The Strategic Leadership Role of Foundation Leaders in Improving the Quality of Education at Various Levels Education (Case Study on Bi Ashokal Hajar Foundation)

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to identify and evaluate the leadership strategies applied by the leadership of the Bi Ashokal Hajar Foundation in improving the quality of education at various levels of education. The research used a qualitative approach with descriptive methods, involving observation, in-depth interviews and documentation. The results show that the strategic leadership applied by the foundation leaders has a positive impact on the quality of education. Foundation leaders are able to direct, motivate and create a conducive working environment, which contributes to improving staff performance and loyalty as well as education quality. Support for educators' innovation and professional development is also a key factor in achieving higher educational goals. Recommendations provided by respondents highlighted the importance of improving learning facilities, developing training programs and effective communication between leaders and staff. This research provides valuable insights for other educational institutions in optimizing the role of strategic leadership to improve education quality. The findings are in line with previous research that emphasizes the importance of effective leadership styles and a supportive work environment in improving educational performance and quality.

Keywords: Strategic leadership, education quality, Bi Ashokal Hajar Foundation.

INTRODUCTION

Leadership is a vital aspect in the management of an entity, where the leader's ability to direct effectively becomes a key point in the success of the organization. Its essence lies in the willingness of team members or subordinates to follow the vision and direction delivered by the leader. In any context, be it business, health, education, religion, social, political, corporate, or government, the role of a leader is crucial to the success or failure of an entity. The quality of a leader is the main determinant for the achievement of goals and the performance of an organization or institution (Hakim & Jamal, 2021).

In the realm of education, every institution hopes to achieve its goals and achieve success. To realize this, the presence of qualified educators is very important. The quality of an educator is reflected in their ability to perform their duties well, which requires at least an understanding of relevant competencies. However, the success of an educational institution is not solely determined by the competence of its educators. There are many aspects that need to be considered more deeply in order to achieve the goals of the educational institution. In addition to the welfare of educators, the moral aspects they convey also have a significant impact on the growth of these educational institutions (Wibowo, 2015).

Leadership today is a very interesting topic to discuss, especially in relation to strategic management. Leadership has various roles that include visionary, administrator, motivator, negotiator, decision maker, strategy implementer, and mentor. Leadership is generally defined as the ability and readiness of a person to be able to influence, encourage, invite, guide, move, direct, and if necessary force individuals or groups to accept this influence and then do something that can help achieve certain goals that have been set (Kalkan *et al.*, 2020).

Strategic leadership is the personal ability to anticipate, imagine, maintain flexibility, think strategically and work with others to initiate changes that will shape a better future for the school organization. It includes the skill of predicting the challenges and opportunities that may be faced in the future. Strategic leaders have a clear vision of the future of the organization and are able to maintain resilience and flexibility in the face of dynamic change (Navaridas *et al.*, 2020).

In discussing strategic leadership to improve the quality of education, it is important to highlight the various leadership styles. First, the autocratic or authoritarian leadership style. This style focuses on the end result, with decisions often taken alone or by small groups. Leaders expect employees to follow their instructions precisely. Second, the bureaucratic leadership style. This style prioritizes adherence to written procedures and regulations. The

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focus is on specific tasks within a hierarchical system, with little need for collaboration and creativity. Third, the mentor leadership style. This type of leader identifies employees' strengths and weaknesses to help them develop. This style creates a positive and motivating environment by setting smart goals and providing feedback. Fourth, the laissez-faire leadership style, which means letting the team work on their own with little or no supervision. This style is effective for creative and experienced employees. Fifth, the democratic leadership style. The leader seeks input from team members and considers their feedback in decision-making. Sixth, transformational leadership. This leader inspires and motivates the team to achieve a shared vision by providing support, encouragement, and personal development opportunities. Seventh, servant leadership. These leaders prioritize the well-being of the team. They believe that employees will be more effective and produce good work if they feel personally and professionally fulfilled. Lastly, transactional leadership style. This style focuses on short-term exchanges, where employees are rewarded for the work they have done. This style is often used in sales and marketing jobs (Chkheidze, 2023).

Education quality is a concept that encompasses a comprehensive description of the characteristics of educational services. It involves both internal and external aspects of an educational institution, describing the ability of the service to meet the needs expected by various stakeholders, including the inputs, processes and outputs of the educational process itself. In this context, the quality of education is not only limited to the end result or academic achievement, but also includes various other aspects such as students' learning experience, parents' satisfaction, and the contribution of the educational institution to society as a whole. Furthermore, the quality of education is also a reflection of the ability of the basic education system to effectively manage and direct all aspects of education, including efficient and effective management, and learning processes that provide added value for students (Achmad, 2019).

In other words, a quality education system is one that is able to provide meaningful and relevant learning experiences for each student, while actively encouraging the development of their full potential. Achieving good quality education requires the implementation of specific strategies in its management. These include the development of a curriculum that is appropriate to the needs and development of students, the implementation of innovative and effective teaching methods, and the improvement of the qualifications and performance of educators. In addition, good management, support from various stakeholders and appropriate use of educational technology are also important factors in creating a quality educational

environment. Thus, the quality of education is not static, but is the result of ongoing efforts to improve and enhance the education system as a whole (Safrida *et al.*, 2023).

The quality of education is strongly influenced by the quality of the learning process carried out by educators. Therefore, improving the ability of educators to manage learning activities in private educational institutions is the responsibility of the head of the foundation in collaboration with the head of each institution under its auspices. As we know, problems will always arise and develop along with the advancement of science and technology. Therefore, professional guidance and coaching from the head of the foundation is needed by the head of each institution and educators on an ongoing basis. The coaching not only aims to increase the work enthusiasm of the educators, but is also expected to bring out the professionalism of the educators. In addition, the leadership of school leaders strongly supports the achievement of effective and efficient school management (Sunaengsih *et al.*, 2019).

An effective leadership strategy for a foundation head also needs to involve training and professional development for teachers. A foundation head who is able to recognize the individual strengths and needs of teachers can provide appropriate support to improve teaching quality. Continuous training and development should also be a key focus in this leadership strategy, so that teachers have the opportunity to develop skills and knowledge. In this way, the head of the foundation not only creates a conducive learning environment for students, but also builds a competent and motivated teaching team (Enco, 2022).

Research conducted by Pasaribu, Krisnaldy, & Warasto (2020) discusses the influence of leadership style, work discipline, and compensation on employee performance. The similarity lies in the focus on leadership in education and the emphasis on the importance of effective leadership in improving performance. However, the difference is the focus on the relationship between leadership style and work discipline on employee performance in the context of government administration, not specifically in the education environment (Pasaribu, Krisnaldy, & Warasto, 2020).

Research by Putra & Pasaribu (2022) also highlights the influence of leadership style and work environment on employee performance. The similarity with the main research is that both emphasize the importance of an effective leadership style in influencing individual performance within the organization. However, the difference is that this study focuses on the corporate sector and the work environment of the Company (Putra & Pasaribu, 2022).

The leadership style and strategy of the head of the foundation in building the loyalty and commitment of educators is very important. Democratic and transformational leadership styles are more effective in building educators' loyalty and commitment than authoritarian leadership styles. With similarities about leadership in the field of education and emphasizing the importance of effective leadership in improving the quality of education is important to be the basis of this research. Meanwhile, the difference is that it focuses on building educators' loyalty and commitment (Hakim and Jamal, 2021).

The role of leaders in education management needs to be considered. The results of research conducted by Chkheidze (2023) show that effective leaders have a clear vision, are able to motivate staff and are able to build a positive school culture. The similarity with the main research lies in the focus of leadership in education and the emphasis on the importance of effective leadership in improving the quality of education. However, the difference lies in the more general focus of the study on the overall leadership of leaders (Chkheidze, 2023).

In addition, research by Kalkan, Altun and Atar (2020) discussed the role of factors related to teachers and educational resources in science literacy. The results showed that qualified teachers and adequate educational resources are important factors in improving students' science literacy. The similarity lies in the discussion of factors that affect the quality of education. However, the difference is the more specific research focus on factors related to teachers and educational resources (Kalkan, Altun, & Atar, 2020).

Similar research by Navaridas, Emeterio, Fernández, and Arias (2020) discusses the influence of strategic principal leadership in school digital transformation. The results showed that principals with strategic leadership were able to drive school digital transformation more effectively. The similarities are about leadership in education and the emphasis on the importance of effective leadership in improving the quality of education. However, the difference is the more specific research focus on school digital transformation (Navaridas *et al.*, 2020).

Boash or Borcess Ashokal Hajar is a foundation established by Mr. Muztahidin Al-Ayubi in 2002. Under Boash, there are several schools, including SD Global Garuda Nusantara, SMP Taruna Terpadu, SMA Taruna Terpadu, and SMK Taruna Terpadu 1. The establishment of Boash began with the establishment of SMK in 2002, followed by SMA, and finally SMP. In 2017, the Chairman of the Foundation built Global Garuda Nusantara Elementary School, which became part of the Bi Ashokal Hajar Foundation. Consequently, in 2018, Muztahidin Al-Ayubi Foundation and Bi Ashokal Hajar Foundation were merged into the name Borcess Ashokal Hajar (Boash). Mr. Muztahidin's motivation in establishing Boash

was his great love for education. He wanted to establish a school that was luxurious, well-equipped, affordable, yet high quality, so that all levels of society could get a proper education. Today, Boash is one of the largest schools in Indonesia with the largest number of students (Boash, 2024).

This study aims to identify and evaluate the leadership strategies applied by the leadership of the Bi Ashokal Hajar Foundation in improving the quality of education at various levels of education. It also analyzes the role of strategic leadership in educational development. In addition, this study seeks to identify the challenges and opportunities faced by the foundation leaders and provide practical recommendations for educational foundations to implement effective strategic leadership in improving the quality of education. This study was conducted by taking a case study of the Bi Ashokal Hajar Foundation, an educational foundation that has various levels of education, ranging from elementary to secondary levels. The foundation was chosen because of its good reputation and commitment in improving the quality of education in the community.

METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with descriptive methods. The qualitative method was chosen because it is in accordance with the research objectives that want to explore the object's natural conditions without experimental intervention. Based on the philosophy of postpositivism, this method allows researchers to understand phenomena in a complex and dynamic context. Data collection techniques were carried out by literature study and questionnaires. The research subjects were the Head of the Bi Ashokal Hajar Foundation as Management, Teaching Staff, and Staff (Sugiyono, 2023).

The analysis technique used in this research is qualitative descriptive analysis. The analysis process involves several stages according to Lexy.J & Moeleong in Hakim & Jamal, (2021) including:

1. Preliminary Phase: Collecting initial data and understanding the research context.
2. Screening Stage: Verifying and filtering the data that has been collected to ensure its validity and relevance. At this stage, intensive data validity checks were conducted.

3.   Data Completion Stage: Analyzing the data to find patterns and main themes relevant to the research objectives, and then drawing conclusions.

Through this approach, the research is expected to provide a comprehensive picture of strategic leadership at the Bi Ashokal Hajar Foundation and its contribution to improving the quality of education, and can provide recommendations for other educational institutions in optimizing the role of foundation leaders in the context of improving the quality of education.

The sampling method in this study is to use a *non-probability* sampling method, namely a sampling technique that uses certain characteristics as the basis for generalization (Sugiyono, 2023). The number of samples is calculated using the Slovin formula, namely:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2}$$

Description:

n = Sample size

N   = Population size

e = *Marginoof error*

With this formula, the number of samples can be calculated as follows:

Table 1. Respondents

Instance	Number of Employees	Percentage	Sample Quantity
SMK Taruna Terpadu 1	278	48%	113
Integrated Taruna High School	106	18%	43
Integrated Taruna Junior High School	109	19%	44
Global Garuda Nusantara Elementary School	89	15%	36
Total	**582**	**100%**	**237**

Source: Boash Internal Data, 2024

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study involved respondents from various levels of education at the Bi Ashokal Hajar Foundation, with the following distribution: SD Global Garuda Nusantara (15%), SMP Taruna Terpadu (19%), SMA Taruna Terpadu (18%), and SMK Taruna Terpadu 1 (48%). The majority of respondents have worked at the foundation for more than 6 years (63%), indicating that this study gained perspectives from an experienced workforce and has a deep

understanding of the foundation's internal dynamics. Most respondents were educators/teachers (82%), with smaller proportions of administrative staff (15%) and management (3%).

Vision and Strategic Communication

The study found that foundation leaders have a clear vision of the future of education in the foundation, with respondents from different levels of education agreeing (78%) and strongly agreeing (22%) with this statement. Communication between foundation leaders and educators regarding the foundation's strategic goals was also rated as frequent (72%) and very frequent (28%) by the majority of respondents.

Leadership Effectiveness in Overcoming Challenges

Most respondents considered the foundation's leaders to be effective (82%) or very effective (28%) in overcoming the challenges faced by the foundation. This shows that foundation leaders are able to provide appropriate solutions and direct the organization well in challenging situations.

Critical Role in Education Quality Improvement

The majority of respondents felt that the role of foundation leaders was very important (86 per cent) and important (14 per cent) in improving the quality of education, with high percentages indicating this level of importance. This suggests that strategic leadership is recognized as a key factor in achieving higher educational goals.

Education Facilities

Satisfaction with the educational facilities provided by the foundation is quite high, with respondents feeling satisfied (47%) and very satisfied (53%). This indicates that the foundation has succeeded in providing adequate facilities to support the teaching and learning process.

Professional Development Program

The quality of professional development programs for educators also received positive ratings, with respondents rating these programs as good (62%) or very good (38%). This shows the foundation's commitment to improving educators' competencies through various relevant trainings and workshops.

Support for Innovation

The foundation's leadership support for innovations in teaching methods was also recognized by most respondents as supportive (79%) and very supportive (21%). This indicates that the foundation encourages creativity and the application of new teaching methods that can improve learning effectiveness.

Communication and Leadership Support

The majority of respondents were satisfied (83%) and very satisfied (17%) with the communication and support provided by foundation leaders. This suggests that foundation leaders are able to create a supportive and communicative work environment, which is important for staff well-being and productivity.

Work Motivation

Most respondents feel motivated to work at this foundation because of the leadership style applied, with respondents agreeing (84%) and strongly agreeing (16%) with this statement. This shows that the leadership applied at the foundation is able to motivate and inspire the workforce to contribute optimally.

Rewarding Employee Contributions

Respondents felt that their contributions were valued by foundation leaders, with respondents feeling valued (83%) or highly valued (17%). This shows that foundation leaders recognize and appreciate the hard work and contributions of staff, which is important for building loyalty and commitment.

Discussion

The results of this study show that the strategic leadership applied by the leadership of the Bi Ashokal Hajar Foundation has had a positive impact on the quality of education at various levels of education. Clear vision, effective communication, and support for innovation and professional development are key factors contributing to the foundation's success. The findings of this study are expected to provide insights for other educational institutions in optimizing the role of strategic leadership to improve the quality of education. Effective leadership is also evident in how the foundation's leaders are able to overcome challenges and maintain staff loyalty and commitment. Appreciation of employee contributions and high work motivation show that the foundation has succeeded in creating a positive and productive work environment.

This is in line with research conducted by Pasaribu, Krisnaldy, & Warasto. (2020) which highlights that leadership style has a significant influence on employee performance. In the context of the Bi Ashokal Hajar Foundation, the strategic leadership applied by the foundation leaders is not only able to direct and motivate educators, but also improve work discipline and provide fair compensation. All these factors contribute to improving the quality of education at various levels of education in the foundation.

In addition, research by Putra & Pasaribu (2022) shows that a conducive work environment and inspirational leadership style greatly affect employee performance. In a case study at the Bi Ashokal Hajar Foundation, the application of effective strategic leadership and the creation of a supportive work environment for educators and administrative staff proved to improve their performance. A good working environment and strong leadership support create an atmosphere conducive to learning and teaching, which ultimately contributes to improving the quality of education in this foundation.

Research by Chkheidze (2023) highlights the importance of leaders who are able to inspire, provide clear direction and motivate staff to achieve common goals. This is in line with the findings at Bi Ashokal Hajar Foundation, where strategic leadership is able to shape a positive and productive school culture, which in turn improves the overall quality of education. Effective foundation leaders not only direct but also build motivation and morale among staff and educators.

Research by Hakim & Jamal (2021) focuses on the style and strategy of the head of the foundation in building loyalty and commitment from educators. Democratic and transformational leadership styles proved more effective in building positive relationships between leaders and staff. In Bi Ashokal Hajar Foundation, the strategic leadership applied also showed similar results, where good relationships between leaders and educators contributed to improving the quality of education through higher loyalty and commitment from educators.

Research by Kalkan, Altun, & Atar (2020) highlights the importance of teacher quality and adequate educational resources in improving students' science literacy. In the context of the Bi Ashokal Hajar Foundation, developing teachers' skills and providing adequate educational resources is also a key focus in the foundation's leadership strategy. Foundation leaders ensure that educators receive relevant training and adequate facilities to support the learning process, thereby improving the quality of education at all levels.

Research by Lubis (2023) emphasizes the importance of adaptation and human resource development in facing the Society 5.0 era. At Bi Ashokal Hajar Foundation, strategic

leadership plays an important role in preparing educators and staff to face the challenges of the digital era. Adaptation to technological change and enhancement of digital skills are an integral part of the foundation's strategy to improve the quality of education.

Research by Navaridas *et al.* (2020) shows that the strategic leadership of school principals can facilitate digital transformation in schools. At Bi Ashokal Hajar Foundation, the strategic leadership of the foundation also encourages the adoption of technology in the learning process, which has a positive impact on the quality of education. Effective implementation of educational technology enables a more interactive and innovative teaching and learning process.

Research by Sunaengsih *et al.* (2019) highlights the importance of principal leadership in the implementation of effective school management. In Yayasan Bi Ashokal Hajar, the strategic leadership applied by the foundation's leaders succeeded in shaping a positive organizational culture, facilitating effective learning processes and creating an environment conducive to student development. This shows that strong and effective leadership is the key to achieving successful school management.

From the various studies discussed and the results of the questionnaire, it appears that the role of strategic leadership is crucial in improving the quality of education. Leaders who are able to provide clear direction, inspire and support innovation and professional development of educators will be able to create a conducive and productive learning environment. In the context of Bi Ashokal Hajar Foundation, the strategic leadership applied by the foundation's leaders has succeeded in improving the quality of education through various initiatives that focus on developing educators' abilities, providing adequate facilities, and adapting to technological changes. The findings provide valuable insights for other educational institutions in optimizing the role of strategic leadership to achieve higher educational goals.

CONCLUSIONS

From the analysis of this research, it shows that foundation leaders have a strategic role in improving the quality of education at various levels of education. It can be seen that the leadership strategy implemented by Boash has succeeded in creating a superior educational environment. The large number of students and the good reputation that Boash has are indicators of the success of this strategy. This strategic leadership can be a model for other foundations in improving the quality of education in Indonesia.

Respondents provided various recommendations to improve the quality of education in this foundation, such as improving learning facilities, providing innovation and motivation, and improving educators' welfare. Respondents also suggested that the foundation's leadership should continue to develop good communication and objectivity in employee performance appraisals.

The recommendations given by respondents indicate a desire to continue improving the quality of education through various initiatives, both in terms of facilities, development programs and innovations in teaching methods. The implementation of these recommendations is expected to further improve the quality of education in this foundation.

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