



The Role of the Principal in Improving Educator Performance in Islamic Schools

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine in depth the various strategic roles of school principals in the context of Islamic schools, especially in improving the quality of educator performance and strengthening educational governance based on Islamic values. The method used in this study is a literature review, by examining various recent scientific journals in the period 2019–2024. The results of the study show that school principals have various important roles, namely as managers, innovators, communicators, academic supervisors, motivators, and role models. In their role as managers, school principals are responsible for teacher development planning, monitoring, and periodic evaluation of educator performance. As innovators, school principals encourage teachers to innovate in learning and be adaptive to new technologies and methods. The role of communicator is also important, where the principal is expected to build effective and assertive communication with teachers in order to foster trust and loyalty. In terms of academic supervision, the principal functions as a mentor in implementing effective and reflective learning. Internal challenges such as limited funds and teacher motivation, as well as the influence of foundation management, are obstacles that need to be overcome with collaborative solutions and strengthening synergy between the principal, teachers, and the foundation. Meanwhile, external challenges in the form of competition with public schools and the globalization of education require adaptive and innovative strategies.

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INTRODUCTION

Education has become one of the basic needs for all Indonesian citizens, so education is a national interest whose rights are guaranteed by the 1945 Constitution, Article 31. (Suparno & Alfikar, 2019). However, what needs to be considered at this time is how educational institutions, both state and private, can provide the best quality and service to the community. Along with the development of the times, educational institutions are required to provide education that can provide the best quality for their consumers. (Nirwana AN et al., 2025). Therefore, an educational institution needs to be managed properly and correctly. The principal is the main key in school management, because the principal is a captain who will lead the school to achieve its vision through the mission that has been set. (Berhanu, 2025).

The World Bank released a report on the results of its survey, the surprising thing is that the quality of education in Indonesia is still relatively low. Proven by the finding that less than 28% *Worldtop20.org* released a ranking of education in the world, the surprising thing is that Indonesia is ranked 67th out of 209 countries surveyed. Indonesia's ranking is in sequence with Albania at 66th and Serbia at 68th (Wahyuningrat, 2025). Meanwhile, the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) in March 2019 published a ranking of countries based on reading, science and mathematics skills. Indonesia was ranked 74th out of 79 countries surveyed. (Margaretha, 2024).

The two surveys above can provide an overview that the quality of education in Indonesia is still concerning and requires special handling from every stakeholder of existing educational institutions, especially the principal as a leader of an educational institution. In the dynamics of the world of education that continues to develop, the role of the principal is no longer limited to being an administrator alone, but has transformed into a visionary leader who is able to move all elements of the school towards excellence.

The principal has a strategic responsibility in creating a conducive, inclusive learning environment that is oriented towards achieving high quality education. Through transformative leadership, the principal is able to build a collaborative work culture, accompany teachers professionally, and integrate character values into daily school life. (Sofia, 2023). Previous studies have shown that principals who carry out their roles as managers, motivators, and innovators can significantly improve the quality of learning and student morale. (Riani & Ain, 2022).

In addition, the principal also plays an important role in creating a harmonious multicultural environment and supporting the values of tolerance in the school community. (Desika Handayani, 2024). Thus, the quality of the principal's leadership becomes the main foundation in building an excellent school, not only in academic aspects, but also in shaping the character of students.

Private Islamic schools face many challenges in the era of globalization and rapid information openness. Islamic schools bear a great responsibility to maintain and shape the Islamic identity of their students. They must also be able to compete with public and international schools in terms of academic quality. With the increasing public awareness of the importance of quality education, competition between educational institutions is getting stronger. However, some Islamic schools have the wrong approach to survive the competition. (Hamzah, 2023).

One of the main challenges facing private Islamic schools is ensuring the quality of education that is competitive locally and globally without losing its Islamic identity. Many schools only teach religion symbolically, but they do not incorporate Islamic values into all aspects of education and school life. Previous studies have shown that, in addition to ensuring the spiritual orientation of schools, visionary leadership and the implementation of total quality management are essential to building school competitiveness. (Subaidi, 2023) (Supriyadi, 2023).

Keeping Islamic identity alive amidst the pressures of modernization and integration of the national curriculum is also a big challenge. In real life, many private Islamic schools face a gap between the ideal theory of Islamic education and how it can be applied in real life. (Martono, 2020). If there is no authentic and contextual Islamic pedagogical approach, the Islamic identity of the school can be reduced to religious lessons and uniforms. A study emphasizes that Islamic education theory and practice must be integrated in order to create a broad educational model and form a strong Islamic character in students. (Memon, 2021).

In addition, Islamic private schools are undergoing rapid transformation as a result of technological challenges and the digital era as seen in the context of Society 5.0. Improving the quality of Islamic-based learning is hampered by many factors. Some of these include the lack of digital infrastructure, the lack of human resources who are proficient in technology, and the use of learning methods that are still conventional. (Zainuddin et al., 2024). Islamic private schools can lose relevance and excellence amidst dynamic competition if their vision is not strengthened, the curriculum is adapted to technology, and the commitment to Islamic values is not maintained.

METHOD

This research is classified as qualitative research. This type of research is a literature review which is a systematic approach used to examine, analyze, and synthesize various previous research results that are relevant to a particular topic. According to Snyder, a literature review not only aims to summarize the results of previous studies, but also to identify research gaps, build a theoretical framework, and strengthen the conceptual basis for subsequent research. (Snyder, 2019).

In practice, researchers must use strict selection criteria, such as publication time limits, topic relevance, and source quality, so that the results of the study are truly valid and can be academically accounted for. This method is very useful in the educational context because it is able to unite various views and findings, and offer strategic recommendations based on existing scientific evidence.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. The Concept of Educational Leadership

Educational leadership is the core of the success of school institutions in realizing the goals of learning and developing student character. According to Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom, principal leadership is the influence used to direct and motivate school residents to achieve educational goals effectively. In this context, Makgato and Mudzanani show that the principal's leadership style plays a major role in shaping the overall performance of the school. (Makgato & Mudzanani, 2019).

Regarding leadership style, James Burns and Bernard Bass are figures who developed the concept of transformational and transactional leadership. Transformational style focuses on inspiration, motivation, and empowerment of teachers and students, while transactional style emphasizes structure, control, and feedback. Research by Abu-Hussain shows that principals with strong moral values tend to adopt a transformational style that has a positive impact on school climate and organizational performance.(Jamal, 2014). Similar findings were also put forward by Elmazi who stated that transformational style has a positive correlation with teacher job satisfaction.(Elmaz, 2018).

In carrying out his role, the principal does not only act as an administrator, but also as an instructional leader, agent of change, and facilitator of school culture. Ridho emphasized the importance of the principal in building a positive school culture through a participatory approach and the creation of harmonious relationships between all school residents.(Ridho et al., 2018). On the other hand, a study by Yokota shows that the role of the principal is significantly influenced by national education policies, which encourage the adoption of instructional and distributional leadership styles in the face of demands for changes in the education system.(Yokota, 2019).

2. Educator Performance

Educator performance is one of the main indicators in determining the success of the education process. According to Sagala, teacher performance reflects the ability to carry out their professional duties, both in planning, implementing, and evaluating learning. This performance is usually measured based on four main competencies stipulated in Permendiknas No. 16 of 2007, namely pedagogical, professional, social, and personality competencies.

Pedagogical competence refers to the teacher's ability to understand the characteristics of students and manage effective learning. A study by Islomovich and Ravshanbekovich emphasized the importance of developing pedagogical competence to form innovative and reflective teachers in facing the challenges of the 21st century.(Islomovich & Ravshanbekovich, 2023). Professional competence, namely mastery of teaching materials and teaching methods, has also been proven to be a major determinant of teacher effectiveness. Chrisbiyanto said that increasing professional competence directly improves teacher performance in learning.(Chrisbiyanto et al., 2022).

Social competence is essential because teachers are part of a larger school community. Moreno-Olivos points out that teachers' social skills, such as empathetic and collaborative communication, are often overlooked, yet crucial to creating an inclusive learning environment.(Moreno-Olivos, 2019). Social and personality competencies have a major influence on teachers' teaching performance, especially in the aspects of communication and professional ethics.

Personality competence is related to the integrity, responsibility, and exemplary behavior of teachers. Witari and Manuaba revealed that personality competence has a significant correlation with teacher performance, especially in building discipline and healthy relationships with students.(Witari & Manuaba, 2021). Development of a social and personality competency strengthening model can be done through the role of the principal as a trainer and teacher performance assessor.

3. Factors that influence teacher performance

According to Nana Sudjana, teacher performance is a reflection of the ability to carry out their professional duties in educating, teaching, guiding, and evaluating students. One of the main factors that influences teacher performance is the leadership of the principal. In her study, Anggraeni emphasized that the role of an inspiring, supportive, and communicative leader can create a conducive work climate, encourage collaboration between teachers, and increase a sense of responsibility for teaching tasks.(Anggraeni, 2021).

In addition to leadership, the teacher's own competence is a key factor in determining the quality of his/her performance. Referring to Mulyasa's view, teachers who are competent pedagogically, professionally, socially, and personally will be better prepared to face class challenges and student needs. Teacher competence has a direct influence on performance, while the principal's motivation and leadership act as supporting factors that strengthen this influence.

Training and teaching experience are also important aspects in improving teacher performance in the field. Continuous training allows teachers to adopt modern learning methods and the latest educational technology, while teaching experience enriches skills in classroom management and contextual problem solving. The combination of the two significantly improves the quality of learning interactions in the classroom.

Work environment factors such as peer support, school facilities, and work culture also contribute to teacher performance. A comfortable work environment, supported by healthy communication and appreciation for teacher achievement, can increase motivation and work enthusiasm. Teachers who feel appreciated and supported will show higher dedication in carrying out their duties.

Equally important is work motivation, which is an internal drive to achieve. Georgescu revealed that teachers who have high motivation show more consistent performance, are actively involved in self-development, and have a high commitment to the quality of teaching. Teacher motivation is also greatly influenced by recognition of their hard work and involvement in decision-making at school.(Georgescu, 2020).

4. Islamic Private Schools as a Special Context

Islamic private schools in Indonesia have unique characteristics that distinguish them from public schools, both in terms of management, curriculum, and value orientation. In the view of M. Syaifudin (2021), Islamic private schools are generally established by religious-based foundations that combine Islamic values with general education. This school management system is regulated by Law No. 16 of 2001 and No. 28 of 2004 on Foundations, but the implementation of this policy often does not have a significant impact on the effectiveness of school management. Syaifudin emphasized that the imbalance in the role and authority of foundation administrators is one of the main challenges in the governance of Islamic private schools in Indonesia.(Syaifudin, 2021).

On the other hand, the role of Islamic private schools is very important in the formation of religious character of students. Through a unique approach such as daily coaching, monthly guidance sessions, and a warm personal approach between teachers and students, these schools not only focus on academic achievement but also on the formation of morals and spiritual values. Kholis also highlighted that this strategy is a response to the lack of state support for access to quality education based on religion, so that Islamic private schools grow as the main alternative for Muslim communities in religious areas.

As part of the Islamic education system, private Islamic schools in Indonesia have also undergone an evolution in their curriculum orientation and educational philosophy. Islamic education in Indonesia has evolved from the traditional Islamic boarding school model to modern Islamic schools and madrasas that integrate religious knowledge and general knowledge. This change was influenced by political and social dynamics, as well as the demands of society for graduates who are able to compete academically and still have a strong foundation of faith. Modern Islamic schools and madrasas are now a representation of the spirit of Islamic education reform that still upholds basic values while adapting to the needs of the times.

In addition to internal challenges, private Islamic schools also face external challenges in the form of gaps in academic achievement and resources between institutions. Tatang Muttaqin examined the differences in academic performance between pathways and streams in private Islamic schools in Indonesia. This study found that although family and student backgrounds play a major role in learning achievement, variations in the organizational structure and ideological approach of each school also have a significant influence on differences in student learning outcomes. These findings indicate that not all private Islamic schools have uniform quality, and institutional approaches are an important factor in bridging the gap.(Muttaqin, 2020).

A. The Role of the Principal in Improving Educator Performance

1. Managerial role

The principal's managerial role includes the ability to systematically design teacher professional development strategies. The principal as an education manager is required to prepare planning based on real needs in the school, starting from identifying teacher performance problems, formulating development goals, to coordinating across school elements for program implementation. A principal who is transparent in conveying the agenda and actively provides coaching will be more effective in improving teacher motivation and performance as a whole.

In terms of monitoring implementation, Labobar emphasized that principals must play an active role in supervising the learning process, even amidst challenges such as online learning during a pandemic. Principals can use platforms such as WhatsApp and Zoom to remotely monitor teacher performance, which shows the adaptation of the managerial role to crisis conditions. In addition, the involvement of principals in daily monitoring is considered capable of increasing teacher attendance and teaching quality even though it is done digitally.(Labobar, 2022).

Regular evaluation of teacher performance is an important element in the principal's managerial cycle. Rostini in his study showed that principals who have a consistent performance evaluation schedule carried out at the end of each semester using classroom observation methods and written feedback tend to be able to encourage teachers to continue to improve the quality of learning. (Rostini, 2022). He concluded that a structured evaluation program not only improves individual teacher achievement, but also improves the overall quality of school learning. The evaluation in question is not only administrative, but also includes pedagogical aspects and teacher work discipline.

2. The role of academic supervision

Academic supervision has a strategic role in improving the quality of learning through direct guidance of teacher teaching practices. According to Suharsimi Arikunto, academic supervision is a systematic coaching process for teachers to improve the quality of learning. Suwardi revealed that a collaborative supervision model involving principals and senior teachers in providing training and teaching practices can significantly improve the supervisory competence of novice teachers. This intervention was carried out through direct guidance and in-depth feedback, which resulted in an increase in evaluation scores from 59.00 to 82.50 in teacher academic competence. (Suwardi, 2020).

The reflective aspect of academic supervision also plays an important role in the formation of adaptive and continuously developing teachers. Reflective practice is the process of thinking critically about teaching experiences to improve future actions. Reflection is at the heart of teacher professional development programs. Teachers who are actively involved in reflective practice show improvements in classroom instruction and student achievement. This reflection is not done individually, but is facilitated through professional dialogue and learning communities that encourage openness and ongoing self-evaluation.

Strengthening collaboration between teachers is also an important part of academic supervision. In the supervision model developed by Irma Suryani, teacher involvement in planning, implementing, and evaluating learning together has been shown to increase competence and a sense of professional responsibility. (Suryani, 2024). Implementation of collaborative-based academic supervision involving teachers in class discussions, peer observations, and team-based development of teaching tools. The results will significantly increase teachers' self-confidence and pedagogical capacity in daily teaching practices.

3. The Role of Motivator and Role Model

In the context of Islamic education, the principal is not only an administrator but also the main motivator who fosters Islamic work spirit in the school environment. Leadership in Islamic education must be based on the prophetic character of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, namely *sidq* (honest), *amanah* (trustworthy), *tabligh* (communicative), and *fathonah* (intelligent). This kind of leadership not only encourages the achievement of organizational goals, but also instills moral and spiritual values in every school activity. Principals who internalize these values are able to build a work climate that is oriented towards worship and excellence, as well as being a source of motivation for teachers and students in enforcing discipline and responsibility sincerely. (Fadila, 2019).

As role models of integrity and professionalism, leaders in Islamic schools are required to demonstrate a consistent attitude between words and deeds. The principles of trust and *siddiq* are the main foundations of effective Islamic leadership. Leaders who demonstrate an attitude of integrity will create a school environment filled with trust, fairness and loyalty from their subordinates. In practice, school principals who are role models in honesty and hard work are able to pass on this culture to all teachers and students, creating a collective work ethic based on divine values.

The transformation of Islamic work culture in schools cannot occur without the active role of the principal in building emotional and spiritual relationships with all members of the school. As a study conducted by Suryadi shows, the transformational leadership style applied by Kyai Syarifuddin at the Jannatul Firdaus Islamic Boarding School has succeeded in forming an educational community with a religious, disciplined, and productive character. (Suryadi, 2024). His exemplary attitude in terms of assertiveness, effective communication, and character development of students and teachers made this institution not only academically successful, but also a model of humanistic and spiritual education. The role of a leader as a motivator in developing this character is considered crucial in the context of a religious-based educational institution.

4. Role as an Innovator

The role of the principal as an innovator is very important in forming a dynamic and adaptive learning culture to the development of the times. The principal has the responsibility to develop teacher professionalism through the application of educational technology and the

development of relevant curriculum. The principal must actively create a collaborative learning environment and motivate teachers to use innovative learning approaches, such as digital media integration and project-based approaches. This innovative leadership not only improves the quality of learning, but also encourages significant improvements in student achievement.

Leadership that encourages innovation has been shown to have a strong influence on teacher performance. Siti Arafat in her research showed that principals who actively create space for the exploration of new ideas can improve teacher performance by almost 60%. In the context of SD Cluster 03 Ende, the principal acted as a facilitator who provided training in learning technology, motivated teachers with incentives, and encouraged the use of non-conventional teaching methods. The results showed a significant increase in teaching effectiveness and student engagement. (Arafat, 2022).

As a leader in the digital era, the principal must also be an agent of change who facilitates teachers to be able to respond to global challenges. Innovation in technology-based learning must be pioneered by the principal by creating strategies that motivate teachers to think creatively. The principal's leadership can be demonstrated through providing experimental space in learning, developing innovative teacher characters, and supporting human resource development. This places the principal as the main actor in building an education system that is adaptive and relevant to the digital era.

5. Role as a Communicator

As the primary communicator in the school environment, the principal plays an important role in creating an open, assertive communication system that supports healthy professional relationships between leaders and teachers. The effectiveness of the principal's communication directly affects the improvement of teacher performance through strengthening trust and mutual support. In a narrative study at an elementary school in Bekasi, it was found that communication that was carried out intensively and based on the principles of justice and empathy was able to increase teacher motivation and sense of responsibility for their duties. (Sofia, 2023). Principals who understand the importance of active listening, openly conveying aspirations, and appreciating teacher contributions, succeed in building a harmonious and productive organizational culture.

Communication is also the foundation of building teacher loyalty to the school. Organizational communication carried out by the principal vertically and horizontally affects teacher loyalty and work motivation. Studies in elementary schools show that principals who routinely communicate directly, both in formal forums such as meetings and informally through personal dialogue, are able to foster emotional attachment between teachers and the institution. (Safitri & Putra, 2021). This form of communication not only conveys instructions, but also serves as a space for appreciation, joint problem solving, and coaching that builds long-term trust.

The interpersonal aspect of leadership communication is also very important in creating emotional closeness and a sense of psychological security for teachers. Interpersonal communication carried out intensively by the principal through direction, professional discussion, and constructive feedback will form a positive working relationship and support improvements in the quality of learning. Principals who actively engage in dialogue with teachers about learning challenges have been shown to foster a sense of appreciation and increase teacher participation in school decision-making. This kind of communication strengthens team cohesion and accelerates the process of change in schools.

B. Real Strategy and Implementation

1. Islamic Value-Based Professional Training and Development

Teacher professional training and development based on Islamic values is not only oriented towards improving technical competence, but also forming the character of educators with integrity, *ihsan*, and *amanah*. The implementation of teacher performance management in schools can be based on MGMP activities, routine training, and certification programs that have been proven to significantly improve the quality of teaching and professional attitudes of teachers. Through a structured managerial approach that includes planning, implementation, and monitoring of activities, teachers get space to grow academically and spiritually. The instillation of Islamic values in training is reflected in the strengthening of professional ethics and responsibility as educators of the people, with MGMP becoming a collaborative means to share experiences and strengthen the vision of Islamic education that is *rahmatan lil 'alamin*.

Teachers who are actively involved in MGMP, scientific training, seminars, and publication of written works are a form of reflective effort to strengthen their capabilities in

facing the challenges of the 21st century. The implementation of Islamic values is seen in activities that emphasize sincere work, moral responsibility, and collaboration. Needs-based training management is also needed, with measurable results and periodic evaluation as indicators of program success. This approach shows the synergy between professionalism and spiritual values in the development of teachers in Islamic schools.(Robiyah, 2021).

Structured training with religious content is needed to improve quality in Islamic schools. Islamic Religious Education teachers who participate in MGMP, workshops, and certification can significantly improve their competence, both in terms of learning planning, student needs analysis, and professional ethics. Strengthening Islamic values in training is done through the integration of teaching materials that reflect honesty, responsibility, and teacher etiquette. Periodic evaluations carried out through supervision by the head of the madrasah also help maintain the continuity and quality of this coaching process.

2. Formation of teacher work teams

The strategy of forming a collaborative teacher work team in developing lesson plans and evaluating learning is a very relevant approach to improving the effectiveness and quality of classroom learning practices. The success of the teacher team in continuing collaborative learning after the end of the research partnership program is influenced by the accumulation of various contextual resources. The formation of a collective inquiry culture, collaborative organizational structure, and support from school leadership are strong foundations that enable teachers to continue to evaluate and improve their teaching practices.(Shim & Thompson, 2025).

The actual implementation is seen in the form of regular meetings between teachers to reflect on classroom data, discuss evidence-based teaching strategies, and experiment with a uniform shared learning approach across classes. This approach not only strengthens the professional bond between teachers, but also creates continuity between planning and implementing learning that is more responsive to student needs.

In the context of real implementation in schools, the formation of teacher work teams also requires a supportive structure, such as clear division of roles, regular collaboration schedules, and a focused focus on learning objectives. The process of collectively developing lesson plans is not only about unifying the format, but more about unifying the vision and pedagogical approach. Teachers need to discuss in depth about learning objectives, differentiation strategies, and appropriate forms of assessment, so that the resulting lesson plans are truly contextual and applicable.

Moreover, the teacher team is also responsible for evaluating the implementation of learning through post-teaching reflection, for example by conducting peer reviews, cross-observations, and analyzing student learning outcomes. Thus, the formation of a teacher work team becomes a strategic means in creating a cycle of continuous improvement in the quality of learning based on real practices in the classroom. This collaborative approach is in line with the views of education experts such as Fullan, who emphasize that meaningful educational change can only be achieved through collaborative work and collective commitment from practitioners in the field.(Crary, 2021).

3. Reward and Punishment Based Performance Evaluation

Teacher performance evaluation based on reward and punishment system is an important strategy in education management to encourage the improvement of teacher professionalism and work motivation. Awards or rewards given based on performance can increase job satisfaction, commitment, and productivity. In practice in schools, rewards can be in the form of financial incentives such as bonuses or salary increases, and also non-financial incentives such as job promotions, symbolic awards, or opportunities to participate in professional training. Strategically designed rewards not only increase work enthusiasm, but also foster healthy competition between teachers, while punishments in the form of reprimands or coaching are directed at building awareness and self-improvement of low-performing teachers. In this context, the evaluation system becomes a reflection tool for teachers and policy makers to continuously improve the quality of learning in the classroom.

In addition to awards, the coaching approach to low-performing teachers is also an integral part of the reward and punishment-based evaluation system. Constructive punishment is not merely a form of punishment, but rather a means of providing clear feedback and opportunities for performance improvement through targeted coaching. In practice, low-performing teachers are not immediately sanctioned, but are guided through coaching, retraining, and intensive mentoring by superiors or more competent colleagues.

A study by Nzabahimana and Andala showed that this strategy is effective when accompanied by empathetic communication and appreciation for teacher improvement

efforts.(Nzabahimana & Andala, 2024). Their research findings show that fair recognition and coaching can increase teachers' intrinsic motivation and have a positive impact on students' academic performance, especially in subjects such as mathematics. This suggests that an evaluation system that balances rewards and coaching can create a professional environment that supports teachers' holistic growth.

C. Challenges and Solutions

1. Internal Challenges

Internal challenges in managing private Islamic educational institutions are important factors that influence teacher performance and the overall effectiveness of the institution.(Yusutria, 2022). One of the prominent challenges is the limited operational funds that hinder the implementation of teacher development programs optimally. Principal leadership plays a strategic role in managing teacher motivation through training, reward and punishment systems, and improving educational standards.

However, teachers' internal motivation often decreases due to high workload pressure and limited resources, including minimal budget support from the foundation. Lack of funds impacts on training opportunities, inadequate facilities, and low incentives that can be given to teachers. In addition, the intervention of foundation management in operational decision-making without involving school management often causes conflict and hinders innovation that could improve the quality of teaching.

Solutions to these challenges require an integrated approach that involves increasing the managerial capacity of school principals and improving communication with foundations. Recommended strategies include developing school business units as alternative sources of funding, increasing transparency in budget planning, and involving teachers in formulating policies related to their welfare. In addition, strengthening organizational culture based on Islamic values such as amanah, ihsan, and sincerity is expected to increase teachers' intrinsic motivation. These efforts must be accompanied by regular monitoring and evaluation of teachers' financial and psychosocial conditions to ensure the sustainability of the coaching programs designed by schools and foundations.

2. External Challenges

The external challenges faced by private Islamic schools are increasingly complex amidst competition with public schools and the globalization of education. One of the main challenges is how Islamic schools can remain relevant and in demand in a competitive environment, where public schools often have better facilities and wider access to the latest educational technology.(Subaidi, 2023).

To address these challenges, many private Islamic schools have begun implementing educational marketing strategies such as flagship programs, long-term promotions, and curriculum integration that combines Islamic values with global competencies. These strategies have proven to be able to increase school competitiveness and attract the interest of parents and students from various social and cultural backgrounds.

Another concrete solution lies in the importance of visionary leadership that is able to bring Islamic schools into the current of modernization without losing their Islamic identity. Subaidi stated that school leaders must have the ability to think far ahead and be adaptive to global changes, including the development of educational quality, curriculum innovation, and increasing the competence of educators. Leaders like this are not only able to maintain the existence of Islamic educational institutions, but also make them superior in the global competitive arena.

3. Solutions and Recommendations

Strengthening the synergy between principals, teachers, and foundations is one of the strategic solutions in overcoming the challenges faced by Islamic schools, both internally and externally. The role of the principal in the context of technopreneur leadership is crucial in creating a work ecosystem that encourages innovation and collaboration among all stakeholders. Through a collaborative leadership approach, the principal is able to integrate the values of entrepreneurship, technology, and Islamic value-based management to improve the innovative work behavior of teachers. This creates a work climate that supports the development of sustainable professionalism and builds trust between teachers and foundations as the main stakeholders of Islamic education.

In addition to internal collaboration, the use of technology and professional networks are also important pillars in improving the quality of Islamic education in the digital era. Integration of technology in Islamic education management can improve efficiency, access to learning resources, and create a collaborative and innovative work environment.(Astuti, 2024). Digital literacy training, development of technology-based pedagogical competencies,

and partnerships with professional teacher communities are key strategies in strengthening teacher capabilities in facing the challenges of globalization of education. By utilizing technology and professional networks effectively, Islamic schools are able to maintain relevance, increase competitiveness, and adhere to Islamic values in their educational practices.

CONCLUSION

The role of the principal in Islamic schools is very strategic in integrating Islamic values into educational leadership. The principal not only functions as an administrative manager, but also as an innovator, communicator, motivator, coach, and role model who fosters an Islamic work culture that is trustworthy, *ihsan*, and disciplined. In his role, the principal encourages collaboration of the teacher team in developing the RPP, conducts academic supervision that fosters reflection and effective learning, and implements reward and punishment-based performance evaluation to motivate increased teacher professionalism.

However, the implementation of this role is not free from internal challenges such as limited funds, declining teacher motivation, and the influence of foundation management, as well as external challenges in the form of competition with public schools and the flow of globalization of education. The solutions offered include strengthening the synergy between principals, teachers, and foundations, as well as the use of technology and professional networks of Islamic teachers. With visionary, participatory, and Islamic-based leadership, principals have the potential to become agents of change who are able to improve the quality of education and form Islamic schools that are superior, relevant, and adaptive to changing times.

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