

## Improving The Religious Character of Educators Through Exemplary of Principles

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DOI: <http://doi.org/10.33650/al-tanzim.v6i3.3691>

Received: 27 April 2022; Recieved in Revised Form 6 April 2022, Accepted: 28 May 2022, Available online: 1 June 2022

### Abstract:

This paper aims to analyze the principal's good strategy in improving the religious character of teachers and education personnel at SDN 2 Mimbaan Situbondo. This paper uses qualitative research with a case study approach. The data collection technique was carried out with participatory observation, unstructured interviews, and documentation. Data analysts follow the Huberman model. The findings of this article are: 1) Forms of exemplary principles in improving the religious character of teachers, namely; honest, disciplined, fond of worship, trust, and responsibility; 2) Implementation of exemplary principles in improving the Islamic character of educators with stages of value transformation, value transactions and value transinternalization. This research implies that the principal has a positive effect on all school members with the exemplary model that is exemplified.

**Keywords:** *Exemplary Principals, Religious Characters, Educators, Staff*

### Abstrak:

Paper ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis tentang strategi keteladanan kepala sekolah dalam meningkatkan karakter religius guru dan tenaga kependidikan di SDN 2 Mimbaan Situbondo. Paper ini menggunakan jenis penelitian kualitatif dengan penekatan studi kasus. Teknik pengambilan data dilakuakn dengan observasi berperan serta, wawancara secara tidak terstruktur dan dokumentasi. Analisis data mengikuti model Huberman. Adapun temuan dari artikel ini adalah: 1) Bentuk keteladanan kepala sekolah dalam meningkatkan karakter religius guru yaitu; jujur, disiplin, gemar beribadah, amanah dan tanggung jawab; 2) Implementasi keteladanan kepala sekolah dalam meningkatkan karakter islami pendidik dengan tahapan transformasi nilai, transaksi nilai dan transinternalisasi nilai. Adapun Implikasi dari hasil riset ini adalah bahwa kepala sekolah memberikan efek positif bagi seluruh warga sekolah dengan model keteladanan yang di contohkan.

**Kata Kunci:** *Keteladanan Kepala Sekolah, Karakter religius, Pendidik, Tenaga Kependidikan*

*Please cite this article in APA style as:*

Indawati, N., Kartiko, A., Suyitno, S., Sirojuddin, A., & Fuad, Z. (2022). Improving The Religious Character of Educators Through Exemplary of Principles. *Al-Tanzim: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam*, 6(3), 789-801.

## INTRODUCTION

Principal leadership must be able to mobilize school resources from planning and implementation to program evaluation (Fr et al., 2021; Suhifatullah, 2022). As a manager, the principal must use all school resources to fulfill the established goals (Arifin et al., 2018). In addition, the principal must be able to deal with various school problems, think analytically and conceptually, and be an intermediary teacher in solving problems faced by educators and educational staff as their subordinates. He or she must also be wise in attitude and decision-making and a role model for all school members (Siregar et al., 2021; Tunnisa et al., 2021). The principal can detail National Education's functions and goals. The school's head must deliver educational services that meet community expectations.

The administrators should not have any reservations in making their tactics and policies. In general, schools' quality must be improved to meet competency standards, and this requires the backing of a large number of advocates (Subiyantoro, 2022). Among them are school principals, and professional teachers are one of the school's inputs which have very influential duties and functions in the ongoing education process; therefore, professional principals are needed, as the fulfillment of good human resources having competencies that support their duties and functions in carrying out the process. Education in education units (Baharun et al., 2021; Hamzah et al., 2016). Other elements, like facilities and infrastructure, curriculum, and teaching and learning procedures, can also affect the quality of education (Amzat, 2022; Ma'arif et al., 2022).

The principal, as management, must optimize learning activities to satisfy client expectations (Dian et al., 2022). Schools create creative and inventive human resources to address community demands in formal and informal labor markets (Santosa & Devi, 2021). Education managers must find and implement a new management strategy that can encourage school quality improvement (Javed et al., 2020).

Based on initial observations, SD Negeri 2 Mimbaan is a school that was only established in 1998. Precisely after the reformation era broke out in Indonesia, the collapse of the New Order. Initially, the purpose of establishing this school was only for underprivileged children, but thanks to cooperation with all elements of society, this school began to develop.

SD Negeri 2 Mimbaan, Panji sub-district, is one of the pilot schools for Islamic character education in Situbondo district, approved by the education office with a decree numbered 421/6523/431.212.5.1/2017. SD Negeri 2 Mimbaan, Panji sub-district, was accredited A in 2016 and was followed by the ratification of Islamic character education pilot schools in the Situbondo district. This started from the principal's initiative, a role model for educators and teaching staff to make breakthroughs with the formation of Islamic character, which is a planned and systematic effort to make someone know, care and internalize Islamic values so that someone behaves as a human being. For school principals, character education is more than teaching right from wrong. Character education helps teachers comprehend, feel, and do good.

To realize good habits, the principal applies the exemplary method to set a good example or example to educators and education staff in everyday life in the school environment (Haekal et al., 2022). This method is a guideline to act as the realization of educator goals. Educators and education staff tend to imitate their leader, namely the principal; this should be done by all education experts, basically because psychologically, students do like to imitate, not only good ones but also bad ones. Giving examples to educators and education staff or doing it before their subordinates do, is not only in the form of writing but must be realized. So before someone can do it, the principal must always have a good idea to be realized for educators and education staff. The principal will be respected by his subordinates if his behavior can be imitated. This automatically makes subordinates reluctant and makes school principals an excellent example to be imitated by educators and education staff.

This is not an easy job for a school principal who must be a manager. A top school needs to have morals in behavior, for example, the prophet Muhammad SAW who has a noble character. He is an example for Muslims around the world. The example or example shown by others can give knowledge to those who see it. This also happens in the school environment. All things that can be seen by students, especially the behavior shown by teachers at school, will become imitation objects for students. As Syaiful Bahri explained, the success of education in schools plays a vital role because teachers are role models for their students. Even teachers are not only role models for their students but also role models for other communities. Thus, the teacher is a role model for students and the surrounding community. The behavior shown by the teacher in this school can be used by the teacher as a weapon to form disciplined students through an exemplary process.

The results of Mathodah's (2019) research show that the example of the principal has a significant effect on discipline and improves teacher performance. The principal's example makes teachers more effective and professional in their performance (Eisenschmidt et al., 2019). The results of Suriansyah & Aslamiah's (2015) research show that the exemplary principle of the school is carried out using the method of habituation and discipline. The example of the principal can form a conducive school culture. Meanwhile, Altar (2014) explained that the teacher's discipline increased due to the example of the principal. The principal builds an excellent academic culture and sets an example for all school members (Fathih et al., 2021). From the explanation above, this research tries to complement the previous research that the principal's role model is focused on aspects of the religious character of teachers and education staff. This article aims to identify and analyze the form of exemplary principles, implementation, supporting factors, and inhibiting exemplary principles in improving the Islamic character of educators and education staff.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This research was carried out with a qualitative approach because the focus was on exemplary principals in improving the religious character of

educators and education staff at SD Negeri 2 Mimbaan for the 2019/2020 school year.

This article does not test hypotheses and does not use hypotheses but only describes and analyzes information as it is according to variables (Moleong, 1989). Following the main problems and objectives to be achieved in this research, this research uses the type of applied research so that the results can be immediately understood for practical purposes and to describe the example of the principal in improving the Islamic character of educators and education staff at SD Negeri 2 Mimbaan for the 2019/2020 school year.

Sources of data in this study were obtained by researchers from key informants, namely people who can provide information to researchers, such as school principals and teachers, and data related to research, be it primary data or secondary data. Suharsimi (Arikunto, 1983) argues that the data source is the research subject to which the data is attached. Data sources can be objects, motion, humans, places, etc.

Sources of data were obtained from three methods, namely the interview method, the observation method by observing educators and education staff at SD Negeri 2 Mimbaan Panji Situbondo, and the documentation method about an overview at SD Negeri 2 Mimbaan Panji Situbondo, which includes the history of the establishment of the SD, vision and mission, organizational structure, teacher data, student data, facilities owned, schedule of activities, and other matters related to this research.

Data analysis is a process that is carried out through recording, compiling, processing, interpreting, and connecting the meaning of the data related to the research problem. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), data analysis in qualitative research can be carried out both during data collection and after data collection through the stages of analysis. These stages are data reduction, data presentation, and conclusions or verifying the findings. While the validity of the data, the authors obtained valid interpretation findings using four examination techniques: Extension of participation, Persistence of observation, Triangulation, and Peer-to-peer examination through discussion (Creswell, 2012).

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Exemplary principals at School**

The exemplary Islamic school principal becomes a view for teachers and students in learning. Teachers are expected to encourage students to pray five times a day at home by scheduling interviews with students at the beginning of each lesson. The school principal's recommendation is also an example for educators or teachers to pray diligently. The principal is a role model for teachers and students with the policies implemented in schools from Monday to Saturday, even in Islamic schools. Every Monday before learning or student entry is scheduled by the PAI teacher to recite the Koran, Tuesday and Wednesday prayer reading lessons with meaning, Thursday do morning exercises but before learning the students recite the Koran, Friday the Koran from grade 1 to grade 6 and Saturday cleaning the school environment. From

each individual's perspective, the program implementers and activities at SD Negeri 2 Mimbaan have implemented character values such as compassion, likes to give advice, prioritizing thinking and *ijtihad*, honesty in science, and fairness in science all things.

In addition to teachers and other education personnel, school principals have a vital role in successfully developing character education in schools, especially in coordinating, mobilizing, and harmonizing all available educational resources (Zepeda et al., 2014). The principal is the highest leader who is very influential in determining the school's progress. Principal leadership is a factor that can encourage the realization of the school's vision, mission, and goals through programs that are implemented in stages and planned (Szeto, 2020).

In the success of developing character education in schools, principals must at least carry out various program activities, both those related to the school program and those related to the principal's daily tasks. *First*, for those related to the school program as a whole, the steps that must be taken care to look at the education calendar so that effective days are found, half effective (because there are certain activities) and ineffective days, such as holidays; the number of practical and half-effective days is the basis for the preparation of annual programs, semester programs, and lesson plans; the preparation of extracurricular activity programs is sought to be placed outside of study hours, so as not to reduce effective learning hours; periodically evaluate the implementation of character education by involving all teachers and school staff so that obstacles and obstacles are found, as well as the various progress that has been passed. *Second*, related to the principal's daily tasks, what needs to be done are as follows, allocating more time for improving the quality of character education, student affairs, teacher and employee development, and school development; compared to administrative activities; providing particular time to evaluate the course of character education; make a work schedule with time details that all school members know; periodically provide time to meet/receive teachers and staff and students, with a schedule that is known to all school members.

The preparation of school program plans can accommodate various programs related to developing values, such as discipline, respect, love of the homeland, love of science, etc (Ro'is & Rokhman, 2021). In addition, the preparation of school program plans must involve various interested parties (stakeholders), for example, teachers, students, administration/employees, parents, and community leaders who have an interest in the school (Smakman et al., 2021).

In addition, school principals try to integrate all parties involved in the effort to implement character education, for example, teachers, school committees, education staff, and the community. However, in practice in the field, not all teachers are actively involved in building student character. Some about the obligation to teach as a teacher. Likewise, with parents, only some are concerned with forming children's character. The reason is partly that they are

busy working, so they do not have quality time. At the same time, the behavior and character of children are first formed in the family environment.

Character education is currently a topic that is widely discussed among educators. Character education is vital to enhancing HR because it determines a nation's success. Early childhood is a "golden" but "essential" time for character formation (Hidayat, 2016; Rony, 2021). The principal's good form is in the form of characteristics that must be possessed, namely honesty, religion, tolerance, discipline, hard work, creativity, independence, democratic, curiosity, national spirit, love for the homeland, respect for achievement, friendly/communicative, love peace, love to read, care for the environment, care about social and responsibility. The exemplary form is applied by habituation and giving examples (Wahjosumidjo, 2010).

In this regard, the character contains five formulations or reach or integrity as follows: a) attitudes and behavior about God, b) attitudes and behavior about oneself, c) attitudes and behavior about family, d) attitudes and behavior about society and the nation, and e) attitudes and behavior about the natural surroundings.

### **Implementation of exemplary principals in improving the Islamic character of educators**

Starting from the principal must be able to mobilize school resources, about planning and evaluate character education, character education development, curriculum development, learning, workforce management, learning facilities and resources, student services, school relations with the community, and creating a school climate (Torres, 2022).

Regarding leadership, Daft (1999) is quoted as saying that the success of character building will be determined not only by the strength of learning but also by the strength of management in the relevant school organizational unit. The strength of management depends on the principal as a leader. The success of character education depends on the principal's leadership in designing, implementing, and assessing it (Lai, 2015). For this purpose, the principal must have a commendable character and be able to implement it in carrying out his duties and functions in the school and its environment as an educator, manager, administrator, supervisor, leader, innovator, or motivator; as well as being a role model for all educators and education staff in schools and their environment. (Mulyasa, 2021). In addition to having and being able to apply the principles of good leadership in managing schools, principals are also required to take the initiative and communicate well with teachers and administration (Mulyasa, 2003).

The principal can also develop activities to improve the teaching and learning process or other activities in intellectual and emotional development. The principal needs to know for sure the content of character education that is integrated into the teacher's learning; with the intention of students who are not by applicable norms, the principal can remind the teacher of actions that deviate from the character values developed by the school.

SDN 2 Mimbaan formally implemented the Islamic Religious Education (IRE) development program as part of the school's cultural development

program starting in 2007; at the same time, the school also began implementing a policy on the use of Muslim clothing on Fridays as an effort to symbolize religion in schools. The principal sets an example for all school members with discipline in their duties, arrives on time, and sets an example in performing worship at school. Like presenting the results of interviews with IRE teachers, namely."

"We saw that the principal was very disciplined and concerned about how all school members dress. The school principal is neat and exemplary. The style of language in expressing opinions is also easy to understand. The principal always exemplifies a good personality and deserves to be imitated. Many students idolize school principals because the way he teaches and gives examples is very touching".

In internalizing religious values, Muhaimin (2009) cites that the internalization of character values goes through three stages; 1) *value transformation*: Principals interact and provide understanding regarding religious characters. The principal at SDN Mimbaan Situbondo provides information to all school members to apply discipline, trust, and responsibility to their respective duties; 2) *value transactions*, namely the stage of instilling values by carrying out two-way communication or interactions between students and teachers in reciprocal interactions. As for what was done by the Principal of SDN Mimbaan related to value transactions, namely, holding coordination meetings and communicating with teachers and students through apples and school activities; 3) *value trans internalization*; this stage is much deeper than just a transaction. In this stage, the appearance of education students face is no longer on the physical side but instead on the mental attitude.

The principal is also consistent and able to obey the rules of school discipline, such as discipline in attendance, the principal must also be present at school on time, and if the principal is present at school on time, the teacher will be present on time (Kouzes & Posner, 2011). On the other hand, if the principal is not on time, it is possible that the teacher will not attend on time because the teacher feels and assumes that he or she does not get coaching through the example given by the principal (Kutsyuruba et al., 2021).

The principal as a school leader who has a role as an educator, administrator, supervisor, innovator, and motivator, the principal must try to take actions that give birth to a willingness to work with enthusiasm and confidence in all his subordinates; the principal must dare to act decisively to enforce teacher discipline (Aalto et al., 2019). in the implementation of learning, prohibits teachers from asking for permission too often if there is no order in the implementation of spending will be disrupted. Act decisively in the sense that the principal must also take action by providing sanctions or reprimands for those who violate discipline or through an approach and understanding that teacher discipline in the implementation of learning is essential for school order (Susanti & Rokhman, 2022).

Helmawati (2017) says growing character should lead to cognitive, emotive, and actual value practice. To reach praxis, a person must desire to practice values (Aqib, 2011). This is called creation, and the decision-making process is conative. Character education should follow methodical processes, beginning with cognitive values and conative determination. Ki Hajar Dewantoro interpreted with taste and creativity.

Self-development activities are used to establish school culture and learning activity centers; 1) Routine activities are performed continually and consistently by educators. Monday ceremonies, state ceremonies, physical hygiene inspections, communal prayers, and greeting other educators; 2) Teachers' spontaneous activities, For example, collecting funds for a friend or community after a calamity; 3) Exemplary is the behavior and attitude of teachers, education professionals, and students who serve as role models for other educators. Discipline, cleanliness, kindness, attention, honesty, and hard work (Marini et al., 2018).

Character education is conditioned. Clean bathrooms, garbage cans, green yards with trees, and clever phrases posters in school corridors and classrooms. Parents and school committees must support this program for its successful implementation (Ródenas et al., 2014). Schools need to guarantee a cooperative relationship to get support. Schools may not be able to carry out the activities that have been programmed themselves, so it is necessary to find solutions with the school committee.

Furthermore, educational institutions must have the right principal. The fact is that school principals' professionalism, authority, and popularity can improve the quality of education, significantly improving teacher performance. In addition, it is essential to have a principal who has a strong example. This shows the complexity of the leadership's knowledge, experience, expertise and vision, and mission. If an educational institution has such a principle, it is possible to improve the quality of education.

Supporting factors in applying the example of the principal in improving the Islamic character of educators and education staff at SD Negeri 2 Mimbaan Situbondo for the 2019/2020 school year, among others. There is support from the supervisory coordinator at the elementary level in the Panji sub-district to enhance further the formation of the Islamic character of educators and education staff in schools. There is an increase in students' character with the existence of a school making a program of inculcating character values from the start. From grade 1, students are taught directly/practice good self-habitation inside and outside the classroom. Starting from the minor things such as etiquette in and out of class, manners of asking and giving opinions, etc.

There is an increase in the Islamic character of educators and education staff through the Islamic example of the principal based on the results of supervision carried out by the principal. For example; 1) presentation, so that educators have a brave and responsible attitude and mentality; 2) Performance. Instilling character values of honesty, independence, confidence, responsible, courageous; 3) Group discussion. Instilling the values of tolerance, mutual help, confidence, responsibility, etc. The form of perceived improvement is in the



academic field, for example, fostering and increasing interest in reading, being independent, creative, and achieving; it has an average output value of at least seven to get the overall winner.

The principal's capacity to handle each school component influences teaching and learning in schools (who is behind the school). The principal's ability is mainly tied to their knowledge and understanding of management and leadership and the responsibilities allotted to them. Often, the failure of education and learning in schools is caused by the principal's lack of comprehension of the required tasks. The success or failure of a school in accomplishing its goals, vision, and mission depends on the principal's administration and leadership, especially in mobilizing and empowering school components.

Factors inhibiting the application of exemplary principals in improving the Islamic character of educators and education staff at SD Negeri 2 Mimbaan Situbondo for the 2019/2020 school year, among others. It takes a long process to grow the Islamic character of educators and education staff at SD Negeri 2 Mimbaan Situbondo. This follows Khatib Ahmad Santut's theory, which states that exemplary always demands a consistent and continuous attitude in actions and noble character. Because once giving a bad example will tarnish all the noble character that has been built.

In the process, dynamic quality interactions between school principals, teachers, administrative staff, and students play a vital role, especially in adjusting various school activities to the demands of globalization, changes in society, the development of science and technology, as well as the demands of the situation, conditions, and environment. All of these are very demanding on the competence and professionalism of the principal to enable the creation of dynamic quality interactions.

## CONCLUSION

Implement exemplary principles in improving the Islamic character of educators and education staff at SD Negeri 2 Mimbaan through implementing Islamic character programs in daily behavior, religious activities at school, commemorating Islamic holidays and providing religious insight through workshops. Supporting factors in the application of exemplary principals in improving the Islamic character of educators and education staff at SD Negeri 2 Mimbaan, namely the support from the supervisory coordinator at the elementary level in the Panji sub-district, an increase in the Islamic character of educators and education staff through the Islamic example of the principal, the ability to the principal in managing each component. At the same time, the inhibiting factor is that it takes a long time to grow the Islamic character of educators and education staff at SD Negeri 2 Mimbaan Situbondo.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Thanks to the Research Team from the Institut Pesantren KH Abdul Chalim Mojokerto and P3II (Indonesian Islamic Education Research Association).

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