

The Role of the Headmaster in Establishing Exemplary Schools

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ABSTRACT

This research analyzes the character of the *madrasah* principal in leading educational institutions. The objective of this study is to elucidate the significance of a madrasah head's virtuous character as a leader, which undoubtedly influences the persons and institutions under their guidance. This study is a qualitative case investigation conducted at a Madrasah located in Kartasura during the year 2022. Employing the interview technique with the headmaster, two educators, two parental figures of students, and observation. Triangulation is employed to verify the accuracy of the data by juxtaposing it with interviews and observations. This study employed interactive analysis. The findings of this investigation: The head of Madrasah embodies the qualities of *uswatun hasanah*, which include adherence to instructions, democratic leadership, and recognising teachers as individuals with their own capabilities. They possess excellent listening and speaking skills, empathy towards others, and the ability to make sound judgements. The term used to refer to this character is "nguwongke". Recommendations in this study propose that leaders of educational institutions should strive to establish efficient two-way communication by minimising mutual blame and adopting an attitude of mutual evaluation. Additionally, it is advised that leaders raise awareness among all stakeholders of educational institutions regarding the importance of frequently recognising and rewarding staff and subordinates. The character embodying the principles of the madrasah is characterised by democratic objectivity, serving as a role model, doing what they preach, making intelligent decisions, being attentive to others, and possessing effective communication skills. This character possesses the capability to cultivate self-leadership.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Head of a *Madrasah* is an individual who leads an Islamic-based educational institution. As a leader, his position is the center of all the management activities of the educational institution he leads.

Every gesture, style of speech, attitude, style of leadership will affect how the entire system runs in the institution (Kezar & Holcombe, 2017). In facing the change of a superior school, the effective power of the school principal is needed. A research reveals that there is a significant influence of 53% of school principal leadership and quality improvement on school competitiveness (Tanzeh et al., 2021). Another study also says that effective leadership influences teacher performance motivation. When teacher performance increases, it will have an impact on superior quality of education (McGinity et al., 2022).

A wise saying says that "there are no good schools with bad principals and no bad schools with good principals (leaders). Studies say that an educational institution led by a school principal with a good character side will result in good management of an educational institution and vice versa, an educational institution led by a school principal who is less skilled in his field will result in management that is less than optimal. The principal's leadership also influences the quality of the educational institution. Furthermore, another factor that causes the low quality of education in Indonesia is leadership, the readiness of leaders greatly determines the success of an educational institution. (Ahmad Fauzi, 2018: 113). In line with this opinion, Amien Headari's research (2009: 10) explains that the leadership factor is something that should be given more attention as an effort to strengthen educational quality management. The survey results revealed that in 2006, only 9% of MI and MTs madrasah heads had a master's degree, 56% had graduated with a bachelor's degree, and the remaining 34.4% had not yet graduated. At the MI level, 43.6% of *madrasah* heads have no awareness of educational planning, only 75% of *madrasah* have 1-year term planning, and 50% of madrasahs have 3 to 5 year term planning (Haedari, 2010).

A leader has an important task in managing his organization, both internally and externally (Tolentino, 2021). An important task of a leader is as a counselor and instructor. As a parent in an organization, a leader has a role as a counselor. The counselor in question is a place to receive complaints from subordinates about work so that a leader can help find a way out of all the obstacles his subordinates face (Lumpkin & Achen, 2019). As instructors, leaders have a major role in influencing their followers to achieve goals and objectives effectively and efficiently (Meng & Qu, 2022).

As an educational leader, the principal must have a character that can be an example. It is this character that brings the led institution towards its proper goal. This character has components of moral knowledge, a sense of morality and moral action. This is supported by a research that reveals that the character possessed by the school principal has an important and crucial role. The character of the school principal determines the direction of policy in implementing activities at school (Mundiri, 2017). Modern professional behaviour is a composite of competing management and professional ideals, such as independence and supervision, or effectiveness and efficiency (Goodwin, 2021). Integrating institutional, project-based policies with larger social movements is the new face of Islamic school teachers' professionalism. Islamic schools provide a more rigorous curriculum than public schools, but there are still relatively few efforts to make teachers more professional (Muqit, 2018; Prasetyo & Zulkhairi, 2022).

Unlike previous studies that focus on various factors such as change management, performance, leadership, and learning, this study examines the principal character of headmaster. This study analyzes the character of the *madrasah* principal in leading educational institutions. The need for attention to principal character is not merely a procedural requirement established by a practical system, but rather a means of cultivating character to create excellent *madrasah*.

2. METHODS

This research is a qualitative case study in *Madrasah Al-Islam Purwohutaman Kartasura* 2022/2023. Using method of interview with headmaster, two teachers, two student parents, and observation about leadership of headmaster. Observations were made by looking at the activities, attitudes, and actions carried out by the principal when he was at school together with the teachers and students.

Triangulation is used to check validity of the data by comparing the data interview and observation. This study used interactive analysis.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Leadership is the ability to influence other people, subordinates or groups, the ability to direct the behavior of subordinates or groups, having special abilities or expertise in the field desired by the group, to achieve organizational or group goals. Three important elements that must exist in leadership: leaders, followers, and the interaction between the two. Without these three important elements, leadership will never exist. (Fortunately Rahardja and Ninda Lutfiani, 2017:4) states that educational leadership is the ability to coordinate, and mobilize all resources related to education to achieve educational goals effectively and efficiently Dirawati in Hefny Rozak (2014: 11). Defines a leader as someone who has the ability to move and influence others with power (Jamal ma'mur Asmani, 2009:92).

The character of leadership in Islam illustrates that (a) the leader must have the nature of love, (b) have commitment, (c) implement all the characters of love in leading, (d) be responsible, (e) monotheism to Allah SWT and uphold the interests of the people, (f) give clear instructions to all subordinates (Rozak, 2014:212). Abbasi in Wan Norhayate Wan Daud, et al. (2014: 5) also revealed that having a good leader/role model who is in accordance with the true teachings of Islam is the key to obtaining the blessings of Allah SWT. From the explanation above, a leader or principal must have a character in his leadership or leadership based on good character.

The results of an interview with the *madrasah* principal:

"Apart from being the principal, I am also here as a manager. Manage all educational program developments in schools, and manage all educational journeys up to administration. Apart from that, I am also a role model for teachers and children. In essence, I just focus more on the children and the teachers." (WB)

"For me, I used to be the one who had to set an example by example. In addition, I am not used to lecturing continuously in front of teachers and children. I have to come early in the morning and pray the congregational prayers. As soon as the call to prayer, I was the first to enter the mosque. For me, congregational prayer is very important. Everything starts from congregational prayers, such as the ease of work and others. This is the same as during the Duha prayer with the children before class starts. The point is, I must first set an example." (WB)

"One meeting, one order. I think teachers are adults and know their duties and responsibilities, so the cleaning staff should also know. If it's dirty, yes, I've cleaned it myself. The point is, I used to be an example." (WB)

The same thing about the school principal was expressed by the teachers, as follows:

"He is a responsible person, prefers communication face to face (face to face) with the teacher if there is a conflict. Once reprimanded, yes, it's been left. For him, he is an adult and understands his respective job duties and responsibilities." (WG)

This is as expressed by one of the student's guardians:

"The principal himself is an easygoing person, so to be firm it seems like he has to be forced. I think it's too relaxed, but in fact the foundation chose him as the principal. The specialty is that in Javanese terms, it doesn't like to talk carelessly. For example, when he understands that there is a staff member who is not right, he will not tell people or talk, 'He said he was big, already S1. Once told, you should already understand'. Well, if Mrs. Robingah will really be advised and invited to sit down and talk. Mr. Principal gives full responsibility to the teachers and likes discussions. So

according to the teachers and my colleagues, Mr. Headmaster has always been a humble figure, even though he is now the headmaster.” (WI)

From the explanation above, the Head of MI as the executor of educational activities, has a *uswatun-hasanah* attitude, setting a good example for teachers and their students. He is also not the type of leader who likes to lecture his subordinates, has a soul to build individuals personally and is characterized by the role of leading his subordinates. Occasionally hands over decisions and responsibilities to his subordinates after careful consideration.

Result of an interview with B:

“One can say for sure he did too, for me that’s for sure. I teach that the important thing is that the child understands what is being conveyed. It’s funny, lots of laughs, children are made comfortable. I teach never to bring lesson plans.” (WB)

*“I am one of those old people who still use the old way of educating, prioritizing children’s ability to absorb material. I see the benefit in children teaching Arabic. The children studied together, then I tested them one by one. I use the *pesantren* system, namely *sorogan*. Actually it depends on the teacher how to convey it so that the child understands. (WB)*

From the explanation above, the *madrasah* head is a person who already has passion as an educator, has a spirit of compassion for students, is open to change, but still puts forward examples and compassion, and is very concerned about students in terms of their ability to receive lessons. The head of MI is a leader who positions subordinates as individuals who understand their respective duties after being given directions, rarely orders subordinates many times, occasionally gives subordinates the opportunity to express their ideas as well as execute their ideas with certain considerations, communicates personally/face to face with subordinates in the event of a conflict, making the conflict a joint evaluation material. *Madrasah* is led by a school principal who is able to build good networks/relationships with outsiders.

According to the study's findings, effective leaders make staff engagement a top priority, know how to handle conflict, and foster an environment where everyone is on the same page. This is in line with the view that effective conflict management, clear and concise communication, attentive listening, and the capacity to build cooperative relationships are the cornerstones of effective leadership (Stutsky, 2009: 34).

Character is something that is inherent in every individual. The principal of the *madrasah* must have strong and good characters in his leadership. The good and strong characters of the *madrasah* principal will be attached to subordinate staff and will eventually become the values of every teacher or educator when teaching in class. So that these characters will become the identity of each student. From the explanation above, it can be concluded that when educational institutions want to produce students with clear character, everything must start first with the head of the *madrasah*. A wise saying says "there are no good schools with bad principals and no bad schools with good principals (leaders).

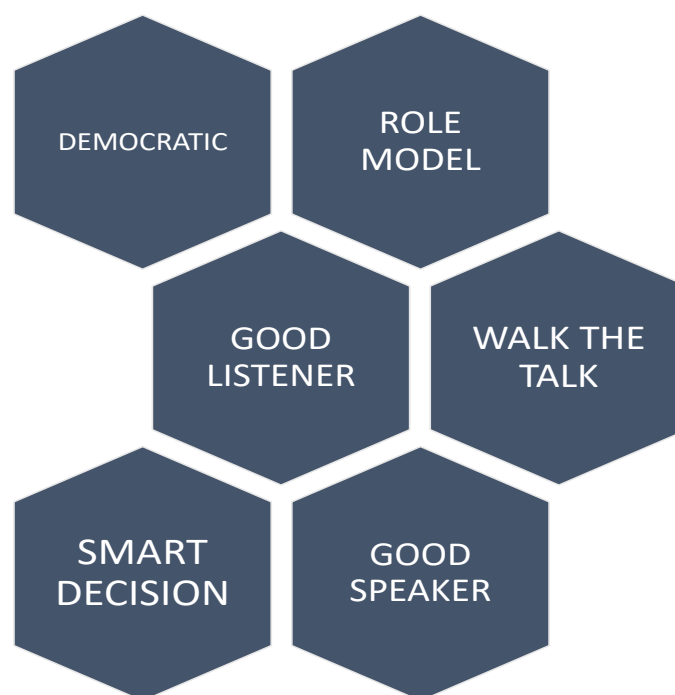


Figure 1. Character Based on Headmaster

The character possessed by the head of MI Al-Islam Purwohutaman Kartasura is the character of *uswatun hasanah*, doing what is said (walk the talk), democratic, and positioning teachers as educational subjects who have their own potential, good listeners, good speakers, able to understand the conditions of others and able to make good decisions. This character is called the "*nguwongke*". Seeing that everyone is respectable, he will serve, help, and ensure everything goes well. As the head of the *madrasah*, a leader like this will act according to his duties as a leader. The principal of the *madrasah* will make sure that everything goes well, if the subordinates don't act according to the rules, then he will set the record straight. Leaders like this carry out their duties because of the mandate that has been given, not because they seek honor from their subordinates and those they lead.

In an educational institution the principal as an educational leader is required to be able to move the entire organizational system in accordance with the vision and mission of the educational institution. In order to be able to move well, it is necessary to have a school principal who can be an example for all his subordinates. Because subordinates or staff work more dominantly by seeing direct examples from their leaders. So that the principal as an educational role model with awareness must have this attitude.

One can also discern the main in this scenario by observing his behaviour. Was he merely following orders or what? It is essential for leaders to demonstrate what they preach. Basically, those in charge who follow orders. Other languages refer to it as honesty. This is the kind of leader who is dedicated and accountable. This kind of principal knows that their words and deeds set the tone for their employees. In order for him to plan out his words and actions with precision.

A school principal needs to have excellent communication skills, including the ability to listen and communicate appropriately. Some leaders have trouble hearing or speaking clearly. He is more than just a good listener if he has good hearing. Nevertheless, he managed to comprehend and absorb the information. When we do more than hear, we are listening. Then, after giving it some thought, he

grasped just what he had said. And hence, it all comes down to making smart decisions. Last but not least, an objective democratic principal meets all of the above requirements. In other words, the principle who is open to all forms of information can hear and understand the details of the information he receives. Next, process with an objective. In order to arrive at a dispassionate conclusion. The principal believes his subordinates are good people because they have this democratic objective mindset. Constantly take into account the subordinates' abilities alongside the organization's interests and objectives.

Regarding the aforementioned matter, when discussing the administration of education in European nations, the education system appears to be quite comparable at first glance. However, the crucial factor lies in the manner in which the system is executed. The implementation of the education system relies on the leadership of the educational institution. The school principal possesses the authority to strategize, coordinate, and steer the entire current system towards a desired direction. Education holds the top position on the national priority scale in France. The French government regards schools as a crucial institution capable of fostering a collective feeling of national cohesion. Proceeding with this topic will positively influence all educational institution leaders in their leadership roles. Not only assuming a leadership role, but actively shaping, fostering, and guiding towards the desired goal. The concept of professionalism will be ingrained in every school administrator, according to Manir Hossin and Imran Hossain (2023).

Another study also revealed that the principal's leadership was able to make a contribution to the school. One of the contributions of the school principal is being able to play the characteristics of the teachers, including their theological, physical, and personal character. This character is able to improve the quality of teachers in school services (Nursaid, 2020). Leadership character as function of management (Jovanovic & Ciric, 2016) Management leadership style strongly related to personality or self-character (Pletzer et al., n.d.). Even if we relate it to the characterswomen's leadership, gender has a strong influence on leadership. Gender differences also influence management patterns (Alhassan & Al Doghan, 2022). In the middle of the world's situation of uncertainty, global economy, fast change, dynamic world, and world war, the role of a leader is very important in reconstructing a strong system and mindset. In any situation the character of a critical, communicative leader, the courage to make decisions in critical situations is needed (Rawat et al., 2023)

The character of this leader can be a self-leadership system for other individuals. When leaders can set an example for other employees, employees will be encouraged to upgrade themselves to be better, such as participating in professional educator training programs, educator certification and other training. This is what is called self-leadership, where each individual consciously directs himself to things that are more advanced. (Goldsby et al., 2021) This statement is supported by research results which reveal that when leadership is able to be transmitted or distributed with a more democratic approach it has an impact on improving and understanding subordinates to support the direction of the institution getting better (Notman, 2020).

Principals who have character will be able to create a scientific and objective collaboration within the school. This collaboration will be the fuel for a school to achieve its goals. Without collaboration, all existing resources will not be able to work in the proper direction. A collaboration initiated by a school principal who has a character like a body that has a spirit. The physical body will be able to work productively when there is still a spirit inside. If the spirit is no longer present in the body, the components of the body will not be able to work productively. This character is the soul that is in the principal.

The concept of collaboration is also elucidated in the Al Qur'an, specifically in Surah Al Hujurat, verse 10. The text states, "Indeed, the believers are brothers, so make peace between your two brothers and fear Allah that you may receive mercy." For a school administrator to demonstrate leadership with integrity, it is essential to provide a clear direction for collaboration inside the school. All available resources are interconnected. Resources form an integrated system that can be mobilised through collaboration. Therefore, it is evident that the establishment of this relationship necessitates the

involvement of a school principal who can serve as a role model. Successful participation in this partnership necessitates dedication and unwavering adherence. Therefore, school principals who possess democratic objectivity, serve as role models, demonstrate consistency between their words and actions, make intelligent decisions, and excel in listening and speaking skills, will effectively guide the achievement of established educational objectives and significantly enhance the outstanding quality and character of education. Undoubtedly, MI AL ISLAM Purwohutan Kartasura has remained a prestigious and highly regarded institution since its inception in 1960. Based on the aforementioned information, it is crucial for a school to be headed by a principal who possesses the ability to foster harmonious collaborations characterised by coherence and dedication.

4. CONCLUSION

This study found MI Al-Islam Purwohutaman Kartasura Character Based. Every madrasah head needs a principal to produce character-building graduates. Democratic objectivity, role model, walking to talk, clever decision, being good listener, and being a good speaker are MI Al-Islam Purwohutaman Kartasura school principal's traits. This character creates self-leadership. This study can help educational institution leaders establish effective two-way communication, minimise mutual blame, throw blame at each other but turn it into an attitude of mutual evaluation themselves first, and raise awareness of stakeholders/leaders to frequently award staff/subordinates. Limitations in this study include limited access to foundation chairman, member, and committee interviews. The research above has limitations, but it can help other researchers analyse MI Al-Islam Purwohutaman Kartasura's case study. Researcher advise educational institutions to support qualified human resources. Qualified education leaders/managers/advisors/supervisors can help institutions achieve their aims. The appropriate visionary leader can create an educational plan. A mature plan/design can help achieve educational goals, but the school leader/principal must be able to determine what is truly desired and achieved. Without knowing what you want or where it's going, it's impossible to reach. This education must be personal to the leadership/institution, not just following other institutions. Leaders can take advantage of the government's autonomy policy for each region to develop their institutions to their full potential. This is where a leader's authority shines through.

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