



Effective Strategic Management in Improving the Quality of Senior Secondary Education Units

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ABSTRACT

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This study aims to analyze effective strategic management practices for enhancing the quality of senior secondary education units in Indonesia. The role of secondary education is crucial as it serves as a bridge between basic education and either higher education or direct entry into the workforce. However, the sector faces persistent and multi-dimensional challenges, including disparities in access and quality across regions, inequitable distribution of qualified teachers, limited financial resources, and the insufficient integration of school programs with market demands. Employing a qualitative literature review and document analysis methodology, this study synthesizes findings from national education policies, empirical studies, and international best practices. The discussion encompasses visionary educational planning, comprehensive curriculum management, human resource development, facilities and infrastructure optimization, financial stewardship, stakeholder collaboration, and the integration of information technology. The findings indicate that a holistic, adaptive, and stakeholder-engaged approach to management—grounded in data-driven decision-making and continuous improvement—is fundamental to fostering sustainable and high-quality senior secondary education. The paper concludes with recommendations for strengthening school management systems through professional development, participatory leadership, and technological innovation.

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INTRODUCTION

Education is widely acknowledged as the cornerstone of sustainable national development (Shiurkar, 2023; Stoliarchuk et al., 2023). It shapes the future workforce and prepares individuals for both higher education and employment (Chen, 2025). While educational management theories have been extensively developed, there remains a significant gap in understanding how strategic management approaches can effectively address the complex challenges

in senior secondary education, particularly in developing countries like Indonesia. The lack of an integrated theoretical framework that links strategic management with real-world educational practices often leads to inefficient policy implementation and suboptimal outcomes. This gap in the literature necessitates a deeper exploration of how strategic management, leadership, and operational efficiency can be applied in the context of senior secondary education.

In Indonesia, senior secondary education—encompassing high schools (SMA), vocational schools (SMK), and Islamic senior high schools (MA)—plays a critical role in both preparing students for higher education and integrating them into the workforce. However, various challenges hinder the effectiveness of these institutions. Inequities in educational access and quality, especially between urban and rural areas, continue to persist. Regional disparities, uneven distribution of qualified teachers, and financial limitations prevent many schools from providing the high-quality education required to meet evolving global and labor market demands. The impact of these challenges is amplified by the ongoing digital divide, further complicated by the global COVID-19 pandemic.

Previous studies have documented the disparities in educational access and quality across different regions in Indonesia, emphasizing the need for a more equitable distribution of resources (Sidauruk et al., 2025; Putri, 2025). Research has also highlighted the mismatch between the skills students acquire in school and the skills demanded by employers in the rapidly changing global economy (Marbun et al., 2020; World Bank, 2022). These issues underscore the importance of aligning educational curricula with the needs of the labor market, which has not been adequately addressed in the current educational management strategies.

Additionally, studies have examined the role of school management and leadership in addressing these challenges. However, many of these studies have focused primarily on operational aspects, such as teacher quality and school infrastructure, with limited emphasis on strategic management approaches that can drive long-term improvements (K-Media, 2020; Tirtoni & Wulandari, 2021). The lack of strategic vision and leadership in educational institutions is often cited as a major hindrance to achieving the desired educational outcomes. This points to the need for more comprehensive research on how strategic management practices, including professional development, leadership, and stakeholder involvement, can be integrated into the management of senior secondary schools in Indonesia.

This study offers a novel contribution by integrating strategic management principles with the specific needs of senior secondary education in Indonesia. Unlike previous research that has largely focused on operational

improvements, this study emphasizes the role of visionary leadership and strategic management in addressing the root causes of educational inefficiencies. It proposes a framework that aligns educational policies with labor market needs, promotes digital literacy, and integrates modern technology into the educational system. By focusing on the strategic management of schools, this research introduces a new approach to improving both the quality and accessibility of education in Indonesia.

The primary objective of this study is to analyze how strategic management approaches can be implemented to improve the quality of senior secondary education in Indonesia. This includes examining the role of school leaders in fostering a culture of strategic thinking, promoting professional development, and involving stakeholders in the decision-making process. The study also aims to explore the integration of technology into the education system, focusing on how digital tools can enhance learning outcomes, improve operational efficiency, and address the digital divide. Through this analysis, the study seeks to provide actionable recommendations for policymakers and educational leaders to enhance the performance of senior secondary schools in Indonesia.

Education remains a critical pillar for national development, and the senior secondary education sector in Indonesia faces numerous challenges that hinder its potential. By adopting a strategic management framework, educational institutions can better address these challenges, align curricula with labor market demands, and improve both access and quality. This study aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse on educational reform in Indonesia by offering insights into how strategic management, leadership, and stakeholder involvement can enhance the effectiveness of senior secondary schools, ultimately preparing students for the demands of higher education and the workforce.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative, descriptive approach, utilizing a literature review and document analysis as the primary research methods. Sources include peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, Indonesian national education regulations, international policy documents, and empirical studies on school management. Data were collected through systematic searching using keywords such as “educational management,” “secondary education,” “school governance,” and “strategic management” in online databases and libraries.

The analytical process involved coding and thematic analysis, allowing for the identification of core components of effective school management as well as challenges and best practices. Triangulation was achieved by comparing findings across multiple sources and, where possible, aligning them with recent field data

from Indonesian schools and relevant international experiences. The scope of the analysis covers management models, implementation strategies, leadership practices, stakeholder engagement, technological integration, and evaluative frameworks. This methodological approach ensures both depth and breadth in the synthesis of information, enabling the development of robust recommendations for the improvement of senior secondary school management in Indonesia.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Visionary Educational Planning

Strategic and visionary planning forms the backbone of high-performing educational organizations (Do, 2025). Visionary planning requires school leaders to anticipate future societal, economic, and technological trends and to design educational programs that are flexible, forward-looking, and contextually relevant (OECD, 2023). Key principles of visionary planning in education include interdisciplinarity, flexibility, effectiveness, change-orientation, objectivity, rationality, and cooperation (Berglund, 2024).

Indonesian schools that excel in visionary planning tend to develop clear, shared visions and missions that are co-created with input from teachers, students, parents, and community stakeholders. These institutions are proactive in scanning the external environment, identifying emerging opportunities and threats, and aligning school programs with national priorities as well as local needs (Hidayah & Widodo, 2020). For instance, vocational schools that regularly update their curricula based on industry needs and technological trends are better positioned to produce work-ready graduates (Marbun et al., 2020).

Visionary educational planning is not static; it requires continuous review, evidence-based adjustments, and the cultivation of an organizational culture that values innovation, risk-taking, and lifelong learning (Nurdyansyah & Widodo, 2017). The integration of scenario planning and strategic foresight methods can further strengthen a school's capacity for resilience and adaptability in an uncertain world.

Comprehensive Curriculum and Learning Management

Curriculum management is central to achieving educational goals and ensuring that students acquire the competencies required for further education or employment. In Indonesia, the national curriculum provides a broad framework, but effective school management involves contextualizing and enriching this curriculum to suit local contexts and student needs (Iman et al., 2024).

Effective curriculum management is characterized by the principles of productivity, democratization, cooperation, effectiveness, and efficiency. Productive curriculum management prioritizes learning outcomes and ensures that every instructional activity is aligned with desired competencies (Selvakumar et al., 2025). Democratic curriculum management promotes participation and feedback from teachers, students, and parents, fostering a sense of ownership and accountability (Omodan et al., 2025).

Schools must also balance academic and non-academic programs, integrating co-curricular and extracurricular activities that support students' holistic development (Tirtoni & Wulandari, 2021). In high-performing schools, instructional supervision is conducted regularly, and professional learning communities are established to encourage collaborative curriculum planning, reflective practice, and innovation.

Moreover, continuous assessment and the use of learning analytics can help school leaders and teachers monitor student progress, identify gaps, and implement targeted interventions. The increasing integration of digital learning resources, blended learning models, and formative assessment tools further enhances curriculum delivery and personalization (OECD, 2023).

Human Resource Development and Management

Teachers and education personnel are at the heart of school effectiveness. Effective human resource management encompasses staff recruitment, selection, induction, continuous professional development, performance appraisal, and retention strategies (Mulyasa, 2017). The Indonesian context presents unique challenges, including the uneven distribution of qualified teachers, variations in teacher motivation and professional competence, and sometimes limited access to high-quality training (World Bank, 2022).

Professional development programs should be sustained, relevant, and linked to both individual and institutional goals. Schools benefit from adopting mentorship and coaching models, as well as encouraging action research and reflective practice among teachers (Iman et al., 2024). Performance management systems should be transparent, formative, and supportive, focusing on both instructional quality and student learning outcomes.

School leaders must also foster a positive organizational culture that values collaboration, inclusivity, well-being, and professional autonomy (OECD, 2023). Recognition and reward mechanisms can further motivate teachers, while supportive leadership and distributed leadership models empower teachers as agents of change within their institutions.

Facilities and Infrastructure Optimization

The quality of educational facilities and infrastructure significantly impacts teaching and learning processes. According to Indonesian regulations (PP No. 19/2005; Ministerial Regulation No. 24/2007), schools are required to provide sufficient learning spaces, equipment, and resources that support a diverse range of instructional activities.

Management of facilities should be guided by principles of adequacy, safety, accessibility, sustainability, and innovation (K-Media, 2020). Well-maintained facilities contribute to a positive school climate, enhance student engagement, and reduce absenteeism. Schools should conduct regular needs assessments, prioritize investments, and adopt preventive maintenance practices to ensure the longevity and functionality of assets.

The role of school committees and local government is critical in mobilizing resources and advocating for equitable distribution of infrastructure, especially in disadvantaged areas. Furthermore, the digital transformation in education underscores the importance of investing in ICT infrastructure, reliable internet connectivity, and digital literacy programs for both teachers and students (Nurdyansyah & Widodo, 2017).

Financial Stewardship and Resource Management

Financial management is a central component of school management, influencing almost every aspect of educational provision. Senior secondary schools in Indonesia primarily depend on government funding through programs such as BOS (School Operational Assistance) and BOPD (Regional Operational Assistance). Effective financial stewardship requires transparency, accountability, and participatory budgeting processes (Masyud, 2014; Hidayah & Widodo, 2020).

Schools must develop annual financial plans, ensure efficient allocation and utilization of funds, maintain accurate records, and submit regular reports to authorities and stakeholders. Internal and external audits, as well as mechanisms for community oversight, are essential to prevent mismanagement and corruption (World Bank, 2022).

In addition to core operational funding, innovative schools seek alternative revenue sources through partnerships, grant applications, alumni networks, and social entrepreneurship. Financial literacy education for school leaders and administrators can further strengthen financial governance and sustainability (OECD, 2023).

Stakeholder Collaboration and Community Engagement

The relationship between schools and their communities is foundational to educational success (Lenning et al., 2023; Sanjani, 2024). Effective public relations and stakeholder engagement strategies foster trust, support, and shared responsibility for student outcomes. Collaborative partnerships with parents, school committees, local businesses, and civil society organizations can mobilize resources, support student welfare, and enhance educational relevance.

Community engagement is especially important for contextualizing curricula, providing real-world learning opportunities (such as internships and community service), and ensuring cultural responsiveness. Schools should adopt open communication channels, regular consultation processes, and participatory decision-making structures.

Case studies from Indonesia and other countries demonstrate that schools with strong community ties are more resilient, innovative, and successful in sustaining improvements over time (Tirtoni & Wulandari, 2021).

Integration of Information Technology in Management

The digital transformation of education is both a challenge and an opportunity for school management. Management Information Systems (MIS) enable schools to collect, store, analyze, and use data for decision-making, reporting, and continuous improvement (Nurdyansyah & Widodo, 2017).

Technology can automate administrative processes, support instructional innovation, and facilitate communication among all stakeholders. However, digital adoption must be supported by adequate infrastructure, digital skills training, and a strategic vision for technology-enabled learning (OECD, 2023).

Schools should develop digital transformation strategies that address hardware and software needs, cybersecurity, digital citizenship, and the integration of online learning platforms. Lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic highlight the importance of system resilience, flexible learning modalities, and equitable access to technology for all students and staff (World Bank, 2022).

CONCLUSION

The management of senior secondary education units plays a crucial role in improving educational quality and equity in Indonesia. This study highlights the importance of implementing holistic, adaptive, and participatory management strategies that encompass all aspects of school operations—from visionary planning and curriculum development to human resource management, financial stewardship, stakeholder engagement, and technological integration. Addressing persistent challenges such as regional disparities, resource limitations, and the misalignment between education and labor market

needs requires innovative, coordinated efforts and a forward-thinking approach.

The findings suggest that data-driven, collaborative management practices, combined with professional development and technological advancements, are key to building resilient, high-performing schools. Policy implications emphasize the need for continuous investment in leadership development, digital infrastructure, and community partnerships. Further research should investigate the impact of emerging technologies, new governance models, and distributed leadership on educational outcomes. By strengthening strategic management at the school level, Indonesia can foster educational environments that not only address local and global challenges but also cultivate the talents and aspirations of all students.

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