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Leadership Management in Improving the Quality of Education: A Case Study at MAN Sibolga

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ABSTRACT

Leadership management is a crucial factor in educational administration, as it is closely associated with policy formulation, resource management, and the development of organizational culture. This study aims to describe the role of madrasah principals' leadership management in improving the quality of education at MAN Sibolga, identify the challenges encountered, and examine the strategies implemented to address these challenges. This study employed a qualitative approach using a descriptive method. The research was conducted at MAN Sibolga, Sipange Village, Sayurmatangi District, in November 2024. Data were obtained from the madrasah principal as the key informant, supported by vice principals and teachers as additional informants. Data were collected through observations and interviews and subsequently analyzed through data reduction, data presentation, conclusion drawing, and verification. The findings reveal that the principal's leadership is demonstrated through the development of a religious culture, particularly communal Yasin recitation activities, efforts to secure financial support from the community and donors, facilitation of access to educational assistance for students in need, and opportunities for teachers to develop entrepreneurial activities. The main challenges identified include budget constraints, the economic circumstances of some students, the welfare of non-permanent teachers, and coordination difficulties in off-site classes. This study concludes that the principal's leadership management plays an important role in directing educational development programs. However, improving educational quality requires adequate financial support, strengthened teacher competencies, and collaboration among the madrasah, government, parents, and the community.

leadership management; madrasah principal; educational quality; Islamic senior high school; Islamic education.

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INTRODUCTION

Leadership is one of the essential aspects of organizational management, including the management of educational institutions. Leadership is not merely concerned with an individual's ability to direct organizational members but also encompasses vision formulation, decision-making, resource management, and the establishment of an organizational culture that supports the achievement of institutional objectives. In the educational context, the leadership of school or madrasah principals plays a strategic role in coordinating various educational components to ensure that teaching and learning processes are conducted effectively and sustainably (Hadi, 2022).

Education serves as a fundamental instrument for developing human resources who possess knowledge, strong character, and the ability to adapt to societal changes. Therefore, improving educational quality requires well-directed institutional management and effective leadership capable of developing the potential of all members of the school community. Educational leaders are also expected to possess broad perspectives, sound decision-making abilities, and a strong commitment to the development of students and educators (Hidayat et al., 2019).

Within the national education system, Islamic education makes a significant contribution to the development of knowledge as well as the formation of students' character and moral values. Islamic educational institutions seek to integrate religious education with the acquisition of knowledge and skills necessary for participation in society. Madrasahs represent a form of Islamic educational institution that integrates Islamic values with general academic instruction in their educational practices (Watoni, 2018).

The development of madrasahs in Indonesia highlights the important role of Islamic educational institutions in addressing societal needs. The existence and sustainability of madrasahs are closely associated with institutional administrators' efforts to maintain public trust by providing education that is relevant to students' needs. These developments also require madrasahs to continuously improve institutional management, instructional practices, and the quality of educational services (Muhajir, 2010).

One of the factors influencing educational practices in madrasahs is the leadership of the madrasah principal. The principal is responsible for directing institutional programs, coordinating teaching staff, managing educational funding, and establishing relationships with parents and the wider community. Different leadership approaches may influence program implementation and the educational climate developed within each madrasah (Sujarwo, 2017).

MAN Sibolga is an Islamic educational institution that provides educational services to the surrounding community. In implementing its

educational programs, the madrasah faces several challenges, particularly financial constraints, the economic circumstances of some students, the welfare of non-permanent teachers, and the need for effective coordination across geographically separated classes. These circumstances require the madrasah principal to develop leadership strategies that extend beyond administrative responsibilities to include the empowerment of the madrasah community and the strengthening of community support.

Based on these circumstances, examining the leadership management practices of the principal of MAN Sibolga is essential to understanding how leadership policies are implemented to support improvements in educational quality. This study also seeks to identify the challenges encountered and the strategies employed to minimize the impact of limited resources. Specifically, the research addresses three main questions: (1) How does the principal of MAN Sibolga implement leadership management to improve educational quality? (2) What challenges are encountered in implementing educational programs? and (3) What strategies does the madrasah principal employ to overcome these challenges? Accordingly, this study aims to describe the leadership practices of the principal of MAN Sibolga, identify the factors hindering improvements in educational quality, and explain the management strategies implemented to address various institutional constraints.

RESEARCH METHODE

This study employed a qualitative approach using a descriptive research method. The qualitative approach was selected because the study sought to understand leadership practices, institutional policies, and informants' experiences within the context of educational administration at MAN Sibolga. The descriptive method was used to provide a comprehensive account of the phenomena under investigation based on information obtained from the field. This approach is consistent with Moleong's (2022) perspective on qualitative research, which emphasizes understanding social phenomena through interaction with and observation of research participants within their real-life contexts. The study was conducted at MAN Sibolga, which, according to the research manuscript, is located in Sipange Village, Sayurmatangi District, along the Padangsidempuan-Panyabungan Road. Data collection was carried out in November 2024.

The research data consisted of primary and secondary sources. Primary data were obtained from the principal of MAN Sibolga, who served as the key informant and provided information regarding institutional policies, educational programs, and leadership strategies. Secondary data were obtained

from vice principals and teachers who served as supporting informants. Information from these informants was utilized to develop a more comprehensive understanding of policy implementation and the challenges associated with educational management at the madrasah. Data were collected through observation and interviews.

Observation. Observations were conducted to examine policies and activities related to the principal's leadership, including the implementation of religious programs and the management of educational activities.

Interviews. Interviews were conducted with informants relevant to the research focus to obtain detailed information regarding leadership policies, financial constraints, the conditions of teaching personnel, and strategies implemented to support improvements in educational quality.

Data were analyzed qualitatively through three main stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. These stages were based on the data analysis procedures described by Sugiyono (2010).

First, data reduction involved selecting, summarizing, and focusing on information relevant to the research objectives, particularly leadership policies, financial constraints, and strategies for improving educational quality.

Second, data display involved systematically organizing information into narrative descriptions to facilitate an understanding of the relationships among leadership practices, identified challenges, and the strategies employed to address them.

Third, conclusion drawing and verification involved formulating research findings based on the analyzed data and examining their consistency with the information obtained throughout the research process.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. The Role of the Madrasah Principal's Leadership in Improving Educational Quality

The findings indicate that the principal of MAN Sibolga plays a significant role in determining policy directions and implementing educational programs. This role is reflected in efforts to develop a religious culture, strengthen community support, address students' needs, and explore alternative solutions to help educators overcome economic constraints. The principal's leadership is not limited to administrative responsibilities but also involves coordinating various available resources. Under conditions of limited resources, the principal is required to establish priorities and develop strategies that align with institutional needs. These findings demonstrate that leadership is an essential component of madrasah management. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of

leadership policies should be assessed through program implementation and evidence of actual improvements rather than merely through the existence of instructions or established policies

2. Development of Religious Culture Through Communal Yasin Recitation

One of the policies identified in this study is the implementation of regular communal Yasin recitation activities among students. These activities form part of the madrasah's efforts to strengthen religious practices and foster social interaction among members of the madrasah community. Religious activities can serve as a means of instilling spiritual values, discipline, togetherness, and social responsibility when implemented systematically and accompanied by an understanding of the values being taught. Nafisah et al. (2023) discuss Yasin recitation as a spiritual activity that can be incorporated into individual and community practices.

In the context of MAN Sibolga, regular Yasin recitation is regarded as an integral component of developing students' Islamic character. These activities also have the potential to strengthen relationships among students, teachers, and parents through their involvement in religious and community activities. Religious-based learning within school and community environments has also been discussed by Siregar (2021). Nevertheless, religious activities represent only one dimension of educational quality development and cannot serve as the sole indicator of educational success. Comprehensive educational improvement also requires attention to instructional quality, teacher competence, students' academic development, institutional management, and the availability of educational facilities and infrastructure. Therefore, religious habituation programs should be integrated with systematically planned learning activities and character development initiatives so that their contributions to educational objectives can be evaluated more effectively.

3. Financial Constraints as an Obstacle to Improving Educational Quality

The research findings reveal that budget limitations constitute one of the major challenges in implementing educational programs at MAN Sibolga. These constraints may affect the madrasah's capacity to implement institutional development initiatives and meet educational operational requirements. Educational financing is an essential component of educational administration because various instructional activities and institutional development programs require financial resources. Mesiono et al. (2021) emphasize the importance of financing in supporting the sustainability of educational provision.

Educational financing may include direct expenditures associated with school activities, students, and families, as well as indirect expenditures supported by government and community contributions. Systematic financial

management is necessary to ensure that available resources are allocated according to educational priorities (Sagala, 2017).

Within the context of this study, financial constraints require the madrasah principal to strengthen planning capabilities, establish program priorities, and expand support from various stakeholders. Budget management should also be conducted transparently and accountably to ensure that the utilization of financial resources can be justified to relevant stakeholders.

Therefore, improving educational quality requires not only the principal's ability to secure funding sources but also the capacity to ensure that available financial resources are utilized effectively to support instructional processes and meet students' educational needs.

4. Students' Economic Conditions and Efforts to Obtain Educational Assistance

The economic circumstances of some students represent another challenge in educational provision at MAN Sibolga. Financial difficulties experienced by families may affect students' ability to meet their educational needs and potentially hinder the continuity of their education. In response to these circumstances, the madrasah principal seeks to establish communication and negotiate with relevant authorities to facilitate educational assistance for students in need, including the assistance program referred to in the original research manuscript as *Bantuan Siswa Miskin* (BSM), or Financial Assistance for Disadvantaged Students.

These efforts highlight the importance of leadership in connecting students' educational needs with available support mechanisms. The madrasah principal is responsible not only for managing internal institutional activities but also for serving as a liaison among the madrasah, government agencies, and the wider community.

To optimize the effectiveness of these strategies, applications for educational assistance should be based on accurate assessments of students' needs, compliance with program requirements, and systematic monitoring of assistance utilization. These measures can help ensure that financial support reaches eligible students and contributes to the continuity of their education.

5. Teacher Welfare and Entrepreneurship Development

This study also identifies teacher welfare as one of the challenges faced by the madrasah principal. The research manuscript indicates that many educators at MAN Sibolga are employed as non-civil servant or honorary teachers, making limited income an important concern in human resource management. These circumstances require particular attention to teacher welfare because educators play a direct role in implementing instructional activities. Support for

teachers should encompass professional competency development, the establishment of a conducive working environment, and the management of teacher welfare in accordance with applicable regulations.

One strategy identified in the study involves providing opportunities for teachers to develop entrepreneurial activities, such as cooperatives and snack food businesses. These initiatives are intended to provide alternative sources of additional income. Entrepreneurship development can serve as a form of economic empowerment when properly planned and implemented without interfering with teachers' primary professional responsibilities. However, such activities should be regarded as supplementary alternatives rather than substitutes for the responsibilities of educational institutions and the government in ensuring teacher welfare.

Entrepreneurship programs should also consider business management capabilities, capital requirements, the distribution of responsibilities, and the sustainability of business activities. With adequate planning, these initiatives have the potential to enhance teachers' economic skills and strengthen a collaborative culture within the madrasah environment.

6. Coordination Challenges in Geographically Separated Classes

The existence of geographically separated classes also presents challenges in the management of MAN Sibolga. According to the research manuscript, the madrasah principal's visits to these off-site classes are scheduled twice a week. This situation necessitates more systematic coordination to ensure that instructional activities and emerging challenges at these locations remain effectively monitored. Limited opportunities for direct visits may affect the speed of information dissemination and the resolution of instructional problems. Therefore, the principal needs to establish coordination mechanisms that maintain effective communication even when daily on-site visits are not feasible.

Several potential measures include appointing coordinators responsible for off-site classes, preparing regular instructional activity reports, conducting scheduled coordination meetings, and utilizing available communication technologies. These measures represent management recommendations that should be adapted to the actual circumstances of the madrasah and should not all be interpreted as practices empirically confirmed by this study.

Strengthening coordination is necessary to ensure that the principal's policies are implemented consistently across all instructional locations and that the needs of teachers and students are addressed more systematically.

7. Leadership Strategies to Support the Improvement of Educational Quality

Based on the research findings, the leadership strategies implemented by the principal of MAN Sibolga can be classified into four main areas. First, the development of a religious culture through regular communal Yasin recitation. This strategy aims to strengthen spiritual values and foster students' character development. Second, strengthening financial support by establishing relationships with donors and community members willing to provide voluntary contributions. This strategy can expand the sources of financial support available for implementing madrasah programs while maintaining transparency and accountability in financial management. Third, facilitating educational assistance for students experiencing economic difficulties. This strategy aims to reduce financial barriers that may adversely affect the continuity of students' education.

Fourth, providing opportunities for teachers to develop entrepreneurial activities as alternative sources of additional income. This strategy reflects efforts to empower educators economically in response to financial limitations, although its implementation must continue to prioritize teachers' primary professional responsibilities. These four strategies demonstrate that leadership management at MAN Sibolga encompasses spiritual, social, financial, and human resource empowerment dimensions. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of these strategies in improving educational quality should be assessed through measurable indicators, including student learning outcomes, student attendance, instructional quality, teacher competency development, and the sustainability of madrasah programs.

This study provides an overview of leadership strategies implemented within a single educational institution. Consequently, its findings cannot automatically be generalized to all madrasahs. Further research incorporating more detailed empirical data is necessary to examine the relationship between leadership policies and improvements in educational quality more comprehensively.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that the leadership management of the principal of MAN Sibolga plays an important role in directing educational policies and institutional development programs. This role is demonstrated through the implementation of regular religious activities, efforts to secure financial support from the community and donors, facilitation of educational assistance for students in need, and provision of opportunities for teachers to develop entrepreneurial activities.

The implementation of these programs faces several challenges, particularly budget limitations, the economic circumstances of some students, issues related to the welfare of honorary teachers, and coordination difficulties in geographically separated classes. These conditions indicate that improving educational quality cannot rely solely on the leadership of the madrasah principal but also requires adequate resources and collaboration among various stakeholders.

Religious activities constitute an integral part of efforts to develop students' character, while strengthening financial support and empowering teachers represent strategies for addressing resource constraints. However, the impact of these strategies on educational quality requires further evaluation using clearly defined indicators and sufficient empirical data.

Therefore, the leadership of the madrasah principal should be implemented through systematic planning, participatory management, transparency, and a strong commitment to improving the quality of teaching and learning. Collaboration among the madrasah, government, parents, teachers, and the wider community is essential to ensuring the sustainability of educational quality improvement programs.

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