

The Principal's Strategy in Developing Islamic Boarding School-Based Educational Institutions

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Abstract— *This study aims to investigate the principal's strategy in developing pesantren-based educational institutions, with a focus on MTs Nurul Qur'an Patokan-Kraksaan. In the dynamics of modern education, the role of school principals is very important in directing the development of educational institutions, especially in the pesantren environment. However, in-depth research on the strategies implemented by school principals in the context of pesantren education is still limited. A descriptive qualitative approach is used, by collecting data through interviews, observations, and documentation. Data analysis was carried out using data triangulation to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the principal's strategy in developing Islamic boarding schools. The findings of the study show that the characteristics of school principals, such as discipline, clear vision, democratic approach, and ability to manage resources, play a key role in the development of Islamic boarding school educational institutions. School principals who meet these characteristics are able to lead effectively, strengthen the identity of pesantren through the integration of religious teachings with modern curriculum, and utilize information technology to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of learning. In addition, resource management and the development of partnerships with local communities are also important aspects that school principals strive for to ensure the sustainability and growth of Islamic boarding school educational institutions.*

Keywords— *Leadership Strategy, School Principal, Islamic Boarding School*

1 Introduction

In the midst of the current dynamics of education, the role of school principals, especially in pesantren-based educational institutions, is becoming increasingly vital in directing the flow of development and improving the quality of education (Aldiani & Nelisma, 2022; Bashori et al., 2022). School principals not only play the role of administrators, but also leaders who have a strategic vision in the development of pesantren-based educational institutions (Ilham, 2021; Agung et al., 2021; Mushthofa et al., 2022). In this context, the strategies used by school principals have a significant impact on the direction and development of the educational institution.

In the context of pesantren-based educational institutions, the strategic role of school principals is very important in directing the flow of development and improving the quality of education (Ya'cub & Ga'a, 2021). The principal not only plays the role of an administrator, but also a leader who has a strategic vision (Fitri & Permatasari, 2022). The strategies used by school principals have a significant impact on the direction and development of these educational institutions (Priyambodo, 2023; Arifin et al., 2024). By facing the challenges of change, optimizing resources, strengthening the identity and values of the pesantren, and developing partnerships and networks, the principal's strategy is the main foundation in developing the pesantren educational institution in a better direction.

The strategies implemented by school principals have an essential correlation with the overall evolution of the institution (Hidayati, 2021). A strategy is not just an action plan, but also a roadmap designed to achieve the set educational goals, while addressing the various complexities and

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International Journal of Instructional Technology (IJIT), 03 (02), 2024, 98-106

P-ISSN: 2828-867X, E-ISSN: 2828-9145 | DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33650/ijit.v3i2>

challenges that arise in the context of Islamic boarding school educational institutions (Sanjani et al., 2023). In the ever-changing dynamics of education, the right strategy is the main foundation in ensuring the relevance, sustainability, and quality of pesantren education (Sanjani et al., 2023; Al Farisi et al., 2024). An in-depth understanding of the strong link between the principal's strategy and the development of Islamic boarding school educational institutions will be an important foundation for the sustainable development of educational knowledge and practice.

In his main role as the head of the madrasah, his responsibilities include the formulation and implementation of essential strategies (Masrur et al., 2021). The strategic vision carried must be in line with the goals of pesantren education and the values that are upheld. The strategies implemented include various aspects, from the development of a curriculum that suits the needs of the Islamic boarding school, the use of information technology in the learning process, to optimal resource management (Fachrudin, 2021). In addition, the madrasah head's strategy also plays a role in strengthening the identity and values of the pesantren, which is reflected in the learning program that combines religious teachings with modern knowledge and technology, as well as in the implementation of extracurricular activities that strengthen social and family ties among the entire educational community.

A number of previous studies have reviewed the role of school principals in the context of pesantren education, although their scope sometimes varies. Existing research (Shofiyyah et al., 2023; Hasanah et al., 2022; Rifa'i et al., 2023) highlight the importance of the role of madrasah heads in shaping an organizational culture oriented towards the achievement of academic achievement and Islamic character. However, this study emphasizes more on the managerial aspects of leadership, with little discussion of the specific strategies applied by the head of the madrasah. Other studies (Sugiyanto & Santosa, 2021; Mahmud, 2023; Putri et al., 2023) explore the use of leadership strategies by madrasah heads in the process of developing pesantren-based schools. Although it provides valuable insights into the use of technology in the context of Islamic boarding schools, this study has not fully explored the various strategies of madrasah heads in developing Islamic boarding school educational institutions as a whole.

Although the strategic role of madrasah heads in the development of pesantren-based educational institutions has been recognized, there are still research gaps that need to be filled. There is a lack of in-depth research on specific strategies applied by madrasah heads in the context of pesantren education. Although several studies have provided an overview of the role of school principals, in-depth analysis of the concrete strategies they use is lacking. Previous research focuses have tended to focus on general aspects of leadership and managerial, such as resource management or curriculum development, without thoroughly exploring the specific strategies implemented by madrasah heads.

This research offers a significant new contribution in the development of the context of Islamic boarding school educational institutions. The main focus is an in-depth exploration of specific strategies implemented by school principals. Most previous research has only provided an overview of the role of school principals, without thoroughly exploring the concrete strategies they implement (Fachrudin, 2021). Through a detailed approach to these strategies, this research is expected to fill the knowledge gap that exists in the literature on pesantren education. Thus, this research will provide a deeper understanding of the essential role of school principals in developing Islamic boarding school educational institutions and in dealing with various related challenges. This detailed approach also makes it possible to understand the more complex dynamics behind the success or failure of Islamic boarding school educational institutions.

The main purpose of this paper is to investigate in depth the strategy of madrasah heads in developing pesantren-based educational institutions. By understanding the strategies implemented by school principals, this study aims to make a significant contribution to understanding the dynamics of the development of Islamic boarding school educational institutions. Through a detailed approach to these strategies, this study seeks to provide a more comprehensive picture of the role of madrasah heads in shaping the direction and development of pesantren educational institutions.

In addition to investigating the strategies of madrasah heads in the development of pesantren-based educational institutions, this study also aims to identify the factors that influence the selection and implementation of these strategies, as well as their impact on the achievement of pesantren education goals. With a holistic approach, we hope that this research will provide a more complete picture of the role and strategy of madrasah heads. An in-depth analysis of the strategies of madrasah heads is also expected to reveal best practices that can be used as guidelines for school principals

and other stakeholders, including at MTs Nurul Qur'an Patokan-Kraksaan, in an effort to improve the quality of pesantren education. Thus, this research is expected to make a significant contribution to the development and improvement of Islamic boarding school educational institutions, especially at MTs Nurul Qur'an Patokan-Kraksaan and similar institutions in the future.

2 Method

The research method used in this study is qualitative with a descriptive approach (Waruwu, 2023). Data and data sources were obtained through three main techniques, namely interviews, observations, and documentation at MTs Nurul Qur'an Patokan-Kraksaan. The interviews were used to get views and direct understanding from the head of the madrasah about the strategies they applied in developing Islamic boarding school educational institutions and several resource persons to obtain secondary data. Observations were carried out to gain an understanding of daily practices related to these strategies within MTs Nurul Qur'an Benchmark. In addition, documentation from internal records, strategic plans, and school policies will also be used as data sources.

Data analysis will be carried out using data triangulation (Susanto & Jailani, 2023), which is by comparing and harmonizing findings from the three data sources to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the strategies of madrasah heads in the context of pesantren education at MTs Nurul Qur'an Patokan-Kraksaan. By using a qualitative approach and appropriate analysis techniques, this study aims to provide an in-depth overview of best practices in the development of Islamic boarding school educational institutions at the research location, namely MTs Nurul Qur'an Patokan-Kraksaan.

3 Findings And Discussion

The importance of the principal's strategy in the context of pesantren educational institutions cannot be overstated (Purwanto et al., 2023). Strategic theory in educational leadership emphasizes that school principals are not only administrators, but also leaders who have a strategic role in directing the direction of the development of educational institutions (Umagapi & Adam, 2023; Nasir & Shaleh, 2021). In today's context, Islamic boarding schools are faced with various challenges, including social, technological changes, and demands for higher quality of education (Fachrudin, 2021). Therefore, the principal's strategy in managing and developing Islamic boarding school educational institutions is crucial to maintain the relevance and sustainability of the institution. Thoughtful and well-planned strategies can help Islamic boarding schools to overcome these challenges effectively (Ulya & Ikhwan, 2024; Zaini et al., 2022), as well as maintaining the authenticity and traditional values of the pesantren that are its characteristics. Thus, a deep understanding of the principal's strategy in the context of pesantren education is important in facing the dynamics and complexity of today's challenges and ensuring the continuity and quality of pesantren education in the future.

School principals also have an important role in establishing strategic visions that are in accordance with the values and identity of Islamic boarding schools, as well as implementing strategic measures to support these visions (Saharani & Hidayat, 2023; Susanto et al., 2022). By combining the understanding of the heritage of the pesantren with innovative ideas in education, the principal can help the educational institution of the pesantren to remain relevant in the face of the changing times. The responsibility of the principal also includes ensuring that the strategies used are not only successful in achieving educational goals, but also in harmony with the moral and ethical values that are the foundation of the pesantren (Arifin et al., 2023). This means that the principal's strategy not only aims to improve academic quality, but also to shape the character and personality of students in accordance with the principles of the Islamic boarding school. Thus, school principals need to have a deep understanding of the challenges faced in the current era and the ability to develop responsive and adaptive strategies. Thus, the strategic role of the principal in the Islamic boarding school educational institution is not only limited to the administrative aspect, but also an important foundation in maintaining the integrity and relevance of the pesantren in the context of modern education.

Characteristics of a Principal

In the context of the development of pesantren-based educational institutions, the characteristics of school principals play a crucial role. Leadership theory highlights that the principal not only acts as an administrator, but also as a leader who has the responsibility to shape the vision, inspire, and motivate the entire educational community (Nabila & Fathurrohman, 2022). Affirmation that traits such as discipline, clear vision, and a democratic approach determine success in formulating and implementing strategies for the growth of pesantren (Tsauro & Wahidah, 2023). The characteristics of school principals that emerge are an important factor in the development of pesantren-based educational institutions. The findings show that school principals who have traits such as discipline, a clear vision, and democracy tend to be more successful in formulating and implementing strategies that support the growth of Islamic boarding schools.

In the context of the research location at MTs Nurul Qur'an Patokan-Kraksaan, the characteristics of a disciplined principal, having a clear vision, and a democratic approach are very relevant to the challenges and dynamics that may be faced by the Islamic boarding school educational institution.

First, school principals who have disciplined nature at MTs Nurul Qur'an can play an important role in maintaining order and consistency in the implementation of educational strategies. With the presence of disciplined leadership, the daily management process of the school such as lesson schedules, extracurricular activities, and school rule enforcement can be carried out efficiently. This is very important considering that Islamic boarding schools often have a strong culture of discipline in carrying out educational and religious routines.

Second, the principal with a clear vision can help MTs Nurul Qur'an set a sharp and inspiring direction in the development of pesantren education. With a focused vision, the principal can move the entire educational community toward desired goals, such as improving the quality of religious education, increasing student participation in religious activities, or improving relationships with local communities.

Finally, the democratic approach of principals at MTs Nurul Qur'an can help strengthen the engagement and participatory skills of various stakeholders, including teachers, students, parents, and the surrounding community. By involving them in the decision-making process, the principal can ensure that the educational strategies adopted reflect the needs and expectations of the entire educational community, as well as strengthen the sense of belonging and commitment to the success of the Islamic boarding school.

This analysis shows that the characteristics of a school principal who is disciplined, has a clear vision, and applies a democratic approach is very relevant in the context of MTs Nurul Qur'an Patokan-Kraksaan. Disciplined leadership helps maintain order and consistency in the implementation of educational strategies, which is important in maintaining a strong culture of discipline in Islamic boarding schools. Furthermore, the principal with a clear vision is able to provide a sharp and inspiring direction for the entire educational community, guiding them towards the desired goals. The democratic approach of school principals strengthens the involvement of all stakeholders in the decision-making process, thus ensuring that educational strategies reflect the needs and expectations of the entire educational community.

Strengthening the Identity of Islamic Boarding Schools

The principal strengthens the identity of the pesantren through the integration of religious teachings with the modern curriculum. This creates a learning environment rich in religious values, as well as preserving the cultural heritage of the pesantren. The actions of school principals in strengthening the identity of pesantren through the integration of religious teachings with modern curricula have a significant impact on the learning environment (Maulidia & Sanjani, 2023; Susanto et al., 2022). By combining religious values with curriculum materials that are relevant to the needs of the times, the learning environment in pesantren becomes more diverse and rich in meaning. Students not only gain a deep understanding of religious teachings, but are also equipped with the knowledge and skills needed in the modern era. This integration also helps to maintain the cultural heritage of the Islamic boarding school, which is the hallmark and pride of the institution.

The integration of religious teachings with modern curricula also opens up space for the development of critical and reflective thinking in students. By learning how religious values can be applied in the context of daily life and global issues, students are invited to consider the moral and ethical implications of every action they take. This not only enhances their understanding of religious values, but also helps them become responsible individuals and aware of the social impact of their actions. In addition, this integration also strengthens the relationship between the pesantren and the local community and the surrounding environment. By emphasizing religious values in the curriculum, pesantren can act as a center for moral and spiritual development for the surrounding community. This creates opportunities for Islamic boarding schools to be more involved in social activities and community empowerment, as well as strengthen the network of cooperation between educational institutions, the community, and other stakeholders.

At MTs Nurul Qur'an Patokan-Kraksaan, the principal plays a key role in strengthening the identity of the pesantren through the integration of religious teachings with the modern curriculum. This step not only creates a learning environment rich in religious values, but also maintains the cultural heritage of the Islamic boarding school. This integration opens a window for the development of critical and reflective thinking in students, inviting them to consider the moral and ethical implications of their actions in daily life and global issues. In this process, pesantren becomes not only an educational institution, but also a center for moral and spiritual development for the surrounding community.

The impact of this integration is significant on the learning environment. Curriculum materials that are relevant to the needs of the times are combined with religious values, creating a diverse and meaningful learning atmosphere for students. They not only gain a deep understanding of religious teachings, but are also equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to face today's challenges. In addition, this integration strengthens the relationship between the pesantren and the local community and the surrounding environment. Pesantren is not only a place of education, but also a center for community interaction and empowerment, strengthening cooperation with various parties in advancing education and community welfare.

Utilization of Information Technology

Madrasah heads actively utilize information technology in the learning process to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of teaching. The use of this technology includes the use of educational software, online learning platforms, and electronic communication with education stakeholders. The influence of technology on schools can be very beneficial in several aspects (Permana et al., 2021; Fachrudin, 2021; Caesarani et al., 2022). *First*, technology allows for the presentation of learning materials that are more interesting, interactive, and relevant to the needs of students. Online learning apps and platforms provide diverse educational content tailored to individual learning styles. *Second*, the use of technology simplifies school administration processes such as student data management, lesson scheduling, and academic reporting, saving time and resources. *Third*, technology facilitates the involvement of stakeholders, including teachers, students, parents, and the community, through electronic communication, online learning platforms, and social media. *Fourth*, students develop digital skills that are essential for success in the digital age, such as problem-solving and communicating effectively. *Fifth*, school access to global educational resources such as e-books, online courses, and collaborative projects with other schools broadens students' and teachers' horizons and improves the quality of learning.

In the context of MTs Nurul Qur'an Patokan-Kraksaan, the presence of information technology is one of the important aspects that the head of the madrasah strives for to advance the learning system. Through the use of educational software, teachers can access diverse and up-to-date educational resources, as well as compile learning materials tailored to students' needs and interests. The use of online learning platforms allows students to access learning materials from anywhere and anytime, facilitating self-paced and collaborative learning.

Electronic communication initiated by the head of the madrasah strengthens the involvement of all education stakeholders. Parents can monitor their children's progress in real-time through communication platforms, while teachers can quickly provide feedback and guidance to students. This creates an integrated learning ecosystem that is responsive to individual needs, strengthening synergy between educational institutions, teachers, students, and parents.

The efforts of madrasah heads in utilizing information technology not only aim to improve the efficiency of teaching in the classroom, but also to create an inclusive, flexible, and results-oriented learning environment. By continuing to develop and strengthen the use of information technology, MTs Nurul Qur'an Patokan-Kraksaan has the potential to become an innovative and adaptive educational model in this digital era.

Resource Management and Partnerships

Madrasah heads are effective in managing resources and building partnerships with local communities, foundations, and government agencies. This strategy supports the sustainability and growth of Islamic boarding school educational institutions. According to human resource management theory, good leadership within educational institutions is not only related to academic ability, but also the ability to manage resources effectively (Diavano, 2022; Supriatna, 2023; Hamdani, 2021). In this context, madrasah heads who are able to efficiently manage human resources, finances, and infrastructure facilities can create a productive work environment and meet the learning needs of students.

In addition, building partnerships with local communities, foundations, and government agencies is also important to support the sustainability and growth of Islamic boarding school educational institutions. Organizational management theory highlights the importance of collaboration and collaborative networks in achieving organizational goals. By establishing good relationships with the surrounding community, madrasah heads can expand access to additional resources, such as grants, training, or assistance in the development of school infrastructure. Thus, the strategy of the head of the madrasah in managing resources and building partnerships not only contributes to the financial sustainability of the Islamic boarding school educational institution, but also strengthens the relationship between the educational institution and the surrounding community. This creates a conducive environment for the development of pesantren education and strengthens the position of the institution in meeting the demands of education in the modern era.

Through research at MTs Nurul Qur'an, it was found that madrasah heads who are effective in managing resources and building partnerships have a significant impact on the progress of Islamic boarding school educational institutions. Efficient management of resources, including human resources, finance, and infrastructure, helps create a quality and productive learning environment for students. Madrasah heads who are able to make optimal use of existing resources can increase the effectiveness of teaching and learning in schools.

In addition, partnerships built with local communities, foundations, and government agencies expand schools' access to additional resources that support educational development. Collaboration with external parties helps overcome various challenges, from lack of funds to the development of school infrastructure. Furthermore, this partnership strengthens the relationship between the school and the surrounding community, creating a close and supportive bond in advancing education in the environment.

These findings confirm that resource management and partnership development are key factors in improving the quality and sustainability of Islamic boarding school educational institutions. By paying attention to and optimizing these two aspects, MTs Nurul Qur'an and similar educational institutions can continue to develop and make a positive contribution to society and the world of education at large. The importance of leadership oriented towards community development in the context of pesantren education. Partnerships with various parties and efficient management of resources are key factors in ensuring the sustainability of Islamic boarding schools.

This research provides a comprehensive overview of the various strategies of school principals in developing Islamic boarding school-based educational institutions. These findings not only provide insight into best practices in the management of pesantren education, but also provide a foundation for the development of more effective educational policies and practices in the future. However, more longitudinal research can provide a deeper understanding of the long-term impact of the strategies adopted by madrasah heads.



Episode 1: The Principal's Role

This research contributes an in-depth understanding of the various characteristics of school principals that play a role in the context of Islamic boarding school educational institutions, such as discipline, clear vision, democratic approach, and effective resource management. The contribution of this research not only provides a more comprehensive view of the role of school principals, but also provides valuable insights for leadership development in the pesantren education environment. Furthermore, this research also makes a significant contribution to strengthening the identity of pesantren through the integration of religious teachings with modern curriculum and the use of information technology in the learning process. By combining the tradition of pesantren with technological innovation, this research stimulates the growth and sustainability of pesantren educational institutions, while strengthening their position in meeting the demands of education in this digital era. In addition, this study highlights the importance of resource management and partnership building in the context of MTs Nurul Qur'an and possibly also in other Islamic boarding school educational institutions. By strengthening resource management and forging strong partnerships with local communities, Islamic boarding schools can continue to grow and have a greater positive impact on students and the surrounding community.

CONCLUSION

This research, conducted with a focus on MTs Nurul Qur'an Patokan-Kraksaan, reveals that the characteristics of school principals, such as discipline, clear vision, democratic approach, and ability to manage resources, have a key role in the development of Islamic boarding school educational institutions. Principals who meet these characteristics have the ability to lead effectively, strengthen the identity of the pesantren through the integration of religious teachings with modern curriculum, and utilize information technology to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of learning. It was found that resource management and partnership building with local communities are also important aspects fought for by school principals to ensure the sustainability and growth of Islamic boarding school educational institutions. By combining all these aspects, this study confirms that quality and strategic leadership from principals can be key in meeting challenges and seizing opportunities in a rapidly changing era of education. This conclusion provides an important foundation for the development of Islamic boarding school education policies and practices that are more adaptive, inclusive, and relevant to the demands of the times, especially in MTs Nurul Qur'an Patokan-Kraksaan.

4 Conclusion

This research, conducted with a focus on MTs Nurul Qur'an Patokan-Kraksaan, reveals that the characteristics of school principals, such as discipline, clear vision, democratic approach, and ability to manage resources, have a key role in the development of Islamic boarding school educational institutions. Principals who meet these characteristics have the ability to lead effectively, strengthen the identity of the pesantren through the integration of religious teachings with modern curriculum, and utilize information technology to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of learning. It was found that resource management and partnership building with local communities are also important aspects fought for by school principals to ensure the sustainability and growth of Islamic boarding school educational institutions. By combining all these aspects, this study confirms that quality and strategic leadership from principals can be key in meeting challenges and seizing opportunities in a rapidly changing era of education. This conclusion provides an important foundation for the development of Islamic boarding school education policies and practices that are more adaptive, inclusive, and relevant to the demands of the times, especially in MTs Nurul Qur'an Patokan-Kraksaan.

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