

Educational Policy for Sustainable School Quality Improvement

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ABSTRACT

Improving school quality is a strategic priority in educational development because it determines the effectiveness of learning processes and the development of students' competencies. This article aims to analyze the role of educational policy in improving school quality through strengthening school leadership, teacher professionalism, educational management, quality assurance systems, and educational transformation. This study employed a literature review method by analyzing academic sources published over the last five years related to educational policy and school quality improvement. The findings indicate that educational policy functions not only as a regulatory framework but also as an instrument for change that promotes innovation, accountability, and continuous improvement. Successful policy implementation is strongly influenced by school leaders' capacity to manage change, teachers' readiness to develop professional competencies, and the effectiveness of evaluation and quality assurance mechanisms. Educational transformation, including the implementation of the Independent Curriculum, requires an integrated approach involving policy frameworks, human resources, and school culture. Therefore, sustainable school quality improvement should be developed through comprehensive strategies involving all components of the educational ecosystem.

Keywords: *Educational Policy, Educational Transformation, Quality Assurance, School Leadership, School Quality.*

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ARTICLE HISTORY

Received : July 12, 2024

Final Revised : August 25, 2024

Accepted : October 17, 2024

Published : December 30, 2024

1. | INTRODUCTION

In addition to leadership and governance aspects, the improvement of school quality is also influenced by the professionalism of teachers as the main implementers of the learning process. Teachers are required to have pedagogical, professional, social, and personality skills that are able to answer the learning needs of the 21st century. Policy transformation through the Independent Curriculum provides wider opportunities for teachers to develop differentiated learning, integrate character strengthening projects, and implement assessments oriented to develop student competencies. However, these changes also require teachers' readiness to continue to improve professional competence through training, learning communities, academic supervision, and sustainable self-development. Various studies show that teacher professionalism has a significant relationship with the successful implementation of education policies and the improvement of the quality of learning services in schools (Ditya et al., 2023; Dewi et al., 2023; Suratin, 2023; Eliwatis et al., 2023).

On the other hand, strengthening the education quality assurance system is an inseparable component of the implementation of education policies. Quality assurance not only functions as an evaluation mechanism for the achievement of educational standards, but also as a continuous improvement process that involves planning, implementing, monitoring, evaluating, and following up on various school programs. This approach allows schools to identify organizational strengths and weaknesses so that the policies implemented can be adjusted to real needs in the field. Systematic monitoring and evaluation have been proven to be able to increase the effectiveness of decision-making and strengthen the quality culture in the school environment (Gustiani et al., 2023; Hidayah et al., 2023).

Various previous studies have generally examined education policies, principals' leadership, teacher professionalism, and the implementation of the Independent Curriculum separately. Some research focuses on the effectiveness of school leadership in supporting policy implementation, while other research focuses on improving teacher competence or school culture as a determinant of education quality. Research on school improvement also highlights the use of data, organizational culture, and leadership effectiveness as determinants of school success (Schildkamp, 2019; Lee & Louis, 2019; Koh et al., 2023). However, studies that integrate education policy, school leadership, teacher professionalism, quality assurance, and education transformation into one comprehensive analytical framework are still relatively limited.

Based on these conditions, there is a research gap in the form of a non-optimal discussion of the mutually affecting relationship between education policy and various components of improving school quality in an integrated perspective. In fact, the success of policy implementation is not only determined by the substance of the policy itself, but also by the capacity of the school organization, leadership, quality culture, teacher professionalism, and continuous evaluation mechanisms. Therefore, this

research offers novelty in the form of an analysis that integrates these various dimensions to explain how education policy can be a strategic instrument in improving the quality of schools in a sustainable manner.

Based on this description, this study aims to analyze the role of education policy in improving school quality through strengthening school leadership, teacher professionalism, school management, quality assurance system, and educational transformation. The results of the research are expected to make a conceptual contribution to the development of education policy studies as well as become a consideration for stakeholders in formulating a more effective, adaptive, and sustainable school quality improvement strategy.

2. | RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a library research method with a descriptive-qualitative approach to analyze the relationship between education policy and school quality improvement. Literature studies were chosen because this research aims to review, understand, and synthesize various concepts, research results, and academic findings related to education policy, school management, educational leadership, teacher professionalism, quality assurance systems, and educational transformation. Through this approach, research does not focus on collecting field data directly, but utilizes a variety of relevant scientific literature sources as a basis for building research arguments and analysis.

The data sources in this study come from various academic literature published in the 2019–2023 period, including national and international journal articles, academic books, and relevant education policy documents. Literature is selected based on several criteria, namely having a relationship with the theme of education policy and school quality, being published within a predetermined time frame, having a theoretical and empirical contribution to education studies, and can be used to explain the dynamics of education policy implementation in the context of improving school quality. The use of various sources of literature allows research to gain a broader perspective on the factors that affect the success of improving the quality of education (Schildkamp, 2019; Javornik & Klemenčič Mirazchiyski, 2023).

The data collection process is carried out through identification, selection, classification, and analysis of relevant literature. The identification stage is carried out by determining search keywords such as educational policy, school improvement, school quality, educational leadership, quality assurance, teacher professionalism, curriculum reform, and education transformation. Furthermore, the literature found was classified based on the focus of the study, such as education policy, principals' leadership, implementation of the Independent Curriculum, teacher professionalism development, and school quality improvement strategies. The selection process is carried out to ensure that the sources used have academic relevance and are able to support discussions about the relationship between education policy and school quality (Loeb & Byun, 2019; Lee & Louis, 2019).

Data analysis was carried out using content analysis techniques by identifying the main themes that emerged from various literature sources. The data that has been collected is then critically analyzed to find patterns, conceptual relationships, and policy implications related to improving school quality. The content analysis approach allows researchers to understand how education policies are translated in school practices as well as the factors that support or hinder their successful implementation (Safitri et al., 2021; Juharyanto et al., 2023).

To maintain the validity of the study, this study applied a source triangulation process by comparing various research results from different perspectives. The comparison was carried out to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the strategy to improve school quality through education policies. Thus, the results of the study not only describe theoretical concepts, but also provide a relevant analysis of the current needs of educational transformation. This literature study method is expected to be able to produce a deep understanding of how education policies can be optimized as an instrument for improving school quality in a sustainable manner (Utaminingsih et al., 2023; Annabila et al., 2023).

3. | RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

School quality improvement is a complex process that is influenced by various aspects of policy, management, leadership, human resources, and school organizational culture. Based on the results of the literature review, education policy has a strategic position as a guiding instrument in building a quality school system because policies not only determine educational standards, but also affect how schools plan, implement, and evaluate quality improvement programs. An effective education policy must be able to provide a direction of change while providing room for adaptation for schools in accordance with the needs of students and the development of the educational environment. The data-based approach is one of the important aspects of policy implementation because it allows schools to make decisions based on real conditions and priority needs identified through a systematic evaluation process (Schildkamp, 2019). In addition, accountability-oriented education policies are able to strengthen the responsibility of schools in achieving established quality standards, although their success is highly dependent on the capacity of schools to translate policies into effective practices (Loeb & Byun, 2019).

From the perspective of improving school quality, education policy needs to be understood as part of the continuous improvement process. A quality school is not only a school that is able to meet administrative standards, but a school that has the ability to continue to innovate, evaluate learning practices, and develop the capacity of all school residents. Studies on school improvement show that a strong school culture has a major contribution to the sustainability of educational change because organizational culture is the basis for the formation of collaboration, commitment, and orientation towards quality improvement (Lee & Louis, 2019). This shows that the success of

education policy does not only depend on the content of the policy, but also on the readiness of the school environment to accept and implement changes. Schools that have a quality culture tend to be more able to integrate new policies into effective and sustainable educational practices (Koh et al., 2023).

The transformation of education policy in Indonesia through the implementation of the Independent Curriculum is one example of policy changes directed at improving the quality of learning. The Merdeka Curriculum provides flexibility to schools and teachers in designing learning according to the characteristics of students, while encouraging the strengthening of competence, creativity, and character. However, the success of the implementation of the curriculum is greatly influenced by the readiness of human resources, especially teachers and principals as the main actors of change. Research shows that curriculum changes require the readiness of educational institutions, including an understanding of policy philosophy, the ability to design learning, and adequate institutional support (Dirgantoro & Soesanto, 2023). Therefore, the implementation of the Independent Curriculum cannot be seen only as a change in the curriculum document, but as a transformation of the education system that requires a paradigm shift in school management.

The leadership of school principals is one of the key factors in ensuring the successful implementation of education policies and improving the quality of schools. The principal not only plays the role of administrator, but also as an instructional leader who is in charge of building vision, developing academic culture, improving teacher competence, and ensuring that school policies run effectively. Research on school leadership shows that transformational leadership styles contribute to improving teacher performance and the success of school organizational change (Juharyanto et al., 2023). In the context of the Independent Curriculum, school principals have an important role in providing support, building collaboration, and creating an environment that allows teachers to adapt to policy changes (Hidayat et al., 2023). Strong leadership is also related to the school's ability to build a management system that is oriented towards quality and innovation (Utaminingsih et al., 2023).

In addition to leadership, teacher professionalism is a fundamental factor in determining the quality of education. Teachers are the main actors who translate education policies into the learning process in the classroom. Therefore, improving the quality of schools requires the continuous strengthening of teacher competencies through training, academic supervision, learning communities, and professional development. The implementation of the Independent Curriculum provides new demands on teachers to be able to implement differentiated learning, develop authentic assessments, and create student-centered learning. Research on teacher readiness shows that teachers' professionalism and adaptability are important factors in the successful implementation of the new curriculum (Ditya et al., 2023; Dewi et al., 2023). Therefore, school quality improvement policies must place teacher capacity development as a top priority.

Academic supervision also has a strategic role in strengthening teacher professionalism and ensuring that the quality of learning remains in accordance with the goals of education policy. Supervision carried out constructively can help teachers reflect on learning practices, identify weaknesses, and develop improvement strategies. Research shows that strengthening through academic supervision and professional development activities can increase teachers' understanding of new learning policies and support the implementation of curriculum changes more effectively (Suratin, 2023). Thus, schools need to build a teacher development system that is not only administrative, but also oriented towards improving competencies and learning innovations.

The education quality assurance system is also an important component in the strategy to improve school quality. Quality assurance allows schools to systematically evaluate various aspects of education implementation, ranging from the learning process, educator competence, school management, to the achievement of student learning outcomes. Continuous monitoring and evaluation can help schools determine more appropriate improvement strategies based on actual data and needs. Studies on school quality monitoring show that effective evaluation can strengthen decision-making and increase the accountability of educational institutions (Gustiani et al., 2023; Hidayah et al., 2023). Therefore, the quality assurance system must be seen not as an administrative burden, but as an organizational learning mechanism to achieve continuous quality improvement.

From a school management perspective, quality improvement requires integration between strategic planning, resource management, organizational culture development, and the involvement of various stakeholders. An effective school is one that is able to manage change systematically and build collaboration between principals, teachers, students, parents, and the community. The framework for school improvement shows that the quality of education is not only influenced by a single factor, but is the result of the interaction of various organizational elements that support each other (Safitri et al., 2021; Javornik & Klemenčič Mirazchiyski, 2023). Therefore, education policies need to be designed with a holistic approach in order to be able to reach all aspects that affect the quality of schools.

Overall, the results of the study show that improving the quality of schools through education policy requires an integrated approach. Good policies must be supported by effective leadership, professional teachers, a positive school culture, a strong quality assurance system, and the ability to adapt to educational transformation. The implementation of the Independent Curriculum and various educational transformation policies shows that changes in school quality cannot be achieved through regulation alone, but require organizational capacity to manage change in an ongoing manner. Thus, the success of education policies is highly determined by the school's ability to turn policies into real practices that have an impact on the quality of learning and student development (Annabila et al., 2023; Baro'ah et al., 2023; Eliwatis et al., 2023).

4. | CONCLUSION

Education policy has a strategic role in improving the quality of schools because it is the guiding basis for the process of change, resource management, and the development of learning quality. Based on the results of the study, improving the quality of schools cannot be achieved only through the implementation of regulations, but requires integration between effective policies and the capacity of schools in implementing them. The success of quality improvement is influenced by various interrelated factors, such as principal leadership, teacher professionalism, school management, quality culture, quality assurance system, and the school's ability to adapt to educational transformation.

The implementation of education policies such as the Independent Curriculum shows that changes in the education system require the readiness of all school components. School principals play a role as drivers of change through visionary and collaborative leadership, while teachers are the main actors in translating policies into meaningful learning practices. In addition, a continuous monitoring and evaluation system is needed so that schools are able to identify improvement needs and develop quality improvement strategies consistently.

Thus, improving the quality of schools should be seen as a continuous process that involves the entire education ecosystem. A comprehensively designed education policy needs to be supported by strengthening the capacity of human resources, effective school governance, and an organizational culture that is oriented towards improvement. An approach that integrates aspects of policy, leadership, professionalism, and quality assurance will enable schools to face today's educational challenges while creating a more adaptive, quality, and sustainable education system.

Acknowledgment

We gratefully acknowledge the contributions of individuals who supported the completion of this article.

Funding Information

This research did not receive any funding.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

Ethical Approval and Originality Statement

Ethical approval was obtained for this study. The manuscript represents original work and has not been previously published, nor is it under consideration by another journal.

Data Disclosure Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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