IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND THEIR PARTICIPATION IN THE SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT

It is not only related to academic achievement but also reflects the institution's ability to interact with and contribute to the community. This article aims to examine strategies for improving the quality of educational institutions and how they can expand their participation in social development. Through a qualitative-descriptive approach, it was found that the synergy between internal management, professional educators, relevant curricula, and community involvement is the key to the success of educational institutions that are both high-quality and socially impactful. Educational institutions must be able to serve as centers of learning as well as agents of social change in their environments.

INTRODUCTION

Education is the main pillar in the development of a nation, and educational institutions are the spearhead. The quality of educational institutions not only has an impact on the academic achievement of students but also contributes directly to the social and economic progress of the surrounding community. In the context of human resource development, quality educational institutions are able to produce individuals who are productive, have integrity, and are adaptive to changes in the times. (Mulia & Kurniati, 2023) However, many educational institutions in Indonesia, especially in the regions, still face various internal challenges such as limited human resources, weak management, and lack of community participation in the education process.

Most previous studies still focus on improving the quality of education from the internal side of the institution, such as curriculum development, teacher training, and learning facilities. However, there are still few that comprehensively examine the reciprocal relationship between

the quality of educational institutions and the role of these institutions in the social development of the community. (Suryatini & Nurhalim, 2023) This study offers an integrative approach that highlights the importance of synergy between improving internal quality and strengthening social participation as an inseparable unit in enhancing the strategic role of educational institutions.

Several previous studies have discussed improving the quality of education, such as those conducted by Mulyasa (2013) who emphasized the importance of principal leadership in quality management, and Tilaar (2004) who discussed national education reform. However, these studies still lack emphasis on the social dimension of educational institutions as agents of community development. Therefore, this study is here to fill this gap by looking at social participation as part of an indicator of sustainable education quality. (Hasanah, 2020)

This study aims to:

1. Analyze strategies for improving the quality of educational institutions from internal and external aspects.
2. Examine the forms of participation of educational institutions towards the community.
3. Explain the relationship between the quality of educational institutions and their contribution to the social development of the community.
4. Offer a collaborative model between educational institutions and the community in order to create social change.

By considering the importance of the dual role of educational institutions as centers of learning and agents of social change, this study proposes an integrative approach to improving the quality and participation of educational institutions in community development. (Simatupang et al., 2021) It is hoped that the results of this study can be a reference for policy makers, managers of educational institutions, and the community in developing an education system that is not only academically superior but also socially useful.

METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach that aims to deeply understand the phenomenon of improving the quality of educational institutions and the forms of their participation in society. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to explore processes, experiences, and social meanings that cannot be explained quantitatively. (Tujiyono, 2023) The main focus of this study is to explore the interaction between educational institution management, educators, students, and the community in a joint effort to build superior and socially empowered educational institutions.

The research was conducted in several secondary educational institutions in the Padangsidimpuan area which have different geographical and social characteristics. The selection of locations was carried out purposively with the consideration that these institutions were running quality development programs and had a history of quite active social participation. (Maujud, 2017) The research subjects consisted of school/madrasah principals, teachers, school committees, community leaders, and parents of students.

Data were collected through three main techniques, namely:

1. In-depth interviews with related parties to obtain direct information about strategies for improving the quality of education and forms of social involvement of educational institutions.
2. Participatory observation, namely direct observation of learning activities, community activities involving schools, and partnership programs between schools and the surrounding environment.
3. Documentation study, including analysis of internal institutional documents such as vision-mission, work programs, activity reports, and external partnership documents with the community or local government.
1. Data Analysis Techniques

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis techniques. This process includes the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. Researchers identified the main patterns or themes that emerged in the data, such as quality management strategies, collaboration patterns with the community, and their impact on social change. (Ully Muzakir, 2013)

To maintain the validity and reliability of the data, this study used source and method triangulation techniques. Triangulation was carried out by comparing the results of interviews, observations, and documents, and confirming the findings with key informants (member checking). This was done to ensure that the data obtained accurately reflected the reality in the field. (Pratiwi, 2016)

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on data collected through observations, interviews with school principals, teachers, and school committees, as well as document analysis, several strategies have been identified in enhancing the quality of educational institutions. These strategies reflect a strong commitment by schools not only to academic improvement but also to community involvement and social development.

One of the primary strategies adopted is the continuous development of teacher competencies. Most schools under study regularly conduct training programs, both internally and externally, including workshops, seminars, and certification courses. These initiatives aim to enhance teachers' professional skills in line with the subjects they teach, ensuring they are well-equipped to address diverse educational needs.

In addition, the implementation of School-Based Management (SBM) has become a central component in improving educational quality. Schools have started to involve all stakeholders—including principals, teachers, and school committees—in decision-making processes related to school policies. This approach fosters shared responsibility, encourages collaboration, and empowers school communities to manage resources efficiently and achieve common educational goals.

Curricular innovation is another key area. Some schools have developed locally relevant curricula by incorporating the potential and characteristics of their surrounding environments. For instance, schools located in agricultural areas have integrated entrepreneurship subjects based on farming practices and offer extracurricular activities that

reflect local socio-economic conditions. This contextualized learning not only makes education more meaningful for students but also contributes directly to their communities.

Technological integration in teaching and learning has also become increasingly common. Schools are gradually adopting digital platforms for instruction and assessment to enhance learning efficiency and overcome spatial limitations. However, despite these advancements, challenges remain, especially in schools that face limited access to digital infrastructure and a lack of digital literacy among teachers (Ahmad Gunawan, 2022).

Beyond the academic realm, educational institutions are actively participating in various community-based activities. Many schools engage in social initiatives such as communal clean-ups, disaster relief fundraising, and other social events that involve teachers, students, and local residents. These activities foster students' social awareness and strengthen the bond between schools and communities.

Moreover, schools have formed partnerships with local figures, NGOs, and government bodies to implement programs such as health awareness campaigns, skill-based training, and collaborative social events. Some schools even offer non-formal education programs such as computer courses, language training, and functional literacy classes for the broader community. These efforts aim to empower local residents, especially parents and youth, by providing skills that contribute to economic improvement (Normina, 2016).

Several supporting and inhibiting factors influence these initiatives. On the supportive side, visionary school leadership and strong community collaboration play a crucial role. Schools that receive active support from the local community tend to experience more sustainable development. Additionally, schools with adequate infrastructure—such as classrooms, computers, and internet access—are more capable of implementing programs effectively (Nurafni et al., 2022).

However, several obstacles hinder progress. Limited funding remains a major issue, often restricting schools' ability to implement educational improvements and social programs. Digital illiteracy among both teachers and students also poses challenges in maximizing the use of educational technology. Furthermore, a lack of understanding regarding the social function of schools leads some institutions to focus solely on academic achievement, overlooking their role in fostering community development (Khairani, 2021).

Despite these challenges, the positive impact of improving educational quality extends beyond academic outcomes. Active school participation in community development enhances social welfare and increases public awareness of the importance of education. Schools that act as community partners help build a stronger, more engaged society.

These findings underscore the reciprocal relationship between educational quality and social engagement. The study reveals that most schools strategically focus on improving internal capacity—especially through teacher development and school-based management—while also responding to the contextual needs of the community. This aligns with Freire's (1970) perspective that education should be grounded in the local social context and address community needs.

Moreover, the study supports Mulyasa's (2013) assertion that effective school leadership and management are instrumental in improving educational outcomes. Schools that adopt SBM tend to manage resources more transparently and efficiently, ultimately enhancing both academic and social performance.

While digital technologies have the potential to expand learning opportunities, uneven infrastructure and digital readiness remain significant barriers. Thus, government support in improving technological access and teacher training is crucial to ensure equitable implementation across regions.

In terms of social contribution, schools demonstrate various forms of community engagement, functioning not only as educational institutions but also as agents of social transformation. Training programs, such as literacy classes or vocational courses, provide direct benefits to local communities. This approach reflects Tilaar's (2004) concept of community-based education, which emphasizes the importance of public involvement in creating broader social change.

Ultimately, the research highlights the need for a holistic educational model—one that integrates internal quality improvements with strong community engagement. Schools that go beyond academic achievement and engage in community empowerment play a vital role in shaping inclusive, resilient, and forward-looking societies. Future research is encouraged to further explore the interconnection between educational excellence and social impact, aiming to build a more inclusive and sustainable education system for all.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals that improving the quality of educational institutions and their participation in social development of the community are interrelated and mutually supportive. In an effort to improve the quality of education, the educational institutions studied have implemented various strategies, such as developing teacher competencies, implementing school-based management, developing a curriculum that is relevant to local needs, and utilizing technology in the learning process. The implementation of these strategies has proven effective in improving the quality of education in the schools that are the objects of the study.

In addition, the participation of educational institutions in the community shows a very significant role. Educational institutions do not only focus on academic achievement, but are also active in various social activities that provide direct benefits to the surrounding community. These social activities, such as skills training, health counseling, and collaboration with various institutions, show that schools can function as agents of social change that encourage the development of a more inclusive and empowered community.

However, the challenges faced by educational institutions in improving the quality and social participation are still quite large, especially related to limited funds, facilities, and digital literacy. Nevertheless, collaboration between educational institutions and the community has proven to be able to overcome many obstacles and increase the effectiveness of educational programs and their contribution to social development.

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