

Missiological Dialogue in Strategic Decision-Making of the School Principal: A Qualitative Study at UPT SDN 076 Siponjot, Lintongnihuta District, Humbang Hasundutan Regency

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This article explores the integration of "Missiological Dialogue" into the strategic decision-making processes of the School Principal at UPT SDN 076 Siponjot, Lintongnihuta District, Humbang Hasundutan Regency. Strategic decision-making in public primary schools situated within highly religious communities requires an approach that transcends formal managerialism. Using a descriptive qualitative method, this study demonstrates how strategic policies, rooted in the spirit of mission prioritize the holistic development of students and uphold moral integrity to create a transformative educational ecosystem. The findings suggest that Christian Educational Management is not merely a matter of formal identity, but rather a manifestation of the values of love (agape) and justice within every school policy. By aligning governmental mandates with missiological principles, the school functions as a center for social transformation and a witness to ethical leadership in the Humbang Hasundutan region.

Keywords: Missiological Dialogue, Strategic Decision-Making, School Principal, Christian Education Management.

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1. Introduction

Educational management in public schools is often viewed as a purely secular administrative process, in which policies are formulated solely based on technical regulations and principles of bureaucratic efficiency (Tilaar, 2004). However, in regions with a strong religious character such as Lintongnihuta District, Humbang Hasundutan Regency, elementary schools cannot be separated from the spiritual context of their communities (Sidjabat, 2011). UPT SDN 076 Siponjot is situated within a community that upholds Christian values, thus the role of the principal in making strategic decisions requires a deeper dimension beyond formal managerial considerations. John Stott emphasizes that mission is not only about proclaiming a message but also involves dialogue and collaboration with the community. In the school context, principals can apply this principle by involving various stakeholders in the decision-making process so that the resulting decisions are more relevant to the needs of the school and its surrounding environment.

The leadership of the principal plays a crucial role in determining policy direction and the development of educational institutions. In schools located within religious communities, strategic decision-making is not limited to administrative and managerial aspects but also encompasses dimensions of values, ethics, and spirituality. A key issue that arises is the dichotomy between administrative demands and the missionary calling, where principals are often caught between pressures to achieve national academic targets and the moral responsibility to shape students' character (Groome, 2011). Stephen B. Bevans explains that missiological dialogue is a mission approach that emphasizes communication, collaboration, and mutual

respect among individuals or groups. In the context of principals' strategic decision-making, this dialogue enables the exchange of ideas among principals, teachers, staff, and the community, resulting in decisions that are more participatory and contextual.

Roger P. Schroeder states that dialogue in mission serves as a means to build relationships, trust, and mutual understanding. In educational management, principals can utilize missiological dialogue as a leadership approach that prioritizes open communication in determining strategic school policies. Therefore, a missiological dialogue is needed a process in which every strategic decision is filtered through the lens of *Missio Dei* or the Mission of God (Bosch, 2011). This article aims to analyze how the integration of such missiological dialogue can create holistic educational transformation in public elementary schools.

Elementary schools serve as the primary foundation for shaping children's character and intellectual development. In the Lintongnihuta District, Christian values have become an integral part of the social life of the community. Consequently, leadership at UPT SDN 076 Siponjot faces a unique challenge: how to uphold formal national educational management while simultaneously maintaining the spirit of missiological values in everyday decision-making.

From a Christian education perspective, educational leadership is inseparable from the calling of God's mission (*missio Dei*), which positions education as a means of holistic human transformation. Christian education is oriented toward the formation of character, morality, and spirituality rooted in Gospel values (Pazmiño, 2008). Therefore, every strategic decision made by the principal should reflect the values of love, justice, and social responsibility within the educational community.

Strategic decision-making is not merely about technical efficiency but represents a dialogue between organizational needs and a calling to service. The concept of missiological dialogue becomes relevant as principal functions not only as an administrator but also as a transformational leader capable of facilitating positive change within the school environment. Research on value-based principal leadership has also been found in the context of Islamic education. A study conducted by Ariza Fardiatama, Harun Joko Prayitno, and Maryadi shows that effective principal leadership strategies in improving teacher performance are strongly influenced by the integration of spiritual values, exemplary behavior, and participatory communication within the school environment.

These findings affirm that value-based leadership is not only relevant within specific religious education contexts but also holds broader significance in building a positive and productive organizational culture. Therefore, this study seeks to extend this perspective by positioning missiological dialogue as a distinctive approach within the context of Christian education, particularly in the strategic decision-making of school principals.

2. Literature Review

Missiology in Christian Education

Missiology is a branch of theology that specifically studies the mission of God (*Missio De*) in the world and the involvement of believers in carrying out that mission. The concept of mission in Christianity is not limited to evangelism or the dissemination of religious teachings but also encompasses efforts to bring about social transformation, justice, peace, and the well-being of all humanity (Bosch, 2011).

In the development of modern theology, the understanding of mission has shifted from an expansionist approach toward a more dialogical and contextual one. David J. Bosch explains that the mission of the church is participation in God's work, which continually seeks to renew the world and restore relationships

among humans and with creation as a whole. Therefore, mission does not only take place within the church but also across various spheres of life, including education.

In the context of Christian education, missiology plays an important role in shaping an educational paradigm oriented toward holistic human transformation. Christian education is not merely aimed at transferring academic knowledge but also at forming character, morality, spirituality, and social awareness among learners (Pazmiño, 2008).

Pazmiño emphasizes that Christian education should help learners understand their identity and calling in society. Thus, education becomes a means of shaping individuals who are able to live according to the values of the Kingdom of God, such as love, justice, honesty, and social responsibility. In the context of public schools situated within religious communities, missiological principles can serve as an ethical and spiritual foundation for decision-making in educational leadership. These values can be embodied through policies that prioritize social justice, care for others, and the character formation of students.

Missiological Dialogue

Missiological dialogue is an approach in mission practice that emphasizes the importance of open and respectful interaction between the Christian faith and culture, religion, and the social realities of society. This approach developed as a response to increasingly pluralistic and complex societies, where mission practice is no longer confrontational but dialogical and contextual (Bevans & Schroeder, 2004).

According to Bevans and Schroeder, missiological dialogue is not merely a conversation between individuals but a reflective process involving the exchange of understanding, experiences, and life values. This dialogue enables the creation of mutually respectful relationships while also opening space for shared transformation.

In the field of education, missiological dialogue can be applied through participatory communication among various stakeholders within the school community, such as principals, teachers, students, parents, and the surrounding community. Through an open dialogue process, educational policies can be formulated in a more contextual and relevant manner to meet the needs of the community. A dialogical approach also allows faith values to be integrated wisely into educational practices without neglecting the principles of inclusivity and diversity. Thus, schools can become spaces of learning that not only develop intellectual abilities but also foster moral and spiritual awareness.

Strategic Decision-Making in Educational Leadership

Strategic decision-making is one of the fundamental functions in organizational leadership, including in educational institutions. Strategic decisions relate to long-term planning processes that determine the direction of organizational development, the establishment of policy priorities, and the effective and efficient management of resources to achieve predetermined goals. In the context of educational organizations, strategic decisions not only affect institutional sustainability but also influence the quality of the learning process and the overall development of students (Robbins & Coulter, 2016).

Within the school environment, the principal plays a central role as a leader responsible for various important decisions related to the management of educational institutions. These decisions include the formulation of academic policies, human resource management, curriculum development, infrastructure management, and strengthening relationships between the school and the community. Therefore, the principal's ability to make strategic decisions is a crucial factor in creating effective school governance oriented toward improving educational quality.

The leadership of a principal is not limited to administrative and managerial functions but also includes the role of a visionary leader capable of directing school development toward broader educational goals. Principals are expected to build a positive organizational culture, create a conducive learning environment, and mobilize all members of the school community to work collaboratively in achieving the institution's vision and mission. Effective educational leaders are able to optimally integrate available resources to enhance the quality of learning and support the maximum development of students' potential. In this regard, principal leadership is viewed as a key factor in improving educational quality, especially in facing the challenges of change in the modern era (Mulyasa, 2020).

Robbins and Coulter explain that decision-making is essentially the process of selecting the most appropriate course of action to solve an organizational problem. This process involves several important stages, such as problem identification, situation analysis, determination of alternative solutions, and evaluation of the consequences of each decision option. Through this process, organizational leaders are expected to determine the most effective and rational decisions to achieve planned objectives (Robbins & Coulter, 2017).

However, in the context of educational leadership grounded in Christian values, decision-making is not based solely on rational or technical considerations. It also involves ethical, moral, and spiritual dimensions that serve as the foundation for determining fair and responsible policies. The principle of wisdom becomes an essential element in Christian leadership, as it enables leaders to consider various aspects thoughtfully before making decisions that impact the educational community.

Furthermore, effective leadership is characterized by the ability of leaders to build a clear vision and inspire organizational members to work together toward common goals. Northouse (2018) emphasizes that effective leaders not only possess analytical skills in solving organizational problems but are also able to motivate and mobilize members through strong leadership values, integrity, and commitment to shared objectives. In the educational context, principals with a clear vision and strong leadership integrity can create a conducive, participatory learning environment oriented toward holistic human development.

Thus, strategic decision-making in educational leadership is not only related to managerial aspects of the organization but also reflects the quality of the principal's leadership in integrating educational vision, moral values, and social responsibility in every policy taken. This approach is particularly important in the context of schools within religious communities, where educational decisions not only affect the learning process but also contribute to shaping the character and life values of students.

3. Method

This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive method. The qualitative approach was chosen because this research aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of missiological dialogue in the process of strategic decision-making by school principals within the educational environment. The descriptive method is used to systematically describe the leadership practices of the school principal in formulating educational policies related to moral and spiritual values at UPT SDN 076 Siponjot.

The research was conducted at UPT SDN 076 Siponjot, located in Lintongnihuta District, Humbang Hasundutan Regency. This school was selected as the research site because it is situated within a community that has strong religious characteristics, thereby enabling the integration of spiritual values into educational leadership practices.

Data collection techniques were carried out through several methods. First, participatory observation, where the researcher directly observed various activities within the school environment, particularly during teacher meetings, learning activities, and the process of school policy formulation. Second, in-depth interviews were conducted with the principal and several teachers to obtain information regarding the considerations used in strategic decision-making and how moral and spiritual values are integrated into school policies. Third, documentation study, which involved analyzing official school documents such as the School Work Plan (RKS), reports on the use of BOS funds, and other policy documents related to school management.

Data analysis was conducted using the interactive analysis model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), which consists of three main stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. This analysis process was carried out continuously from the beginning of data collection until the final stage of the research.

4. Results and Discussion

Integration of Agape (Love) Values in Inclusive Policies

The findings of this study indicate that the principal of UPT SDN 076 Siponjot applies the principles of missiological dialogue in various policies related to student welfare. One concrete manifestation of this approach is a policy ensuring that no student is hindered from participating in the educational process due to economic limitations.

The principal, together with the teaching staff, seeks solutions through various assistance mechanisms, such as proposing economically disadvantaged students for the Program Indonesia Pintar (PIP), providing school uniforms, and supporting the learning needs of underprivileged students. This policy reflects the value of agape (love), which is central to Christian ethics, namely selfless concern for the well-being of others. This approach demonstrates that school policies are not solely based on administrative procedures but also take into account humanistic dimensions and social solidarity. Thus, the school functions not only as an academic institution but also as a community that practices values of love in everyday life.

Moral Integrity as a Form of *Marturia* (Witnessing)

The study also reveals that moral integrity is a key principle in the principal's leadership, particularly in financial management. In managing the School Operational Assistance (BOS) funds, the principal emphasizes the importance of transparency and accountability to all stakeholders.

All financial expenditures are reported openly to teachers and the school committee, fostering an organizational culture that upholds honesty and responsibility. This transparent management practice is not only intended to comply with government regulations but also serves as a form of *marturia* (witnessing) in educational leadership. Integrity in financial management becomes a concrete example for teachers and educational staff regarding the importance of honesty in professional life. Thus, the principal's leadership not only provides administrative direction but also builds an ethical culture within the school environment.

Implementation of Holistic Education in the Curriculum

One of the significant findings of this study is the principal's effort to develop a holistic educational approach in the school's learning process. Education is not merely understood as the transfer of academic knowledge but also as a process of character formation, moral development, and the comprehensive development of

students' potential. This approach emphasizes that educational success is not only measured by students' cognitive achievements but also by the development of their attitudes, values, and personalities.

According to Ali Abdurroziq and Muh. Hanif (2024), the implementation of holistic education in the curriculum can be carried out through the integration of project-based learning, character strengthening, and authentic assessment that evaluates students' overall development. This approach supports balanced intellectual, moral, and social development. Meanwhile, Aqsyal Ilham Syachbana and Aulia Rahmah (2023) argue that the implementation of holistic education within an adaptive curriculum aims to create an inclusive and responsive educational system that accommodates differences in students' abilities, backgrounds, and potentials so that all learners can develop optimally.

In practice, the principal encourages the integration of academic skill development with character formation. One example is the support for numeracy improvement programs using the GASING (Easy, Fun, and Enjoyable) method initiated by the Humbang Hasundutan Regency Government. This method is designed to help students understand mathematical concepts in a simpler and more engaging way, making the learning process more effective and reducing anxiety toward mathematics.

The numeracy program using the GASING method is not only viewed as a strategy to enhance academic competence but also as a means to foster students' self-confidence, creativity, and learning motivation. Through interactive and enjoyable learning approaches, students are encouraged to actively participate in the learning process, thereby developing positive attitudes toward academic activities.

In addition to strengthening academic aspects, the school consistently integrates character values into daily learning processes. Values such as honesty, responsibility, cooperation, discipline, and social awareness are instilled through various learning activities and school programs. Teachers serve not only as facilitators of knowledge but also as role models in instilling moral values in students.

Through the integration of these values, education in the school is not only oriented toward cognitive achievement but also toward the holistic development of students' personalities. This holistic educational approach aligns with the perspective that Christian education aims to shape individuals comprehensively, encompassing intellectual, moral, social, and spiritual dimensions. Thus, the educational process is expected to produce individuals who are not only academically competent but also possess strong character and social concern.

In addition to developing a curriculum oriented toward holistic education, the principal also promotes the involvement of various stakeholders in decision-making processes within the school. The participation of teachers, educational staff, and the school community is seen as an important factor in creating relevant and contextual educational policies. This approach reflects participatory leadership practices that emphasize collaboration and collective involvement in achieving organizational goals (Northouse, 2018).

The findings indicate that the implementation of a missiological dialogue approach in school leadership enables the principal to integrate spiritual values into various educational policies without neglecting formal regulations within the national education system. This approach positions faith values as a source of inspiration in leadership practices, as well as an ethical foundation in formulating policies that prioritize student welfare.

These findings are consistent with Bosch (2011), who emphasizes that Christian mission is not limited to liturgical religious activities but also encompasses social transformation practices in various aspects of life, including education. In this context, schools can be understood as spaces where missiological values are

realized through policies and educational practices oriented toward character formation and community well-being.

Furthermore, leadership practices that emphasize transparency, accountability, and integrity in managing school resources reflect a strong ethical dimension in educational management. The principal strives to build an organizational culture that upholds honesty and responsibility, particularly in managing school funds and educational programs. This aligns with ethical leadership theory, which asserts that leaders with integrity are capable of creating healthy, transparent, and morally grounded organizational environments (Northouse, 2018).

Thus, the implementation of holistic education combined with a missiological dialogue approach in school leadership not only contributes to improving the quality of learning but also strengthens the role of schools as spaces for character formation and agents of social transformation within society.

5. Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that missiological dialogue plays a significant role in the strategic decision-making process of the principal at UPT SDN 076 Siponjot. This approach enables the integration of national education policy demands with the moral and spiritual values embedded in the community. The implementation of missiological dialogue is reflected in various school policies, such as inclusive policies grounded in the value of love, transparent and integrity-based management practices, and the development of holistic education. Through these policies, the school functions not only as a formal educational institution but also as a space for character formation and the cultivation of life values.

Furthermore, the findings of this study are aligned with research on value-based leadership in other educational contexts, such as the study conducted by Ariza Fardiatama and colleagues, which emphasizes that the integration of spiritual values in school leadership significantly contributes to improving performance quality and organizational culture. This indicates that value-based leadership, both in Christian and Islamic contexts, possesses a universal dimension in fostering effective and meaningful educational practices.

Thus, principal leadership grounded in missiological dialogue not only strengthens the role of schools as formal educational institutions but also positions them as agents of social and moral transformation within society. This approach affirms that Christian educational management is not merely an institutional identity but a tangible praxis of the values of love, justice, and social responsibility across all aspects of educational life.

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