Principal Policy Management in Improving Education Quality Based on Education Report Cards at SMA Negeri 2 Banjarbaru

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Abstract: This study aims to examine school principals' policy management in improving the quality of education by utilizing Rapor Pendidikan data. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, the research was conducted at SMA Negeri 2 Banjarbaru through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation analysis. Data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, encompassing data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Findings indicate that the principal plays a central role in formulating, implementig, and evaluating policies based on National Assessment results. Challenges include limited human resources and data literacy. Through transformational, instructional, and visionary leadership, the principal successfully directed improvements in key educational quality indicators. The findings emphasize the importance of integrating data into school policy management to sustain educational quality improvement.

Keywords: Policy management, school leadership, educational quality

1.   Introduction

Education is a fundamental element in nation-building and in enhancing the quality of human resources to be globally competitive (Tilaar, 2002). In this era of globalization and increasing complexity, education no longer serves merely as a means of transferring knowledge, but also as a medium for shaping character, creativity, and individuals' adaptive capacities (Suyanto & Jihad, 2013). In line with these dynamics, the demand for improved education quality is becoming increasingly urgent, requiring educational institutions to continuously transform.

In the Indonesian context, the Merdeka Belajar (Freedom to Learn) policy initiated by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek, 2020) represents a strategic effort to strengthen the autonomy of educational units in making data-driven decisions. One of the main instruments developed is the Rapor Pendidikan (Education Report), a data platform that presents the results of the National Assessment, including literacy, numeracy, school climate, and school governance indicators (Kemendikbudristek, 2022).

The utilization of the Education Report aims to enable school principals and the broader education ecosystem to diagnose their institution's condition, design problem-based planning, and evaluate the outcomes of quality improvement programs. According to (Suryadi & Hasan, 2019), data-driven decision making in educational institutions enhances the effectiveness of program interventions and supports sustainable school growth.

Research by (Nurbani et al., 2024) indicates that schools consistently using Education Report data for planning and academic supervision have experienced significant improvements in student literacy and numeracy. However, (Chigbu & Makapela, 2025; UNESCO, 2021) notes that major challenges in implementing data-based leadership include low data literacy among educators, resistance to change,and limitedd supporting infrastructure.

In the context of SMA Negeri 2 Banjarbaru, these findings are highly relevant, especially in relation to improvements in various indicators on the 2024 Education Report. This school showed notable gains, particularly in literacy and numeracy scores. These improvements were significantly influenced by the school principal's policy of adopting data-based academic supervision, as highlighted by Maharani and Hidayat. The principal actively mapped the strengths and

weaknesses of learning processes using the Education Report data and then formulated more focused, targeted, and measurable supervision programs.

Furthermore, collaboration between the principal and various stakeholders within the school has been strengthened, as evidenced by the frequency of discussion forums, need-based teacher training, and periodic evaluations of program implementation. The correlation between Maharani and Hidayat's findings and the outcomes at SMA Negeri 2 Banjarbaru demonstrates that systematic data management using the Education Report can serve as a solid foundation for school policy management. This reinforces the argument that data-based policies can accelerate quality improvements at the school level.

The process of improving education quality based on data at SMA Negeri 2 Banjarbaru has not been without its challenges, stemming from both internal and external factors. Internal factors include human resource readiness, the leadership capacity of the principal, and an organizational culture supportive of change. External factors involve government regulations, community support, and the socio-geographical conditions surrounding the school. These dynamics influence how education policies are designed, implemented, and evaluated in a sustainable manner.

Preliminary observations by the researcher revealed that the principal nitiated policies have yielded positive outcomes, particularly in literacy and numeracy, as reflected in the 2024 Education Report indicators. This was confirmed through an interview with the school principal, Saryono, M.Pd, conducted on Thursday, March 27, 2025. According to internal data from the 2024 Education Report, among 15 indicators, several showed score improvements. Literacy reached a score of 97.78% (rated "Good"), as did numeracy. Other indicators rated "Good" included teacher training experience (63.8%), diversity climate (79%), and inclusivity climate (74%).

Despite these improvements, the 2024 report also identified several indicators that declined, though still within the "Good" category above the minimum competency threshold. Based on follow-up observations on Wednesday, April 2, 2025, the following indicators showed declines: character (63.7%), teacher reflection and learning improvement (61.47%), instructional leadership (66%), school safety climate (78%), gender equality climate (76%), stakeholder participation (75.8%), and school policies and programs (75%).

Some indicators received "Moderate" ratings, such as learning quality (63.47%) and resource utilization for quality improvement (54.6%), the latter without updated scores due to non-response by the school unit. Compared to 2024, the 2025 Education Report shows a significant improvement, with scores as follows: literacy (100%), numeracy (97.78%), character (63.7%), teacher training experience (65.8%), learning quality (66%), instructional leadership (66.05%), school safety climate (78%), gender equality (76%), diversity climate (79%), inclusivity climate (74%), stakeholder participation (75.8%), resource utilization (54.6%), ICT use in budgeting (61.87%), and school policies/programs (75%).

To enhance education service quality, the principal explicitly described several managerial strategies used to address National Assessment results and Education Report data. One of the first steps was collective reflection with all school members to address low-performing indicators. These reflections became the foundation for setting policy priorities. The data from the Education Report was not treated as a mere administrative document but served as the main reference for formulating the School Work Plan (RKS), School Activity and Budget Plan (RKAS), and other strategic programs.

The principal emphasized broad stakeholder involvement in policy formulation. Teachers, administrative staff, and the school committee were invited to collectively analyze the data to foster a shared awareness that improving education quality is a collective responsibility. This participatory approach illustrates the principal's role not only as a top-down leader but also as a facilitator and motivator in addressing education quality challenges.

In implementing policies, the principal stressed the importance of consistency and sustainability. Programs such as subject-based literacy enhancement, teacher development through learning communities, and active learning training were regularly conducted. The principal facilitated capacity building so that teachers could respond to contextual learning needs. This policy improved not only teaching performance but also positively impacted student learning experiences, as reflected in improved National Assessment scores.

In terms of evaluation, the principal paid close attention to systematic monitoring and control mechanisms. Evaluations were conducted internally through coordination meetings and externally with school supervisors and the Education Office. These evaluations informed follow-up policies, including reinforcing successful strategies and revising ineffective ones. The principal also used the data analysis features of the Education Report platform to monitor indicator progress regularly and thoroughly.

All these efforts show that the improvement in education quality at SMA Negeri 2 Banjarbaru results from reflective, collaborative, and evidence-based policy management. The principal does not merely perform administrative functions but acts as a transformational leader capable of driving change through strategic approaches. This aligns with instructional and transformational leadership theories, which emphasize the importance of vision, inspiration, and empowerment in building a school culture that adapts to change and evolving demands (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985).

Based on the empirical data and experiences presented, it can be concluded that school policy management is a key factor in improving education quality, particularly within the framework of the *Merdeka Belajar* policy, which emphasizes autonomy and data-based accountability. Therefore, it is crucial to further investigate the principal's ability to analyze Education Report data, how policies are formulated based on these data, and how implementation and evaluation are conducted to bring tangible improvements in education service quality. Thus, the school principal's policy management practices in improving education quality merit deeper analysis. This includes the planning process, policy

formulation, implementation strategies, and monitoring mechanisms particularly regarding the use of Education Report data as the foundation for effective decision making.

2. Research Objection

a. To analyze the role of the school principal in formulating education quality improvement policies based on Rapor Pendidikan data at SMA Negeri 2 Banjarbaru
b. To describe the managerial strategies employed by the principal in implementing data-driven policies derived from the National Assessment results
c. To identify challenges and obstacles faced in managing data-based policies within the school environment
d. To evaluate the impact of the principal's policies on the improvement of key educational quality indicators such as literacy, numeracy, and school governance
e. To propose strategic recommendations for strengthening school leadership capacity in driving sustainable, evidence-based educational transformation

3. Research Question

a. How does the principal of SMA Negeri 2 Banjarbaru formulate policies to improve educational quality based on Rapor Pendidikan data?
b. What strategies are employed by the principal in implementing and managing data-driven policies?
c. What are the main challenges faced in utilizing Rapor Pendidikan as a basis for policy decisions?
d. How do the principal's policies impact key indicators such as literacy, numeracy, and school climate?
e. What leadership approaches support the sustainable implementation of data based educational policies?

4. Literature Review

School policy management refers to a strategic process undertaken by school principals to formulate, implement, and assess policies that guide educational practices and organizational governance (Bush, 2008). The effectiveness of this process is largely shaped by the use of data-informed approaches, where decisions are grounded in measurable evidence and aligned with institutional objectives (Earl & Katz, 2006). Within the Indonesian education system, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology has introduced the Rapor Pendidikan, a national diagnostic tool designed to provide schools with feedback on performance indicators such as literacy, numeracy, school climate, and governance (Kemendikbudristek, 2022). This initiative aligns with international trends emphasizing data-driven assessment as a foundation for continuous school improvement. However, its application in policy-making at the school level remains suboptimal, often hindered by low levels of data literacy and limited engagement from school leaders (Suryadi & Hasan, 2019).

In this regard, school leadership plays a pivotal role in translating assessment data into actionable policies. (Bass & Avolio, 1994) highlight the significance of transformational leadership, which fosters innovation, encourages shifts in mindset, and empowers school stakeholders. Complementing this, instructional leadership as described by (Hallinger, 2003) emphasizes the principal's role in enhancing teaching quality through the use of performance data. Visionary leadership is equally essential for anticipating long-term educational trends and ensuring strategic alignment across school initiatives. Despite its potential, the implementation of data-informed policies faces several obstacles, including resistance to change, insufficient professional development, and a lack of skills in data interpretation (Fullan, 2007; Earl & Katz, 2006). Thus, schools need to establish supportive systems that encourage collaboration, critical reflection, and adaptive decision-making (Datnow & Park, 2018).

From a methodological standpoint, ensuring the trustworthiness of qualitative research requires adherence to four criteria proposed by (Lincoln & Guba, 1985): credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Techniques such as triangulation of data sources and methods, member checking, and maintaining an audit trail are crucial for preserving research integrity. Furthermore, in-depth interviews as advocated by (Musundire, 2025; Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009) offer valuable insights into participants' perspectives, enabling a deeper understanding of leadership behavior and decision-making dynamics within the school setting.

5. Research Methodology

5.1 Research Design

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach, aiming to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of school principals' policy management based on the utilization of Rapor Pendidikan in improving the quality of educational services at SMA Negeri 2 Banjarbaru, South Kalimantan. This approach was chosen because qualitative methods allow for the exploration of meaning, process comprehension, and interpretation of participants' experiences and actions within their natural context (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

5.2 Research Sample

The research was conducted at SMA Negeri 2 Banjarbaru, South Kalimantan, Indonesia, selected based on the consideration that the school has actively utilized Rapor Pendidikan in its strategic decision-making processes. The

research subjects included the principal, vice principals, teachers, and other educational staff who were directly involved in the formulation and implementation of school policies.

5.3 Research Instrument

In qualitative research, the primary research instrument is the researcher themselves, who functions as the key tool in data collection and interpretation (Creswell & Poth, 2016). In this study, the researcher was actively involved in observing, interpreting, and interacting with participants to ensure the richness and depth of the data. To support the data collection process, several auxiliary instruments were used:

5.3.1 Interviews Guidelines

A semi-structured interview guide was developed to explore participants' perspectives on school policy management based on Rapor Pendidikan. The questions were open-ended, allowing flexibility for probing and in-depth responses.

5.3.2 Observation Sheet

An observation sheet was used to record key managerial activities, staff interactions, and the use of data in school decision-making processes. This helped capture natural behaviors and contextual factors influencing policy implementation.

5.3.3 Document Analysis Format

A structured format was employed to review and analyze relevant documents, including Rapor Pendidikan, school strategic plans, meeting minutes, and internal policy documents, which provided insights into policy direction and data utilization.

6. Findings and Discussion

6.1 Research Findings

Based on the data collected through interviews, observations, and document analysis at SMA Negeri 2 Banjarbaru, the following findings were obtained:

6.1.1 Policy Formulation based on the Education Report (Rapor Pendidikan)

The principal, Saryono, M.Pd., consistently uses data from the Rapor Pendidikan as the primary reference in formulating the school's strategic policies. The main focus is directed toward indicators such as reading literacy, numeracy, school climate, and school management.

6.1.2 Involvement of School Stakeholders

In the policy formulation process, the principal involves all school stakeholders, including teachers, administrative staff, students, and the school committee. This engagement is facilitated through subject teacher working groups (MGMP), faculty meetings, and open discussions with parents.

6.1.3 Policy Implementation Strategies

Policy implementation is carried out through participatory and collaborative approaches. The principal integrates new policies into the annual work programs and lesson plans (RPP), while also promoting teacher capacity building through literacy and numeracy training.

6.1.4 Evaluation and Continous Improvement

Evaluation is conducted regularly through assessment analysis, academic supervision, and collective teacher reflection. The results of these evaluations are used to revise policies and work programs, fostering a continuous improvement cycle.

The implementation of data-informed policies also reflects the principles of data-driven decision making (DDDM) in educational management, where data is systematically used to identify issues, design targeted interventions, and assess program effectiveness (Mandinach & Gummer, 2016). This approach enhances transparency, accountability, and the objectivity of decisions made within the school context.

Although several indicators have shown improvement from 2024 to 2025, the overall results have not yet reached optimal levels. Among all indicators, only literacy skills achieved a perfect score of 100%. Furthermore, the indicator related to the use of ICT for budget management recorded a decline in performance over the same period. To address these challenges, the principal has initiated capacity building efforts through internal training sessions and external partnerships, thereby gradually cultivating a data-driven culture within the school (Earl & Katz, 2006).

Overall, the integration of the Education Report into school policy management at SMA Negeri 2 Banjarbaru demonstrates that data serves not merely as an evaluation tool but as a catalyst for innovation and sustainable educational improvement.

6.2 Analysis of Research Questions

6.2.1 Research Question 1: How is the principal's policy management implemented to improve the quality of education based on the Education Report at SMA Negeri 2 Banjarbaru?

The implementation of the principal's policy management at SMA Negeri 2 Banjarbaru shows a strong alignment with the findings from the Education Report. The principal has systematically used the report as a data-driven foundation to guide school development planning and intervention programs. Emphasis has been placed on improving core learning outcomes—particularly literacy and numeracy—by promoting active learning strategies, classroom engagement, and reflective teaching practices. The outstanding score of 100% in literacy and 98.99% in numeracy in 2025 reflects the effectiveness of such policies. Additionally, the principal's leadership supports a culture of collaboration and continuous

professional development among teachers, as indicated by the significant improvement in the indicator of teaching reflection (from 61.53 to 70.72). These practices demonstrate the application of instructional leadership rooted inevidence based decision-making.

6.2.2   Research Question 2: What challenges are encountered in the implementation of education quality improvement policies based on the Education Report?

Despite the overall positive trajectory, several challenges remain in the implementation process. One significant issue is the limited integration of digital technology in school administration. The score for the utilization of ICT in budget management declined from 68.68 in 2024 to 61.87 in 2025, suggesting insufficient capacity or inconsistent practices in digital financial governance. Moreover, the absence of comparable data on teacher participation in training activities between 2024 and 2025 highlights a limitation in the school's data tracking systems, which may affect the evaluation of long-term capacity-building efforts. These challenges indicate that while policy directions are well-formulated, supporting systems and infrastructure need further strengthening.

6.2.3   Research Question 3: How does the principal's policy affect school culture and stakeholder participation?

The principal's policies have contributed to fostering a more inclusive and participatory school culture. This is evident from improvements in indicators such as school safety (increased from 73 to 78), gender equality (from 71.42 to 76), and inclusiveness for students with special needs (from 65.16 to 74). These scores suggest that the learning environment is becoming increasingly respectful, equitable, and responsive to diversity. Additionally, stakeholder involvement has strengthened, with the score for parental and student participation increasing from 70.41 to 75.8. These changes reflect the principal's success in mobilizing the school community and building collective ownership over the school's vision and mission.

The research findings indicate that the principal of SMA Negeri 2 Banjarbaru adopts a transformational leadership approach in driving change based on the Education Report. This aligns with the view of (Bass & Avolio, 1994), who argue that transformational leaders are capable of inspiring and mobilizing all members of an organization to actively engage in achieving meaningful and positive change.

7.   Results

The findings of the study indicate that student literacy skills have reached an advanced level of competence, as demonstrated by the ability of learners to not only identify and extract explicit information from texts and make straightforward interpretations, but also to engage in more complex cognitive processes such as synthesizing information across multiple sources, critically evaluating the quality and style of written content, and reflecting meaningfully on textual messages, thereby signifying a comprehensive development of higher-order thinking skills and textual understanding across the student body.

In the domain of numeracy, the results show that nearly all students have successfully achieved the minimum standards of competency, which reflects the effectiveness of instructional approaches in facilitating mathematical understanding, problem-solving capabilities, and the application of numerical reasoning in various contexts, thereby establishing a strong foundation for quantitative literacy among learners.With respect to character education, the data suggest a growing internalization of Pancasila-based values, as an increasing proportion of students demonstrate moral integrity, independence, creativity, critical thinking, collaborative behavior, and an appreciation of cultural diversity, implying that the educational environment is progressively supporting the cultivation of ethical dispositions and civic responsibility in line with national character-building objectives.

The study also reveals an encouraging trend in teacher professional development, as evidenced by increased participation in training activities, which in turn has a positive impact on the quality of learning experiences through the incorporation of new pedagogical strategies, enhancement of classroom engagement, and the establishment of supportive and cognitively stimulating environments conducive to student achievement. Teachers have shown a marked increase in reflective practice and innovation, signifying a deliberate effort to improve instructional effectiveness by continuously evaluating teaching methods, integrating contemporary educational resources, and experimenting with diverse approaches to better address students' varied learning needs, thereby fostering a culture of sustained professional growth and pedagogical refinement.

The enhancement of instructional leadership within educational institutions reflects a stronger alignment between leadership practices and institutional visions, resulting in more coherent strategies for academic improvement, coordinated instructional planning, and a shared commitment among educators to raise educational standards and student outcomes. Further, the overall school climate, particularly in relation to safety, has improved through clearer communication, inclusive policies, and a consistent emphasis on planning and assessment practices that support student well-being, all of which contribute to the establishment of a school culture that encourages continuous learning and collaborative development among educators and learners alike. The climate of gender equality has become increasingly prominent in school practices, with growing institutional emphasis on ensuring fairness and equal rights regardless of gender, which is indicative of a maturing commitment to social justice and inclusiveness within the school environment. Based on Education Report Data at SMA Negeri 2 Banjarbaru can be seen in the following table:

Table 1. Achievement score indicators based on education report data at SMA Negeri 2 Banjarbaru

Indicator	Definition of Achievement	Education Report Score 2024	Education Report Score 2025
Literacy Skills	a. Students are able to integrate multiple pieces of information across texts, evaluate content, quality, and writing style of a text, and reflect on its content. b. Students can interpret implicit information in a text and draw conclusions by integrating several pieces of information. c. Students are able to find and extract explicit information from a text and make simple interpretations	97.78%	100%
Numeracy Skills	Most students have reached the minimum competency standard in numeracy	Not Available	98.99%
Character	Students are accustomed to applying the values of Pancasila student character: moral integrity, collaboration, independence, creativity, critical thinking, and global diversity in their daily lives.	60.05%	63.7%
Teacher Training Participation	Province/Regency/City/School unit shows progress in teacher participation in training	Not Available	65.8%
Learning Quality	Learning activities show improvements in quality, marked by a more conducive classroom atmosphere, affective support, and cognitive activation by teachers.	63.47%	66
Teacher Reflection and Learning Improvement	Teachers actively improve learning quality through reflective practices, exploring new teaching references, and innovating to engage students	61.53	70.72
Instructional Leadership	Instructional leadership is visionary and aligned with the school's vision and mission	60.88%	66.5%
School Safety Climate	Consistently communicated to all stakeholders. It fosters learning planning, practices, and assessments aimed at improving student outcomes through supportive programs, incentive systems, and adequate resources. This leads to a culture of teacher reflection and improvement.	73%	78%
Gender Equality Climate	The school actively promotes and voices support for gender equality in civil rights based on principles of fairness.	71.42%	76%
Diversity Climate	The school creates an inclusive learning environment that upholds tolerance for religious beliefs and cultures, provides quality learning experiences, supports equality, and strengthens nationalism.	77.17%	79%
Inclusivity Climate	The school offers a learning environment that is friendly and accessible to students with disabilities and those who are gifted and talented.	65.16%	74%
Stakeholder Participation Stakeholder Participation	The school involves parents and students in various academic and non-academic activities within the school.	70.41%	75.8%
ICT Utilization for Budget Management	Your school unit did not answer the questions for this indicator.	68.68%	61.87%

8. Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings of this research highlight the significant role of the principal's leadership in improving the quality of education at SMA Negeri 2 Banjarbaru through a data-driven approach based on the Education Report. By adopting a transformational leadership style, the principal has successfully inspired and engaged the entire school community in a shared vision of educational improvement. The use of data to guide decision-making processes further demonstrates the effectiveness of evidence-based strategies in fostering continuous progress and accountability in school management.

While the results indicate positive growth in various indicators, such as literacy and numeracy, there is still room for further optimization in certain areas, especially in the integration of ICT for budget management. Despite these challenges, the principal's proactive strategies in capacity building, including internal training and external collaborations, have contributed to a gradual shift toward a culture of data-driven decision-making within the school.

The integration of the Education Report into the management policies of SMA Negeri 2 Banjarbaru has proven that data not only serves as a tool for assessment but also acts as a driving force for innovation and sustainable improvements in education. Moving forward, continued focus on strengthening teacher capacity, enhancing digital literacy, and maintaining stakeholder engagement will be essential in ensuring the school's continuous growth and success in achieving educational excellence.

Acknowledgement

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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