

## Efforts of the School Principal in Maintaining the Sustainability of Educational Institutions in the Era of Zoning Policy in Indonesia

*Granodio Daegal Wibowo<sup>1</sup>, Budi Haryanto<sup>2)</sup>*  
*Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo<sup>1,2</sup>*

### ABSTRACT

"Sustainability" is important for the existence of an educational institution as it can affect various aspects of its sustainability. This research aims to determine the extent of success of private school principals in maintaining their schools in the era of zoning policy by analyzing the factors that influence the success of the principals. Seven indicators are used to measure the level of school sustainability, namely (1) funding, (2) staffing, (3) leadership, (4) school community, (5) physical environment, (6) resource management, and (7) quality of learning. A qualitative descriptive method and qualitative data analysis techniques using the Miles and Huberman & Saldana model are used in this research. This model involves four stages in analyzing data, namely data collection, data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification.

**KEY WORDS AND EXPRESSIONS:** Principal's Efforts, Maintaining Sustainability, Zoning Policy.

### INTRODUCTION

Educational institutions are places, means, facilities, or conditions that allow for the process of learning, either with specific rules or based on existing traditions[1]. In terms of management sources, educational institutions in Indonesia are divided into two types: public and private. Public schools are educational institutions under the auspices of the government and receive support from the government in the form of facilities, infrastructure, free school fees, and other forms of assistance. On the other hand, private schools are established by the community itself and do not solely depend on government support. Unlike public schools that receive more significant government funding, private schools rely more on funding from parents of students[2]. The existence of private schools is essential in supporting the national education system because they accommodate students who cannot be accommodated by public schools[3].

In order to equalize the quality of educational services, the government issued Minister of Education and Culture Regulation No. 14 of 2018 which regulates the admission of new students in elementary to high schools supervised by local governments. This regulation requires the implementation of a zoning system[4]. This zoning policy aims to equalize the quality of education throughout Indonesia, because in the past, only academically gifted students were accepted into high-quality state schools through the selection process. This has resulted in a growing educational gap between students who are capable and those who are not. With the implementation of the zoning policy, all students have equal opportunities to access quality education, regardless of their academic abilities. Therefore, it is hoped that the quality of education can be more evenly distributed and educational gaps can be reduced. In addition, the zoning policy aims to enhance the creativity and performance of educators in dealing with students from different backgrounds, making education more inclusive and effective. Therefore, the government intends to end this access inequality. According to Muhadjir Effendy, zoning is one of the strategies to accelerate the equalization of the quality of education. Its goal is not only to determine the ranking of the availability of educational offerings, but also the quality of education[5][6][7].

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On the other hand, the impact of this zoning policy can be felt by private schools located near public schools, where there is a significant number of prospective students absorbed by public schools. Some schools have experienced a decrease in new student admissions, such as what happened at SMP Muhammadiyah 1 Pamekasan, where the number of student applicants decreased by 10% from the previous year, which did not meet the minimum threshold and lowered the academic quality of the students[8].

In this context, it means that the ability of private schools to attract prospective students to their institutions is reduced. In the era of the zoning policy, public schools benefit greatly as they offer free education, diverse students from high to low academic performance, and are made easier to access. The government's policy of increasing the quota of students for public schools further makes it difficult for private schools to attract new students[9].

Meanwhile, students are the main source of funding for private schools, as schools charge tuition fees to students or their parents[10]. The number of students in private schools can affect the school's main financial resources, especially for private schools that do not receive full funding from the government[11]. For example, schools with more students will find it easier to buy equipment or provide better facilities, such as better laboratories or libraries. In addition to facilities, schools also have to pay salaries to teachers and staff who deserve them. Therefore, the presence of adequate students can help ensure the financial sustainability of the school.

Based on the above issue, the researcher will investigate how school principals make efforts to maintain the sustainability of educational institutions. Sustainability means continuity, the concept of sustainability shows the long-term goal of "towards a more sustainable educational institution school"[12]. Sustainability can be defined as the school's ability to continue providing quality education services in the future, considering economic, social, and environmental aspects. Some indicators that can affect school sustainability include: (1) Funding, (2) Staffing, (3) Leadership, (4) School community, (5) Physical environment, (6) Resource management, (7) Learning quality[14]. In this case, the efforts of the school principal are needed to realize these sustainability indicators so that the educational institution can continue to provide benefits for students and the community in the future[15].

Based on the analysis of the problem, there will be a gap between idealistic thinking and the reality that occurs in the field. Ideally, outside the zoning policy, private schools are able to attract students based on the objective capabilities of the school itself, meaning that the acceptance of new students in private schools is based on the school's attractiveness, such as school promotion, school conditions, and the needs of students to choose the desired educational institution with the appropriate quantity and quality to meet their needs[16]. However, in reality, the zoning policy has disrupted the admission of new students in private schools, as the government has opened up wide opportunities for public schools. In other words, private schools are disrupted in recruiting potential students[17].

Several studies have found that in the era of the current zoning policy, building an excellent educational institution requires more than just quality alone. School principals must be able to improve the competitiveness of their institutions. Another study states that the number of students accepted by private schools affects school funding since the operational funds received from the government are based on the number of students accepted [18]. According to some school principals in rural areas, the zoning system helps reduce tight competition between schools. With this system, schools no longer have to compete fiercely with other schools because the accepted students are already regulated in the designated zones by the government. This is in line with the statement from the principal of SDN Bungbaruh 2 Kadur Pamekasan (M. Thoha, 2019). The above study has a positive view of the zoning policy, focusing on schools under government supervision. This study will focus on the conditions experienced by private schools directly affected by the zoning system policy. The focus of this research is on the efforts of school principals in maintaining the sustainability of their educational institutions amid the zoning policy.

## METHOD

This study uses descriptive-qualitative research methodology. The focus is on the general overview of the role, supporting factors, and claims. According to Moleong's work by Bogdan and Taylor (2002:3), "Qualitative methodology is a research technique that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words about people and behavior that can be observed." SMP Muhammadiyah 10 Sidoarjo is chosen as the subject of the study because the school is currently undergoing efforts by the school principal to maintain its existence amidst the implementation of zoning policies. This study is descriptive in nature and is used to identify the efforts and supporting factors that have been undertaken by the principal of SMP Muhammadiyah 10 Sidoarjo to maintain the sustainability of the institution in the era of zoning policy. Data collection for this research is conducted naturally, meaning it is based on the phenomena and situations that occur in the field. The data collection techniques used by the researcher in this study include observation, interviews, and documentation. The approach used by the researcher to collect data is an interactive approach where the researcher directly interacts with the person concerned and is not represented by anyone else. In this study, the qualitative data analysis technique used is the Miles and Huberman & Saldana (2014) model. According to Saldana, the data condensation process consists of three steps, namely the identification of the analysis unit, determination of analysis categories, and condensation. By condensing the data, the researcher can reduce the amount of data that needs to be analyzed and facilitate the process of organizing and interpreting qualitative data.

## RESEARCH RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The zoning policy implemented since 2018 has brought social impacts to the community. In this case, the community can easily access education services from public schools that have good service standards. However, this policy has caused difficulties for private schools because the number of new students admitted to their institutions has decreased. This has an impact on the sustainability of private schools, as they are highly dependent on funding from parents of students.

To maintain the sustainability of schools in the era of zoning policy, efforts by school principals are needed to achieve it. There are seven indicators to measure the level of school sustainability, namely (1) funding, (2) staffing, (3) leadership, (4) school community, (5) physical environment, (6) resource management, and (7) learning quality[14]. According to Y. Dror in Udin Syaefudin Sa'ud (2005:9), education is "the process of preparing a set of decisions for action in the future for the overall economic and social development of a country". Planning in education refers to a process that involves preparing a number of decisions aimed at achieving optimal goals in comprehensive economic and social development in the country for future activities. The author sees a relevance between the findings in the field and the theory of school sustainability in the era of zoning policy.

First, in the context of research, funding is very important to ensure that schools have the resources needed to provide students with the education they deserve. Schools with strong funding are those that have more quality and varied activities[14]. This is because adequate funding can provide space for schools to develop more diverse and higher quality programs and services, such as more varied extracurricular activities, more intensive guidance and counseling programs, the development of more modern educational facilities and technologies, and so on. In the context of education, these programs and services can help students to develop their potential to the fullest and achieve better results.

A research study in China concluded that sustainable school funding can affect the quality of education and student development. The research findings showed that government policies supporting sustainable school funding can have a positive impact on the quality of education and student development [25]. In the scope of the study, researchers found that the efforts of school principals in funding were still minimal, as indicated by limited activities or programs and low spending, such as

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inviting local figures or speakers for school activities. Furthermore, principals also reduced unnecessary expenses, such as cutting meeting consumption costs, and even relaxed the school fee requirements for students to take exams. Therefore, it can be seen that school funding is still inadequate.

Secondly, employment in terms of school sustainability has high standards, characterized by several aspects, including fair wages, a healthy and safe working environment, work-life balance, career development and training, social protection and welfare[21]. A study in Malaysia with a sample of 324 teachers showed that teacher well-being significantly and positively affects their job satisfaction. In addition, the variable of health insurance provided by the workplace also plays an important role in improving teacher well-being and job satisfaction[22]. In the scope of the research, it was found that the wages of teachers and employees only consist of basic salaries. Moreover, no other bonuses or incentives are provided, and there is no health insurance provided by the educational institution. The school principal explained that there was no health insurance cooperation program with external parties, and when a teacher or employee is sick, the school can only provide some money to cover health expenses, but not pay for the full amount.

Thirdly, strong school leadership in terms of school sustainability is needed to lead and coordinate sustainable efforts throughout the school, as well as help create a strong sustainable culture[23]. This means that visionary leadership is needed in sustainability for an educational institution. In addition, strong school leadership can also play a crucial role in creating awareness and enthusiasm for sustainability among students and staff. For example, a school principal who is committed to sustainability can be a role model for staff and students to take sustainable actions and promote a positive sustainable culture throughout the school. Strong school leadership can also stimulate active participation from students and staff in sustainable efforts, thus promoting sustainable involvement and participation in behavioral and action changes[24]. In this regard, the efforts of school principals in the scope of the study have not yet shown their ability to mobilize all members of the school community and have only involved some students, teachers, and staff, such as in the healthy canteen program with regulations to reduce the use of plastic bags. Only a small number of students and staff have implemented this program, thus limiting the success of the program. This indicates that the existing standards of leadership in the research field are still insufficient.

Fourthly, good school community standards internationally cover aspects such as quality of teaching, leadership, collaboration with parents, safety and health, community involvement, inclusivity and equity, effective school management, as well as innovation and development [25]. However, these standards are dynamic and may change as society's needs and the times evolve. An international research journal explained that the implementation and sustainability of a school community is influenced by factors such as leadership support, parental and community involvement, sufficient resources, and collaboration between different institutions. In addition, school communities also have a positive impact on student achievement and parental involvement. The authors concluded that school communities can be an effective model for improving the quality of education and community involvement[26].

The research found that parental and community involvement in school activities is still lacking, as shown by the low participation of parents in various school activities and the lack of direct support from the surrounding community. In addition, there is still a lack of support or participation from external institutions and organizations outside the school, such as the local public library. This indicates that the school community in the research scope is still minimal.

Fifth, the standards for environmental sustainability in schools refer to guidelines or rules applied to create a safe, healthy, and comfortable environment for students and staff [14]. These standards include indoor air quality, lighting and ventilation, noise and acoustics, availability of open spaces, waste management systems, availability of drinking water, accessibility, and safety and fire protection [25]. In the context of the research found in the field, the school has three cleaning staff and waste disposal facilities, and the garbage is collected by local sanitation workers every week and taken to a

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landfill site. However, on the other hand, the school still cannot recycle the waste it produces, so the waste still causes pollution in the surrounding environment. The research institution also uses plastic packaging, unlike a study in Africa that revealed that schools in Tshwane, South Africa have successfully implemented effective waste management practices, such as organic waste management and reducing the use of plastic, which reduces the amount of waste generated and helps maintain the cleanliness and environmental health[26].

Sixth, sustainable school resource management covers various aspects such as policies and strategies, energy management, water management, waste management, transportation management, building construction and renovation, education and awareness, as well as monitoring and evaluation. The goal is to minimize the environmental, social, and economic impact of school activities and to encourage the use of more efficient and sustainable resources[14]. In a study of schools in Hong Kong that discusses the factors influencing the successful implementation of sustainable resource management in schools, such as student participation, support from school management, and human resources. The article also provides examples of best practices that schools can adopt to achieve sustainability goals, such as the use of renewable energy resources, water conservation, and the use of technology to support environmental learning[27]. In the scope of research found in schools, the efforts of school principals to create policies for good resource management are still not optimal. This is indicated by the many obstacles in implementing sustainable resource management in schools, such as lack of funding and support from the government, lack of participation from students, teachers, and school staff, as well as lack of awareness of the importance of sustainable resource management. In addition, some additional efforts made in schools to increase awareness of the importance of sustainable resource management among students, teachers, and school staff include displaying environmental posters, incorporating environmental and resource conservation materials into the curriculum, and collaborating with local health centers to hold seminars and education sessions.

Seventh, the standards for quality sustainability education must meet quality standards that include integration into the curriculum, student engagement, use of sustainable resources, community involvement, evaluation and improvement, leadership and staff involvement, and adequate support and resources[14]. A study in Malaysia investigated the effect of educational service quality on student satisfaction and loyalty in private higher education institutions in Malaysia. The study found that the quality of educational services has a significant impact on student satisfaction and loyalty, with reliability, sustainability, and responsiveness being the most important dimensions. The journal concludes that improving the quality of educational services can increase student satisfaction and loyalty, as well as have a positive impact on the institution's reputation and competitiveness in the education market[28].

In the scope of the research, obstacles were found in the field, including not all teachers implementing the Lesson Implementation Plan (RPP) in daily learning. Furthermore, there have been no students who have won national level competitions. This indicates that student achievements are not yet optimal and still need to be improved in efforts to improve the quality of learning at the school. On the other hand, the character of the students in this school highly upholds the values of Islam in accordance with the school's vision and mission.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the research results on the efforts made by school principals to maintain school sustainability based on the 7 aspects of sustainability, it has not shown optimal results. All aspects, including funding, staffing, leadership, school community, physical environment, resource management, and quality of learning, still have minimal limits. This is very concerning, especially in facing the zoning policy that is applied in several regions, where schools will compete to attract the

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best and most potential students. Therefore, school principals need to continue their efforts to improve the quality of learning and overall school sustainability in order to compete well in the future.

Suggestions for other researchers interested in developing studies on sustainability in educational institutions are to expand the scope of research on several educational institutions in a wider area. In addition, researchers can also combine qualitative and quantitative methods in collecting and analyzing data, so that they can obtain a deeper understanding of sustainability practices and strategies used by educational institutions. In future studies, researchers can also expand the scope of sustainability aspects analyzed, including health, safety, and community participation in supporting the sustainability of educational institutions. This can contribute more to developing effective sustainability strategies and practices in educational institutions in Indonesia to face the impacts of zoning policies.

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