



## Transformational Leadership of School Principals to Enhance Islamic Educational Management in Formal Institutions

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p><b>Article History:</b> Recieved : 17-Jul-2025 Revised : 5-Aug-2025 Accepted : 17-Sep-2025 Available online: 30-Sep-2025</p> <p><b>Keyword:</b> School Principal; Quality Management; Formal Institution</p>	<p>This study aims to examine how school principals innovate in their leadership to improve the quality of Islamic education management in formal institutions. A qualitative research method was employed. Data were collected through a literature review, drawing from various sources, contexts, and approaches.</p> <p>The findings indicate that principals who effectively enhance the quality management of education are those who recognize themselves as leaders and are capable of managing the human resources within their institutions—such as teaching staff, students, and the entire academic community. Effective management of infrastructure and facilities in formal educational institutions is also essential. The study concludes that the role of leadership in formal educational institutions is crucial for improving Islamic education management. A leader must simultaneously fulfill multiple roles: as a leader, manager, supervisor, administrator, innovator, educator, and motivator.</p>

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## INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of the industrial revolution has brought about substantial changes in various facets of human life, notably in the realm of education (Amelia et al., 2024). In the context of national development, education functions as a strategic foundation for cultivating high-quality human resources—not only intellectually, but also morally, socially, and spiritually. As an integral part of the national education system, Islamic education plays a vital role in aligning religious values of faith (īmān) and piety (taqwā) with academic excellence, thereby contributing to the development of the holistic individual (insān kāmil).

The transformation of Indonesia's education system in the post-reform era has been characterized by a series of legislative revisions, including the National Education System Laws enacted in 1999, 2004, and 2014. These reforms emphasize the principles of autonomy, decentralization, and community participation. Such changes have enabled educational institutions to adopt innovative and contextual learning approaches tailored to learners' needs and societal demands (Kusasi et al., 2024). In this evolving landscape, the leadership role of school principals has emerged as a decisive factor in achieving educational quality.

In Islamic educational institutions, principals are expected not only to manage administrative functions effectively, but also to embody and apply Islamic ethical and spiritual values in every aspect of school governance (Putri et al., 2024). Their leadership role is multidimensional, encompassing functions as educators, managers, administrators, supervisors, leaders, innovators, and motivators. These roles must be exercised synergistically to foster a learning environment that is transformative, humanistic, and conducive to intellectual and moral development. Addressing the challenges of 21st-century education requires leadership that is both innovative and quality-oriented.

The advancement of Islamic education quality necessitates a comprehensive strategy, including the optimization of institutional resources, innovation in learning and character education, effective collaboration with parents and the broader community, and integrative communication with all stakeholders. Educational management, therefore, should not be confined to administrative tasks; rather, it constitutes an integrated process aimed at creating an educational system that is effective, efficient, and meaningful.

Total Quality Management (TQM) represents a relevant approach to addressing the complexity of contemporary educational challenges. The application of quality principles in the planning, implementation, and evaluation stages of education must become a shared commitment among all school actors. As the central figure in educational governance, the school principal holds a strategic position in ensuring that the entire process aligns with institutional quality standards.

Based on this background, the present study employs a qualitative approach through library research to explore the innovative leadership practices of school principals in enhancing the management of Islamic education in formal institutions. The study also aims to analyze the implications of such leadership transformations for the sustainable improvement of educational quality in the Islamic education sector.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. School Principal Leadership

Leadership is defined as the capacity of an individual to influence, guide, nurture, and motivate others toward the achievement of shared objectives (Azhar, 2016). From an Islamic perspective, leadership (*al-imārah*) transcends mere authority; it is regarded as a trust (*amānah*) and a form of service (*khidmah*) that must be exercised ethically and with foresight. This concept is epitomized by the leadership of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), who exemplified the principle of *qudwah ḥasanah* (exemplary conduct).

Within the educational setting, the school principal functions as a pivotal figure who not only holds administrative responsibilities but also plays a strategic role in mobilizing all school components to realize the institution's educational vision (Hasba, 2020). A school principal is a professional educator formally entrusted with leading an educational institution and managing the complex interactions between teaching staff and students to achieve learning goals.

Islamic school leadership should be grounded in the values of justice, integrity, and wisdom, with particular emphasis on nurturing the spiritual and moral

development of learners. Effective principals must possess a transformative vision, pedagogical expertise, moral leadership, and the ability to foster constructive interpersonal relationships. Therefore, leadership in Islamic education aims not only at academic excellence but also at embedding Islamic values throughout all aspects of school life (Sibarani et al., 2024).

## **B. Islamic Education Management**

Management is a discipline involving systematic processes of planning, organizing, directing, and controlling resources to achieve organizational goals efficiently and effectively. According to George R. Terry, management comprises a series of integrated activities that utilize human and other resources through structured processes aimed at predetermined objectives (Syahputra & Aslami, 2023).

In the educational context, management extends beyond administrative functions to encompass the holistic development of individuals—physically, intellectually, emotionally, socially, and spiritually. This aligns with Article 3 of Indonesia's Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System, which stipulates that education aims to optimize learners' potential and cultivate dignified, responsible citizens.

The national education goals in Indonesia emphasize the formation of individuals who are faithful and devoted to Allah Subhānahu wa Ta'ālā, possess noble character, maintain physical and mental health, are knowledgeable, creative, independent, and capable of fulfilling their roles as democratic and accountable citizens.

Thus, educational management can be understood as a comprehensive process that administers all educational activities, including the organization of human resources, pedagogical methods, curriculum design, learning media, facilities, and evaluation systems. The objective of this approach is to foster an educational ecosystem that facilitates the full development of learners' potential.

In the context of Islamic education management, conventional management principles are integrated with Islamic ethical and spiritual values. Although structurally similar to general educational management, this approach emphasizes the application of values such as *amānah* (trust), *'adālah* (justice), *shūrā* (consultation), and *istiqlāl* (integrity) in every managerial function. Consequently, the management of Islamic educational institutions is oriented not only toward academic achievement but also toward the cultivation of *insān kāmil*—a complete human being grounded in Islamic values (Feiby et al., 2021).

## **C. Formal Educational Institutions**

Education as a social system is categorized into three primary pathways: informal, non-formal, and formal education, as outlined in Law No. 20 of 2003. Formal educational institutions are characterized by structured curricula and organizational frameworks, whereas informal and non-formal education models offer greater flexibility while still playing a strategic role in shaping individual character and competencies (Kusmiran et al., 2022).

Informal education begins early within the family environment and continues throughout life, laying the foundation for an individual's moral and spiritual development (Irsalulloh & Maunah, 2023). In contrast, non-formal education is adaptive and designed to meet the learning needs of broader society, particularly for

those not accommodated within the formal system. Educational units such as courses, training programs, Community Learning Activity Centers (*PKBM*), and majelis taklim provide inclusive and contextually relevant learning opportunities (Taofik, 2020).

Formal educational institutions—whether state-sponsored or privately managed—adhere to a national curriculum framework and implement standardized academic evaluation systems. Their distinguishing features include hierarchical levels, systematic learning processes, and measurable educational outcomes, typically reflected in certification or diploma issuance (Amrullah et al., 2021).

## METHOD

This study investigates the transformation of school leadership in enhancing the management of Islamic education within formal institutions by employing a qualitative research approach. The primary aim is to explore how educational leaders innovate their leadership practices to improve the quality management of Islamic education in formal educational settings. Consistent with Sugiyono's conceptualization, qualitative research seeks to comprehend phenomena in their natural context, with the researcher acting as the main instrument for data collection and analysis (Nasser et al., 2021).

The study adopts a descriptive-analytical method, wherein data are collected through library research encompassing a broad spectrum of relevant academic sources. The initial phase involved systematically gathering data from scholarly literature, including books, peer-reviewed journal articles, research reports, and policy documents pertinent to the roles of school principals, quality management in Islamic education, and formal educational institutions.

Sources were selected based on their relevance and contribution to deepening the theoretical and practical understanding of the subject matter. To analyze the data, content analysis was utilized to meticulously examine each source, aiming to extract core principles of school leadership that are instrumental in strengthening the quality management of Islamic education.

The results derived from this content analysis were then synthesized and critically evaluated to formulate recommendations for effective school leadership practices. These recommendations are intended to support the advancement of quality management within Islamic educational institutions.

## FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

### A. The Duties and Roles of the Principal in Leadership within Formal Educational Institutions

The transformation of Indonesia's educational system in the post-reform era has been characterized by significant policy revisions, notably through the enactment of the National Education System Laws in 1999, 2004, and 2014. These legislative frameworks underscore the principles of autonomy, decentralization, and community participation, which have collectively enabled educational institutions to adopt contextualized and innovative learning approaches tailored to learner characteristics and contemporary demands. Within this evolving landscape, the leadership role of

school principals has become a critical determinant in steering educational institutions toward achieving targeted quality standards.

School principals serve a pivotal function in optimizing institutional potential to fulfill educational objectives. They implement participatory leadership models by actively involving teachers in policy formulation, fostering collaborative environments, and facilitating effective bidirectional communication. Teachers are recognized as professional partners through deliberative and transparent decision-making processes.

In operationalizing the institution's vision and mission, principals emphasize student-centered learning, cultivate conducive learning environments, and oversee curriculum implementation that supports instructional quality. Teacher professionalism is continuously enhanced through systematic professional development programs.

Effective principals are expected to embody a clear vision and mission, alongside managerial competencies encompassing multiple roles: leader, educator, manager, administrator, supervisor, innovator, and motivator. Their leadership priorities include improving instructional quality, developing human resource potential, and ensuring the adequacy of educational facilities and infrastructure. Such leadership is characterized by persuasive, collaborative, and exemplary practices in the design, execution, and evaluation of school programs (Sutikno et al., 2022).

Principals actively engage in academic supervision, particularly within Islamic Religious Education, by conducting direct classroom observations to evaluate the implementation of learning components—introduction, core activities, and closure—and their alignment with curricular content. This supervision is complemented by reflective discussions with teachers aimed at identifying areas for pedagogical improvement. Additional supervisory activities include guidance on teaching method selection, assistance in preparing relevant instructional materials, routine classroom visits, support for curriculum-based syllabus development, facilitation of periodic academic meetings, and evaluation of collective educational programs.

From an administrative perspective, principals are responsible for ensuring the efficient and effective execution of school administrative and operational functions. Drawing on Sunarto's framework, effective school leadership necessitates adaptability to social dynamics and shifts in educational policy (Mulyati, 2022), alongside proficient management of curriculum planning, facilities and infrastructure, recordkeeping, and financial administration with accountability (Utari et al., 2022).

As educators, principals foster the development of both teaching staff and students to remain responsive to advancements in science and technology. They act as role models in attitude and behavior, promoting a positive learning climate. The synergy among all school stakeholders is essential for cultivating a harmonious and collaborative educational environment.

To reinforce the principal's educational role, efforts are made to enhance teacher competencies through participation in Teacher Working Groups (*Kelompok Kerja Guru, KKG*), training sessions, seminars, and workshops. These activities aim to enrich pedagogical knowledge and encourage innovation aligned with curriculum and educational standards. Principals also provide constructive feedback during instructional planning and implementation to ensure continuous improvement, particularly in Islamic Religious Education (Fitrah, 2017).



In their capacity as innovators, principals spearhead educational transformation by generating new ideas and implementing reform-oriented policies. Examples include expanding the school library's collection and promoting creative teaching methodologies, especially among Islamic Religious Education teachers. Strengthening educational infrastructure is integral to quality enhancement, addressing both technical and managerial dimensions to meet institutional and societal demands amid globalization.

As motivators, principals nurture harmonious interpersonal relationships within the school community and with external stakeholders. They establish supportive environments through discipline enforcement, promotion of religious culture, and internalization of moral values. Practices such as customary greetings, discipline management, and spiritual and moral development serve as foundational elements for sustainable character education among students.

From a managerial standpoint, principals develop strategic work programs encompassing short-, medium-, and long-term plans that consider both internal and external factors (Muslimah et al., 2025). Human resources, finances, facilities, and information systems are managed professionally and transparently, adhering to principles of effectiveness and efficiency. Recruitment processes for teaching staff are conducted openly, free from nepotism, collusion, and corruption, and based on institutional needs and professional qualifications (Julaiha, 2019).

The interrelated roles of innovator, motivator, and manager collectively support the sustainable enhancement of educational quality, enabling schools to function as adaptive, responsive, and transformative institutions capable of addressing contemporary educational challenges.

## **B. Management of Islamic Education in Formal Institutions: Human Resources, Infrastructure, and Learning Strategies**

The management of Islamic education within formal institutions involves the comprehensive administration of human resources and the optimization of educational infrastructure, both of which are essential to achieving instructional objectives. Competent and motivated teachers are pivotal in enhancing the quality of learning outcomes. Consequently, school principals bear the responsibility to facilitate continuous professional development and capacity building for educators. This is achieved through internal mechanisms such as Subject Teacher Consultative Forums (*Musyawarah Guru Mata Pelajaran - MGMP*), in-house training sessions, as well as external opportunities including seminars and advanced educational programs. Such initiatives substantially improve teachers' pedagogical competencies, thereby positively impacting the quality of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) (Adien et al., 2025).

Students, as the primary beneficiaries of education, are influenced by their intrinsic motivation to learn and the sustained development of character. Islamic Religious Education plays a strategic role in fostering students' noble character through habituation programs and practical activities, including Qur'an recitation and memorization, worship practices, and religious observances, especially during Ramadan. The internalization of Islamic values—such as greetings, politeness, and social ethics—is systematically integrated into religion-based character education.

The management of adequate educational infrastructure constitutes a critical responsibility for school principals. This encompasses ensuring the availability and effective utilization of instructional materials such as Qur'an texts, Iqra' books, IRE textbooks, and prophetic storybooks, which are indispensable resources in the learning process (Ari Anshori, 2024).

Effective learning strategies necessitate that teachers employ diverse instructional methods tailored to the nature of the subject matter. These methods include lectures for information dissemination, discussions to foster student engagement, and demonstrations for the practical application of religious rituals such as prayer and charitable giving (infaq). Additionally, varying instructional approaches and periodically rearranging classroom seating arrangements serve to maintain student motivation and concentration.

The overarching goal of Islamic Religious Education is to promote the holistic development of students across cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains, grounded in an Islamic worldview. Instruction extends beyond academic achievement to encompass the cultivation of exemplary Muslim personalities who internalize Islamic values as the foundation for their thought processes, behaviors, and actions, as well as a guiding framework for the advancement of knowledge and technology.

## CONCLUSION

School principals, as educational leaders, are required to possess a well-defined vision and mission, complemented by managerial competencies that encompass diverse roles including leadership, educational guidance, management, administration, supervision, innovation, and motivation. The primary emphasis of educational leadership lies in enhancing the quality of learning, fostering human resource development, and ensuring the provision of adequate educational facilities and infrastructure. Effective leadership is demonstrated through persuasive, collaborative, and exemplary practices in the planning, execution, and evaluation of school programs.

The management of Islamic education within formal institutions entails the administration of human resources alongside the optimization of facilities and infrastructure, both of which are critical to the attainment of educational goals. The presence of competent and motivated teachers is instrumental in elevating instructional quality. Accordingly, principals bear the responsibility of facilitating continuous professional development for teachers through internal mechanisms such as Subject Teacher Forums (*Musyawah Guru Mata Pelajaran* or MGMP), in-house training sessions, and external opportunities including seminars and continuing education programs. These initiatives serve to enhance pedagogical competencies and directly contribute to the effectiveness of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) delivery.

Furthermore, principals must demonstrate proficiency in three core management competencies: problem-solving skills, sound decision-making, and effective communication. These competencies are essential to fostering coordination and collaboration among all educational stakeholders within the school community.

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