

THE ROLE OF SCHOOL PRINCIPALS IN OPTIMIZING EDUCATIONAL FUNDING

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ABSTRACT

Background	Education funding is crucial for ensuring smooth learning processes, while the principal is responsible for transparency, accountability, and budget optimization to improve education quality.
Purpose	This study analyzes the role of the principal in education financing at SDIT Titian Hidayah.
Research Methodology	Using a qualitative case study approach, the research employs interviews, observations, and documentation to understand human resource management in the context of education fund management.
Result	The principal acts as an administrator by mapping staff needs, a manager in budget allocation, a supervisor ensuring transparency, a developer in designing financial systems, and a mentor enhancing efficiency through evaluation, training, and data analysis. The school budget shows a balanced distribution, with the largest allocations for staff salaries, facilities, and academic and extracurricular activities. Operational funds, staff development training, and emergency reserves are also considered, while digitalization still receives a smaller portion.
Conclusion	The school budget is balanced, with surplus funds allocated for technology and student welfare. The principal optimizes funding through five key aspects.
Keywords	Principal, Financing, Education

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INTRODUCTION

Cost is defined as a rational financial sacrifice incurred in the production process and considered unavoidable; otherwise, such expenditures are categorized as wasteful (Yohannes et al., 2019). The Standard Education Cost Policy, which refers to the technical guidelines for the use of school operational funds, grants schools the authority to manage expenditures in accordance with national standards (Vista & Sabandi, 2020). Literature and document analysis indicate that education financing management plays a critical role in ensuring the smooth implementation and success of the learning process (Muhajir et al., 2023). Without adequate funding, education cannot function optimally (Shaleha & Panggabean, 2021). The view that quality education is expensive is often used to justify high costs, which ultimately restricts access for underprivileged communities (Purba et al., 2023). Sound financial management can enhance school quality and create opportunities for development (Maryono & Nurfuadi, 2023). Effective fund management directly affects the quality of education (Khuluqiah et al., 2022) and has been successfully implemented in primary schools (Muspawi & Lukita, 2023).

As leaders, school principals hold a strategic responsibility in budget planning, financial management, and ensuring accountability and transparency in all expenditures (Sumual et al., 2024). The principal's ability to mobilize additional funding sources significantly contributes to school performance improvement (Susanti & Muslihin, 2024). Furthermore, well-maintained accountability fosters budget efficiency (Amalyah et al., 2021). The principle of transparency implemented by school principals in managing funds also builds public trust in educational institutions (Mulyani et al., 2024; Trianita, 2023). Principals play a strategic role in ensuring that educational funds are used effectively to support the quality of learning (Hasanudin et al., 2024). Leadership strategies in budget management are key factors in achieving better education quality (Susanti & Muslihin, 2024). Additionally, principals must also act as educational entrepreneurs capable of planning, supervising, and periodically evaluating the use of funds (Pangestu et al., 2024).

Principal leadership contributes 8.5% to teacher performance, while school funding contributes 7.8%, indicating that both factors influence teacher achievement in schools (Armaiyyetti et al., 2020). Principal leadership has a significant effect on teacher performance, with a correlation of 0.641 and a contribution of 41.1%, while school financial management shows a correlation of 0.788 and a contribution of 51.9%. Simultaneously, both contribute 55.9% to teacher performance, with the remaining percentage influenced by other factors (Sakbana et al., 2022). Effective school leadership has a positive and significant impact on financial management, where high-quality leadership enhances the efficiency of education financing management in alignment with expected standards (Anwa, 2017).

The principal's role in optimizing education financing encompasses entrepreneurial leadership, strategic financial management, and effective policy implementation. Principals with an entrepreneurial mindset are able to mobilize both internal and external resources through projects involving students, school management, and collaborations with the private sector or alumni—initiatives that not only increase funding but also foster students' entrepreneurial skills (Mamabolo, 2020). Through the Weighted Student Funding system, principals can strategically manage finances to encourage innovation and experiential learning (Ho, 2023). Additionally, principals play a crucial role in navigating education policies, balancing government interests with those of the school community (Kruger & du Plessis, 2025). Effective bureaucratic management also supports administrative efficiency and school quality (Nwafor & Ololube, 2024). Nevertheless, cultural and structural challenges must still be addressed to ensure sustainable school improvement (Shava & Heystek, 2019).

Previous studies have highlighted the principal's role in education financing from the perspectives of entrepreneurial leadership, strategic management, and policy and bureaucratic implementation. However, there remains a gap in the literature regarding a detailed examination of the principal's multifunctional role as administrator, manager, supervisor, developer, and mentor within an integrated financial management system.

This study aims to identify and analyze these roles comprehensively. The findings reveal that principals not only manage budgets but also conduct data-driven evaluations, provide staff training, and develop school financial systems. Budget distribution shows a balanced allocation, with the largest portions dedicated to salaries, infrastructure, and academic activities, although digitalization efforts remain suboptimal. These findings offer a new perspective in strengthening efficient and sustainable school financial governance, serving as a strategic foundation for formulating more adaptive and innovative education financing policies.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research on school culture in supporting teacher development was conducted at SDIT Titian Hidayah Bogor using a qualitative approach. This approach was used to describe the school's practices in mentoring teachers throughout their work. Data collection was carried out through interviews with the principal, vice principal for curriculum affairs, vice principal for student affairs, teachers, and students, using the following interview framework:

Table 1. Interview Framework

Aspect	Question	Respondents
Principal as Administrator	Staff needs mapping is conducted every academic year	Principal, Treasurer
	Efficient fund allocation for educators and other aspects	Principal, Treasurer
Principal as Manager	Coordination with the Foundation and school human resources	Principal, Foundation Chair, Treasurer
	Discussion of fund allocation after the second midterm exam	Principal, Treasurer
Principal as Supervisor	Supervision of funding sources to ensure transparent management	Principal, Treasurer, Teacher
Principal as Developer	Financial transparency related to student payment status	Principal, Treasurer
Principal as Mentor	Lesson planning before the new academic year	Principal, Teacher
	How long-term planning is developed based on previous data, including teacher training	Principal, Treasurer, Teacher

In addition, observation techniques were used for the school budgeting process carried out by the principal, treasurer, and teachers with the following research framework:

Table 2. Observation Framework

Aspect	Observed Indicator	Observation Location
Principal's Role	School budgeting process	Principal's Office, Treasurer's Room, Classrooms, and Office

Meanwhile, documentation was collected in the form of school budget plan files prepared by the treasurer with the following framework:

Table 3. Documentation Framework

Document Type	Description
School Budget Activity Plan	Details of school fund usage for one year

This study was conducted in three stages: preparation by developing research instruments, data collection, and analysis of findings. This study also used a qualitative approach with a case study method to provide an in-depth description of how the school manages human resources in the context of education funding management. The data obtained were processed through several stages, namely data condensation by grouping information based on the main discussion, data presentation in the form of narratives and tables, and

conclusion drawing. Data validity was ensured through credibility techniques, including source triangulation by comparing interview results from various parties, technique triangulation by comparing interview, observation, and documentation results, and confirmability by confirming the research findings with key informants.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Role of the School in Maximizing Education Financing at SDIT Titian Hidayah Bogor First, the principal as an administrator plays a role in maximizing education financing at SDIT Titian Hidayah Bogor by mapping staff needs at the beginning of each academic year. This mapping includes both teaching and non-teaching staff, which has a direct impact on the education budget. Once the number of staff and their duties are determined, this information is forwarded to the finance department managed by the treasurer. This process ensures efficient and needs-based fund allocation, allowing educational financing to be managed optimally not only for teaching staff but also for other aspects of school operations. As the school's financial administrator, the principal plays a key role in ensuring the smooth operation of the educational institution. The main duties include budget planning, organizing financial resources, implementing financial policies, supervising fund usage, and preparing financial reports and accountability. This role encompasses the management of student affairs, curriculum and instruction, human resources, finance, administration, facilities and infrastructure, and public relations (Saleh et al., n.d.).

Second, the principal as a manager contributes to maximizing education financing at SDIT Titian Hidayah Bogor by ensuring the effective and efficient use of resources. This management involves coordination with the Foundation Advisor, Foundation Chairperson, Foundation Treasurer, Education Bureau, and Institution Head. Discussions on fund allocation and educational needs are held after the second midterm examination and applied to the new academic year, remaining in effect for one year. With structured management, all needs in the provision of education can be met, enabling the teaching and learning process to run optimally and sustainably. As the school's financial manager, the principal holds an essential role in planning, organizing, implementing, and supervising the budget to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of educational fund usage. These responsibilities include managing student affairs, curriculum, staffing, finance, administration, facilities and infrastructure, and public relations (Daud, 2023).

Third, the principal as a supervisor supports the maximization of education financing at SDIT Titian Hidayah Bogor by supervising various funding sources. This supervision is conducted together with the Institution Head, Treasurer, and Homeroom Teachers to ensure that received funds are managed transparently and effectively. Furthermore, the principal designs specific strategies to seek additional funding to support educational sustainability. With strict oversight and appropriate strategies, education financing can be utilized optimally so that school needs are met and the learning process proceeds smoothly. As the financial supervisor, the principal has an important role in auditing, monitoring, and guiding the organization in managing educational funds. This responsibility includes evaluating the financial recording system, measuring the performance of the finance team, and ensuring transparency and accountability in fund usage. Effective financial supervision by the principal can enhance financial management efficiency and support the achievement of quality educational goals (Ariskawanti & Munastiwi, 2022).

Fourth, the principal as a developer contributes to maximizing education financing at SDIT Titian Hidayah Bogor by ensuring that all financial aspects and activity planning are executed effectively. Information regarding student payment status is communicated to the foundation chair and treasurer to maintain financial transparency. Moreover, all teaching and learning activities are planned before the new academic year begins to ensure effective implementation. Every activity is proposed through a written proposal prior to execution to assess its alignment with the predetermined plans. Through this approach, the management of educational

funds becomes more structured and supports the continuity of the learning process. As a developer of school finances, the principal plays a crucial role in ensuring that financial resources are managed efficiently and effectively. Responsibilities include careful budget planning, resource organization, policy implementation, fund monitoring, and financial reporting and accountability. Through proper management, the principal ensures that financial resources are optimally utilized to support high-quality teaching and learning processes (Sumual et al., 2024).

Fifth, the principal as a mentor plays a key role in optimizing educational financing at SDIT Titian Hidayah Bogor by ensuring that human and financial resource management is carried out optimally. The assignment of staff duties and responsibilities is conducted in detail, directly impacting the payroll system. Evaluation of activity reports and purchases is conducted to obtain more accurate data, enhancing transparency and budget efficiency. Additionally, the principal prepares planning based on data analysis from previous years and organizes training for teaching and non-teaching staff so that financing strategies become more effective and sustainable. As a financial mentor, the principal is responsible for managing the budget and ensuring that fund usage is effective and efficient. These responsibilities include planning, organizing, directing, coordinating, supervising, and evaluating school financial management. By fulfilling these functions, the principal ensures that educational funds are managed transparently and accountably, thereby supporting the achievement of optimal educational goals (Heriyah et al., 2021).

The principal, as the school's financial manager, holds a crucial responsibility in ensuring the efficiency, transparency, and accountability of fund utilization. A primary challenge faced is dual accountability both to the school governing body and the Department of Education which often results in conflicts of interest in financial decision-making (Dwangu & Mahlangu, 2021). In developing countries such as Eswatini, many principals still lack adequate competencies in financial management despite receiving training (Myende et al., 2020). The situation became more complex during the pandemic, where principals had to navigate resource constraints and adapt policies to emergency conditions (Martinez et al., 2021). In South Africa, weak oversight and financial policies have led to numerous cases of school fund mismanagement (Rangongo et al., 2016).

Conversely, some rural principals have demonstrated innovation and community involvement in accountable financial management (Myende et al., 2018). Best practices in school financial management are exemplified by a collaborative fiscal management model in the Philippines emphasizing strategic leadership and collective decision-making (Fabrao & Pacadaljen, 2024). In Malaysia, a school-based approach involving planning, acquisition, acceptance, and evaluation has proven effective (Mohd Radzi et al., 2017). Principals are required to implement transparency and accountability in all financial processes to openly justify every decision made (Garcer et al., 2024). Therefore, continuous professional development in legislation, financial policy, and risk management is essential for principals to optimally fulfill their roles (Tsharane & Bussin, 2022).

Results of the Education Financing Plan at SDIT Titian Hidayah Bogor

Based on the principal's role in maximizing education financing at SDIT Titian Hidayah Bogor, there are several key points that must be budgeted by the treasurer in order to optimize school funding in accordance with the principal's instructions, including the following:

Table 1. School Budget

No	Budget Category	Description	Amount (IDR)*
1	Salaries and Employee Benefits	Salaries for teaching and non-teaching staff	15,000,000
2	Training and HR Development	Training for teachers and administrative staff	7,000,000
3	Recruitment and Employee Welfare	New staff recruitment and allowances	8,000,000
4	Facilities Procurement and Maintenance	Renovation and maintenance of school facilities	10,000,000
5	Learning Material Procurement	Books, stationery, and learning media	6,000,000
6	Academic and Extracurricular Activities	Academic and non-academic programs	8,000,000

7	School Operational Costs	Electricity, water, internet, and cleaning services	7,000,000
8	Transparency and Financial Reporting Funds	Auditing and financial reporting	5,000,000
9	Financial Administration Management	Financial system, treasurer's honorarium, and reporting	6,000,000
10	Program Evaluation and Purchase Reporting	School program evaluation and budget reporting	5,000,000
11	Emergency and Contingency Funds	Budget for urgent and unforeseen needs	7,000,000
12	Education Technology and Digitalization	Procurement of IT equipment and digital systems	2,000,000
Total			86,000,000

*amounts are estimates only

The budget analysis at SDIT Titian Hidayah Bogor shows that the distribution of funds has been arranged in a balanced manner to support various aspects of education. The largest portion of the budget is allocated to salaries and employee benefits, as teaching and administrative personnel are key elements in school operations. In addition, facilities procurement and maintenance are prioritized to enhance the quality of education. Learning and extracurricular activities, as well as recruitment and employee welfare, also receive significant allocations to support both academic and non-academic initiatives.

Furthermore, in the mid-range budget category, operational costs are allocated to fulfill basic learning needs such as electricity, water, and internet. Training and human resource development are also given attention to improve the competence of teachers and staff. Emergency and contingency funds are prepared to anticipate unexpected needs, ensuring the school can continue to operate smoothly. Effective financial management ensures that available funds are used efficiently to improve the quality of education. Moreover, sound financial management allows the school to manage financial risks, such as unexpected expenses or budget shortages, and ensures equitable access to education for all students (Muhajir et al., 2023).

Meanwhile, smaller budget allocations at SDIT Titian Hidayah Bogor are directed toward activity evaluation and purchase reporting, as well as transparency and financial reporting, emphasizing the importance of supervision and accountability in school financial management. Education technology and digitalization receive the smallest allocation, indicating that the school is still in the early stages of developing a digital learning system. There remains a portion of the budget that could be allocated to other needs. Potential uses include investing in educational technology to enhance tech-based learning systems, improving school facilities such as classroom or laboratory renovations, and providing scholarships or support for underprivileged students to ensure they continue to have access to proper education. Additionally, financial reserves can be set aside for unforeseen urgent needs beyond the designated emergency budget. Therefore, transparency and accountability in school financial management can increase public trust and encourage their participation in educational programs (Baidowi et al., 2024).

Education financing plans are a critical aspect of developing education systems across various countries. A study in Nigeria revealed that external financing, such as official development assistance (ODA) and GDP per capita, positively influences educational development, although foreign direct investment (FDI) and poverty rates exert negative effects (Oluwashina & Oladipo, 2024). Innovative strategies like the Green Ocean Strategy for Financial Sustainability (GOSFS) have been designed to optimize university investment sources and maintain financial sustainability through resource development and good governance (Al-Filali et al., 2023). At the national level, Uruguay's education plan emphasizes innovation, inclusion, and the utilization of information technology to enhance learning outcomes (Manzanilla-Granados et al., 2023). Reforms in Italy focus on teacher recruitment and vocational education to support inclusive education (Casalone & Checchi, 2024). Meanwhile, in Australia, the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement aims to reduce funding disparities between public and private schools, although improvements remain limited (Kenway & Boden, 2025).

CONCLUSION

The school budget has been designed with a balanced proportion between core needs, human resource development, operations, and oversight. The remaining available funds can be utilized to support areas that are not yet optimal, particularly in educational technology and student welfare. The principal at SDIT Titian Hidayah Bogor plays a vital role in maximizing education financing through five key aspects. As an administrator, the principal conducts staff needs mapping to ensure budget efficiency. As a manager, the principal coordinates with the foundation for optimal fund allocation. As a supervisor, the principal ensures transparency and seeks additional funding sources. As a developer, the principal designs a structured and effective financial system. As a mentor, the principal evaluates financial management and enhances efficiency through training and data analysis. Through these roles, the principal ensures the smooth operation and sustainability of the school's educational processes.

The analysis of SDIT Titian Hidayah Bogor's financing plan shows a well-balanced budget distribution to support school operations. The largest allocation is designated for salaries and employee benefits, while facilities procurement and employee welfare are also prioritized. Operational costs and human resource training receive a moderate share to support teaching and school management. Smaller portions of the budget are allocated for evaluation, financial transparency, and education digitalization. Emergency funds are prepared for urgent needs. Effective financial management ensures efficient use of resources, improves education quality, and enables further development, such as digitalization and facility enhancement.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Author 1: Conceptualization, Data Collection, Conclusion

Author 2: Data Collection, Report Writing

Author 3: Research Methodology, Report Writing

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