

Human Resource Management Strategy for Optimizing Elementary School Teacher Professionalism

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the Human Resources (HR) management strategy in optimizing teacher professionalism at Muhammadiyah Condongcatur Elementary School. Teacher professionalism is a key pillar in ensuring the quality of education at the elementary school level, but the challenges of curriculum dynamics and workload require a comprehensive managerial strategy. This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with the Principal, Vice Principal, and Teachers, as well as observations, and supported by documentation studies. Data analysis was conducted with the help of the Atlas.ti 9 software to map the relationships between managerial variables. The results show that the HR management strategy is carried out through an integrated cycle, including: 1) Linearity-based planning and real needs analysis; 2) Competency development through applied training and interdisciplinary collaboration; 3) Reflection-based performance evaluation for policy making; and 4) Internalization of Islamic organizational culture as a reinforcement of moral integrity. Although the reward system has been implemented, the aspect of transparency remains a note for future development. In conclusion, the synergy between administrative support, sustainable capacity development, and spiritual values is key to creating a solid ecosystem of teacher professionalism in elementary schools.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The development of science in the 21st century plays a crucial role in the advancement of education. Education serves a crucial purpose in developing democratic and responsible citizens. Educational institutions, both formal and informal, require various supporting elements to achieve their goals. Management is the science that regulates the effective and efficient utilization of human and other resources to achieve a goal. If these management functions are implemented effectively and optimally, educational services will run smoothly and achieve positive results. Therefore, human resources are crucial for achieving quality education (Darim, 2020).

Education is a planned process aimed at creating a conducive learning environment where students can actively develop their potential. This potential encompasses spiritual aspects, self-control, character building, intelligence enhancement, the development of good qualities, and the mastery of skills that are useful for oneself and society. Thus, education plays a crucial role in improving a person's quality of life and the progress of the nation

(Humiaty & Budiarti, 2020). To achieve good quality education, educational institutions need to provide the best service, develop innovative programs, provide adequate facilities, conduct high-quality teaching, and organize various positive activities that support optimal student growth and development (Mubarok et al., 2024). Creating a learning environment that is enjoyable, not burdensome, and able to motivate students is crucial. Motivation can grow if students are interested and enthusiastic about the material being studied.

Elementary school education requires educators who not only excel academically and pedagogically but also demonstrate a high level of professionalism through loyalty, honesty, innovation, and the ability to adapt to technological developments and changes in education policy. To achieve this, a comprehensive human resource (HR) management strategy is needed, encompassing recruitment, training, performance evaluation, career development, and a transparent reward system. Based on the theory of Strategic *Human Resource Management* (SHRM), organizational success depends heavily on the alignment of human resource management strategies with the overall organizational strategy to achieve optimal performance. In line with the theory of teacher professionalism, professionalism encompasses aspects of integrity, morality, and pedagogical competence as the primary foundation for carrying out educational tasks (Collins et al., 2021a).

The reality on the ground shows that many elementary school teachers still face challenges in achieving ideal professionalism. These obstacles include a lack of ongoing training programs tailored to school needs, a high administrative burden that reduces space for pedagogical reflection and innovation, and a lack of leadership support oriented toward rewards or motivation. Furthermore, a performance appraisal system that emphasizes administrative aspects over improving the quality of learning exacerbates the situation. Furthermore, increasing demands for accreditation and societal expectations for educational quality are not matched by adequate resources such as funding, time, and facilities (Collins et al., 2021a).

The gap between expected professional standards and the reality of administrative tasks often creates mental stress for elementary school teachers. Teaching duties and formal reporting requirements overlap, wasting teachers' energy and narrowing the space for innovation in teaching and critical thinking. If this is not addressed through appropriate management measures, the potential for skill erosion and decreased work enthusiasm increases, ultimately impacting student learning outcomes in the classroom (Kholif, 2025).

This situation has a significant impact on declining teacher motivation, weakening creativity in learning, and suboptimal student learning outcomes. The hampered development of teacher professionalism has the potential to lead to competency stagnation and a decline in the quality of basic education. In the long term, this can weaken the quality of educational institutions and the competitiveness of national human resources amid the challenges of globalization. Therefore, implementing targeted human resource management strategies and developing teacher competencies is crucial to maintaining educational quality. These efforts can be realized through training, the use of educational technology, online courses, and experiential learning, which are integral parts of human resource management. (Nasir et al., 2020)

This research is based on several theoretical guidelines that are relevant to the topic of human resource management (HRD) to improve teacher professionalism in elementary schools. This theoretical guide serves as a conceptual framework for analyzing data and understanding phenomena occurring in elementary schools. The main theories used include the Strategic Theory of Human Resource Management (*Strategic Human Resource Management/SHRM*), Teacher Professionalism Theory, and Transformational Leadership Theory (Wahyuni et al., 2024).

Theory: Strategic *Human Resource Management* (SHRM) The theory of teacher professionalism emphasizes the importance of integrating human resource management with continuous individual development (Collins et al., 2021b). Transformational leadership theory (Jaya, 2023) also suggests that principals or educational institution leaders need to inspire and motivate teachers through personal support and intellectual stimulation to create a productive and professional work environment. The implementation of Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) in educational institutions is not only about managing administrative matters but also about integrating teachers' individual abilities with the school's broader goals. In this context, the role of transformational leadership is crucial. Principals act not only as managers but also as guides, motivating teachers to continuously develop and adapt to changes in educational policy. This combination of an organized management system and supportive leadership is the foundation for sustainable professionalism (Fathurrohman, 2022). In the school context, SHRM involves recruitment, training, performance evaluation, career development, and reward systems aligned with educational goals. In elementary schools, SHRM is used to address challenges such as administrative burdens and a lack of training, with a focus on improving teacher productivity and the quality of learning (Fitri, 2023).

The urgency of this research lies in the gap between human resource management theory and practice in elementary schools, particularly in private Islamic schools. A thorough understanding of appropriate and locally contextualized human resource strategies is crucial for effective policymaking and interventions. Therefore, this study can provide a comprehensive understanding of how human resource strategies are implemented and the factors that influence their success in elementary schools (Collins et al., 2021c). According to Pajri (2025), teacher professionalism encompasses aspects of integrity, morality, pedagogical competence, innovation, and adaptability to change. Teachers serve not only as academic instructors but also as agents of change who are loyal, honest, and responsive to the dynamics of education. This perspective is relevant for assessing the extent to which these aspects of professionalism are implemented in elementary schools, given that obstacles remain, including a lack of time for pedagogical reflection and an inadequate evaluation system.

The researcher's interest in human resource management issues in primary education stems from the belief that educational success is highly dependent on the quality of teachers as agents of change. Empirical experience has shown that effective human resource management can strengthen a positive work culture while enhancing the professionalism of educators. Therefore, this research focuses on identifying human resource management strategies that are contextual, adaptive, and oriented toward the continuous development of teacher professionalism (Jannah & Aziz, 2025).

This research provides an update by combining ideas on Strategic *Human Resource Management* (SHRM) in Islamic primary education, which has not been extensively researched. Unlike previous studies that only discussed training, supervision, or teacher performance assessment separately, this study attempts to create a more comprehensive, flexible HR management model based on Islamic values such as amanah (trustworthiness) and ihsan (goodness). This approach not only focuses on improving teachers' teaching abilities but also emphasizes the alignment of school HR policies with the Islamic vision of Muhammadiyah institutions in developing professional and character-driven teachers. Thus, this study contributes theoretically to the development of the SHRM concept in education and practically to strengthening HR management in Indonesian Islamic schools (Lembaga & Islam, 2025).

The main objective of this study is to identify the most effective HR management strategies in improving teacher professionalism in elementary schools, while providing

practical recommendations for school principals, foundations, and policy makers to create a comprehensive, responsive HR management system that makes a real contribution to improving the quality of education (It & Selokerto, 2025).

Based on the research objective to find the most effective human resource management strategy in improving teacher professionalism at Muhammadiyah Condongcatur Elementary School, the research questions proposed are as follows:

1. How are the empirical conditions of HR management practices in elementary schools related to the development of teacher professionalism?
2. What factors support and hinder the implementation of strategic HR management at Muhammadiyah Condongcatur Elementary School?
3. What is an effective strategic human resource management model to improve teacher professionalism at Muhammadiyah Elementary School, Sleman?

Although numerous studies have been conducted on human resource management, this study is unique in that it incorporates spiritual values into management practices in Islamic-based elementary schools. This study also used the Atlas.ti 9 software to analyze the data, making this research method more novel and helping to illustrate the relationships between management variables more clearly and transparently. Therefore, the results of this study are expected not only contribute to the science of educational management but also serve as a reference for elementary schools in building unique professional systems capable of adapting to various challenges in the global world.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study applies a qualitative method with a descriptive approach, as it is considered most appropriate for the main objective of the study, namely to comprehensively understand the implementation of human resource management (HR) strategies in improving teacher professionalism at Muhammadiyah Condongcatur Elementary School. This approach allows researchers to explore the meanings, experiences, and views of participants in depth in a real context without interfering with the variables being studied (Narbuko, Cholid, Acmhadi, 2016). According to Creswell & Poth (in Falah, n.d.), qualitative research is used to explore meaning, understand experiences, and discover patterns that emerge in a particular social context. This choice was made because of the need to understand how and why an HR management strategy in elementary schools is implemented, not to measure achievement rates. The core of this study is the application of the method of *Empirical Model Building*, namely a process of building a model that is not only based on abstract theory, but also taken directly from reality in the field (Murtafiah, 2021).

The research location was determined at Muhammadiyah Condongcatur Elementary School, Sleman Regency, Yogyakarta Special Region. The location was determined purposively, as the school is known to be active in implementing innovative policies for developing teacher competency. Based on data from the Sleman Education Office (2023), Muhammadiyah schools in the region are categorized as educational institutions with a high level of participation in competency-based teacher training programs. The research subjects included the principal, vice principal for Human Resources and ISMUBA, vice principal for Curriculum, and teachers who play a direct role in human resource management. The determination of the number of informants followed the principle of data saturation (*data saturation*), namely, when the information obtained no longer produces significant new findings (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2019).

The researcher acts as the primary instrument, as is customary in qualitative research, actively involved in the data collection and analysis process. To maintain focus and direction in data collection, a semi-structured interview guide was used, which balanced

the question framework with flexibility in exploring participants' perspectives (Nurbaiti et al., n.d.).

The data collection process was conducted using three main techniques: in-depth interviews, non-participant observation, and documentary studies. Semi-structured interviews were used to obtain subjective perspectives from informants, while observation captured the real dynamics of school management activities. Documentary data, such as organizational structures, teacher lists, training programs, and competency improvement policies, were used for triangulation. The combination of these three techniques provided rich, valid, and contextual data, as recommended by Denzin & Giardina (2022) in the principle of source and method triangulation.

The research stages included preparation, implementation, data analysis, and reporting of results. In the preparation stage, the researcher developed a research design, prepared interview guidelines, and conducted a preliminary study to understand the school context. The implementation stage included interviews with five informants: one principal, one vice principal for Human Resources, one vice principal for Curriculum, and two teachers, along with observations of human resource management activities at the school. All interview and observation results were recorded in field notes to maintain data integrity (Rahardjo, 2021). Data analysis was conducted using the Miles and Huberman interactive model, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction was carried out by filtering important information to focus on the research theme. The reduced data was then presented in narrative form and a matrix to identify patterns and relationships between categories.

To ensure the validity of the information, the researcher applied triangulation of sources and methods, comparing the results of interviews, observations, and supporting documents. Validity was strengthened through member checking and audit trail (systematically recording the entire research process) to ensure the reliability of the findings (Narbuko, Cholid, Acmhadi, 2016). At the reporting stage, the research results were compiled in the form of an analytical narrative that linked the field findings with human resource management theory and the concept of teacher professionalism. The researcher attempted to demonstrate how the human resource management strategy at Muhammadiyah Condongcatat Elementary School was able to contribute to the improvement of teacher professional quality in a real and sustainable manner. It is hoped that the results of this study can provide theoretical and practical contributions to human resource management in elementary educational institutions based on Islamic values.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on data analysis conducted through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation studies at Muhammadiyah Condongcatat Elementary School, this study successfully mapped the Human Resources (HR) management strategy implemented to optimize teacher professionalism. The research findings were analyzed using the Atlas.ti 9 software, which produced a network view and visualized in a concept map that integrated various school managerial elements (See Figure 1), which shows that the HR management strategy at this school is integrative, starting from needs-based planning, continuous competency development, data-based performance evaluation, to the creation of an Islamic organizational culture.

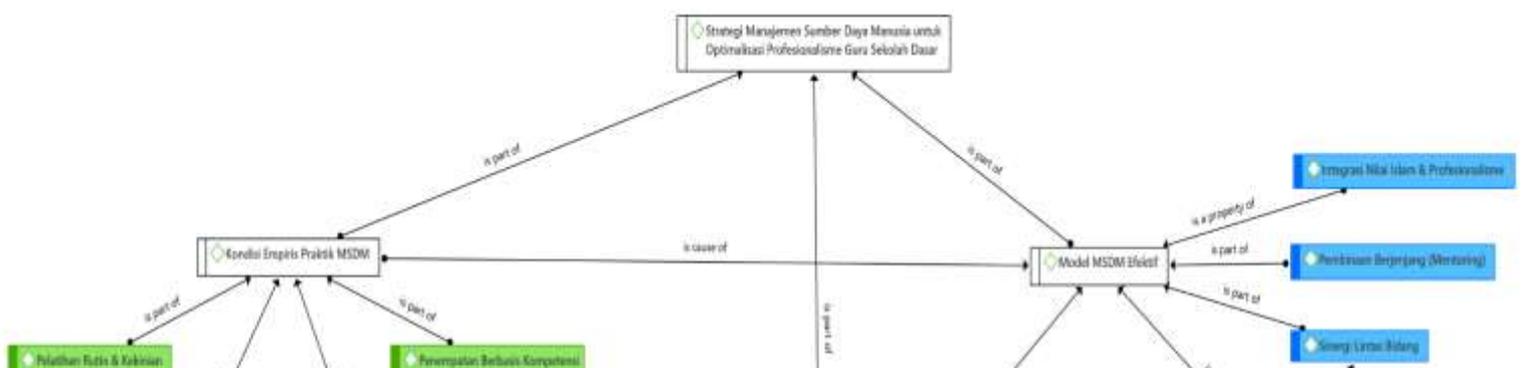


Figure 1. Concept Map of Human Resource Management Strategy for Optimizing Elementary School Teacher Professionalism

The following is an in-depth discussion of the components of this strategy, which is supported by field findings:

1. Needs and Competency-Based Planning and Recruitment

The first strategic step identified in the concept map is thorough human resource planning. School management does not conduct random recruitment, but rather conducts a measurable job analysis. This is confirmed by the principal's statement, which emphasized that planning takes place at the beginning of the school year, taking into account the workload and future projections.

"We plan our teaching staff at the beginning of the school year by analyzing the school's actual needs, the number of study groups, and the teachers' teaching load. We also consider the school's future development program."(Source 1)

This strategy was reinforced by Resource Person 3, who explained the transparent technical recruitment mechanism through mapping and wide publication to attract the best candidates according to specifications.

"We will first map the needs of teaching staff... Then, based on that mapping, we will publish job openings both in the mass media and on social media. From there, we will conduct a selection process..."(Source 3)

In addition, teacher placement (*placement*) pays close attention to educational background, especially the aspect of educational linearity to guarantee professionalism, as conveyed by Resource Person 2: *"...we adapt our teaching assignments to each person's field or educational background."*

2. Competency Development and Continuous Training

Human resource development is a crucial strategy for addressing changes in the national curriculum. Schools implement a variety of development strategies, ranging from internal training and external assignments to spiritual guidance. Research shows that schools provide a learning environment for teachers through regular training. Teachers serve not only as instructors but also as lifelong learners. Interviewee 4, one of the teachers interviewed in the study, explained the psychological and professional impact of the training:

"I personally welcome and enthusiastically welcome any training or workshop held at school because it is only at that time that I can develop myself, so to speak, from just an ordinary teacher to a knowledgeable and experienced teacher."(Source 4)

"Schools provide regular training facilities and access to modern learning technology... The training is usually highly practical, such as workshops on the Independent Curriculum or the use of IT."(Source 6)

School support also includes technological facilitation and innovative teaching methods. Interviewee 6 added that the training provided is practical:

"The training is usually very hands-on, such as workshops on the Independent Curriculum or IT utilization, which I can directly put into practice with my students..." (Source 6)

Synergy between management departments is also strongly evident in this process. Resource person 3 explained the collaboration between HR and Curriculum:

"Mr. Anto focuses on teachers upgrading their learning skills... I focus on my fellow employees regarding time management to increase work productivity." (Source 3)

This shows that the development strategy is carried out holistically, covering pedagogical and managerial aspects.

3. Teacher Performance Evaluation and Reflection

One of the interesting findings in this study is the reflective and strategic function of evaluation. Performance data is not simply stored as an archive but rather serves as the basis for school policy-making. Performance evaluation is not only conducted administratively but also reflectively. The concept map demonstrates a strong relationship between "Performance Evaluation" and "Policy." Data on teacher performance is used as a basis for making strategic decisions.

"Teacher performance will later serve as data for schools to determine various policy directions, including for us to upgrade both the competency and qualifications of existing teachers." (Source 3)

In terms of curriculum, evaluation also involves teacher reflection on the learning that has taken place. Resource person 2 emphasized the importance of this reflection as part of continuous improvement:

"Teachers' evaluation and reflection on the curriculum that has been implemented... is part of curriculum evaluation."

However, there are challenges in maintaining consistent motivation amidst the workload, as acknowledged by Resource Person 1: "The biggest challenge is maintaining teacher motivation amidst the workload and dynamic changes in education policy."

4. Reward and Welfare System

Reward-giving strategy (*reward system*) as an instrument to motivate professionalism, but findings indicate a dynamic of varying perceptions among teachers. On the one hand, some teachers consider the measurable assessment system to be quite fair:

"I think it's fair enough because the assessment is based on measurable performance and discipline."(Source 6)

However, this strategy requires ongoing evaluation due to perceptions of inequality among some teachers. This is an important consideration for management to improve transparency and equitable rewards to prevent social jealousy.

"I don't think it's fair. Only certain teachers get excessive appreciation... Meanwhile, teachers who are perhaps less well-known rarely get appreciation."(Source 4)

"It's fair and motivating, but transparency can still be improved."(Source 5)

The existence of this variation in opinion (source triangulation) shows that although the strategy of *reward* is already underway, the aspect of distributive justice still needs to be optimized so that all teachers feel valued equally.

5. Organizational Culture Based on Islamic Values

The main distinguishing feature of the human resources strategy at Muhammadiyah Condongcatur Elementary School is the integration of Islamic values into professionalism. A teacher's professionalism is not only measured by technical skills but also by good moral character. The principal stated that teachers must be good examples for their students. This Islamic work culture extends beyond completing tasks to being understood as worship and preaching.

"The core values we uphold are Islamic values, professionalism, integrity, and togetherness. Teachers are not only required to be academically competent but also to possess good morals."(Source 1)

This culture creates a conducive and polite work environment, which is directly felt by teachers as a factor of work comfort.

"The Islamic and family-like culture at this school makes me feel comfortable working and more polite in interacting with everyone."(Source 6)

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis and discussion, it can be concluded that the Human Resources (HR) management strategy at Muhammadiyah Condongcatur Elementary School has been implemented with a structured and comprehensive approach to improve teacher professionalism. This strategy begins with precise planning that takes into account the educational sequence and evaluates the school's actual needs. Teacher competency development is carried out continuously through a practical learning environment, including improving teaching skills and mastery of information technology, which directly increases teacher confidence and innovation.

This study also shows that performance appraisal serves as a reflection tool that connects data directly with management decision-making. However, there is still room for expansion in terms of the reward system, especially in terms of transparency and fairness in awarding rewards, in order to increase teacher work motivation evenly. In addition, the application of Islamic and Muhammadiyah values is a unique value that strengthens organizational culture, so that professionalism can be interpreted not only as technical skills, but also as inner responsibility and part of worship. Theoretically, this study emphasizes that to optimize teacher professionalism at the elementary school level, collaboration is needed between administrative support, teacher capacity development, and strengthening organizational thinking values. As a practical suggestion, school management needs to build a more integrated and transparent HR information system so that every teacher's contribution can be recognized fairly. For future researchers, it is recommended to examine more deeply the effectiveness of digital performance-based awards in private elementary schools.

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