THE IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLANNING IN IMPROVING EDUCATION QUALITY: SWOT ANALYSIS AS A KEY INSTRUMENT

Syahril Yusuf[1], Ilham Wahyudi[2], Maynur[3], Muhammad Syaifuddin[4]

[1,2,3,4] Universitas Islam Negeri Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau

*Corresponding Author: syahrilyusuf25@gmail.com
http://dx.doi.org/10.18860/rosikhun.v4i3.38178

Abstract:
This study aims to examine how strategic planning drives improvements in educational quality in a public elementary school. Educational quality improvement has become a significant concern for schools facing policy changes, accountability demands, and limited resources, requiring school leaders to adopt effective strategic management practices. Previous studies indicate that strategic planning in schools is often implemented as an administrative requirement rather than as a mechanism for instructional improvement and organisational learning. This research employed a qualitative case study design conducted at an Indonesian public elementary school, using interviews, observations, and document analysis. Data were analysed thematically through iterative coding and triangulation to ensure credibility. The findings show that SWOT-based strategic planning strengthened institutional direction and managerial coherence by aligning the school's vision, mission, and programs through participatory processes. Strategic planning also facilitated improvements in teaching quality by integrating teacher capacity building with supervision and program implementation. In addition, stakeholder participation, supported by continuous evaluation, enabled sustainable improvements in educational quality through shared responsibility and adaptive decision-making. These findings demonstrate that strategic planning functions as a dynamic and integrative process rather than a static managerial document. This study contributes to the literature on strategic educational management and recommends institutionalising participatory planning, continuous professional development, and systematic evaluation to sustain school quality improvement.

Abstract:
Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji bagaimana perencanaan strategis mendorong peningkatan kualitas pendidikan di sekolah dasar negeri. Peningkatan kualitas pendidikan telah menjadi perhatian yang signifikan bagi sekolah yang menghadapi perubahan kebijakan, tuntutan akuntabilitas, dan sumber daya yang terbatas, yang mengharuskan pemimpin sekolah untuk mengadopsi praktik manajemen strategis yang efektif. Studi sebelumnya menunjukkan bahwa perencanaan strategis di sekolah sering diterapkan sebagai persyaratan administratif daripada sebagai mekanisme untuk peningkatan instruksional dan pembelajaran organisasi. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain studi kasus kualitatif yang dilakukan di sekolah dasar negeri Indonesia, menggunakan wawancara, observasi, dan analisis dokumen. Data dianalisis secara tematik melalui pengkodean iteratif dan triangulasi untuk memastikan kredibilitas. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa perencanaan strategis berbasis SWOT memperkuat arah kelembagaan dan koherensi manajerial dengan menyelaraskan visi, misi, dan program sekolah melalui proses

partisipatif. Perencanaan strategis juga memfasilitasi peningkatan kualitas pengajaran dengan mengintegrasikan peningkatan kapasitas guru dengan pengawasan dan pelaksanaan program. Selain itu, partisipasi pemangku kepentingan, didukung oleh evaluasi berkelanjutan, memungkinkan peningkatan kualitas pendidikan secara berkelanjutan melalui tanggung jawab bersama dan pengambilan keputusan adaptif. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa perencanaan strategis berfungsi sebagai proses yang dinamis dan integratif daripada dokumen manajerial statis. Studi ini berkontribusi pada literatur tentang manajemen pendidikan strategis dan merekomendasikan pelembagaan perencanaan partisipatif, pengembangan profesional berkelanjutan, dan evaluasi sistematis untuk mempertahankan peningkatan kualitas sekolah.

INTRODUCTION

Educational quality improvement has become a central concern in contemporary society, particularly in developing countries where education functions as a primary driver of social mobility and national competitiveness. High-quality education is no longer defined solely by access but by the effectiveness of school management in delivering meaningful learning outcomes. Strategic planning is crucial for ensuring that educational institutions respond proactively to societal demands, policy changes, and technological advancements. Evidence from international assessments indicates that schools with strong strategic leadership demonstrate higher institutional resilience and learning effectiveness (Bush, 2021; Zhao, Y., & Watterston, J., 2021; Pettersson, F., 2021). In Indonesia, the challenge of uneven educational quality across regions highlights the urgency of strengthening school-based management systems. Without a clear strategic direction, schools risk operating reactively rather than proactively, resulting in fragmented programs and suboptimal outcomes. Therefore, investigating how strategic planning drives improvements in educational quality is essential not only for academic discourse but also for policymakers, school leaders, and communities seeking sustainable educational development. This research contributes to societal needs by offering empirical insights into how structured planning practices can transform public elementary schools into more effective and accountable institutions.

Despite policy reforms emphasising school autonomy and quality assurance, many public elementary schools continue to struggle with persistent quality gaps. These problems manifest as inconsistent teaching practices, limited professional development, weak institutional coordination, and inefficient resource use. Previous studies indicate that the absence of systematic strategic planning often results in short-term program implementation that lacks sustainability (Leithwood et al., 2021; Fahmi, A., & Nasution, I., 2024). In the Indonesian context, decentralisation has transferred greater responsibility to schools; however, not all institutions possess the managerial capacity to translate policy mandates into effective school-level strategies. Consequently, educational quality improvement remains uneven, particularly in rural and semi-urban areas. The general problem addressed in this study arises from the disconnect between policy expectations and school-level planning practices. While schools are expected to improve learning

outcomes and institutional performance, many lack coherent planning frameworks that integrate internal strengths, external opportunities, and stakeholder engagement. This condition underscores the importance of examining strategic planning as a critical mechanism for addressing systemic educational challenges faced by society.

Empirical observations in Indonesian public elementary schools reveal a complex reality in which commitment to improvement coexists with structural and managerial limitations. Schools often demonstrate strong human resource potential, community support, and government assistance, yet these assets are not always translated into improved instructional quality. Field studies indicate that teachers frequently face challenges in classroom management, pedagogical creativity, and adaptation to curricular changes, despite having adequate academic qualifications (Dulo, A. A., 2022; Sudrajat, A. 2021). Moreover, infrastructure limitations and underutilised learning resources further constrain innovation in teaching and learning. At the same time, schools operate in increasingly competitive environments, facing pressure from private institutions and public accountability through media exposure. These conditions require schools to adopt strategic responses rather than ad hoc solutions. The phenomenon observed suggests that strategic planning is not merely an administrative requirement but a practical necessity for aligning vision, resources, and instructional practices. Understanding how schools operationalise strategic planning in real contexts is therefore critical for advancing educational quality.

Previous research has extensively examined the relationship between leadership, management, and educational quality. Studies highlight that strategic planning enables schools to articulate clear goals, prioritise programs, and establish performance indicators aligned with quality improvement (Bush, 2021; Shavard, G., 2022). In addition, empirical evidence suggests that schools that implement participatory planning processes exhibit higher levels of organisational commitment and program effectiveness (Fahmi, A., & Nasution, I., 2024). Research in Southeast Asian contexts emphasises that strategic planning supports curriculum implementation, teacher professional development, and stakeholder collaboration (Sheyin, A. O., 2024; Cheng, E. C., 2021). However, much of the existing literature focuses on secondary or higher education institutions, leaving primary education underexplored. Furthermore, many studies adopt quantitative approaches that capture outcomes but fail to explain the planning processes behind successful implementation. As a result, the nuanced dynamics of strategic planning at the elementary school level remain insufficiently understood, particularly within public school systems in developing countries.

Although strategic planning has been widely acknowledged as a driver of organizational effectiveness, several gaps remain in the current body of research. First, limited studies examine strategic planning as an integrated process that involves SWOT analysis, stakeholder participation, and continuous evaluation within public elementary schools (Sari & Ulfatin, 2023). Second, previous research often treats strategic planning as a formal document rather than as a dynamic practice that influences the quality of teaching and learning (Zhao, Y., & Watterston, J.,2021; Pettersson, F., 2021). Third, contextual factors such as community involvement, policy adaptation, and institutional culture are frequently overlooked. In the Indonesian context, existing studies tend to emphasise policy analysis rather than school-level implementation (Ela, A., Ismanto, B., & Iriani, A., 2023; Anif, M.,

2023). Consequently, there is a lack of in-depth case studies that reveal how strategic planning is enacted in daily school practices. Addressing these gaps is essential to generate context-sensitive knowledge that informs both theory and practice in educational management.

This study contributes by positioning strategic planning as a driver of educational quality improvement through an in-depth case study of a public elementary school in Indonesia. Unlike prior research that focuses on outcomes or leadership styles, this study examines strategic planning as a comprehensive process encompassing environmental analysis, participatory decision-making, and program integration. The state-of-the-art contribution lies in linking strategic planning directly to instructional quality and sustainability, rather than treating it as a managerial formality (Fahmi & Nasution, 2024). By integrating perspectives from strategic management and educational leadership, this research provides a holistic understanding of how planning practices shape school performance. Furthermore, the study responds to recent calls for qualitative, context-rich investigations that capture the complexity of school improvement processes in developing countries (Ng, 2021; Sudrajat, A., 2021). The findings are expected to enrich international discourse on school effectiveness while offering practical implications for public elementary education.

Based on the identified issues and gaps, this study addresses the following research problem: How does strategic planning drive improvements in educational quality in a public elementary school context? The central argument of this research is that strategic planning, when implemented through systematic analysis, stakeholder engagement, and continuous evaluation, functions as a catalyst for sustainable quality improvement. The study assumes that schools possessing clear strategic direction are better equipped to align resources, enhance teaching practices, and respond to external challenges. By examining a case study of an Indonesian public elementary school, this research provides empirical evidence supporting the argument that strategic planning is not merely a matter of administrative compliance but a transformative process. The findings are expected to contribute theoretically to educational management literature and practically to school leadership practices, particularly in similar socio-educational contexts.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative single-case design to examine how strategic planning drives improvements in educational quality in a public elementary school. The case-study approach is chosen because it enables an in-depth, context-rich examination of complex, practice-oriented processes, namely, SWOT-informed planning, stakeholder participation, and the translation of strategic decisions into instructional practice (Fahmi, A., & Nasution, I., 2024). Case study methodology is particularly suited to answering "how" and "why" questions in real-life settings where boundaries between phenomenon and context are blurred (Leithwood, 2021). Moreover, recent scholarship argues that qualitative case studies provide theoretical transferability (analytical generalisation) rather than statistical generalisation, making them appropriate for informing both local practice and wider theory in educational management (Fahmi, A., & Nasution, I., 2024). In short, the qualitative single-case design permits iterative, interpretive investigation of mechanisms and meanings that quantitative designs would likely obscure (Hermanto, Y. B., et al., 2024).

The research site is UPT SDN 032 Kualu. The school was purposively selected as an illustrative and information-rich case because it demonstrates documented efforts in strategic planning while still facing instructive implementation challenges, making it ideal for theory-building about planning-to-practice linkages (Dulo, A. A., 2022). In practice, the site provides access to senior leaders, teaching staff, committee members, and parent representatives, enabling multi-stakeholder data collection. The choice aligns with recent recommendations in the literature that case selection should prioritise contextual variation and information richness to illuminate mechanisms of change (Leithwood, 2021; Fahmi, A., & Nasution, I., 2024). Studying a single, well-documented public primary school enables deep process tracing of how strategic choices influence teacher practices, resource allocation, and monitoring systems, insights that are particularly relevant for Indonesian decentralised education contexts (Fahmi, A., & Nasution, I., 2024).

To capture multiple perspectives and triangulate evidence, data will be collected through (a) semi-structured in-depth interviews with the principal, vice-principal, selected classroom teachers (including novice and experienced teachers), committee representatives, and parents; (b) participant and non-participant observations of planning meetings, classroom instruction, and supervisory activities; (c) document analysis of strategic planning documents (renstra/renop), meeting minutes, M&E reports, and curriculum/program records; and (d) collection of artefacts such as timetables, teacher portfolios, and photographic records of facilities. Semi-structured interviews enable probing of actors' reasoning and perceptions about planning processes (Ahmed, 2024), while sustained observation reveals discrepancies between formal plans and enacted practice (Sudrajat, A., 2021). Document analysis functions both as primary evidence of planning content and as a means to cross-check participant accounts (Fahmi, A., & Nasution, I., 2024). Sampling of interviewees will be purposive and theoretical, selecting participants who are directly involved in planning and implementation to ensure depth and relevance (Dulo, A. A., 2022).

Data analysis will follow an iterative thematic approach combining open, axial, and selective coding to move from descriptive categories to explanatory themes (pattern-based analysis). First, all interview recordings will be transcribed verbatim, and field notes will be digitised. Second, open coding will identify initial codes related to planning activities and implementation mechanisms. Third, axial coding will relate categories into broader themes such as "planning as sensemaking," "capacity-building pathways," and "monitoring for adaptive change." Selective coding will then integrate themes into a coherent explanatory narrative of how strategic planning catalyses improvements in educational quality. Pattern matching between empirical patterns and theoretical propositions from strategic management and school-effectiveness literature (Acton, K.S., 2021; Leithwood, 2021) will be used to strengthen analytic claims. NVivo or similar qualitative software may be used to manage and visualise codes, while constant comparison and memoing will document analytic decisions (Ahmed, 2024; Fahmi, A., & Nasution, I., 2024).

To ensure the trustworthiness of findings, this study will apply established qualitative validity procedures, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, adapted from contemporary best practice (Enworo, 2023; Ahmed, 2024). Specific techniques include methodological triangulation (interviews, observations, documents), member checking (returning analytic summaries to key

informants for confirmation), thick description to enable transferability judgments by readers, an audit trail of raw data and analytic memos for dependability, and peer debriefing with external qualitative researchers to challenge interpretations (Enworo, 2023). Additionally, prolonged engagement and persistent observation during multiple site visits will reduce the risk of superficial or contextually biased readings (Hermanto, Y.B. et al., 2024). Ethical procedures, consent, anonymity, and secure data storage will be strictly observed throughout the research process (Dulo, A. A., 2022)

. Through these measures, the study aims to generate transparent, credible, and valuable insights into the role of strategic planning in improving the quality of primary education.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
RESULTS

In this study, strategic planning based on SWOT analysis is operationally defined as a systematic, participatory managerial process through which UPT SDN 032 Kualu identified internal strengths and weaknesses, as well as external opportunities and threats, to guide institutional decision-making. In practice, this process was implemented through structured meetings among the principal, teachers, and education staff to diagnose school conditions, align priorities with national education standards, and formulate coherent short-, medium-, and long-term programs. Institutional direction refers to the clarity of vision, mission, goals, and program priorities shared by school stakeholders. At the same time, managerial coherence denotes the consistency between planning documents, Leadership actions, and implementation practices. Empirical indicators included the existence of documented SWOT analyses, shared understanding among staff, coordinated program execution, and aligned supervision and evaluation practices.

An interview with the school principal revealed that SWOT analysis functioned as the core foundation of strategic decision-making. The principal stated: "Before determining any program, we first mapped our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats together. This helped us avoid working randomly and ensured that every program supported our vision and targets." This statement indicates that SWOT analysis was not treated as a formal administrative task but as a practical managerial tool. The researcher interprets this finding as evidence that strategic planning strengthened institutional direction by providing a shared analytical framework. Decisions regarding teacher development, facility improvements, and learning supervision were grounded in collectively identified priorities, thereby reducing fragmented or reactive leadership practices.

A senior teacher further emphasised the impact of SWOT-based planning on managerial coherence. The informant explained: "After the SWOT discussion, we understood why certain programs were prioritised. Even though not all proposals were accepted, we could see the reasons and support the decisions." This interview highlights that participatory SWOT analysis enhanced transparency and acceptance among educators. From the researcher's perspective, this indicates that managerial coherence emerged through shared meaning-making rather than top-down directives. Teachers' understanding of strategic rationales facilitated smoother implementation and reduced resistance, enabling consistent alignment between planning, instruction, and evaluation.

To strengthen the credibility of interview findings, the influence of SWOT-based strategic planning on institutional direction and managerial coherence is further illustrated in Table 1, which summarises informant roles, interview excerpts, and key indicators.

Table 1. Influence of SWOT-Based Strategic Planning on Institutional Direction and Managerial Coherence

Informant Position	Interview Excerpt	Indicator
School Principal	"We use SWOT analysis as the basis for determining school programs so that all activities move in the same direction."	Strategic clarity
Senior Teacher	"After SWOT discussions, we understand program priorities and support school decisions."	Shared understanding
Curriculum Coordinator	"Planning documents, learning supervision, and evaluations are now aligned."	Managerial coherence
School Committee Member	"The school explains its priorities clearly so that we can support programs effectively."	Stakeholder alignment

The data presented in Table 1 reveal that SWOT-based strategic planning influenced multiple layers of school management. The principal emphasised strategic clarity, while teachers and coordinators highlighted alignment and shared understanding. This convergence of perspectives suggests that institutional direction was internalised across roles rather than confined to leadership discourse. Stakeholder alignment, particularly involving the school committee, further indicates that planning coherence extended beyond internal management to external support structures.

Moreover, the table illustrates a pattern of vertical and horizontal coherence. Vertically, leadership decisions were consistently translated into teacher practices and supervision mechanisms. Horizontally, coordination among teachers, curriculum teams, and committees ensured that programs reinforced one another rather than operating in isolation. This pattern underscores that SWOT-based strategic planning functioned as an integrative framework that stabilised management practices and supported continuous improvement in educational quality.

Observational data supported interview findings. The researcher observed that planning meetings followed structured agendas referencing SWOT results and national education standards. Planning documents, including annual programs and supervision schedules, demonstrated alignment with identified strategic priorities. Classroom supervision practices reflected planned focus areas, particularly teacher professionalism and learning quality. These observations suggest that SWOT-based planning translated into coordinated managerial actions. The researcher interprets this as evidence that institutional direction was not merely rhetorical but operationalised through consistent leadership practices and documented procedures.

Restating the findings, strategic planning grounded in SWOT analysis at UPT SDN 032 Kualu functioned as a unifying mechanism that clarified institutional direction and strengthened managerial coherence. By involving stakeholders in diagnostic analysis, the school developed shared priorities, aligned programs with its vision and mission, and ensured consistency between planning and

implementation. SWOT analysis thus served as both an analytical and communicative tool that connected leadership intentions with daily practices.

A clear pattern emerges from the data: SWOT-based strategic planning fostered coherence through participation, transparency, and alignment. When stakeholders were involved in identifying challenges and opportunities, strategic decisions gained legitimacy and collective ownership. This, in turn, enabled consistent managerial actions across planning, supervision, and evaluation domains. The pattern indicates that institutional direction became stronger not solely because of leadership authority, but because strategic planning created shared understanding and coordinated action among school actors.

Strategic Planning Facilitated Improvements in Teaching Quality through Capacity Building and Program Integration

In this study, strategic planning that facilitates improvements in teaching quality is operationally defined as a structured school management process that systematically links teacher capacity building initiatives with integrated academic and non-academic programs. At UPT SDN 032 Kualu, this process was observed through the deliberate planning of teacher training, instructional supervision, curriculum alignment, and extracurricular integration, guided by previously identified strategic priorities. Teaching quality refers to teachers' pedagogical competence, classroom management skills, creativity in instructional delivery, and the ability to implement student-centred learning. Program integration denotes the alignment of teacher development programs with classroom practices, school culture, and evaluation mechanisms, ensuring that capacity-building efforts are not isolated activities but part of a coherent improvement strategy.

An interview with the vice principal for curriculum revealed that strategic planning played a central role in structuring teacher development. The informant stated: "Training programs are no longer incidental. They are planned based on classroom needs and followed up through supervision." This statement indicates a shift from sporadic professional development toward a systematic and needs-based approach. The researcher interprets this finding as evidence that strategic planning transformed capacity building into a continuous improvement cycle. Teacher training was explicitly linked to instructional supervision, ensuring that newly acquired pedagogical knowledge was applied in classroom practice rather than remaining theoretical.

A classroom teacher emphasised the practical impact of program integration on teaching practices. The teacher explained: "After attending workshops, we are guided to apply the methods in class, and supervisors give feedback." This narrative illustrates that professional development activities were embedded within a broader instructional support system. From the researcher's perspective, this indicates that improvements in teaching quality were facilitated by integrated programs that combined training, mentoring, and evaluation. Strategic planning thus reduced the gap between teacher learning and instructional implementation, fostering more reflective and adaptive teaching practices.
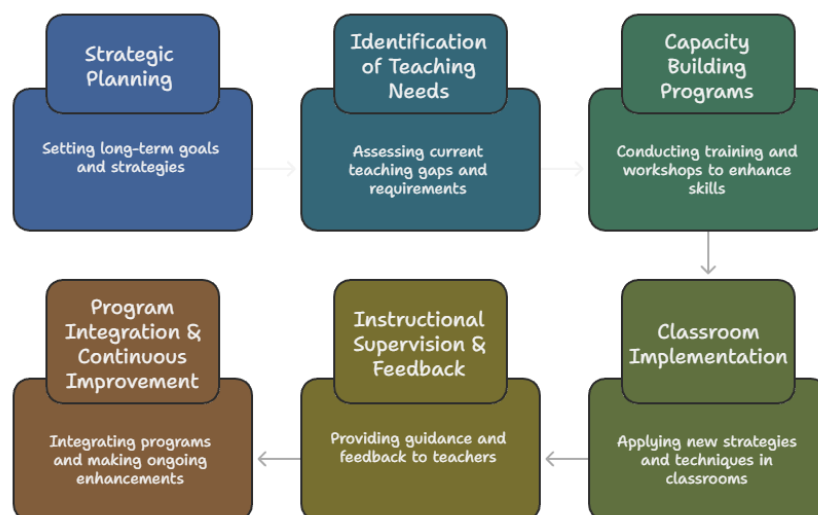
Figure 1. Flow of Strategic Planning and Teaching Quality Improvement

This flow illustrates how strategic planning functioned as the initiating mechanism for teaching quality improvement. Identified instructional needs informed capacity-building programs, which were systematically implemented and evaluated through supervision. The cyclical nature of this process indicates that teaching quality improvement was sustained through continuous feedback and program integration rather than one-time interventions.

Observational findings corroborated interview data. The researcher observed classrooms where teachers employed varied instructional strategies, including group discussions and contextual learning approaches aligned with training outcomes. Supervision records indicated that follow-up feedback sessions were conducted after classroom observations. Additionally, extracurricular activities were designed to reinforce academic competencies, demonstrating program integration. The researcher interprets these observations as evidence that strategic planning effectively translated into improved instructional practices and coherent program execution, thereby supporting sustained enhancement of teaching quality.

Restating the findings, strategic planning at UPT SDN 032 Kualu improved teaching quality by systematically linking capacity-building initiatives to integrated instructional programs. Teacher training, classroom implementation, and supervision were aligned within a single strategic framework, ensuring that professional development directly influenced teaching practices. This integration enabled consistent pedagogical improvement across classrooms.

A consistent pattern emerges from the data: teaching quality improved when capacity building was planned, implemented, and evaluated as an integrated system. Strategic planning fostered coherence between professional development, instructional supervision, and program evaluation. This pattern indicates that sustained improvement in teaching quality depends on integrating teacher learning with structured managerial support and continuous reflection.

Table 2. Influence of Strategic Planning on Teaching Quality Improvement

Informant Position	Interview Excerpt	Indicator
Vice Principal (Curriculum)	"Training programs are planned based on classroom needs and followed up through supervision."	Needs-based capacity building

Classroom Teacher	"After workshops, we apply the methods in class and receive feedback."	Instructional application
Instructional Supervisor	"Supervision ensures training outcomes are implemented."	Program integration
Extracurricular Coordinator	"Activities support academic learning objectives."	Holistic learning integration

The flow diagram and Table 2 collectively demonstrate that strategic planning established a structured pathway from identifying instructional needs to improving teaching quality. Each stage reinforced the next, ensuring that capacity-building initiatives were not isolated but embedded within a continuous improvement cycle. This structure enhanced teacher accountability and encouraged reflective teaching practices.

Furthermore, the data reveal a pattern of systemic integration across instructional domains. Teacher training informed classroom practices, supervision reinforced implementation, and extracurricular programs supported academic goals. This interconnected pattern highlights that strategic planning served as an enabling framework for sustainable teaching quality improvement by aligning human resource development with instructional and programmatic coherence.

Stakeholder Participation and Continuous Evaluation Enabled Sustainable Educational Quality Improvement

In this research, stakeholder participation and continuous evaluation are operationally defined as the active and structured involvement of internal and external stakeholders, school principals, teachers, education staff, parents, school committees, and the local community in the planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of school programs on an ongoing basis. Sustainable educational quality improvement refers to continuous, adaptive, and long-term enhancement of academic services, learning environments, and institutional performance, supported by regular feedback, reflective evaluation, and shared responsibility. At UPT SDN 032 Kualu, sustainability was evident in the institutionalisation of participatory decision-making forums and routine evaluation mechanisms that informed program refinement and policy adjustment.

Table 3. Stakeholder Participation and Continuous Evaluation in Educational Quality Improvement

Interview Excerpt	Indicator	Informant
"Parents and the committee are always involved when the school plans or evaluates programs."	Stakeholder engagement	School Principal
"Evaluation meetings help us identify what works and what needs improvement."	Continuous evaluation	Vice Principal
"We feel responsible because the school often asks for our input."	Shared ownership	Parent Representative
"Monitoring is conducted regularly to ensure programs run as planned."	Program accountability	Education Staff

Table 3 indicates that stakeholder participation at UPT SDN 032 Kualu extends beyond symbolic involvement toward substantive engagement in decision-making and evaluation processes. The principal's statement reflects an inclusive governance approach in which parents and the school committee are integrated into strategic deliberations. This participatory mechanism fosters transparency and trust, which are essential for sustaining long-term educational improvement. The researcher interprets this as evidence that stakeholder engagement functions as a

social control mechanism, ensuring that school programs align with community expectations and educational standards.

Furthermore, the emphasis on continuous evaluation, as expressed by the vice principal and education staff, highlights the role of systematic monitoring in sustaining quality improvement. Regular evaluation meetings and monitoring activities enabled the school to identify program weaknesses early and implement corrective actions promptly. From the researcher's perspective, this indicates that sustainability was achieved not merely through planning but through iterative evaluation cycles that reinforced institutional learning and adaptability. Stakeholder feedback thus became a strategic resource rather than a passive formality.

Observational data reinforced the interview findings. The researcher observed regular coordination meetings involving teachers, parents, and school committee members to review program progress and student outcomes. Documentation analysis revealed written evaluation reports and follow-up action plans that guided subsequent program adjustments. These observations indicate that stakeholder participation and evaluation were embedded in daily school management practices. The researcher interprets this as evidence that continuous evaluation mechanisms strengthened accountability and ensured the sustainability of educational quality improvements.

In summary, stakeholder participation and continuous evaluation at UPT SDN 032 Kualu enabled sustainable improvements in educational quality by institutionalising shared responsibility and reflective practice. Inclusive participation ensured broad support for school programs, while ongoing evaluation provided empirical foundations for continuous refinement and long-term effectiveness.

A clear pattern emerges from the data: sustainable improvements in educational quality were achieved when stakeholder participation was consistently coupled with structured evaluation processes. Engagement without evaluation risked inefficiency, while evaluation without participation limited program legitimacy. The integration of the two elements formed a cyclical, self-reinforcing system that sustained institutional improvement over time.

Table 4. Ideal Influence of Stakeholder Participation and Continuous Evaluation

Informant Position	Interview Excerpt	Indicator
School Principal	"All stakeholders are involved in planning and evaluation."	Participatory leadership
Vice Principal	"Evaluation results guide program improvements."	Evidence-based decision-making
Parent Representative	"We are invited to give feedback regularly."	Community involvement
Education Staff	"Monitoring ensures accountability."	Continuous quality assurance

Table 4 demonstrates that sustainable improvements in educational quality were supported by a governance structure that emphasised participation and accountability. Leadership encouraged stakeholder involvement, while evaluation mechanisms ensured that feedback translated into concrete improvements. This alignment strengthened institutional legitimacy and fostered collective commitment to quality enhancement.

Moreover, the data reveal a consistent pattern of mutual reinforcement between participation and evaluation. Stakeholder engagement increased program acceptance and ownership, while continuous evaluation maintained focus on performance and outcomes. This pattern confirms that sustainability in educational quality is achieved through collaborative governance and systematic reflection rather than isolated managerial interventions.

DISCUSSION

The first significant finding of this study demonstrates that SWOT-based strategic planning strengthened institutional direction and managerial coherence at UPT SDN 032 Kualu. This finding is consistent with prior studies emphasising that evidence-based and participatory strategic planning enables schools to align vision, mission, and operational programs more coherently (Priyambodo, 2021; Hallinger, P., & Kovačević, J., 2021). Hallinger et al. (2023) argue that strategic leadership becomes effective when planning processes are embedded in collaborative sense-making among school actors, rather than treated as administrative compliance. The present study extends this literature by showing that SWOT analysis functioned not merely as an analytical tool but as a communicative mechanism that fostered shared understanding and managerial consistency across leadership, teachers, and committees. This confirms Leithwood's (2021) assertion that coherent leadership practices emerge when strategic planning integrates organizational diagnosis with participatory governance.

The second finding reveals that strategic planning facilitated improvements in teaching quality through capacity building and program integration. This aligns with research indicating that teacher professional development yields meaningful instructional change when it is needs-based, context-sensitive, and systematically supervised (Prenger, R., et. al., 2021; Dulo, A. A., 2022). Studies in Indonesian educational settings similarly report that fragmented training programs often fail to impact classroom practice unless integrated into school-wide strategies and evaluation systems (Hermanto, Y.B. et al., 2024; Dian, D., 2022). The present findings contribute to this discourse by evidencing a structured cycle of planning, training, classroom supervision, and evaluation that enabled teachers to translate professional learning into improved instructional practices. This supports Poekert, P. E., et al. Findings Al. (2022) and Kim, T., Yang, M., & Oh, Y. (2024) indicate that sustainable improvement in teaching quality depends on Leadership capacity to align professional development with instructional goals and on monitoring mechanisms.

The third finding indicates that stakeholder participation, combined with continuous evaluation, enabled sustainable improvements in educational quality. This corroborates studies emphasising the role of stakeholder engagement in strengthening school accountability, legitimacy, and resource mobilisation (Susilowati & Widodo, 2022; Hasanah, I., et. al., 2023; Holst, J., 2023). Carney, S. (2022) and Anwar, N. (2025) underscore that participatory governance is central to building resilient and adaptive education systems, particularly in decentralised contexts. However, this study advances prior research by demonstrating that participation alone is insufficient unless institutionalised through routine evaluation practices. Continuous evaluation transformed stakeholder involvement from symbolic participation into actionable feedback that informed program refinement, consistent with findings by Fahmi, A., & Nasution, I. (2024), who report

that feedback-driven leadership enhances organisational learning and sustainability.

From a theoretical perspective, the integration of the three findings reinforces process-oriented models of school improvement that conceptualise strategic planning, capacity building, and stakeholder participation as interdependent and cyclical rather than linear interventions. This supports contemporary leadership theories that frame school improvement as an iterative socio-organisational process (Leithwood, 2021; Bush & Glover, 2022). The findings refine existing theory by illustrating how SWOT-based planning initiates coherence, capacity building operationalises improvement, and continuous evaluation sustains it over time. Thus, the study contributes to the theoretical advancement of strategic educational management by empirically linking planning processes with instructional and governance outcomes.

Practically, the findings offer important implications for school leaders and policymakers. Schools are encouraged to implement participatory SWOT analyses to establish shared priorities, integrate teacher professional development within strategic plans, and institutionalise stakeholder-inclusive evaluation mechanisms. Such practices are particularly relevant for public elementary schools operating under resource constraints, as they optimise internal capacities and external support simultaneously (Poekert, P. E., et al., 2022; Kim, T., Yang, M., & Oh, Y., 2024; Ghasemy, M. et al., 2024). For policymakers, the findings suggest that accountability frameworks should emphasise process quality, how schools plan, learn, and evaluate, rather than focusing solely on output indicators. Overall, this study demonstrates that sustainable improvements in educational quality are achievable when strategic planning, professional capacity building, and stakeholder engagement operate as a coherent, continuously evaluated system.

CONCLUSION

This study examined how strategic planning drives improvements in educational quality through a qualitative case study of an Indonesian public elementary school. The findings demonstrate that SWOT-based strategic planning played a critical role in strengthening institutional direction and managerial coherence by aligning vision, mission, and operational programs through participatory processes. Strategic planning also facilitated improvements in teaching quality by integrating capacity building, supervision, and program implementation into a continuous cycle of professional learning. Furthermore, the study highlights that stakeholder participation, combined with systematic and continuous evaluation, enabled sustainable improvements in educational quality by fostering shared ownership, accountability, and adaptive decision-making. Collectively, these findings suggest that educational quality improvement is not achieved through isolated interventions but through the coherent integration of planning, professional development, stakeholder engagement, and reflective evaluation. Theoretically, this research contributes to strategic educational management literature by reinforcing process-oriented and participatory Leadership models that emphasise sustainability and organisational learning. In practice, the study offers actionable insights for school leaders and policymakers, particularly in decentralised education systems, by demonstrating how strategic planning can serve as a dynamic and inclusive mechanism for continuous improvement rather than a static administrative requirement.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the research employed a single-case qualitative design, which limits the generalizability of the findings to other educational contexts. While the in-depth analysis provides rich insights, the results may reflect context-specific conditions unique to UPT SDN 032 Kualu. Second, the study relied primarily on interviews, observations, and document analysis, which may be subject to participant bias and researcher interpretation. Additionally, the study did not quantitatively measure the impact of strategic planning on student learning outcomes, focusing instead on managerial and instructional processes. Future research is therefore recommended to adopt comparative or multi-site case studies to examine whether similar strategic planning mechanisms produce consistent outcomes across diverse school settings. Mixed-methods or longitudinal designs could also be employed to measure the long-term effects of strategic planning on student achievement, teacher performance, and organisational sustainability. Further studies may explore the role of digital leadership and data analytics in strengthening strategic planning and evaluation practices in elementary education.

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