

# CHALLENGES OF EDUCATION MANAGEMENT SYSTEM IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS AND SOLVING STRATEGIES

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## Abstract

This qualitative descriptive research aims to understand the challenges of the education management system in primary schools and the strategies implemented to address them. The study focuses on five public primary schools in Musi Rawas Regency, South Sumatra, involving school principals, teachers, school committees, and education supervisors as research subjects. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and documentation. Data analysis employed Miles' interactive model (1994), which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings reveal several main challenges: centralized leadership by school principals, low involvement of school committees and parents, inconsistent government policies, and limited resources and infrastructure. Nevertheless, the research also identified several strategies implemented by schools to address these issues, including strengthening transformational leadership, revitalizing the role of school committees, adapting policies through a local approach, and gradually using technology. It is recommended that primary school education management emphasize participatory approaches, inclusive leadership enhancement, empowerment of school committees and parents, and the development of more consistent and contextual education policies.

**Keywords:** *Education Management System, Primary School, Educational Challenges, Problem-Solving Strategies, Transformational Leadership, Community Involvement, Educational Policy, Educational Resources.*

## INTRODUCTION

Elementary School is the main foundation in the national education system, where character building, basic literacy habits, and the instillation of social and cultural values begin to be formed. Education at this level determines the direction of success in education at the next level, because the formation of children's cognitive, affective, and psychomotor skills is greatly influenced by learning experiences in this early period. (Muzaini & Fadhilah, 2023). Therefore, the education management system in Elementary Schools cannot be viewed as merely an administrative aspect, but rather as a strategic instrument to realize quality and sustainable education.

However, the reality on the ground shows that the basic education management system in Indonesia still faces many challenges. Most schools still rely on the figure of the principal as the center of decision making, without a solid and participatory governance system. Planning activities are often not based on data, program implementation is still normative, and community involvement is very minimal. (Huraerah, 2008). In addition, challenges also arise from policy changes that are not in line with conditions at the school level, which causes confusion in implementation in the field.

One of the main issues in the management system in elementary schools is the weak managerial capacity of the principal. Many principals do not yet have adequate strategic leadership skills and planning capabilities. In a study by (Pramudya et al., 2023), it was found that the success of a school is highly dependent on the principal's competence in managing resources and building a positive school culture. When leadership is bureaucratic and not transformative, the entire system becomes stagnant and does not develop sustainably.

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The urgency of this research is also strengthened by the development of the era that demands an increasingly flexible, innovative, and collaboration-based education management system. The digital era, dynamic curriculum, and social complexity require elementary schools to be able to manage adaptive and responsive programs to the needs of students.(Nasir *et al.*, 2023). Therefore, education management must move from an administrative approach to participatory and results-based management.

The novelty of this study lies in its holistic approach: it not only maps the systemic challenges in the management of elementary school education, but also offers a solution strategy based on good practices that have been proven in various local contexts. If many previous studies only highlight the leadership or facilities aspect, then this article tries to synergize the various dimensions of leadership, collaboration, policy, and community support into one systemic thinking framework.(Septiana *et al.*, 2023). Thus, this article is expected to be a reference for policy makers, education practitioners, and academics.

This research is important to do because a weak education management system at the elementary level will have a direct impact on the quality of elementary school graduates and the continuity of education at higher levels. In the long term, the ineffectiveness of this management system will hinder the achievement of national education goals. Therefore, a concrete, contextual, and participatory strategy formulation is needed so that these challenges can be overcome comprehensively and sustainably.(ZAINU, 2022).

## METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with the aim of deeply understanding the challenges of the education management system in Elementary Schools and the solution strategies applied by education actors. This approach allows researchers to explore social dynamics, subjective experiences, and managerial practices holistically and contextually (Sugiyono in Hasan *et al.*, 2025). The research location was centered in five Public Elementary Schools, namely SDN Sukajaya, SDN Madang, SDN Trans Madang, SDN Jaya Mulya and SDN 1 Sumber Sari which were selected purposively in Musi Rawas Regency, South Sumatra. The selection of locations took into account geographical diversity, resource limitations, and variations in the implementation of education policies. The research subjects included principals, teachers, school committees, and education supervisors who have a direct role in the school management process.

Data collection techniques were carried out through three main methods, namely in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation. Interviews were conducted with school principals and teachers to gain an understanding of their perceptions of the challenges and strategies of education management. Participatory observation was conducted on various managerial activities such as the preparation of the School Work Plan, the implementation of evaluation meetings, and school interactions with the community. Meanwhile, documentation was used as a triangulation tool by reviewing formal documents such as RKS, reports on the use of BOS funds, and minutes of school committee meetings.

Data were analyzed using an interactive model.(Miles, 1994), which consists of three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. Data reduction is carried out to filter essential information from the results of interviews and collected documents. Furthermore, the data is presented in the form of an organized thematic narrative, as well as tables if necessary to clarify the findings. Drawing conclusions is done by identifying patterns and relationships between data in order to find the main challenges and relevant solution strategies. To ensure the validity of the data, the researcher uses triangulation techniques of sources and methods, and conducts member checking with informants to ensure the accuracy of the interpretation of the data obtained.(Bungin & Moleong, 2007).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### A. Challenges of Education Management System in Elementary Schools

Based on the results of interviews and observations, a number of main challenges were found that hamper the effectiveness of education management in elementary schools:

#### 1. Centralized Principal Leadership

The results of the study show that the leadership of the principal in most elementary schools is still centralized. The principal is the main actor in making important decisions, such as allocating BOS funds, determining the curriculum, and planning programs. This leads to a lack of delegation of authority to teachers and other staff, who should have an active role in planning and evaluation. This centralized leadership pattern results in limited innovation and collegiality, thus potentially reducing the quality of education. According

to(LANGGA, 2022), the centralistic leadership model tends to hinder the development of teacher creativity in implementing school programs that should focus more on the needs and development of students.

In addition, with the lack of participation from teachers and other education personnel, the decisions taken may be less relevant to real needs in the field. When only one party makes decisions, many voices and ideas are ignored, which could enrich the policies implemented. For example, if the principal is too dominant in planning the curriculum or learning program, the policy may not consider the perspectives of teachers who are directly in the classroom. This in turn can affect the quality of teaching and student engagement in the teaching and learning process.

## 2. Low Involvement of School Committee and Parents

One of the most striking challenges is the low involvement of school committees and parents in education management. In many schools studied, school committees more often function as administrative bodies that only handle financial reports, especially related to BOS funds, rather than as active partners in the evaluation and supervision of education programs. Community involvement, including parents, in the decision-making process is very limited, so there is no clear accountability for the implementation of the program. Research(Hapsari et al., 2021)revealed that when the community is actively involved, the accountability of education programs becomes clearer and more in line with local needs, and can increase support for the policies implemented.

The lack of involvement of parents and school committees in the evaluation process also causes a mismatch between the educational programs being run and the specific needs that exist in the school environment. This is further exacerbated by the low awareness of parents about the importance of their involvement in their children's education. In some schools, although school committees exist, their function is limited to administrative matters without carrying out supervisory functions or joint program planning with the school. This results in limited sustainability and accountability of the programs run in schools.

## 3. Inconsistency of Government Policy

The inconsistency of government policies in education, especially in the curriculum and management of BOS funds, is a major challenge in managing education in elementary schools. Frequent policy shifts cause confusion for schools in implementing planned education programs. For example, sudden changes in curriculum policies or BOS fund reporting procedures are often not followed by adequate socialization. As a result, schools are often caught in confusion about the correct way to run programs according to the latest policies. According to(Yaqin, 2025), this policy inconsistency has a negative impact on long-term planning, because schools cannot develop stable and sustainable work plans.

In addition, inconsistent policies also affect the performance of teachers who are faced with rapid and unexpected changes. This can disrupt the learning process, because educators must adapt to new policies that are implemented without sufficient training or clear information. This uncertainty creates an environment that is not conducive to effective education management, because educators find it difficult to carry out their duties optimally. Limitations in coordinated policies can hamper efforts to improve the quality of education at the elementary level.

## 4. Limited Resources and Infrastructure

Limited resources and infrastructure are significant challenges in managing education in many elementary schools, especially those in 3T (disadvantaged, frontier, outermost) areas. Observation data shows that many schools in these areas lack basic facilities such as adequate classrooms, learning equipment, and technological facilities that support the teaching and learning process. These limitations greatly affect the effectiveness of teaching and learning activities, because teachers and students cannot utilize the existing facilities optimally.(Angriani et al., 2024)In their research, they emphasized that the quality of educational management is greatly influenced by the completeness and quality of the resources available at the school.

In addition, in remote areas, many schools still have difficulty accessing technology, which is one of the important tools in supporting efficient education management. The shortage of permanent teachers, especially in certain subjects, is also a problem that worsens the quality of education. With these limitations, it is very difficult to implement the curriculum effectively, because the available resources are not enough to support all planned activities. Therefore, schools in these areas need special attention in terms of infrastructure development and resource procurement to support optimal teaching quality.

## B. Challenge Solving Strategy

Despite facing many obstacles, the schools studied demonstrated several interesting and contextual solution strategies, including:

## 1. Strengthening Transformational Leadership

Some of the principals studied tried to overcome the challenges of centralized leadership by adopting transformational leadership. They took the initiative to conduct internal training for school staff, form small work teams for each educational program, and implement a shared vision-based leadership model. This approach aims to empower teachers and staff in making decisions and improve cooperation between the parties involved. Mulyasa in (Permatasari et al., 2023) revealed that transformational leadership is able to increase motivation, work spirit, and staff performance in a more inclusive and collaborative way. With this change, the principal is not only the main decision maker, but also a leader who facilitates the professional growth of teachers and other education personnel.

In addition, this strategy helps build a more open work culture and supports innovation in education management. By focusing on effective collaboration and communication, principals can create a more supportive environment for the implementation of more relevant and adaptive education programs. This shows that although the previous leadership system tended to be centralized, transformational leadership can be a solution to create more active and innovative participation among all school members.

## 2. Revitalizing the Role of School Committees

Several schools studied also attempted to improve the role of the school committee by involving them in the preparation and evaluation of work programs. One example of success occurred at SDN Jaya Mulya, where the school committee not only functions as an administrative body, but also as an active partner in procuring teaching aids, monitoring curriculum implementation, and improving school facilities. According to (SULAENI, 2024)), a strong relationship between schools and communities, manifested in the involvement of school committees, can improve the quality of education management and strengthen accountability and sustainability of programs. This success also emphasizes the importance of parental and community involvement in supporting education programs.

Revitalizing the role of school committees also increases transparency in the management of education funds and programs. With more active participation, school committees can provide valuable input on local needs that should be prioritized, as well as monitor the use of funds and program implementation. This creates a sense of ownership and shared responsibility between schools and communities, which in turn strengthens the quality of education and expands access to the resources needed to achieve it.

## 3. Adaptation to Policy with Local Approach

Several elementary schools in Musi Rawas Regency have shown positive initiatives in dealing with inconsistent government policies by adapting based on local needs. One form is the modification of the Learning Implementation Plan (RPP) which is adjusted to the social and cultural context of the local village. Teachers develop teaching materials that link learning materials to the realities of students' daily lives, such as the use of local agricultural themes, cultural wisdom, and regional languages in the introduction of learning. This approach not only makes it easier for students to understand, but also builds an emotional attachment between students and their environment.

In addition to modifying the RPP, several schools also integrate extracurricular programs with local culture as part of an adaptation strategy. For example, traditional dance activities, pencak silat, or regional handicraft skills are made part of the character building program. This strategy is based on the principle of contextual leadership, where the principal and teachers adjust the leadership and micro policies of the school to the socio-cultural conditions of the surrounding community. (Muhaimin, 2015). By utilizing local potential as part of the education system, schools not only survive amidst the uncertainty of national policies, but also strengthen local identity and values in the learning process.

## 4. Gradual Use of Technology

In the face of limited digital infrastructure, a number of elementary schools have begun to implement the use of technology gradually and contextually. This initial step is carried out through the use of simple and easily accessible applications, such as Google Form for surveys of parents' needs and WhatsApp groups as a means of communication between teachers and guardians. This strategy is a practical solution in areas with limited connectivity, because it does not require sophisticated devices or a stable internet network continuously. With

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this approach, teachers and parents can still be actively involved in the education process even with minimal facilities.

The gradual use of technology also opens up new space for the development of more responsive and efficient school management. For example, student data collection, activity reporting, and meeting schedule reminders can now be done digitally, which previously relied entirely on manual documents. (Solehudin, 2024) noted that this gradual approach is more appropriate for elementary schools outside urban areas, as it allows for natural adaptation and avoids resistance due to technical limitations. Therefore, the digitalization of education management does not need to be carried out in a revolutionary manner, but rather evolutionary by considering the readiness of human resources and available resources.

## CLOSING CONCLUSION

From the results of this study, it can be concluded that the education management system in elementary schools in Musi Rawas Regency still faces various challenges that affect its effectiveness. Some of the main problems found include centralized principal leadership, low involvement of school committees and parents, inconsistent government policies, and limited resources and infrastructure. These challenges require serious attention from related parties to create more efficient and quality education management.

However, despite the challenges being quite large, there are a number of strategies that can be adopted to solve them. Strengthening transformational leadership, revitalizing the role of school committees, and adapting to policies based on local needs are steps that have proven effective in improving education management at the elementary school level. Therefore, it is important for principals, teachers, and school committees to work together to create a more collaborative environment that is responsive to the development of the times and the needs of students.

## SUGGESTION

Based on the findings in this study, it is recommended that related parties, both the government, principals, and the community, prioritize a participatory approach in managing education at the elementary school level. The leadership of the principal needs to be strengthened with an inclusive and collaborative leadership model, while the school committee and parents must be empowered to be more actively involved in program planning and evaluation. In addition, more consistent education policies that are in accordance with local needs must be introduced so that the management of education in elementary schools becomes more adaptive and sustainable.

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