



# Headmaster's Strategy to Improve the Quality of Teaching and Learning of Islamic Education in an Elementary School

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## Abstract

This research aims to analyze the strategies employed by school principals to enhance the quality of Islamic Religious Education in primary schools. The study utilizes a qualitative method with a case study approach. Data sources are obtained through structured interviews with four key informants, including the school principal, Islamic Religious Education teachers, homeroom teachers, and students. To strengthen the interview data, the author also conducts direct observations and analyzes relevant documentation to ensure comprehensive research outcomes. All data are analyzed using the Miles and Huberman data analysis techniques. The research findings reveal nine strategies implemented by school principals to improve the quality of instruction. These nine strategies consist of two aspects of planning (internal analysis and external analysis), five aspects of implementation (providing continuous motivation to teachers, enhancing teacher competence, fostering discipline among teachers and students, improving student quality, and enhancing learning facilities), and two aspects of evaluation (supervision and routine evaluation). These strategies can serve as references for schools in enhancing the quality of instruction in various primary schools in Indonesia.

## INTRODUCTION

Learning is one of the main pillars for improving the quality of human resources. Learning should also have resources with the best competencies to achieve superior quality. The improvement of learning quality is the hope of the entire community (Novita et al., 2022; Oktriani et al., 2021).

The improvement of learning quality is also a target of development in the field of national education (Anwar et al., 2022; Fernando et al., 2022). National education has a responsibility to make efforts to educate the nation's life, especially in preparing students to become individuals who are devoted to God Almighty, have noble character, resilience, creativity, independence, democratic values, and professionalism in their respective fields (Ani Sari et al., 2020; Sholeh, 2017).

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To achieve this, one way to accomplish the goals of national education is by improving the quality of learning. According to (Ani Sari et al., 2020; Asrita, 2022) in the context of education, quality consists of the input, process, and output of learning. This means that quality is related to the way, process, and outcomes of learning carried out in schools.

In the book "Manajemen dan Kurikulum" (Mahanani, 2021; Sultanik et al., 2022), it is stated that quality education input can be seen from the readiness of teachers, students, and facilities before the start of learning; quality educational process can be expressed through the learning process and educational implementation; and quality output can be expressed through graduates who have the required competencies.

However, the current reality in Indonesia is far from the above-mentioned goals of national education. Instead of improving the quality of learning, there has been a decline in the quality of education at all levels. In an article on Kompasiana dated December 8, 2022, the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) ranked Indonesia 10th from the bottom in terms of learning quality achievement. According to (Nurasiah et al., 2015), this is due to the emphasis on quantity in the implementation of education, while neglecting its quality.

The quality of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning has also become a concern due to the decline in its quality. This is because Islamic Religious Education is one of the most important subjects that can determine the success of national education goals (Bararah, 2017; Fahrurrozi, 2022). If Islamic Religious Education can be achieved maximally, it is expected that it will be able to create students who are faithful and devoted in accordance with the goals of national education. With this expectation, schools are expected to improve the quality of Islamic Religious Education, both in terms of content, methods, and facilities to support the learning process.

The improvement of learning quality greatly depends on the strategies implemented by school principals. According to (Latifah, 2022; Santika, 2017), the success of education and learning in schools depends heavily on the ability and strategies of school principals in managing all components of the school. With the role and management carried out by school principals, it is expected to improve the quality of learning, especially in Islamic Religious Education.

The statements above are supported by the research findings of (Oktriani et al., 2021) stating that school principals play a strategic role as leaders in the implementation of education in schools. This is because as educational leaders, school principals must make efforts to involve teachers and staff in understanding and implementing school programs. The research conducted by (Ashari, 2019) also mentioned that the strategies employed by the school principal to improve the quality of Islamic Religious Education at SMP Negeri 11 in Bengkulu City include enhancing teacher competencies, optimizing the use of educational media and facilities, conducting regular supervision, and implementing strict discipline for both teachers and students. Therefore, the role of the school principal is crucial in improving the quality of Islamic Religious Education in schools, and this research will also discuss each stage, from planning to implementation and evaluation of the school principal's strategies.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Education enables a person to transition from knowing nothing to gaining knowledge, thereby transforming themselves for the better. As stated by (Engkizar et al., 2021; Setiyadi & Rosalina, 2021), education is also a process of developing attitudes and behavior in individuals or groups, aimed at maturing individuals through teaching and training efforts. Islamic Religious Education refers to education based on the teachings of Islam, namely the Qur'an and Hadith. Islamic Religious Education is also a conscious and structured effort to prepare students to understand, appreciate, and believe in the teachings of Islam, with the aim of fostering tolerance towards followers of other religions, promoting harmony among religious communities, and establishing unity and national unity (Triani, 2015). This means that Islamic Religious Education is concerned with educating students to interact with others and their environment without causing conflicts.

The school principal is the top-level authority in the school environment, comparable to the head in the human body's organizational structure. Just as the head is the center of nerves in the human body, the school principal is the center of all activities in the school. This aligns with the opinions of (Mulyasa, 2012; S. M Hasanah, 2020), stating that the school principal is someone who guides their institution in achieving educational goals and directs and supervises all activities within the school environment. The functions of a school principal, according to Aswarni Sujud, Moh. Saleh, and Tatang M. Amirin in their book titled "Administrasi Pendidikan dalam Jelantik" (2015), include: a) formulating work objectives; b) establishing school policies; c) organizing school procedures, which involve assigning tasks for carrying out activities; and d) supervising school activities, including organizing, directing, evaluating, guiding, and improving the implementation of activities.

Supervision is a form of support from school leaders to develop the leadership of teachers and other school staff in achieving educational goals. According to (Asmaldi et al., 2022; Engkizar et al., 2022), the school principal, who plays the role of a supervisor, is the one who effectively carries out supervision, as also stated in the Minister of Education and Culture Decree Number 0134/0/1977. The decree specifies that supervisors include school principals, school owners, and district/city-level school principals, as well as employees in the relevant field offices of each province.

In general, quality refers to the comprehensive description and characteristics of a product or service that demonstrate its ability to satisfy expected needs. In the context of education, quality refers to the input, process, and output of education (Engkizar et al., 2021; Febriani et al., 2022; Mutathahirin et al., 2022). This means that quality is related to the methods, processes, and outcomes of learning in schools. In the book "Manajemen dan Kurikulum" (Mardiana et al., 2022), it is stated that quality education can be observed through: quality input, which includes the readiness of teachers, students, and resources before the start of learning; quality process, which encompasses learning activities and educational implementation; and quality output, which entails graduates who possess the expected competencies.

The quality of a school is influenced by various interconnected stages (processes), such as planning, implementation, and monitoring (Huriaty et al., 2022; Usman, 2017). In this era of globalization, quality has become a competitive factor. Therefore, educational institutions,

from primary to higher levels, must prioritize educational quality. The quality of education can be enhanced by considering the components of a school that greatly influence the improvement of Islamic Religious Education learning, namely teachers, students, and resources.

Strategy is a crucial element in school implementation. It is the art of utilizing the skills and resources of an organization to achieve specific goals through effective relationships with the environment in the most favorable conditions (Fauziyati, 2018; Jannah, 2021). The school principal is an individual entrusted with the authority to lead an educational institution. The school principal is also fully responsible for the organization of education within the school under their leadership. The success of an educational institution, including the improvement of the quality of Islamic Religious Education, is influenced by the school principal.

## METHODS

In this study, a qualitative research method was used. Qualitative research is an approach that describes and analyzes a specific event, phenomenon, social activity, or thoughts, with the purpose of drawing conclusions (Engkizar et al., 2021; Zen et al., 2022). The specific type of research used in this study is a case study. A case study in qualitative research involves an in-depth exploration by the researcher of a program, event, process, activity, or individuals (Mulyasa, 2012; Sugiyono, 2015).

In this study, the researcher acted as the research instrument and sought to obtain in-depth data and information regarding the research problem, aided by other data collection tools such as observation sheets, interview guides, lesson plans (RPP), syllabi, and student learning outcomes. The data collection techniques employed were observation, interviews, and documentation (Engkizar et al., 2022; Mutathahirin et al., 2022; Sudrajat, 2023). The data analysis technique used to describe the research findings is the Miles & Huberman data analysis model. As for data validity, credibility testing was conducted. Credibility testing of the data involved triangulation of sources and triangulation of techniques.

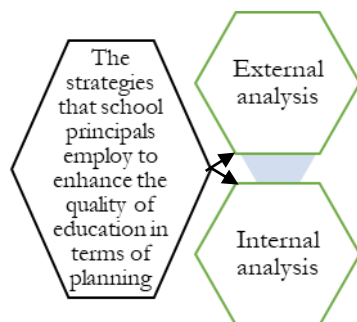
## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The research findings reveal nine strategies implemented by school principals to improve the quality of instruction. These nine strategies consist of two aspects of planning (internal analysis and external analysis), five aspects of implementation (providing continuous motivation to teachers, enhancing teacher competence, fostering discipline among teachers and students, improving student quality, and enhancing learning facilities), and two aspects of evaluation (supervision and routine evaluation).

The nine strategies that the writer found while conducting this research will be divided into three groups for discussing the results and discussing the research. Two strategies related to lesson planning, five strategies related to implementation and two strategies related to evaluation.

### **Two strategies that school principals employ to enhance the quality of education in terms of planning**

Based on the results of data analysis, there are two strategies used by school principals to improve the learning quality of students in elementary schools. To make it clearer, the two strategies can be seen in Figure 1



**Fig 1. School Principal's Strategies to Enhance the Quality of Education in the Planning Aspect.**

**First,** (internal analysis) This activity is conducted at the beginning by deeply thinking about various aspects such as strategies, programs, and activities to achieve the set goals (Asmaldi et al., 2022). One of the verses from the Quran related to planning can be seen in Surah Al-Hashr, Verse 18, as follows:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَلْتَنْظُرْ نَفْسٌ مَّا قَدَّمَتْ لِغَدٍ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٨﴾

It means: "O you who have believed, fear Allah and let every soul look to what it has put forth for tomorrow - and fear Allah. Indeed, Allah is Acquainted with what you do."

The above verse emphasizes the importance of planning before undertaking any action. It is reflected in the excerpt of the verse, which states, "...let every soul look to what it has put forth for tomorrow..." In this excerpt, there is a command to engage in planning about what should be done in the future so that one's actions do not become in vain or even detrimental.

**Second,** (external analysis) the external environment includes parents of students, the community, the government, and other institutions. Internal analysis is conducted to identify the strengths and weaknesses of Islamic Education learning. On the other hand, external analysis is carried out to identify the opportunities and threats in Islamic Education learning. The school principal initiates the analysis by examining the challenges in Islamic Education learning in the January-July 2022 semester, thereby understanding what should be done, what needs to be maintained, and what changes are necessary. Additionally, the school principal also seeks to understand the thoughts and feelings of Islamic Education teachers. Strategy is a management stage where the school principal implements strategies and policies through tangible actions based on programs, budgets, and implementation procedures (Lestari, 2020; Loca Prasista Noer et al., 2022). The school principal must be able to improve the quality of education by implementing strategies that can enhance the quality of learning. This aligns with the words of Allah SWT in Surah Shad, Verse 26, as follows:

يَا دَاوُدُ إِنَّا جَعَلْنَاكَ خَلِيفَةً فِي الْأَرْضِ فَاحْكُم بَيْنَ النَّاسِ بِالْحَقِّ وَلَا تَتَّبِعِ الْهَوَىٰ فَيُضِلَّكَ عَن سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَضِلُّونَ عَن سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ لِّمَا نَسُوا يَوْمَ الْحِسَابِ ﴿١٦﴾

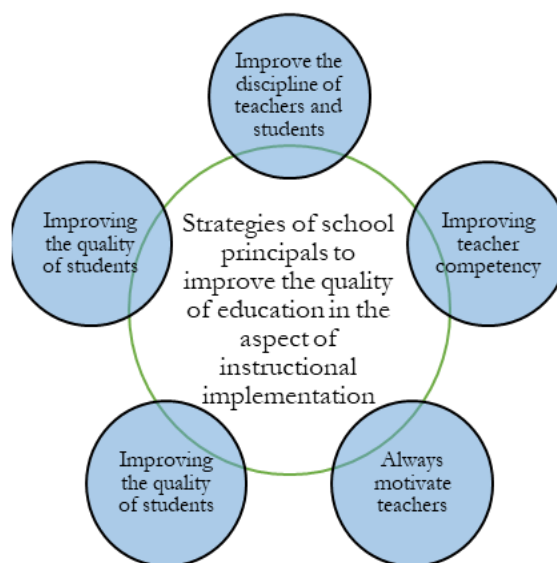
It means: "O Daud, indeed We have made you a successor upon the earth, so judge between the people in truth and do not follow [your own] desire, as it will lead you astray from the way of Allah. Indeed, those who go astray from the way of Allah will have a severe punishment for having forgotten the Day of Account."

The above verse signifies that a leader should be someone who implements actions in accordance with the Islamic Shariah. This is to ensure that what is implemented is not only focused on worldly matters but also oriented towards the Hereafter. Additionally, the

formulated strategic planning should be interpreted as effectively as possible so that all members of the school community can understand it. This way, during its implementation, everyone can work according to their respective roles and coordinate well.

### Five strategies of school principals to improve the quality of education in the aspect of instructional implementation

Based on the results of data analysis, there are five strategies used by school principals to improve the learning quality of students in elementary schools. To make it clearer, the two strategies can be seen in Figure 2.



**Fig 2. Strategies of the school principal in enhancing the quality of education in the aspect of implementation.**

**First,** (providing continuous motivation to teachers) The school principal has consistently provided motivation to teachers and staff, particularly Islamic Religious Education teachers, by approving all the programs they have proposed. One of the programs implemented is the addition of extra teaching hours for the Tahfidz program and the implementation of demonstration methods for the topic of ablution (wudhu) conducted outside the classroom to enhance the quality of Islamic Religious Education.

This strategy has resulted in a significant improvement in the learning outcomes during the semester of July-December 2022 compared to the previous semester, where no such activities were conducted. As narrated by Abu Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him), the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said:

ومن يَسَّرَ عَلَى مُعْسِرٍ يَسَّرَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ، وَمَنْ سَتَرَ مُسْلِمًا سَتَرَهُ اللَّهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ، وَاللَّهُ فِي عَوْنِ الْعَبْدِ مَا كَانَ الْعَبْدُ فِي عَوْنِ أَخِيهِ

It means: "Whoever relieves a believer's distress in this worldly life, Allah will relieve his distress on the Day of Resurrection. Whoever makes it easy for a person in difficulty, Allah will make things easy for him in this world and the Hereafter."

This verse relates to motivation as it emphasizes the importance of helping others overcome their difficulties. The motivation provided by the school principal can facilitate Islamic Religious Education teachers in solving problems in their teaching. This strategy is also consistent with the views of (Engkizar et al., 2018; Julaiha, 2019; Rahayu et al., 2022), who state that the main task and function of the school principal as an educational leader is to motivate teachers and staff. (Engkizar et al., 2022; Setiyadi & Rosalina, 2021; Sudrajat, 2023) argue that motivation is a dominant factor that can drive other factors towards work effectiveness.

**Second**, (enhancing teacher competencies) Academic qualifications, competencies as learning agents, physical and spiritual well-being, and the ability to achieve national educational goals are competencies that every teacher must possess. The minimum education requirement for a teacher should be fulfilled with relevant academic degrees or certificates according to the applicable laws and regulations. As learning agents at the primary education level, teachers should possess pedagogical, personality, professional, and social competencies (Asopwan, 2018; Novita et al., 2022). Allah's words emphasize the importance of enhancing competencies or abilities as they can determine the rewards in the Hereafter. This can be found in Surah Al-An'am, Verse 135:

قُلْ يَتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسْتَعِينُونَ ۖ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ يُعْتَقُونَ ۚ فَالَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْتُونَ مَالَ اللَّهِ سِرًّا وَلَا يُخْفُونَ إِلَيْهِ إِنَّهُ لَا قَلْبٌ يَتَّقِي ۚ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ يُعْتَقُونَ ۚ فَالَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْتُونَ مَالَ اللَّهِ سِرًّا وَلَا يُخْفُونَ إِلَيْهِ إِنَّهُ لَا قَلْبٌ يَتَّقِي ۚ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ يُعْتَقُونَ ۚ فَالَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْتُونَ مَالَ اللَّهِ سِرًّا وَلَا يُخْفُونَ إِلَيْهِ إِنَّهُ لَا قَلْبٌ يَتَّقِي ۚ

It means: "Say, 'O My people, work according to your position, [for] indeed, I am working. And you are going to know who will have succession in the home. Indeed, the wrongdoers will not succeed.'"

Further, the school principal also provides ample facilities and space for teachers and staff to enhance their competencies in their respective fields. This is manifested by providing opportunities for teachers and staff to participate in various education and training programs, teacher working groups, workshops, study visits, seminars, and other competency enhancement activities.

**Third**, (improving teacher and student discipline), there has been an improvement in the implementation of discipline among Islamic Religious Education teachers and students. This can be seen at the beginning of the semester from January to June 2023, where all school members arrive on time. The implementation of discipline is part of the professionalism of teachers and staff in carrying out their duties. The implication of this improvement is that the learning process runs according to the schedule set in the school regulations, and work productivity increases. This is in line with Allah's words in Surah An-Nisa, Verse 59:

وَعِنْدَهُ مَفَاتِحُ الْغَيْبِ لَا يَعْلَمُهَا إِلَّا هُوَ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ وَمَا تَسْقُطُ مِنَ وَرَقَةٍ إِلَّا يَعْلَمُهَا وَلَا حَبَّةٌ فِي ظُلْمَةٍ إِلَّا يَعْلَمُهَا وَلَا رَطْبٌ وَلَا رُحْبٌ وَلَا يَبْسُ إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ مُبِينٍ ٥٩

It means: "O you who have believed, obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you. And if you disagree over anything, refer it to Allah and the Messenger, if you should believe in Allah and the Last Day. That is the best [way] and best in result."

The above verse is related to discipline because discipline is included in the school regulations that have been established by the school principal as the authority in the school. This discipline aligns with the statement of (Noviarini, 2018; Sudrajat, 2023), who says that the school principal must be able to instill discipline in teachers, staff, students, and most importantly, self-discipline. This opinion is also in line with the views of (Enas, 2018; Jannah,

2021), who state that the success of a school can be achieved when the school principal is given full authority to maintain a culture of discipline for all teachers and staff.

**Fourth**, (improving the quality of students), Law Number 20 of 2003 states that the goal of national education is to develop the potential of students to become individuals who believe in and fear God, have noble character, are healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent, and responsible citizens. This is in line with the opinions of (Idris, 2018; Suwartini, 2017), who state that national education is responsible for efforts to enrich the lives of the nation, especially in preparing students to become individuals who believe in God, have noble character, are resilient, creative, independent, democratic, and professional in their respective fields. This means that efforts are needed to improve the quality of students to make them better than before. This is reflected in Allah's words in Surah Ar-Rad, Verse 11:

قُلْ سِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ ثُمَّ أَنْظِرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُكْذِبِينَ ۝ ۱۱

It means: "For each one are successive [angels] before and behind him who protect him by the decree of Allah. Indeed, Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves. And when Allah intends for a people ill, there is no repelling it. And there is not for them besides Him any patron."

In improving the quality of students, also improves the achievements of its students. These achievements are a result of the maximal teaching conducted by the Islamic Education teachers. Additionally, the students show exceptional enthusiasm in exploring their potentials. This is evident from their participation in Tahfidz activities every Thursday and Muhadharah activities every Friday.

**Fifth**, (improving the facilities and infrastructure of learning), the development of an educational institution cannot progress well without adequate facilities and infrastructure. Therefore, efforts to fulfill the requirements for educational facilities and infrastructure are crucial and should be continuously developed. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) also used various tools and media, both tangible and intangible, in educating his companions. One of the tools used by the Prophet (peace be upon him) to impart knowledge to his companions was through the use of visual aids, such as drawings. This is supported by the following hadith of the Prophet (peace be upon him):

عشمان بن الأرقم بن أبي الأرقم المخزومي قال : أخبرني أبي ، عن يحيى بن عثمان بن الأرقم ، حدثني جدي أنا ابن سبع الإسلام ، أسلم أبي سبع سبعة ، وكانت داره على الصفا وهي الدار التي عثمان بن الأرقم أنه كان يقول كان النبي - صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم - يكون فيها في الإسلام . وفيها دعا الناس إلى الإسلام

It means: *Uthman bin 'Arqom said: "I embraced Islam at the age of seven. My father was the seventh person to embrace Islam. Our house was located on the land of Shafa, and that house was once occupied by Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) for preaching and praying for people to embrace Islam"* (Narrated by al-Hakim).

Regarding the aforementioned aspect, the school principal has made improvements in the quality of essential facilities and infrastructure to ensure smooth education, especially in the process of teaching Islamic Education. This is evident from the availability of tools such as projectors, speakers, whiteboards, markers, libraries, prayer rooms (mushalla), and others, which serve as facilities and infrastructure to support the teaching of Islamic Education at the school. (Atikah, 2020; Sahid & Rachlan, 2019) state that providing adequate facilities to support effective teaching and learning is essential in improving the quality of education. This is supported by the opinions of (Moshinsky, 1959; Sholeh, 2017), who emphasize that school



principals should pay attention to the ability to manage classrooms, facilities, and infrastructure in order to enhance teacher professionalism. The management of facilities and infrastructure as learning aids is the responsibility of the school principal.

### Two strategies for school principals in improving the quality of education in the evaluation aspect

Based on the results of data analysis, there are two strategies used by school principals to improve the learning quality of students in elementary schools. To make it clearer, the two strategies can be seen in Figure 3.

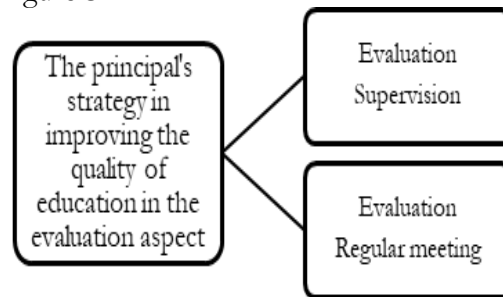


Fig 3. Headmaster's strategies to enhance the quality of education in the aspect of evaluation.

**First**, (supervisory evaluation) is a series of deliberate activities carried out to assess the success level of a program (Djuanda, 2020; Fitrianti, 2018). In management, expertise is required to manage and control various organizational elements to achieve predetermined goals. In strategic management, evaluation is used to determine whether the implementation of strategic formulations aligns with the planning or not (Noviarini, 2018). Therefore, supervision, assessment, advice, criticism, or input from various parties involved are necessary. This aligns with the words of Allah SWT in Surah Al-Infithar, verses 10-12, which state:

وَإِنَّ عَلَيْكُمْ لَحَافِظِينَ ﴿١٠﴾ كِرَامًا كَاتِبِينَ ﴿١١﴾ يَعْلَمُونَ مَا تَفْعَلُونَ ﴿١٢﴾

It means: "And indeed, over you are keepers, noble and recording, they know whatever you do."

This verse signifies that through effective supervision, the extent of achieved outcomes can be observed. Essentially, supervision or evaluation is carried out to improve the quality of Islamic Education learning strategies using the clinical supervision model. This is done through objective observation and careful analysis of data as a basis for modifying teaching behavior of the teachers.

**Second**, (regular meeting evaluation) is conducted to identify any challenges experienced by teachers and students during the learning process (Safitri & Retnasary, 2020; Sholeh, 2017). The school principal holds this regular meeting evaluation once a month. Usually, this meeting is also held in urgent situations or when there are new matters outside the program that need immediate attention. Moreover, this regular meeting evaluation is also conducted to identify any shortcomings in the implementation of strategies to enhance the quality of Islamic Education learning. Teachers express the challenges encountered during the teaching process and provide solutions to overcome them. The school principal also welcomes suggestions, criticisms, and feedback from all teachers to find appropriate solutions to the identified challenges.

## CONCLUSION

In principle, strategy is the art of using the skills and resources of an organization to achieve its goals. To achieve these goals, the school principal is given full authority and

responsibility for the implementation of education in the school under their leadership. The success or failure of an educational institution is influenced by the principal, including the issue of improving the quality of Islamic Education learning. This research has successfully revealed nine strategies implemented by school principals to improve the quality of Islamic Education learning in elementary schools. These strategies can serve as examples for other school principals in achieving better educational quality.

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