technology (IT). The teachers were strongly motivated and encouraged to join IT and English training. Other collaborations and cooperations with some foundations such as Briton International English School, Shinkyokushin Karate Indonesia, Al Munawwar Samarinda Tilawati, and the Research Center of East Kalimantan Agricultural were built through an agreement and memorandum of understanding. In addition, he continuously improved the quality education through the formation of positive attitudes of students through religious activities, especially for slow blooming flower students. He highly appreciated those who worked hard and achieved school quality by giving them certificates of award and a raise.

In sum, the success of the Al Azhar Samarinda in improving its internal quality is a strong combination of four very important elements, the collaboration and coordination with Al Azhar Center Education Jakarta, benchmarking to other Al-Azhar favorite schools throughout Indonesia, formation of student's positive attitudes through religious activities, and high appreciation for hard working staff and school quality achievers. This combination is viewed as a cutting edge of the research.

### 3.3. *Planning and Implementation of Achievement of NES of Al Azhar Islamic Elementary School Samarinda*

#### 3.3.1. *Standard of Curriculum Content*

The results related to the standard of curriculum content gave authority to the curriculum team in terms of managing teacher teaching time, developing local, national, and Islamic curriculum content of Al Azhar Center Jakarta. The interview with the vice principal for curriculum shown as the following quotation:

“There are teams in our school such as teams for curricular and extra-curricular activities, religions, and support of which all teachers were involved with the permission of school foundation (W-KS 22-26)”.

The school tasks were given to every team controlled by the vice principal for the curriculum to implement the standard of curriculum content in improving the school's internal quality that combines the national curriculum of NES and special Islamic Al Azhar curriculum, memorization of the Holy Qur'an as an example. According to the principal, the school already met the standard of curriculum content based on the learning tools, prepared by the teachers, which contain the competencies of attitudes, knowledge, and skills following the K13 curriculum. The school curriculum was prepared and carried through school meetings among school members, committees, foundations by involving school supervisors and university lecturers as experts for consultation. Then, curriculum documents were approved by the school foundation. The principal facilitated the teachers to develop the standard of curriculum content for syllabus and lesson plans relevant with the materials for internal quality improvement of Al Azhar Islamic school based on NES and the central curriculum of Al Azhar Foundation adapted to school conditions. The research findings were relevant to the research conducted by Rossiter (2011). In achieving the standard of curriculum content, the school prepared and developed curricula according to its needs that still refers to the national standards of NES.

Giving academic assignment as a home work was very common for most of the school teachers for the purpose of helping the students' more understanding. However, Al Azhar Islamic school teachers rarely did it because the school implemented five intensive days, Monday through Friday, thus the students worked hard to complete their assignment at school. Considering that this school is based on Islamic religious education, the principal must strive to help his students achieve good basic religious competencies. This research finding was in line with and supporting the research of Thessin (2021) that shows the fulfillment of standards of content and process, good implementation of the school syllabus, the teaching and learning plan, the use of instructional media, and effective supervision for the use of IT in learning have improved the students' learning.

According to the teachers, the standard of student competency stated in the lesson plans was prepared by the teacher and already implemented in the core and basic competencies which included spiritual and social attitudes, knowledge, and skills. The lesson plans prepared by the teacher contained attitude and spiritual competencies like recitation of the Holy Qur'an, while the learning contained the competence of knowledge which referred to the achievement of mastery learning through remedial for the academically unsuccessful students and enrichment for the successful ones. Competency skill was intended to make students independent. Furthermore, according to the students' parents, the school is based on Islam as the basis for shaping students' spiritual or religious attitudes such as recitation and memorization of the Quran as a mandatory for Al Azhar students from grade 1 to 6 and graduates' target.

#### 3.3.2. *Standard of Educational Processes*

Achievements of internal quality related to the standard of educational process were authorities given to school curricular drafting team to handle the administration of learning syllabus, lesson plans, and learning evaluation. The following is the interview with the vice principal for curriculum:

The standards of process and assessment that handle the curriculum team are involving school administration elements such as syllabus, lesson plans, and so on. The curricular team that goes directly to the field either in the form of training, then evaluating, including collecting lesson plans made by friends. (W-KS: 165-172).

The standard of educational process included the preparation of instructional tools and annual semester program such as syllabus, and lesson plans at the beginning of the semester. In connection with this standard, one of the research findings was in line with the research conducted by Warman, Suryaningsi, et al., (2021). The teachers had to prepare lesson plans for learning activities and evaluation. While supervising the teachers and administrative staff was conducted by the principal based on the supervision schedule. The principal showed a strong commitment to the curriculum development while learning activities were carried out by teachers based on the level of teacher competence. The principal made this commitment to improve the teacher competence in the learning process and assessment based on

the results of the research. In the implementation, the principal made a micro-teaching schedule to improve the quality of teacher's teaching if deficiencies appeared when academic supervision was carried out on a scheduled basis.

The principal planned to improve the teaching quality by involving the teachers in pedagogic training so that there is an increase in teacher competence to improve school internal quality. In the process, the principal also emphasized habituation that shapes characters as spiritual values and social attitudes, especially for lower achievers. Before the lesson began, the students were accustomed to reading pledges, performing prayers. The teacher prepared lesson plans by following the instrument of Al Azhar Islamic School Jakarta. In line with the policy of Ministry of Education and Culture on Independent Learning, the lesson plan components are divided into three, learning objectives, learning activities, and learning assessments whose implementation refers to the application of 21st-century thinking process, knowledge competencies, and skills which cover critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity, collaboration, and communication. Following the scientific approach, the school can see inputs, processes, and outputs expected to improve school quality. Following the research conducted by Hanim (2019) and Azainil, et al (2020), school planning was directed to the design of inputs, processes, and output standards. The implementation of learning during the Covid-19 pandemic was carried out by online learning using whatsapp application, one of the media used by teachers to communicate with students.

### 3.3.3. *Standard of Educational Assessment*

The planning and implementation of standard of educational assessment was carried out by the teachers to assess the students' attitudes, knowledge, and skills. The assessment was already prepared in the lesson plans. Based on interviews with the principal and teachers, the school determined students' MCC as a benchmarking to achieve the students' competence determined by the curricular development team. In practice, the students who had not met the MCC were given maximum additional time to research it. The achievement of the standard of educational assessment was prioritized. The assessment was carried out by classroom teachers and religion ones which includes the assessment of attitudes, knowledge, and skills.

According to 2013 curriculum school subjects like Religion, Manners, and Civics were carried out by students during the implementation of learning in and out of the classroom concerning school activities or the supervision of student behavior by the religious team. Knowledge assessment was carried out using assignment techniques, oral and written. The standard of educational assessment had to be objective and accountable, while the teacher assessment was carried out in the learning process by receiving feedback from students during discussion in the learning process, mid-semester, and end-semester. Additional assignments were given to the students who had successfully reached the MCC and remedial to those who had not. The standard of education assessment had to cover four indicators, namely self-assessment, peer-assessment, knowledge assessment with its instruments such as written tests, oral tests, and assignments. Skills assessment was carried out by portfolio assessment.

The instrument of assessment had to adapt the format of Al Azhar Islamic School Center Jakarta. Aspects of assessment include 21st-century skills, critical thinking, problem solving, creativity, collaboration, and communication by which the schools can have the inputs, processes, and outputs expected to improve school quality. This research finding is in line with the research of Hanim, et. al (2020) and Warman et.al (2021) indicating that effective learning innovation was directed to planning and implementation which concerned the achievement of inputs, processes, and outputs as quality products. The implementation of learning during the Covid-19 pandemic was carried out by online learning using whatsapp application. Interviews with students, parents were professionally carried out using screening Islamic films so that the students were expected to behave religiously.

The research findings were also in line with Glickman et al., (2014) stating that learning activates the students and is thematic as well by using school environment as learning resources. For example, students were taught outside of school, field trip, to interact with the environment. The authentic assessment was carried out in the learning process. Micro-teaching and peer-to-peer discussion were held for teachers who were still lacking in the implementation of learning to improve the next learning process. To improve the school internal quality, the students had to go through the learning process and assessment of educational success by following the standards that had been set by MCC determined by the school, that is 75.

#### 4. Conclusion

The principal's leadership in compiling the SIEBP for Al Azhar Islamic School Samarinda went through the stages of programs starting from formulation of meetings which involved the teams of curricular and extracurricular, religious, and support, teacher coordinators, all teachers, and group of school committees. For the improvement of the school internal quality, the principal has delegated the task to each predetermined standard. The standard of curriculum content delegated its task to the curricular team which concerned the teacher duties and responsibilities to implement the teaching and learning process in schools. The teachers were to adapt and develop the Al Azhar national curriculum for the use of the school. The standard of process delegated its task to the curricular team to handle the administration of teaching and learning instruments such as syllabus, lesson plans and evaluation. For the effectiveness of standard of assessment, the schools had to carry out learning evaluations referring to the instruments provided by the Education Office and School Foundation. To determine student graduation, the school used minimum completeness criteria (MCC) based on the combination of the national curriculum and the curriculum of the Al Azhar Foundation Center. Above all, the success of the Al Azhar Islamic School Samarinda in improving its internal quality is a strong combination of four important elements, the collaboration and coordination with Al Azhar Center Education Jakarta, benchmarking to other Al-Azhar favorite schools throughout Indonesia, formation of student's positive attitudes through religious activities, and high appreciation for those who work hard and achieve school quality.

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