ROLE OF THE PRINCIPAL IN CREATING A POSITIVE CULTURE AND SCHOOL BRANDING AT MTS N 5 KARANGANYAR

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ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis strategi yang diterapkan kepala sekolah dalam menciptakan budaya positif dan branding sekolah di MTs N 5 Karanganyar. Metode yang digunakan adalah penelitian deskriptif kualitatif, dengan pengumpulan data melalui observasi, wawancara dan studi literatur. Subyek penelitian ini adalah kepala sekolah. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kepala sekolah menerapkan beberapa langkah, antara lain: menyelaraskan persepsi visi dan misi, menciptakan lingkungan yang mendukung, terbuka terhadap masukan, kritik dan saran, membangun branding melalui media sosial, dan evaluasi berkala. Kajian ini diharapkan dapat menjadi acuan bagi kepala sekolah, guru dan pemangku kepentingan lainnya dalam merancang langkah efektif membangun budaya sekolah yang positif dan branding sekolah yang baik.
Kata Kunci: Pemimpin, Budaya Positif, Branding Sekolah, Visi Misi, Media Sosial, Evaluasi

ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the strategies implemented by the principal to create a positive culture and school branding at MTs N 5 Karanganyar. The method used is descriptive qualitative research, with data collection through observation, interviews and literature studies. The subject of this study was the principal. The results of the study showed that the principal implemented several steps, including: aligning the perception of vision and mission, creating a supportive environment, being open to input, criticism and suggestions, building branding through social media, and periodic evaluations. This study is expected to be a reference for principals, teachers and other stakeholders in designing effective steps to build a positive school culture and good school branding.
Keywords: Leader, Positive Culture, School Branding, Vision and Mission, Social Media, Evaluation

INTRODUCTION

Effective school leaders play a critical role in shaping a positive culture that supports learning and human resource development. In the context of education, a positive culture includes values, attitudes, and practices that create a safe, inclusive, and supportive environment for students, teachers, and school staff. Good leaders do not only focus on administrative aspects but are also able to inspire and motivate all members of the school community to participate in achieving common goals.

Furthermore, visionary leaders can build a safe and supportive environment, where each individual feels valued and contributes to a common goal. Through good leadership practices, principals and other leaders can facilitate constructive dialogue, provide support to teachers, and inspire students to excel. According to research by (Day et al., 2016). High leadership quality is closely related to increased enthusiasm and commitment of all school members, creating a more positive learning atmosphere.

Furthermore, a positive culture in schools contributes to strong school branding. School branding encompasses public perception of the quality of education, the learning environment, and student achievement. When leaders can create a positive culture, it can enhance the school's reputation, attract prospective students and parents, and build community trust.

Institutions that have a positive image will provide many benefits. This is based on the fact that the more people who have a positive image of an educational institution, the more people will be interested in using the educational services of that institution. A positive image will create a positive impression on the surrounding community. Creating a positive impression on the community can be done through student achievements and the advantages of the institution (Ach & Abdullah, 2022).

Educational institutions should have good branding to retain students and attract new students to choose their institutions as a place for the learning process (Zakaria et al., 2023). Therefore, every educational institution needs to continue to improve the quality of education in its institutions through appropriate strategies to achieve satisfaction and meet the needs of the community. As stated by Rahayu, educational units are required to continuously revitalize their strategies, to adjust environmental demands and competition with their internal strengths (Rokim & Hikmah, 2021).

This study will discuss various strategies implemented by the principal in creating a positive culture and school branding at MTs N 5 Karanganyar. This study is expected to be a reference for principals, teachers and other stakeholders in designing effective steps to build a positive school culture and good school branding.

METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach. The descriptive qualitative method is carried out using a study that is related to several people, objects, systems of thought or a momentary event, to obtain information about certain events (Aini et al., 2024). In this study, the researcher wants to provide a picture or description of the Principal's Role in Creating a Positive Culture and School Branding at MTs N 5 Karanganyar. The data collection technique uses several techniques that are adjusted to the qualitative method. Thus the author chooses observation techniques, interview techniques, and literature studies from various sources such as books and journals.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The principal as the leader of an educational institution has a very strategic role in building and developing a positive school culture. Through visionary and inspiring leadership, the principal can create a school climate that is inclusive, democratic, and oriented towatowardeloping student potential. In addition, the principal is also responsible for building a strong school branding, so that the school becomes the main choice for prospective students and gets recognition from various parties. Here are some steps taken by the principal of MTs N 5 Karanganyar to build and create a positive culture and good branding at the school.

1. **Aligning Perceptions Through Vision and Mission**

   Vision is very important for an institution. It must be formulated well. The important role of vision for an institution is as a unifying direction and a determining factor in every decision-making. As an educational institution that is mandated to realize educational goals, the School must carry out its role optimally. In carrying out its role, the school should be managed well to realize the educational goals that have been formulated (Patmawati et al., 2023). Determining the vision and mission is considered a planning that must be formulated because the vision and mission of the School will provide an overview of how the process of implementing education and

what things are achieved in the future (Aini et al., 2024).

The mission is also a fundamental thing to be formulated for an educational institution. In educational institutions such as schools, vision and mission are two vital elements that must exist and be implemented seriously, not just concepts that cannot work operationally. Both are used for their operations that move on the path mandated by interests and hopes to achieve the desired conditions in the future as a manifestation of a goal (Patmawati et al., 2023).

Vision and mission are also benchmarks for schools to determine the direction of the future in the school concerned, without a clear vision and mission it means the school has no ideals. Isn't there a saying that if a person has no ideals, his life will be empty, there is also a saying that is often echoed by old people in the past that says hang your ideals as high as the stars in the sky, surely they will fall before you hold them? If so, the meaning of vision and mission is so great, as important as short-term, medium-term and long-term programs. Each school certainly has a different vision and mission from the other, because the vision and mission must be adjusted to the conditions at the school. Both the conditions of students, schools and the community in the school environment (Widodo, 2017).

Based on the results of the interview conducted with the principal of MTs N 5 Karanganyar, aligning perceptions through vision and mission is done through vision and mission indicators that must be described and socialized by the principal to teachers, students, and guardians with the approval of various parties so that they can be implemented properly. Vision and mission have far-reaching goals, meaning that vision and mission are expected to create and realize alumni or outputs who are proficient in both academic and religious fields.

The principal and all staff and teachers at MTs N 5 Karanganyar also carry out improvements every year to see how successful it is in implementing the vision and mission of the madrasah, if there are still shortcomings, the principal and all teaching staff will conduct an evaluation and hold a meeting to fix the shortcomings that have not been realized in the previous year to fix the shortcomings of the upcoming process.

Image 1. Vision and Mission Display

2. Creating a Supportive Environment

The principal must always communicate and socialize with various school programs, including the Adiwiyata program, the principal is a key position develops and realizes the Adiwiyata school program by communicating and socializing it to the school community, namely teachers, TU, students, school committees, and related parties. The leadership of the principal, in realizing the Adiwiyata School requires hard work from all school residents, both from the principal, teachers, and students of MTs N 5 Karanganyar (Fauzi, 2021).

An effective principal in learning leadership can create a conducive learning environment, which has an impact on increasing student motivation and achievement. (Aini et al., 2024). The Principal of MTs N 5 Karanganyar implements an an important role in carrying out his leadership wherein being a role model, the quality of the principal also determines the quality of teachers and other employees in the school environment, especially in a competitive era and an increasingly global world, teachers who have high achievement motivation are needed to improve the culture of maintaining the school environment (Mala et al., 2021).

Through the idea of Adiwiyata schools/environmentally caring schools, not only the principal cares about the environment but also the teachers, students and staff at MTs N 5 Karanganyar must care about the environment together by giving examples and socializing how to throw rubbish in the right place, providing socialization to students about organic and inorganic waste. The principal and all school residents also tried to plant green plants so that air circulation in MTs N 5 Karanganyar would be smooth, clean, and healthy.

To create a supportive environment, the principal of MTs N 5 Karanganyar also made innovations in the form of forming a STTPPK (Violence Prevention and Control Team Task Force) which aims to create an no-bullying school environment to produce a safe, comfortable, and conducive school environment and support learning activities.

3. **The Principal is Open to Input, Criticism and Suggestions**

The communication process carried out by the principal runs effectively and efficiently. The channels used are not only formal, such as through school service meetings or circulars, but also using non-formal channels, through casual chats in the teacher's room during break time. To obtain support, the method used is: all elements in the school are given the opportunity to provide input/opinions, so that an attitude of caring and being responsible for the decision arises, because the person concerned feels invited to talk and be involved in making the decision (Suhaimi & Khalik, 2018).

The principal's attitude can be emulated by always having discussions, don't feel embarrassed because the principal is considered the number one person in the school by having internal social interactions with the principal related to learning, then the results, God willing, will be better, accepting constructive input and criticism (Sanusi, 2020). The principal's habit of always controlling the condition of the school environment, both the classroom and the teacher's room, so that it is conducive to the learning process at school (Nurasiah & Zulkhairi, 2021).

By mingling and the principal often speaking and interacting directly in daily life with all elements of education at MTs N 5 Karanganyar, it is not difficult for all staff and school residents to convey and provide input, criticism, and suggestions. The principal must be a leader who is not authoritarian, but very democratic, and who always involves two-way relationships.

Based on the interview results, the principal of MTs N 5 Karanganyar communicated with each other and the entire community. Schools interact directly in the field to create a positive image and a conducive atmosphere for life in the madrasah.

The principal should not be an authoritarian leader. The principal is allowed to be authoritarian if it is related to fundamental policies.

4. **Building Branding Through Social Media**

School branding is one way for schools/madrasahs to gain recognition and trust from the community. MTs N 5 Karanganyar has changes in its organizational structure and updates to programs and class management systems. The program referred to here is the development of previous existing programs and improving the program system so that management is neater and minimizes errors (Sonia Azizah et al., 2022). Schools that can improve their branding have been proven to be able to develop and gain more trust from the community in their environment (Romanto et al., 2022).

Principals can optimize utilization through digitalization to improve school branding. The forms of digitalization that can be used vary widely, including social media. Websites are one of the means of school promotion because they can be used by all groups. Through the website, data about the school can be accessed by everyone in various locations easily. At MTs N 5 Karanganyar, the website functions as an official media for disseminating information compared to other social media. The website functions to introduce the school profile, school activities, school academic schedules, and complete information about the institution (Amilia et al., 2022).

Similar to the web, Instagram has now become an important part of people's lives. Instagram as a social networking (social network) is not only a tool for consumers to share information, but to represent themselves, interact, collaborate, share, communicate with other users, and form social relationships virtually (Siti Aisyah et al., 2024). This is utilized by MTs N5 Karanganyar as a means to promote their services while attracting the interest of prospective students. Apart from Instagram, many other types of social networks are currently popular and are used to promote MTs N 5 Karanganyar schools, including; YouTube, for example by going to the field to make a YouTube video clip of the song MATSMAKRA MANTEB, Facebook, Tiktok, Twitter, and others. The success of using websites and Instagram to improve branding at MTs N 5 Karanganyar can be seen from;

a. There is an increase in the number of new student registrations in the 2024/2025 academic year.

b. With content managed by the admin regularly and continuously through the website, MTs N 5 Karanganyar is better known by the public and they can access all information about the school easily.

c. Of the content that has been posted in various features, reel videos attract more visitors. This indicates that the video content is interesting so that many users share the link with others, and the Instagram algorithm will share the video link with fellow Instagram users. If many visitors come, the view will increase and the school branding can be improved.
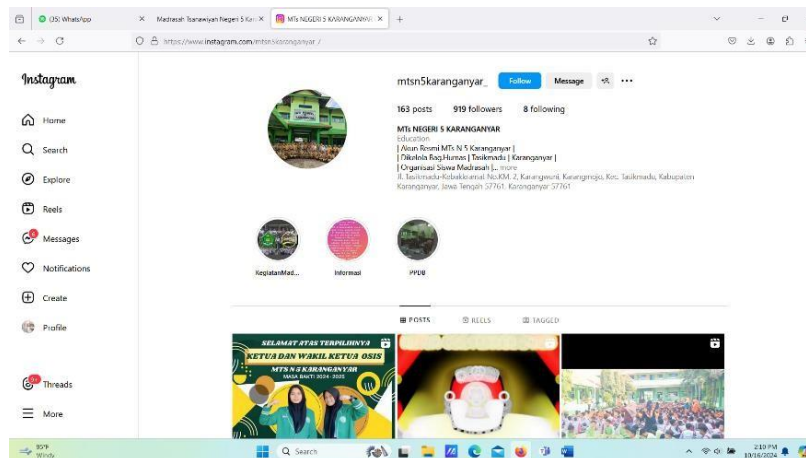
Image 2. Web View
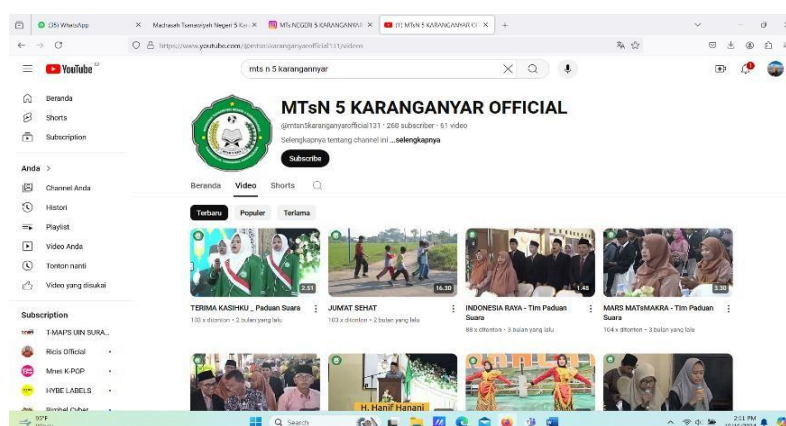

Image 3. Instagram Display
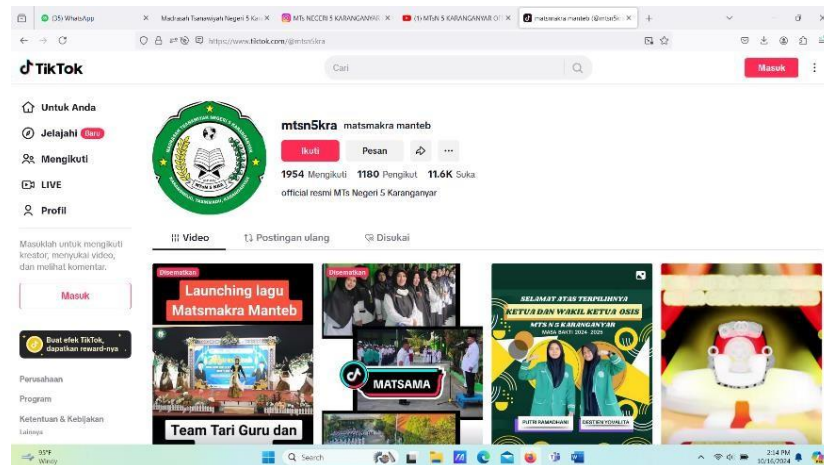

Image 4. Youtube View

Image 5. Tiktok View

5. Implement Periodic Evaluation

School self-evaluation (EDS) has the keyword evaluation which if translated linguistically is assessment. School Self-Evaluation is a competent system for evaluating schools by looking at eight national education standards to achieve maximum improvement. School Self-Evaluation focuses more on what happens in schools by involving school residents such as principals, vice principals and teachers but still with the supervision of the school committee.

Schools must be able to carry out school self-evaluation to improve the quality that marks the quality of educational institutions by understanding management functions properly and correctly, both in theory and practice (Kusumaning Ayu & Mu'adin, 2022). Madrasah self-evaluation aims to be able to Identify obstacles, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in each program that has been running so that the madrasah knows the achievements of each program (Fitria et al., 2022).

The principal and his staff analyze the programs that are currently running and have been running by monitoring and evaluating them. If something is found that is lacking or not by the vision and mission, a system upgrade must be carried out (Sonia Azizah et al., 2022). The principal and staff of MTs N 5 Karanganyar conduct evaluations once a month. The principal hopes that the evaluation process will be carried out once a week to achieve better madrasah goals.

Image 6. Evaluation Meeting View

CONCLUSION

The principal at MTs N 5 Karanganyar has an important role in creating a positive culture and strengthening the school's branding. Through effective leadership, the principal can align perceptions among teachers, students, and parents by establishing a clear vision and mission. This not only helps in achieving educational goals but also creates a safe and supportive learning environment. Openness to input and criticism from the school community is key to improving the quality of education and building harmonious relationships.

In addition, the use of social media and digitalization is an important strategy for improving school branding. By utilizing platforms such as websites and Instagram, MTs N 5 Karanganyar can introduce itself and attract the attention of prospective students and the community. Regular evaluation of the programs being run is also needed to ensure that the school's vision and mission are being implemented properly, as well as to identify areas that need improvement. With this approach, the principal not only enhances the school's reputation but also ensures sustainability and progress in quality education.

SUGGESTION

To improve positive culture and school branding at MTs N 5 Karanganyar, it is recommended that the principal continue to strengthen communication and collaboration between all stakeholders, including teachers, students, and parents. Holding routine activities involving all parties, such as workshops or discussion forums, can help align the vision and mission and create a sense of belonging to the school. In addition, the use of social media and digital technology must be expanded with more varied and interesting content, so that it can increase community and prospective student involvement. Periodic evaluation of the programs being run also needs to be carried out to ensure that all initiatives are aligned with educational goals and the needs of the school community.

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