

THE ROLE OF THE HEAD OF MADRASAH IN ENSURING THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION AT ISLAMIC EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION

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Abstract: *Educational quality is a key element in creating excellent and competitive educational institutions, including madrasahs. Madrasah principals play a strategic role in designing quality policies, conducting supervision, and ensuring the continuity of quality educational processes. This study aims to analyze the role of madrasah principals in controlling and supervising educational quality at MTs Darul Ulum Islamic School Sleman, a pesantren-based madrasah that was newly established in 2021 but has shown significant development. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with data collection techniques through participatory observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. Informants were selected purposively, consisting of the madrasah principal, teachers, administrative staff, and foundation administrators. The results of the study indicate that the madrasah principal plays a role in setting quality standards, conducting periodic evaluations, and mentoring teachers through participatory supervision. However, there are still challenges in quality documentation, limitations in follow-up on evaluation results, and uneven leadership distribution. This study contributes to the development of a madrasah leadership model that integrates Islamic values, modern quality management principles, and sustainable institutional systems within the context of Islamic education.*

Keywords: School Principal; Madrasah; Quality; Education; Supervision.

Introduction

Education is one of the fundamental aspects in developing high-quality and competitive human resources. Amidst the demands of globalization, educational institutions, including madrasahs, are required to not only produce graduates who excel intellectually, but also possess character, spirituality, and the ability to adapt to changing times (Sanaky, 2008). Therefore, efforts to improve the quality of education are a necessity. In the Indonesian context, the quality of education has become a key policy agenda for the government, as outlined in Government Regulation No. 19 of 2005 on National Education Standards. These standards stipulate that every educational institution must be able to design, implement, and evaluate the learning process in a high-quality manner, involving all components of education (Depdiknas, 2005). One of the key actors in quality implementation in madrasahs is the madrasah principal, who not only acts as an administrator but also as a learning leader and change agent.

Previous studies have shown that the leadership of madrasah principals plays a strategic role in the successful implementation of educational quality management. Misbah (2020) emphasizing the importance of madrasah principals in building a culture of quality in public madrasahs. Meanwhile, Fadhilah (2021) notes that monitoring and evaluation practices by madrasah principals have a direct correlation with the achievement of national standards. However, most of these studies were conducted in established madrasahs, and very few highlight how educational quality is developed in new, growing madrasahs, especially those based in Islamic boarding schools.

Pesantren-based madrasahs often face dual challenges in carrying out their formal educational functions. On the one hand, they must comply with national education standards, but on the other hand, they must also maintain the distinctive character of pesantren, which tends to be flexible and tradition based. This often causes tension between the orientation toward formal quality and the local values held by the pesantren community (Abdullah, 2016; Zuhdi, 2014). Therefore, the ability of the madrasah principal to bridge these two interests is an important aspect in the success of quality control in this type of madrasah. In addition, the need for empirical studies focusing

on new madrasahs has become increasingly urgent, given the significant growth in the number of private madrasahs over the past decade (Kemenag, 2022). Previous studies have tended to focus on large institutions or public madrasahs, so that the experiences and strategies of new madrasahs that are still struggling to build quality systems are often overlooked by academia. This study aims to fill that gap, while also contributing conceptually to the development of literature on leadership and quality management in the context of contemporary Islamic education.

On the other hand, new madrasahs face more complex challenges because they do not yet have a strong management structure and are not yet fully established in terms of institutional culture. However, they are still required to meet national standards and compete in a competitive educational ecosystem (Hasan, 2019; Nizar, 2020). In situations like this, the ability of the head of the madrasah to gradually build a quality system becomes very important. This requires flexible, value-based leadership that is responsive to the internal and external dynamics of the institution (Wibowo & Ridwan, 2021). MTs Darul Ulum Islamic School Sleman is one of the new madrasahs that exemplifies this dynamic. Established in 2021, this institution has undergone significant development in terms of curriculum, learning quality, and community appeal. By integrating the Quran memorization program, bilingual education, and the use of digital technology, this madrasah has attracted public attention and received recognition from the Ministry of Religion. This phenomenon indicates the presence of effective leadership strategies, which are worthy of scientific study to determine the extent of their influence on the control and supervision of educational quality (Sutrisno, 2022).

This study aims to analyze in depth how the principal of MTs Darul Ulum controls and supervises the quality of education. The focus of the study is on the policies adopted, the evaluation mechanisms applied, and the human resource development strategies that support the achievement of quality. Thus, this study is expected to contribute to the development of leadership and quality management models that are relevant to new madrasahs, particularly in the context of Islamic education based on *pesantren*.

Method

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with the aim of gaining an in-depth understanding of the role of the headmaster in controlling and supervising the quality of education. This study was primarily conducted at MTs Darul Ulum Islamic School in Sleman. A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to explore meaning, processes, and social dynamics holistically in a natural context (Moleong, 2012). According to Sugiyono (2015), Qualitative approaches are used to understand social phenomena and human behavior in complex situations, where researchers become key instruments. Creswell (2014) emphasizes that this approach relies on subjective interpretations constructed by the individuals being studied, and focuses on in-depth exploration of situations, processes, and personal experiences that cannot be measured statistically.

The selection of MTs Darul Ulum as the research location was based on its characteristics as a new *pesantren*-based madrasah that has grown rapidly in a short period of time. This provides an opportunity to explore quality management practices that are being formed and implemented gradually. The madrasah environment, which is religious-traditional yet open to educational innovation, makes the context of this research even richer for qualitative analysis. Informants in this study were selected purposively, a technique of deliberately determining subjects based on the consideration that they are most knowledgeable and directly involved in the quality control process at madrasahs. The informants consisted of eight people, including one madrasah principal, one deputy principal for curriculum, two senior teachers, two new teachers, one administrative staff member, and one foundation administrator. The criteria for informants included a minimum of one year of work experience, involvement in quality evaluation, and willingness to be interviewed in depth. This composition was designed to represent the perspectives of policy makers, technical implementers, and institutional stakeholders.

Data collection was conducted using a triangulation method, namely participatory observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation studies. Observations were conducted over a period of two weeks to capture the actual processes in the field, particularly the interactions of madrasah principals in the implementation of evaluation and supervision. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to allow respondents freedom in their answers while still focusing on the guiding questions. The documentation reviewed included madrasah work program documents, supervision instruments, evaluation reports, and meeting minutes on quality. These three methods complemented each other and provided a triangulated picture of the reality being studied.

Data validity was maintained by using triangulation of sources, methods, and time. In addition, member checking techniques were used, namely reconfirming the interview results with informants, as well as peer debriefing with fellow researchers to avoid subjective bias. This was done to ensure the credibility and validity of the data (Moleong, 2012). Researchers also recorded daily reflections (field notes) to capture social contexts that

were not verbally recorded. In the process, researchers maintained their position as participant observers, striking a balance between involvement and critical distance in order to remain objective.

Data analysis was performed using an interactive analysis approach according to (Miles & Huberman, 1994), which consists of three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction is carried out by sorting and filtering information based on its relevance to the research focus. Data presentation is carried out in the form of thematic narratives and direct quotes from informants, to maintain the authenticity of the participants' voices. Conclusions are drawn inductively by identifying patterns of findings, which are then linked to the previously determined theoretical framework of leadership and quality management.

This study also pays attention to research ethics, by maintaining the confidentiality of informants' identities, requesting informed consent, and presenting findings in a proportionate manner that does not harm any party.

Findings and Discussion

Findings

MTs Darul Ulum Islamic School is an Islamic boarding school-based educational institution under the auspices of the Darul Ulum Kleben Foundation, located at Kleben, Caturharjo Village, Sleman District, Sleman Regency, Special Region of Yogyakarta. Based on the researcher's observation of its official website, the school has the tagline "Bilingual Techno Science Qur'an," reflecting its aim to guide students in mastering foreign languages, developing skills in science and technology, and adhering to the teachings of the Qur'an. The school offers various flagship programs and extracurricular activities covering religious and scientific fields. Some of the available programs include the Yellow Book Study Program, Quran Memorization, Scouting, Public Speaking, Arts, and Sports. The school also has targets in Quran memorization, studying the Yellow Book, actively speaking foreign languages, fostering leadership spirit, achieving academic and non-academic excellence, and developing technological and entrepreneurial skills. This demonstrates that MTs Darul Ulum Islamic School has a quality education development plan to ensure its growth and excellence.

The principal of MTs Darul Ulum Islamic School has a very supportive policy in improving the quality of education, both in academic and non-academic aspects. The policies implemented include setting learning standards or quality assurance, developing teacher professionalism, and conducting regular planning and evaluation of the educational programs being implemented. Quality assurance includes Quran memorization, in-depth study of religious texts, bilingualism (proficiency in a foreign language), and mastery of technology. Additionally, the school guides its students to excel in both academic and non-academic activities. The principal also emphasizes the importance of involving all teaching staff in designing and implementing effective educational strategies. Teacher professional development can be conducted through training or workshops organized internally or externally. Internal professional development is typically directly led by the principal. External development can be done by participating in MGMP (Subject Teacher Forum) workshops or development programs from offices or trainers in their respective fields. In line with the concept of quality control, the madrasah principal plays a role in ensuring that the education provided meets the established standards. Through clear policies, routine supervision, and continuous evaluation, the madrasah principal can monitor and improve the quality of education at the madrasah.

Based on the researcher's interview with the head of the madrasah, it was mentioned that the evaluation conducted by MTs Darul Ulum Islamic School in internal quality control was carried out by holding periodic evaluations involving the madrasah community, including the head of the foundation, the head of the madrasah, the dormitory administrators, the teachers' council, and the educational staff of the pesantren and madrasah. These evaluations are typically conducted once a month and routinely at the end of each semester and the beginning of the new semester. The evaluation discussions cover aspects such as learning, facilities and infrastructure, finance, human resource development, and other matters related to the madrasah and boarding school programs. In these periodic evaluations, of course, at the end of the discussion, a plan is developed to improve aspects of the evaluation that are deemed poor and in need of enhancement. Externally, MTs Darul Ulum Islamic School conducts quality evaluations through madrasah performance assessments (PKM) by supervisors from the Ministry of Religion and accreditation visits from BAN-PDM.

The quality control measures implemented by the principal of MTs Darul Ulum Islamic School are highly effective, thanks to a structured and well-planned monitoring system. The principal does not only focus on administrative aspects but also strives to improve teaching quality through training and human resource development. This creates an educational environment that supports students' success in achieving optimal performance. Evaluation and supervision also include assessing teacher performance, the quality of instruction, and student learning outcomes, which are key indicators in quality control. Teacher performance evaluations can

be conducted by educational supervisors.

The success of MTs Darul Ulum Islamic School in achieving excellence in various fields demonstrates that the efforts made by the school principal to improve the quality of education have borne fruit. As a relatively new madrasah, MTs Darul Ulum Islamic School has demonstrated rapid progress in educational management. This shows that despite facing challenges, the principal can effectively manage education and motivate all members of the madrasah to achieve higher educational goals. Overall, the principal's role in controlling and overseeing educational quality is crucial in ensuring.

Discussion

The results of the study indicate that the principal of MTs Darul Ulum Sleman plays a central role in maintaining and developing the quality of education, both through internal policies, periodic evaluations, and human resource development. The principal focuses his attention on three main aspects: quality policy, evaluation, and teacher development. However, in its implementation, there are challenges that hinder the effectiveness of quality control, particularly regarding documentation and the implementation of follow-up actions based on evaluation results. The following table presents a summary of the main findings based on observations, interviews, and documentation:

Table 1. Summary of the Role of Madrasah Principals Based on Findings

Supervision Aspects	Implementation	Challenges	Data Source
Quality Policy	Developing standards, memorization programs, and bilingual programs	Not yet systematically documented	Interview with the Head of Madrasah
Evaluation	Performed monthly and semester	Follow-up has been inconsistent	Observation, Teacher Interviews
Teacher Development	Internal and external training	Limited time	Documentation, Teacher Interviews
Learning Supervision	Informal supervision and MGMP (Subject Teacher Forum)	Instrument not yet standardized	Interview with Teachers and Principal

The role of the madrasah principal in formulating quality policies reflects the characteristics of transformational leadership, as explained by (Kasmawati et al., 2022), where leaders are not merely administrators, but agents of change who inspire the madrasah community. At MTs Darul Ulum, policies on tahfidz, bilingualism, and technology are clear evidence of this leadership vision. The head of the madrasah not only directs administrative matters but also builds collective awareness of the importance of long-term quality.

However, challenges in documenting and following up on evaluation results indicate weak implementation of the overall Quality Control (QC) cycle. According to Ishikawa 1985 in Ravika, quality control is not only related to evaluating results, but also to systematic continuous improvement efforts (Hadi, 2021). A similar point was also made by Feigenbaum 1992 in Widiensyah, who emphasized the importance of follow-up on evaluation results as an integral part of an integrated quality system (Widiensyah, 2019). These findings indicate that the QC system in this madrasah is still informal and not supported by formal structures such as SOPs or written quality standards. Furthermore, the results of evaluations conducted so far have not been fully utilized as a basis for subsequent strategic planning. This shows that data has not become a key instrument in the decision-making process. However, in modern quality management approaches, data-driven decision making is one of the key principles in ensuring quality in an objective and sustainable manner. The lack of data utilization also indicates weaknesses in quality literacy within the madrasah organization.

In terms of supervision, the participatory approach taken by the head of the madrasah is in line with the concept of developmental supervision (Sudjana, 2008), namely guidance aimed at improving teachers' professional competence, not merely administrative supervision. Unfortunately, the absence of standard instruments indicates that supervision practices still rely on individual approaches. This leads to inconsistencies in teacher performance monitoring, as the quality of supervision is highly dependent on the perceptions and personal experiences of school principals. Additionally, a culture of mutual feedback among teachers has not yet fully developed, so supervision

tends to be one-sided. Developing a culture of collective reflection and peer coaching could be one strategy to address this weakness. This is important because the quality of teaching cannot be controlled solely from above but must also grow from a shared awareness among educators within the madrasah environment.

Meanwhile, teacher development is carried out internally through direct training and coaching, and externally through participation in MGMP (Subject Teacher Forum). This is a form of implementation of Quality Assurance (QA) in education, namely a systematic effort to improve the quality of educational services (Mitra, 2016). The main obstacle that emerged was the double burden of the madrasah principal as the leader of the pesantren and a formal institution, which had an impact on the effectiveness of task distribution and work focus. For this reason, the distributional leadership model or the formation of an internal quality team became very relevant (Sari et al., 2017), so that the burden is not centered on one figure and the quality improvement process can run collectively. Other findings also show that some teachers and staff do not yet understand the role and function of quality as a whole. This shows the need for internal training that not only focuses on teaching techniques, but also on quality literacy and collective responsibility for educational standards. Quality improvement is not solely the task of the madrasah principal but must be understood as a shared responsibility.

In general, the findings indicate that the success of new madrasahs in building educational quality is highly dependent on the vision and initiative of the madrasah principal. In the context of newly established madrasahs, flexibility and improvisation are often the main characteristics in the implementation of quality management. Madrasah principals do not have many structural references from the past, so the approach used is more experimental and responsive to field needs (Fattah, 2010; Rohiat, 2008). This is both a strength and a challenge, because without a standard framework, the quality management process is at risk of getting stuck in undocumented momentary practices. This is where the importance of external assistance and stakeholder involvement, including foundations and madrasah supervisors, in building a sustainable quality system lies (Asmani, 2012).

From a theoretical perspective, this study reaffirms that the leadership approach in Islamic education must be able to integrate modern managerial aspects with local and religious values. The case of MTs Darul Ulum shows that Islamic values and collective spirit can be the driving force of quality, as long as they are supervised by leaders who have vision and management capacity. Thus, this study not only provides practical contributions to madrasah management but also adds to the treasury of educational leadership theories in the context of growing pesantren-based institutions. However, to ensure long-term sustainability of quality, a written, documented, and institutionally oriented quality management system is needed, not personally. The transition from figure-based leadership to an established system will be the main challenge going forward, and this is the critical point that must be prepared by institutions such as MTs Darul Ulum.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the madrasah principal plays a central role in controlling and supervising the quality of education at MTs Darul Ulum Islamic School Sleman. Although this institution is still relatively new, the madrasah principal is able to demonstrate visionary, participatory, and adaptive leadership in building a quality system gradually. This leadership is reflected in innovative internal policies, the implementation of periodic evaluations, and teacher professional development through a collaborative coaching approach. This has become a major strength in the madrasah growth process in the last two years. However, this study also found important challenges that need to be addressed systematically, such as suboptimal quality documentation, weak follow-up of evaluation results, and institutional dependence on a single figure of the madrasah principal.

These findings have significant practical implications. To ensure the sustainability of quality, it is necessary to form an internal quality team that is able to work collectively, prepare standard operating procedures (SOPs) in supervision and evaluation, and strengthen the role of middle leadership such as vice principals and senior teachers. This is important to prevent the concentration of roles on only one individual and ensure that the quality system continues to run even though there are changes in the leadership structure. In addition, continuous training on quality literacy is needed for all components of the madrasah, so that the culture of quality can become a shared awareness, not just an instruction from above.

Theoretically, this study strengthens the relevance of transformational leadership theory in the context of Islamic education, where spiritual values, collective spirit, and vision of change can be the drivers of successful quality management. This study also illustrates how the principles of quality control (QC) and quality assurance (QA) can be applied contextually in new Islamic boarding schools, with the note that documentation systems, leadership distribution, and data-based decision making are important parts of long-term success. This study also contributes to the development of an approach to Islamic educational leadership that is not only idealistic, but also functional and systemic.

For further research, it is recommended that further exploration be conducted on the perceptions of students, guardians, and even alumni towards the quality of education implemented, in order to see the relationship between quality policies and learning experiences holistically. Comparative studies between state and private madrasahs, or between new madrasahs in various regions, can also provide a broader understanding of successful patterns of quality management in different contexts. In addition, an action research approach is also recommended to test the effectiveness of quality interventions directly in real contexts in the field.

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