THE PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP IN INDONESIAN ISLAMIC SCHOOL: THE STRATEGY IN SHAPING THE ACADEMIC PROFESSIONALISM

Muli Umiaty Noer
Universitas Muslim Indonesia, Indonesia
Email: muliumiaty.noer@umi.ac.id

ABSTRACT

An overview of the current situation of Indonesian Islamic schools may be viewed by examining the areas of management and educational assessment, as well as the schools' amenities and facilities, content, and procedure, as well as the competency of its graduates, teachers, and other educational staff. It has recently come to light that not all Islamic schools in Indonesia can adhere to these standards. This study aims to highlight how principals of Indonesian Islamic Schools promote the academic professionalism of teachers and other educational staff members. In the context of the study of Islamic leadership, it incorporates the idea that the essential leadership talent is instructional leadership. It is associated with the core skillsets of assessment, unity of purpose, diversity, reflection, professional development, curriculum and instruction, instructional leadership, visionary leadership, learning community, organizational management, collaboration, and professionalism. This qualitative research uses a descriptive case study approach to provide a detailed description of the phenomenon under study. Using a purposive sampling technique, data collection involved representatives from public and private Madrasah Aliyah (MA) institutions in Parepare, Indonesia. Our study found the core understanding of academic professionalism emphasizes professional development, social service, competence, and responsibility, requiring the support of a proper institutional outcome plan. It provides evidence that the leadership style of principals influences the academic professionalism of teachers and educational staff, directly contributing to school quality. The excellence of the program and alumni reflects the effectiveness of the leadership of the madrasah principal.

| KEYWORDS | leadership; strategy; Islamic school; academic professionalism |

INTRODUCTION

The urgency of improving the standard of Islamic education by taking into account the ever-changing realities of the natural world cannot be postponed any longer as scientific understanding improves. It is necessary to internationalize the quality of Islamic education, particularly at Madrasah Aliyah (MA), to be on par with the advancements that nations in other regions have made. A quality management system is required to ensure the highest level of performance in the process of creating Islamic education (Allès & tho Seeth, 2021; Munadi, 2020; Zuhdi & Dobson, 2022).

Islamic schools must always organize themselves in such a way that they remain supportive and appear significant amid demands for mastery of science and technology as well as awareness of religious principles (Basri & Paramma, 2019). Then they will be able to do what they were meant to do. As a result, Islamic school needs to be more proactive in the reforming of the development of Islamic school, which should be holistic, environmentally friendly, and focused on the future (El-Mubarak & Hassan, 2021; Syafitri, 2022). This function will be fulfilled whenever Islamic schools can generate pupils of sufficient level. They have the opportunity to participate in and contribute to forming a religious society.

The quality of education is primarily determined by the extent to which educational institutions' teaching and learning processes are effective (Anwar, Jufri, & Muhaimi, 2019; Paramma & Shafa, 2022; Zaini & Syafaruddin, 2020). Madrasas, being educational establishments, require a principal capable of leading and managing madrasas professionally. According to (Zulkifli Musthan, 2019), one factor that impacts whether or not education is provided effectively in madrasas is the leadership of the madrasa principal. This is due to the fact that the head of the madrasa plays an essential part in ensuring that the madrasa is continuously improved and developed (Shulhan, 2018).

Madrasa principals need adequate competency. This is done to ensure that the head of the madrasa can carry out any problem and development about the madrasa. According to (Ross & Cozzens, 2016), an educational institution to function at its best, its principal needs to demonstrate mastery of the fundamental skill of instructional leadership. The fundamental skillsets consist of (1) assessment, (2) unity of purpose, (3) diversity, (4) reflection, (5) professional development, (6) curriculum and instruction, (7) instructional leadership, (8) visionary leadership, (9) learning community, (10) organizational management, (11) collaboration, and (12) professionalism.

As the leader of the madrasa, the person in charge of the institution is responsible for elevating the level of expertise and dedication of the teaching staff (Shulhan, 2018). Therefore, the principal of the madrasa should provide motivation and advice to teachers so that professional standards of teaching can be accomplished to the required level. This is one of the many things that the madrasa principal must do to improve instructors' professionalism (Bukliv, Kuchak, &

Vasylyuk-Zaitseva, 2023). In this instance, the efforts of the madrasa are crucial because someone is accountable for leading the madrasa. The head of the madrasa is someone responsible for leading the madrasa.

Management is still something that is lacking in Islamic schools and other types of Islamic educational organizations. Most Islamic boarding schools have not adhered to the national education standards regarding the systems, procedures, and instruments for measuring the learning results of their students. Many outsiders have a negative impression of these madrasas due to the performance and the standard of the individuals who have graduated from them (Amin, Sinulingga, Desy, Abas, & Sukarno, 2021; Syaifudin et al., 2021).

This article contains some preliminary data gathered from interviews carried out at Madrasah Aliyah (MA) institutions in Parepare, Indonesia, both public and private. The subjects discussed in this article have been broken down into two main themes that came about as a result of the interview results. Discussion of the two most prominent themes that surfaced from the interviews that were carried out, namely, (1) practices on academic professionalism and (2) the effectiveness of institutional programs.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the various approaches to leadership that Islamic school principals employ in order to foster academic professionalism, specifically; (1) to know the practice of applied academic professionalism, and (2) to determine the effectiveness of institutional programs in developing academic professionalism.

RESEARCH METHOD

A descriptive case study was conducted at a Madrasah Aliyah or Islamic Highs School in Parepare, Indonesia, to comprehensively comprehend the leadership of madrasah principals in the professional development sector of teachers and education personnel. The purpose of using a particular case study is not to generalize or verify a theory. Case studies are instead conducted for descriptive purposes. Researchers typically use descriptive case studies to provide a detailed description of the phenomenon under study (Voss, Johnson, & Godsell, 2016).

Using a purposive sampling technique, the data collection involved Representatives from Public and Private Madrasah Aliyah (MA) institutions in Parepare, Indonesia. The Islamic High School or Madrasah Aliyah that we anonymously referred to as "Madrasah A" represents the Public Madrasah Aliyah (MA), and the Islamic High School or Madrasah Aliyah that we anonymously referred to as "Madrasah B" represents the Private Madrasah Aliyah (MA). This study identifies both Islamic High Schools as the research site based on the availability of infrastructure and the human resource components. Each of these Madrasah Aliyah representatives was selected because their success in developing the professionalism of teachers and educational staff at the madrasah was demonstrated by the high standard of teachers at the madrasah and its status as a pilot school within the city.

Sample/ Participants/ Group

The subjects of this study were stakeholders who played a role in each research site, including madrasa's principal, deputy principal, teachers, the head of administration department as educational staff, the head of the librarian, and supervisors as evaluators of the success achieved by the Head of the Madrasah.

Instrument and Procedures

The research data were gathered using an interview instrument that focused on questions regarding the actions taken by the school principal to develop the professionalism of teachers and education staff in order to achieve school objectives.

In carrying out the interviews, the researcher performed three stages: the first stage was determining the primary informants in the interview. These informants included the madrasa's principal, deputy principal, teachers, educational staff, and supervisors. The second step, interview preparation, entails scheduling interviews with informants and preparing interview instruments. The third stage is the presentation of the interview results, in which the results are presented and described to determine the saturation of the collected data.

Data Analysis

The obtained and collected data are organized according to a pattern, category, and fundamental description of the problem under study. This study's data analysis process consisted of three phases. First, data reduction, or the selection process, simplifies the obtained data. Second, the presentation of data, specifically the display of simplified data in narrative text that is straightforward to comprehend. Third, drawing conclusions, or drawing conclusions from the obtained data.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section provides the informant's perspective on the role of madrasah principals in fostering academic professionalism in the institutions they oversee. Two themes emerged from the interviews conducted with stakeholders at each school where data was gathered: (1) practices on academic professionalism and (2) the efficacy of institutional plans. The compiled statements from the interview were then translated from Indonesian to English. The three main themes and six sub-themes that arose from the interviews are then presented in the following table.

Table 1. The interview's emerging themes and subthemes

Themes	Sub-themes
practices on academic professionalism	individual capability development
	professionalism in academia as a social service
	the prominence of the madrasa's principal function
the efficacy of institutional plans	amenities and infrastructure
	a positive educational atmosphere
	curriculum development

Practices on Academic Professionalism

The views of the participants regarding academic professionalism practices consist of three dimensions, including (1) individual capability development, (2) professionalism in academia as a social service, and (3) the prominence of the madrasa's principal function. For the first dimension, Martina, as Principal of Madrasah A, describes how to determine policies to improve the ability of teachers and education staff. Several approaches to developing supporting facilities in their schools include educational training and seminars in the context of developing the teachers' professional development as one of the essential points. She said:

In the last three years, in planning to develop supporting facilities at this school, I have carried out a program to develop and improve the quality of teachers and education staff. For example, starting in 2018, before the COVID-19 outbreak, there was a program that encouraged teachers to take part in training and educational seminars in the context of developing the teaching profession. Continuing in the following year, we carried out a program to strengthen the role and function of teachers as mentors and counselors in the context of building student character. We also do this to support the implementation of the curriculum proclaimed by the Ministry of Education.

A similar approach was used at Madrasah B to raise the professionalism of the educational personnel and teachers. Teachers and education staff were actively involved in activities and teacher training organized by government agencies, universities, or non-governmental organizations. In addition, this school is actively taking the initiative to create programs through inter-madrasah networks. As Herfina, as Principal of Madrasah B, stated:

As the principal of a madrasah, I need to make various approaches to each of my colleagues before making a decision or having an idea to offer to the school. After using such an approach, various interrelated policies emerged that planned to be agreed upon and implemented together. As part of planning the development of teachers and education personnel in this school, several steps have been implemented, including (1) involving teachers and education personnel (staff) in activities and training of teachers, (2) mentoring organized by government agencies, universities, or non-governmental organizations, and (3) madrasah-based teacher and educational staff development programs can also be implemented through programs planned by madrasahs through inter-madrasah networks.

The second dimension in the view of academic professionalism that emerges from the interview is related to professionalism in academia as a social service. The key word that can be drawn from the interviews in this dimension is cooperation. Martina, Principal of Madrasah A, described how good collaboration between teachers and education staff in providing educational services impacted the success of graduate students being accepted into tertiary institutions. In addition, the committee's role at Madrasah A is to focus on improving the quality of education

services and educational services through community participation. As she revealed:

> *This year we are very grateful because many of our alumni students have graduated to enter college. This can be realized thanks to cooperation between teachers and education staff providing educational services at our school. We managed to access many alumni entering public universities and PTKIN every year through the invitation route (free test). The rest who did not pass the invitation route passed through the SBMPTN and UM-PTKIN routes.*

> *The implementation of this exemplary service can also be realized because it is part of the school committee's objectives which act as a forum for communication between the madrasah and parents of students, provide suggestions and input in an effort to improve the quality of education services, assist madrasahs in providing educational services through community participation, and helping the madrasah in socializing madrasah programs.*

Concerning the third dimension, the prominence of the madrasa's principal function, participants highlighted the competence of the madrasah principal, who plays a role in forming academic professionalism in schools. Salam, the Supervisor of Madrasah A, said that the basic competencies a madrasah head must possess are leadership, humanism, communicative, problem-solving, and decision-making skills. He said:

> *The madrasah principal can carry out his duties well if it is based on the ability to lead members, conceptual skills and human relations, able to communicate with teachers and superiors, able to assess the performance of teachers and administrative staff, ability to analyze problems, make decisions quickly and precisely. The ability referred to is a form of competency that must be possessed by the head of the madrasah in carrying out his duties.*

Bahtiar, the supervisor of Madrasah B, stated the same finding. He added apart from competence, the principal of the madrasah must also have a sense of responsibility for his duties. Madrasah principals are responsible for improving the quality of education. He revealed:

> *In supervising schools, there are several aspects that I pay attention to, one of which is the leader or principal of the school. The role of a school principal is very important because he is most responsible for improving the quality of education. Madrasah principals face the challenge of carrying out education in a directed, planned, and sustainable manner, establishing policies that are considered to improve madrasah management. The principal of the madrasah is responsible for organizing educational activities, administration of the madrasa, coaching teachers and other education personnel, and utilizing and maintaining facilities and infrastructure.*

The three sub-themes that emerge from the data findings are essential in reflecting the conception of academic professionalism in an Islamic High School or Madrasah Aliyah environment. According to initial findings from this research

data, academic professionalism consists of professional development, social service, competence, and responsibility.

The Efficacy of Institutional Plans

The participants stated three main issues that affect the efficacy of institutional plans, including (1) amenities and infrastructure, (2) a positive educational atmosphere, and (3) curriculum development. In supporting the process of activities in schools, various supporting facilities are provided to support teaching and extracurricular activities. As stated by Magfirah, the Head of the Administrative Department of Madrasah B:

At this school we provide various supporting facilities that are sufficient enough to support the process of activities at school. The supporting facilities in question include buildings, teaching staff, computer laboratories, science laboratories, language laboratories, libraries, student dormitories, and mushallah. Apart from being a place of worship, we also function the Mushalla as a place for extracurricular activities for students living in the dormitory.

The intriguing aspect of how Madrasas create a positive atmosphere for learning is that they do so as a responsibility to fulfill the mandate of society in the field of education. Madrasah B incorporates Islamic values into all school activities. This becomes a strategy for guiding students' potential. As Herfina, the Principal of Madrasah B, admitted:

From time to time, this school has shown rapid development and its capabilities in the form of programs supported by various quality learning facilities and infrastructure in accordance with technological developments and advances and demands of needs. Armed with the faith and a sense of responsibility, we strive to create a conducive learning environment for students, considering that students are a mandate given by Allah SWT to us to be guided and directed so that they are always in their nature.

The third issue that influences the efficacy of institutional plans, namely curriculum development, is shown by the participants' perceptions as stakeholders. In developing the learning curriculum, the balance between the goals of the world and the hereafter is the focus of the expected learning outcomes. Nahriah, Deputy Principal of Madrasah B, stated this:

To lead students towards self-maturity, we provide the best through the provision of cognitive domains, skills, and attitudes that are integrated into Islamic values, balanced between the functions of the soul, mind, feelings, and body, which are carried out with an individual or collective approach towards a complete human being who can maintain a balance between the goals of the world and the hereafter as the ultimate goal of Islamic education and Qur'aniyah-based madrasah identity

The three main issues related to The Efficacy of Institutional Plans above reflect the indicators observed by participants to form academic professionalism in

Islamic high schools. However, the stakeholders are adjusting the space provision to support the institution's strategic plan to continue as expected.

CONCLUSION

This paper discusses the meaning and practice of academic professionalism in the landscape of Islamic high schools or Madrasah Aliyah in Indonesia. The current trend of approaches taken by stakeholders in managing a secondary education institution has led to new views in the academic profession. The findings in this study show the views of academics in understanding and practicing academic professionalism. Starting from this, academics who apply directly in schools to redefine their perceptions and behavior in relation to their world of work in the Islamic education sector are realized. Even though there are limitations in applying specific academic professionalism to strategic plans in educational institutions or schools, our findings show that stakeholders are still working on various infrastructure adjustments to support the process of activities in schools to keep running smoothly. We also found that the core understanding of academic professionalism emphasizes professional development, social service, competence, and responsibility, requiring the support of a proper institutional outcome plan.

This study provides evidence that the leadership style of school principals influences the academic professionalism of teachers and education staff, directly contributing to improving school quality. If provided with adequate training, teachers and education staff will be more creative and innovative in carrying out their duties and functions as professional educators. Islamic High School culture will be created, making Islamic High School institutions excellent. The excellence of the program and alumni reflects the effectiveness of the leadership of the madrasah principal.

The findings and conclusions in this study are suggestive as follows. To improve the development of teachers and education personnel, it is deemed necessary to implement a capacity-building program that is useful for building the concept of vision, leadership capacity of Islamic School principals, teacher evaluation, and organizational management.

REFERENCES

Allès, D., & tho Seeth, A. (2021). From Consumption to Production: The Extroversion of Indonesian Islamic Education. *TRaNS: Trans-Regional and National Studies of Southeast Asia*, *9*(2), 145–161.

Amin, H., Sinulingga, G., Desy, D., Abas, E., & Sukarno, S. (2021). Issues and Management of Islamic Education in a Global Context. *Nidhomul Haq : Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam*, *6*(3), 608–620. https://doi.org/10.31538/ndh.v6i3.1808

Anwar, L. M., Jufri, A. W., & Muhaimi, L. (2019). Application of Madrasah Based

Management in Improving the Quality of Aliyah Madrasah Education. *International Journal of Multicultural and Multireligious Understanding*, *6*(5), 257–269.

Basri, M., & Paramma, M. A. (2019). EFL Students' Perspective on the Usefulness of ICT based Learning in Indonesian Higher Education. *ELT Worldwide: Journal of English Language Teaching*, *6*(2), 105. https://doi.org/10.26858/eltww.v6i2.10515

Bukliv, R., Kuchak, A., & Vasylyuk-Zaitseva, S. (2023). Professional training of future academic staff and digitalization of education: analysis of mutual influences. *Futurity Education*, *3*(1), 69–78.

El-Mubarak, A. M. O. I., & Hassan, I. (2021). Challenges of Islamic Education in the Era of Globalization: A Proposed Holistic Solution. *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development*, *10*(3), 337–349.

Munadi, M. (2020). Systematizing Internationalization Policy of Higher Education in State Islamic Universities. *International Journal of Higher Education*, *9*(6), 96–106.

Noer, M. U. (2022). Islamic Work Ethic: The Role of Religious Principles on Working Performance in Higher Education. *Borneo International Journal of Islamic Studies (BIJIS)*, *4*(2), 1–20. https://doi.org/10.21093/bijis.v4i2.4788

Paramma, M. A., & Shafa, S. (2022). Increasing Novice EFL Learners' Vocabulary based on Short Islamic Stories in an Islamic Higher Education. *Borneo International Journal of Islamic Studies (BIJIS)*, 62–76.

Ross, D. J., & Cozzens, J. A. (2016). The Principalship: Essential Core Competencies for Instructional Leadership and Its Impact on School Climate. *Journal of Education and Training Studies*, *4*(9), 162–176.

Shulhan, M. (2018). Leadership style in the madrasah in Tulungagung: how principals enhance teacher's performance. *International Journal of Educational Management*.

Syafitri, L. N. H. (2022). Actualization of Hasan Al-Bana Holistic Integral Education in Integrated Islamic School. *Proceeding International Conference on Religion, Science and Education*, *1*, 321–326.

Syaifudin, M., Mujahidin, A., Zatrahadi, M. F., Rahmat, Z., Saleh, H., & Rahman, R. (2021). Evaluating impact of the education foundation law in management system of the private Indonesian Islamic school. *Turkish Journal of Computer and Mathematics Education (TURCOMAT)*. https://doi.org/10.17762/turcomat.v12i2.917

Voss, C., Johnson, M., & Godsell, J. (2016). Case research. In *Research methods for operations management* (pp. 181–213). Routledge.

Zaini, M. F., & Syafaruddin, S. (2020). The leadership behavior of madrasah principals in improving the quality of education in MAN 3 Medan. *Jurnal Iqra': Kajian Ilmu Pendidikan*, *5*(2), 95–106.

Zuhdi, M., & Dobson, S. (2022). Recalibrating تَرْبِيَة (tarbiya) and social justice in the face of internationalisation. The case of inclusion in Indonesian Muslim education. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 1–15.

Zulkifli, M. (2019). An Effective Leadership Model for Madrasah Principals in

Indonesia. *Pertanika J. Soc. Sci. & Hum*, *27*(1), 133–147.