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PRINCIPAL STRATEGIES IN IMPROVING EDUCATIONAL QUALITY AT YAQIN PEMONDAH ISLAMIC HIGH SCHOOL

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Abstract

This study examines the strategies implemented by the principal in improving the quality of education at Yaqin Pemonдах Islamic High School in East Lombok, Indonesia. The research aims to identify the strategic initiatives carried out by the school leadership and to analyze the supporting and inhibiting factors influencing educational quality improvement. A qualitative case study approach was employed. Data were collected through observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis involving the principal, teachers, and school stakeholders. The findings reveal that the principal implements several strategic initiatives, including strengthening teacher professionalism, conducting targeted coaching programs for high-achieving students, optimizing educational facilities and infrastructure, implementing regular academic supervision, and fostering collaborative relationships with students, teachers, and the community. Supporting factors include the availability of qualified teachers, administrative support, extracurricular programs, and active community participation. However, several challenges remain, such as limited teacher welfare, inadequate learning media, unfavorable student social environments, and restricted financial resources. The study highlights the importance of strategic leadership in promoting sustainable educational quality improvement in Islamic secondary schools.

Keywords: Educational quality, Principal strategy, Madrasah, supporting factors, Inhibiting factors.

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1 Introduction

Education plays a fundamental role in developing high-quality human resources and promoting national development. Educational institutions are expected not only to transfer knowledge but also to shape students' skills, character, and critical thinking abilities that are necessary for social and economic progress (UNESCO, 2024). Consequently, improving educational quality has become a major priority in many countries, including Indonesia, particularly in the context of strengthening institutional competitiveness and responding to global educational challenges (OECD, 2020)

One of the most influential factors in improving educational quality is effective school leadership. School principals play a strategic role in directing institutional development, managing educational resources, and creating a conducive learning environment. Previous studies have shown that leadership practices significantly influence teacher performance, student achievement, and overall school effectiveness (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006; Robinson et al., 2008). Principals who demonstrate strong instructional leadership can encourage professional collaboration among teachers and foster a culture of continuous improvement within schools (Wafiq et al., 2021).

In the context of Islamic educational institutions such as madrasahs, leadership plays an even more crucial role. Madrasahs are expected not only to deliver academic knowledge but also to cultivate students' moral and religious values. Therefore, the principal must implement effective strategies to integrate academic excellence with Islamic character education (Ali & Ghazali, 2024). Effective leadership in Islamic schools requires strategic planning, community engagement, and the ability to manage limited resources while maintaining institutional values (Bush, 2018).

The Indonesian government has also emphasized the importance of improving educational quality through various educational policies. Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System states that education is a conscious and planned effort to create a learning environment that enables students to actively develop their potential in terms of spiritual strength, self-control, intelligence, noble character, and essential life skills. This policy highlights the importance of effective educational leadership and management in achieving national education goals.

Several studies have demonstrated that principals' strategies such as teacher professional development, academic supervision, collaborative school culture, and community engagement contribute significantly to improving educational quality (Day et al., 2016; Loose, 2014). Effective school leadership also encourages innovation in teaching practices and supports the implementation of educational reforms within schools (Robinson et al., 2008)

However, many schools, particularly in developing regions, still face challenges in implementing strategic leadership practices. These challenges include limited educational resources, inadequate teacher welfare, insufficient learning facilities, and socio-economic factors affecting students' learning environments (OECD, 2020; UNESCO, 2024). In Islamic schools located in rural areas, these challenges may be even more significant due to limited institutional capacity and access to professional development opportunities.

Based on preliminary observations conducted at Yaqin Pemandah Islamic High School located in Pandan Wangi Village, Jerowaru District, East Lombok, the school leadership demonstrates a strong commitment to improving educational quality. The principal encourages teachers to participate in professional development programs, promotes innovative teaching practices, and continuously improves educational facilities and infrastructure. These initiatives indicate the presence of strategic leadership practices that deserve further academic investigation.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze the strategies implemented by the principal in improving educational quality at Yaqin Pemandah Islamic High School. Furthermore, the study also seeks to identify the supporting and inhibiting factors that influence the implementation of these strategies in the context of Islamic secondary education.

2 Literature Review

Educational leadership plays a crucial role in determining the effectiveness and quality of educational institutions. School principals are responsible not only for administrative management but also for instructional leadership that influences teaching practices, school culture, and student achievement. According to Bush (2011), educational leadership involves the ability of school leaders to guide institutional development through strategic planning, resource management, and collaborative decision-making. Effective leadership enables schools to create an environment that supports innovation, professional growth, and continuous improvement in the learning process.

In the context of school leadership, several studies highlight the significant impact of principals on educational quality. Leithwood and Jantzi (2005) emphasize that transformational leadership in schools can improve teacher motivation, strengthen organizational commitment, and enhance student learning outcomes. Similarly, Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe (2008) found that instructional leadership practices, such as monitoring teaching activities and supporting teacher professional development, have a direct influence on student achievement. These findings suggest that school principals play a central role in shaping the quality of teaching and learning processes within educational institutions.

Another important dimension in improving educational quality is teacher professionalism. Teachers are key actors in the implementation of educational programs, and their competence significantly affects student learning outcomes. According to (Putri et al., 2020), improving teacher professionalism through training, workshops, and collaborative learning communities can enhance pedagogical competence and instructional effectiveness. Professional development programs allow teachers to adapt to new teaching methods, integrate technology into learning, and respond to the evolving needs of students.

In addition to teacher professionalism, the availability of adequate educational facilities and learning resources also contributes to educational quality. Adequate infrastructure, learning media, and teaching resources create a conducive learning environment and support the implementation of innovative teaching strategies. According to Hernita (2018), educational quality is closely related to the availability and effective management of educational resources within schools. Schools that are able to optimize their resources tend to achieve better learning outcomes and provide more effective educational services.

Community participation is also recognized as an important factor in improving educational quality. Collaboration between schools, parents, and the surrounding community can strengthen educational programs and provide additional support for school development. Harris (2014) argues that collaborative leadership and community engagement contribute to sustainable school improvement by encouraging shared responsibility among stakeholders. Through active involvement of parents and community members, schools can create stronger social support systems that enhance students' learning experiences.

In the context of Islamic educational institutions, leadership strategies must also integrate educational management with religious and moral values. Islamic schools are expected to develop not only students' academic competence but also their moral character and spiritual awareness. Yakin (2013) states that effective management of Islamic educational institutions requires leaders who are capable of balancing academic excellence with the cultivation of Islamic values. Therefore, principals in Islamic schools must implement strategies that promote both academic development and character education.

Despite the importance of leadership in improving educational quality, many schools still face various challenges in implementing effective leadership strategies. Limited financial resources, inadequate teacher welfare, and unfavorable social environments may hinder school development and reduce the effectiveness of educational programs. These challenges highlight the need for strategic leadership that is capable of addressing institutional constraints while promoting sustainable educational improvement.

Based on these theoretical perspectives, it can be concluded that principal leadership strategies, teacher professional development, resource management, and community collaboration are key factors influencing the improvement of educational quality. Therefore, examining how school principals implement these strategies in specific institutional contexts is important for understanding how educational quality can be improved in Islamic secondary schools.

3 Method

This study employed a qualitative research approach using a case study design to explore the strategies implemented by the principal in improving educational quality. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because it allows researchers to examine social phenomena in depth and understand participants' experiences within their natural settings (Creswell & Poth, 2024). The case study design enables the researcher to analyze a specific bounded system comprehensively by collecting detailed information from multiple sources over a certain period of time (Yin, 2017). In this research, the case examined was Yaqin Pemandah Islamic High School located in Pandan Wangi Village, Jerowaru District, East Lombok, Indonesia. The study focused on understanding the leadership strategies implemented by the school principal as well as the supporting and inhibiting factors influencing the improvement of educational quality in the institution.

The participants in this study were selected using purposive sampling, a technique commonly used in qualitative research to identify individuals who possess relevant knowledge and experience related to the research topic (Patton, 2013). The participants consisted of the school principal, several teachers from different subject areas, the student affairs coordinator, and a representative of the school committee. These individuals were chosen because they are directly involved in school management and educational activities, and therefore have firsthand experience with the implementation of leadership strategies and educational programs within the institution. Their perspectives provided valuable insights into how the principal's strategies are implemented and how they influence the overall quality of education in the school.

Data were collected using three main techniques: observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation analysis. Observation was conducted to obtain direct information about school activities,

leadership practices, and the teaching and learning process within the institution. Through non-participant observation, the researcher examined how the principal interacted with teachers and students, how educational programs were implemented, and how the learning environment was managed. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the selected participants to gain deeper insights into their experiences and perceptions regarding the principal's strategies in improving educational quality. This interview format allowed the researcher to explore relevant issues while still maintaining a flexible conversation structure. In addition, documentation analysis was carried out by examining various school documents such as school development plans, supervision reports, teacher professional development records, and extracurricular activity programs. These documents served as supporting evidence and helped validate the information obtained through observation and interviews.

The collected data were analyzed using the qualitative data analysis model proposed by (Ridder, 2014) which involves three main stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction refers to the process of selecting, simplifying, and organizing raw data obtained from observations, interviews, and documentation to focus on information relevant to the research objectives. Data display involves presenting the organized data in the form of descriptive narratives or thematic categories to facilitate interpretation. Finally, conclusions were drawn by identifying patterns, themes, and relationships related to the principal's strategies in improving educational quality. Throughout the analysis process, the researcher continuously verified the findings by reviewing the collected data to ensure their credibility and consistency.

To ensure the validity and trustworthiness of the research findings, this study applied data triangulation by comparing information obtained from different sources and data collection methods (Patton, 2013). The researcher compared data from interviews, observations, and documentation to confirm the consistency of the findings. In addition, member checking was conducted by confirming interview results with participants to ensure that the interpretations accurately represented their perspectives. Through these procedures, the study aimed to produce reliable and credible findings regarding the strategies implemented by the principal in improving educational quality at Yaqin Pemondah Islamic High School.

3 Results and Discussions

This section presents the findings of the study regarding the strategies implemented by the principal in improving educational quality at Yaqin Pemondah Islamic High School, as well as the supporting and inhibiting factors influencing the implementation of these strategies. The findings are based on data obtained from observations, interviews, and documentation analysis conducted during the research.

One of the primary strategies implemented by the principal is strengthening teacher professionalism. Teachers are encouraged to participate in various professional development activities such as subject teacher forums (MGMP), workshops, and training programs organized by the Ministry of Religious Affairs. These programs aim to improve teachers' pedagogical competence, subject knowledge, and teaching effectiveness. The principal also motivates teachers to continuously improve their instructional methods by adopting innovative teaching strategies that support student-centered learning. This finding supports previous studies that highlight the importance of teacher professional development as a key factor in improving educational quality (Hallinger, 2011; Robinson et al., 2008). Professional teachers

are better able to design effective learning activities and foster a more engaging classroom environment for students.

Another important strategy implemented by the principal is academic supervision. The principal regularly monitors classroom teaching activities and provides constructive feedback to teachers. This supervision process allows the principal to identify challenges faced by teachers and provide guidance to improve instructional practices. Academic supervision not only ensures that teaching activities align with curriculum standards but also helps teachers enhance their professional competence. According to instructional leadership theory, effective supervision by school leaders can significantly improve teaching quality and student learning outcomes (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005).

In addition to improving teacher performance, the principal also implements special programs aimed at developing student achievement. These programs include academic coaching for high-achieving students, participation in competitions, and various extracurricular activities such as religious programs, scouting, and student organizations. These activities provide opportunities for students to develop their talents and interests beyond the classroom while strengthening their character and leadership skills. Such initiatives demonstrate the principal's commitment to creating a holistic educational environment that supports both academic and non-academic student development.

The principal also emphasizes the importance of optimizing educational facilities and infrastructure to support effective learning. The school management continuously strives to improve the availability and utilization of classrooms, teaching aids, and learning media. Adequate facilities play a significant role in creating a conducive learning environment and supporting the implementation of innovative teaching methods. Previous research has shown that the availability of educational resources significantly influences the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process (Bush, 2011).

Another key strategy implemented by the principal is fostering strong collaboration between the school and the surrounding community. The school actively involves parents, alumni, and community members in various school activities and development programs. This collaboration helps strengthen community support for educational initiatives and encourages shared responsibility in improving the quality of education. Community participation has been widely recognized as an important factor in supporting school improvement and sustaining educational development (Harris, 2004).

The findings of this study also reveal several supporting factors that facilitate the implementation of strategies aimed at improving educational quality at Yaqin Pemondah Islamic High School. One of the main supporting factors is the availability of qualified human resources. Most teachers at the school possess at least a bachelor's degree and demonstrate a strong commitment to their teaching responsibilities. In addition, effective school administration helps ensure that educational programs are well-organized and implemented systematically. Extracurricular programs also contribute significantly to student engagement and character development. Furthermore, active participation from the community, particularly parents and the school committee, provides additional support for school programs and initiatives.

Despite these supporting factors, several challenges also hinder the improvement of educational quality in the school. One of the main challenges identified in this study is the limited welfare of teachers, which may affect their motivation and performance. Another challenge is the limited availability of learning media and educational resources, which restricts the implementation of more innovative teaching methods. In addition, the social environment of students sometimes presents difficulties for the school. Some students come from backgrounds where educational support from families and communities is relatively limited, which can influence their learning motivation and academic performance.

Overall, the findings of this study indicate that the success of improving educational quality at Yaqin Pemondah Islamic High School is strongly influenced by the leadership strategies implemented by the principal. Through teacher professional development, academic supervision, student achievement programs, improvement of educational facilities, and community collaboration, the principal plays a central role in promoting continuous school improvement. However, addressing challenges related to teacher welfare, educational resources, and student social environments remains essential for achieving sustainable improvements in educational quality

4 Conclusion

This study reveals that the principal of Yaqin Pemondah Islamic High School plays a crucial role in improving educational quality through several strategic initiatives, including strengthening teacher professionalism, conducting academic supervision, developing student achievement programs, optimizing educational facilities, and fostering collaboration with the community. These strategies contribute to creating a supportive learning environment and enhancing both academic and character development among students. However, challenges such as limited teacher welfare, inadequate learning resources, and socio-environmental factors affecting students remain obstacles to educational improvement. Therefore, continuous leadership efforts and collaboration with stakeholders are essential to sustain and further enhance the quality of education in the institution.

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Ethical Considerations

Not Applicable

Conflict of Interest

The Authors declare there is no conflict of interest.

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