Framing the Image of Madrasah amid Covid-19 Pandemic: The Principal’s Roles

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to reveal the strategy of Madrasah Principal in improving the image of a Madrasah Aliyah Negeri (MAN) in Manggarai Ruteng during the current Covid 19 pandemic. This research uses a qualitative approach with the type of case study. Data collecting use interview, observation, and documentation techniques. While the data analysis technique, the researchers use an interactive analysis model consisting of four interrelated components: data collection, data simplification, data exposure, drawing and submitting conclusions. The results showed that: (1) the strategy of the principal of the madrasah in building the image was carried out in three stages, (a) studying various strengths and weaknesses of the Madrasah, (b) improving the internal condition of the Madrasah both in terms of physical and non-physical aspects, and (c) to promote and introduce Madrasah to the public. (2) The strategy of the principal in improving the image of the Madrasah is through two steps, (a) internal step to strengthen the Madrasah and (b) external Madrasah to show the Madrasah to the community. (3) the impact that arises from the image: (a) Realizing quality Madrasah that can meet the educational needs of the community, (b) Improving the quality of public education, (c) A religious community culture is the main driving force for Madrasah to become a centre for religious activities, and (d) Increase public confidence in the existence of Madrasah with evidence that the number of students increases every year.

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1. INTRODUCTION

December 2019 was the beginning of Covid-19 cases in the South China Seafood market in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China (Huang et al., 2020). Furthermore, Chinese health experts investigated this virus and later named it Covid-19. On January 7, 2020, the spread of the Coronavirus was released throughout China and accidentally exported worldwide by trade and travel traffic, both sea, land and air. This is news that shakes the international world. The spread of the infectious disease Covid-19 impacts all sectors of life around the world. Practitioners and crisis management experts have signalled the impact of Covid 19 on all sectors of life, including education, worship and other social circles. On February 12, 2020, WHO officially declared the Coronavirus outbreak in humans as Coronavirus Disease (Covid-19). This Coronavirus disease continues to spread throughout the world, including in Indonesia. Seeing the spreading of this disease getting faster in circulation and impacting human death, On March 11, 2020, WHO finally declared Covid-19 as a pandemic. (Huang et al., 2020) (Murfi et al., 2020) (The COVID-19 Pandemic: Shocks to Education and policy and Responses, 2020)

In Indonesia, the spread of the Corona Virus or COVID-19 pandemic is a challenge for educational institutions. To anticipate the transmission of the virus, the government issued policies such as social distancing, and physical distancing to large-scale social restrictions which restrict people from staying at home, studying at home and worshipping at home. As a result of this policy, from basic education to tertiary institutions, stopped learning face-to-face. Instead, the learning process is carried out online from their homes. (Circular Letter of the Minister of Education and Culture Number 4 of 2020)

The Letter of the Ministry of Education and Culture Number 4 of 2020 was strengthened through the Decree of the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia Number: 79l/P/2020 concerning Guidelines for Curriculum Implementation in Education Units in Special Conditions. Regarding the implementation of the Special curriculum, it is necessary to pay attention to (a) the age and stage of development of the Learners in kindergarten students; and (b) competency achievement in curriculum, meaningfulness, and usefulness of learning for Basic Education and Secondary Education including special education and equality education programs (Anwar et al., 2021). This condition has implications for the development of educational services for school principals' leadership, teachers, and students (Prasetyo & Anwar, 2021b).

In addition, there will be competition between schools to be the best amid the Covid-19 pandemic crisis, both between private, state, public and vocational schools. Between private and public schools and Madrasah, there will be competition. Each school maintains an image to capture the market or win the community's hearts to send their children to school. Madrasah is one of the various educational institutions in Indonesia that has placed a lot of hope in the community to send their children to school because it is considered to have many advantages in religious subjects compared to other public schools.

The current threat or crisis has the potential to make education outcomes worse. But with optimism to turn the crisis into opportunity. The most important thing is that no schools nor Madrasah have closed due to the Covid-19 pandemic crisis. This is where the role of the Madrasah principal shows his ability as a good leader in the midst of a crisis like this (Prasetyo & Anwar, 2021c). The expertise of the Principal of Madrasah deserves thumbs up because Madrasah still exist. To realize Madrasah that excel in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic crisis situation, certain strategies must be developed by the Principal of the Madrasah (Wibowo & Subhan, 2020). Madrasah principals are required to implement “crisis management” which is preparing for and managing emergency or unexpected situations that affect students, teachers, staff and other stakeholders in crisis management, this threat must be faced. The current threat or crisis is not entirely bad for schools/Madrasah. On the contrary, it motivates Madrasah to be better. Many Madrasahs carry out digital transformation using web-based applications that facilitate the learning process, meetings and managerial coordination from home.

Al Givari stated that building a good image of Madrasah is done by effectively activating public relations roles in the school (Al Givari, 2020). Fernandez and Shaw (2020) look at the three best applications of leadership to manage unexpected adaptive challenges that can arise during the coronavirus pandemic. Beginning with the type of servant leadership that emphasizes empowerment,
involvement and cooperation, among others, academic leaders with emotional intelligence and emotional stability must put the interests of others above the interests of the individual. Second, academic leaders must distribute leadership responsibilities to the organizational team network to improve decision-making quality in solving crises or problems. Third, leaders must use clear, straightforward and intensive communication language with all stakeholders through various communication channels (Murfi et al., 2020).

With various studies on previous research, it is necessary to do this research with the main focus on the Principal of Madrasah Strategy to Improve Madrasah Image in Covid-19 pandemic in Madrasah Aliyah Negeri at Manggarai NTT. In order to obtain substantive theory, the focus of this research is on the concept of strategic management to improve the image of Madrasah, the efforts of the Principal of Madrasah to improve Madrasah Image and the characteristics of Madrasah Aliyah Negeri at Manggarai in the Covid-19 pandemic.

2. METHOD

To reveal and obtain substantive theory from the focus of the problem, this research uses a descriptive qualitative method with a case study design. Data were obtained through interviews, observation and document studies. The researchers interviewed the principals and vice-principals related to the collecting data process. The researcher also observed the framing of the image of the Madrasah done by the principals. Data analysis was carried out inductively with an interactive model, while a triangulation technique was used for the data validation process (Huberman & Miles, 2014). This research is expected to be able to obtain substantive theories related to the problem and can explain comprehensively the concept of strategic management in building the image of the Madrasah, the efforts of the Madrasah Principal, and the characteristics of Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Manggarai so that they can compete with public schools in the Covid-19 crisis.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The Principal of Madrasah Strategic Management

In managing Madrasah, strategy determination cannot be separated from the management system so that Madrasah runs well, efficiently, and effectively. (Muis et al., 2016) in Nurlali (2015: 39), strategy comes from the Greek “strategos” taken from the word stratos, which means military and lead. So, strategy can be interpreted as generalship which means something done by generals in making plans to conquer the enemy and win the war. (Kottler, 2004) stated that strategy is the placement of an institution’s mission, the setting of institutional goals by considering external and internal forces, the formulation of certain policies and methods to achieve goals and justify their implementation appropriately so that the main goals and objectives of the institution will be achieved. (Sanjaya, 2014) strategy in the world of education is defined as a planning method or series of activities designed for a particular educational goal, meaning that strategy is a plan that contains a series of activities designed to achieve specific educational goals.

According to Huda (2020), who is popular with the practical school theory, which focuses on revising the learning process to increase the quality of learning, among others: 1) a comfortable and orderly school environment, 2) the school has a vision/mission and quality goals achieved 3) the school has a strong managerial, 4) there are high expectations from school personnel, 5) there is the development of school/Madrasah staff that continues to suit the demands of science and technology, 6) there is the application of continuous assessment of various academic and administrative aspects and their use for revision the quality of learning, 7) the existence of communication and support from parents and residents. Meanwhile, George R. Terry, Henry Fayol, Syaiful Sagala (Mukhtar et al., 2019) mention that management practices can be grouped into several patterns of managerial activities in 4 management functions, namely: (1) Planning, (2) Organizing, (3) Direction, and (4) Controlling with basic principles must be efficient and effective.
According to (Hariadi, 2005), strategy formation has several processes. These stages include; a) Formulation of vision and mission provides analysis of the internal and external environment, determination of vision and mission, planning and goals. The steps that a leader needs to take are: (1) Determine the mission to achieve the vision that is aspired to in the environment, (2) Analyse the internal and external environment to measure the strengths and weaknesses as well as the opportunities and threats that will be faced, (3) Set goals and targets. A leader begins by determining his vision of what an organization wants to be in the future and what mission must be fulfilled or carried out now to achieve these goals, b) Implementation: is a crucial stage in an institution’s strategy in achieving goals. Strategy implementation is the process by which strategies and policies are carried out through the development of structures, program development, budgets and implementation procedures, c) Evaluation: This assessment is designed to provide evaluations to the person being assessed as well as the person who considers or the head of the institution regarding the data on the work. An assessment of the organization’s implementation will help leaders to determine whether changes in the organization’s area are still worth maintaining or not. A leader’s credibility is proven in making a sharp evaluation of the changes in the area of the institution experienced so that the mission and vision that is made will match the reality on the ground.

In terms of implementing this strategic management, the Principal of Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Manggarai has implemented a series of implementation steps that are quite good so that the image of the Madrasah persists both in the development and the pandemic situation.

**Building the Image and Characteristics of Madrasah**

Currently, the term imaging often appears in various areas of life. The world of education is also affected by the term imaging. Along with the widespread and growing use of the term imaging. So that the meaning of the image is growing, appearance, the image that many people have about a person, company, organization, or product; mental impression or visual image caused by a word, phrase or sentence, and is a distinctive basic element in prose or poetry (Language, 2017). (Rochmawati, 2012) Jalaluddin Rakhmat (2002:114) says that the image depicts reality and does not have to match exactly with reality. The image is a world for assumptions. Image is a reflection of mental inspiration generated by imagination or character shown to the public by a person, organization, and so on.

While the image of an institution is the public’s perception of the identity of the institution or organization. So that the image needs to be built or formed honestly, consistent with the reality that is perceived properly and correctly by the public. Therefore, the development and improvement of the image must be based on the reality and the implementation of the institution’s program that describes the actual reality. The process of image formation will produce attitudes, opinions, responses which are aimed at a certain condition. In the end, it creates a certain attitude that is obtained from public opinion. Meanwhile, public opinion is formed through effective and persuasive communication to become a favourable public opinion (Siswanto Sutojo, 2004).

Moore (2004) divides the image into five types, namely: (1) The mirror image (shadow image): This image is attached to people or members of the organization, which is usually focused on the leader, regarding the opinion of outsiders about the organization, (2) The current image (image that applies): An image or view held by outside parties regarding an organization. This image is completely determined by the amount of information possessed by those who believe it, (3) The wish image: This image is applied to something relatively new before the audience gets adequate information about it, (4) The corporate image, namely the image of an organization as a whole, so it is not just an image of its products and services, (5) The multiple images (compound image), which is a collection of various images that represent the overall image of the institution. The existence of various images from the public towards a particular organization caused by those who represent our organization with behaviour that is different or not in tune with the goals or principles of our organization.

Meanwhile (Ardianto, 1998) specifically describes the image of the institution. There are three types, namely: (1) Exclusive image, namely the image that can be highlighted in large institutions. What is meant by exclusivity is the ability to present various kinds of the best benefits to consumers and the
public, (2) Innovative image, namely an image that stands out because the institution is good at presenting new products whose models and designs are not the same as similar products on the market, (3) Image cheap, namely the image that is highlighted by an institution that can present products of good quality, but at a low price.

In the 21st century today, quality education must include two orientations: the academic orientation that focuses on learners and the orientation on life skills (Majir & Kurniawan, 2020). The education strategy includes: a) fostering a commitment to empowerment through the duties and functions of each educational stakeholder, b) increasing the involvement of non-governmental organizations, especially in informal and non-formal education, c) developing creativity, innovation according to local culture, d) encouraging the community to participate actively in education, e) equal access to education, both formal, informal and non-formal

(Rhenald, 2004) in Nurlaili (2015: 35-36) suggests that understanding incomplete information produces an imperfect image. Furthermore, the image of the institution includes four elements, namely: (1) Personality: Overall characteristics of institutions that are understood by the target public such as trustworthy institutions, institutions that have a social responsibility, (2) Reputation: Things that have been done by the institution and believed by the target public based on experience themselves or other parties, such as the transaction security performance of all banks, (3) Value: Values owned by an institution, in other words, the culture of the institution such as the attitude of management who cares about the community, employees who are quick to respond to requests and complaints from the public, (4) Corporate Identity: Components that facilitate the introduction of the target public to the institution such as logos, colours, and slogans.

Based on the description of the image of an institution above, to facilitate building an image, it is necessary to have unique values or characteristics that are maintained and preserved. Things that are deemed inappropriate should be addressed as soon as possible to comprehensively fulfil the need for public information about the institution so that a positive image is formed. The image of the Madrasah has an important role in influencing people’s decisions to make choices to send their children to school. Madrasah that has a positive image in the community have their own influence on the community to gain the trust of the public. This is in line with Gronroos (Sutisna, 2003) identifying four roles of image for an institution: (a) Image tells expectations, (b) Filters that affect perceptions of institutional activities, (c) experience and community expectations, (d) Significant influence for Madrasah.

Thus, the image plays an important role in bridging people’s expectations. Public relations is one method of communicating with Madrasah as educational institutions, especially those related to education promotion, publicity and socialization of Madrasah activity programs. Madrasah can provide information to evaluate policies, correct misunderstandings, determine message appeal, public relations, and improve the Madrasah’s image with society in general.

**Concept of Strategic Management to Improve Madrasah Image**

The concept of strategic management to improve the image of MAN 2 Manggarai lies in the expertise of the Principal of MAN 2 Manggarai, including (1) Studying internal and external conditions, followed by the formulation, implementation and control of the vision/mission and educational goals involving all Madrasah stakeholders according to their respective duties and functions (2) Promotion to the Community and Cooperation with Other Agencies, (3) building good internal relations (good relations with teachers, staff and students with open communication and good morals and externally (establishing good relations with SMP, MTS, conducting social service activities and Madrasah introduction activities through banners, calendar distribution, and showing Madrasah profiles through local media) (Interview with the Principal of MAN 2 Manggarai, on January 9, 2021, 09.30 to 10.30 WITA)

According to (Linggar, 2000) in Nurlaila (2015: 67) the process of image formation in the cognitive structure as an experience regarding the stimulus, as shown in Figure 1 below:
Based on Figure 1 above, the Stimulus is the impression of the Madrasah institution that is received from outside to form the perception of the community around the Madrasah, which forms a direct perception associated with an understanding, the formation of an image of MAN 2 Manggarai. The birth of knowledge (cognition) related to belief can motivate to make choices because of information satisfaction. Finally, a positive attitude arises as a result of response of individuals or groups of organizations to stimuli from within themselves and the environment.

Efforts by the Principal of Madrasah in improving the image of Madrasah

Imaging efforts carried out by the Principal of MAN 2 Manggarai include: (1) Creating quality Madrasah that can meet the educational needs of the surrounding community, especially in the Covid-19 Pandemic situation, where initially people saw Madrasah as being the same as public schools, so there were imaging and improvement efforts, the community accepts the presence of a better Madrasah, (2) Improving the quality of community education: educational guidance and development gets a good response from parents of students to improve the quality of community education through increasing achievement and motivating them to continue their education to higher education, (3) Religious community culture is the main driving force for Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Manggarai Ruteng to become a center for students’ religious activities (learning the Koran, praying and general recitation activities for the community around the Madrasah) (Interview with the vice of principal MAN 2 Manggarai, study of meeting note-taking documentation, on 20 January 2021, 11.30-13.30 WITA)

The Principal of the Madrasah’s strategy in improving the Madrasah’s image is in accordance with the views of Moore, (2004:7) states that public relations are a social philosophy of management that puts the interests of the community first in everything related to organizational behavior. So the image can be called: (1) The mirror image (shadow image), this kind of image is attached to insiders or members of the organization, which is usually focused on the leader, regarding the opinion of outsiders about the organization, (2) The current image (the prevailing image) the image or view held by outsiders about an organization is completely determined by the amount of information possessed by those who believe in it, (3) The wish image (the desired image), this image is applied to something that relatively new before the audience obtains adequate information about it, (4) The corporate image (company image), namely the image of an organization as a whole, so it is not just an image of its products and services. Corporate image depends on people’s assessment of the company as a result of the behaviour of people who are within a company itself, and (5) The multiple image, which is a collection of various images that represent the overall image of the institution created by those who represent the organization with behaviour that is different or not in tune with the goals or principles of the organization.
The Madrasah Principal’s strategy for improving the image of the Madrasah can be seen in Figure 2 below:

Based on Figure 2, the Principal’s strategy to improve the image of MAN 2 Manggarai is to implement several steps, including the stages of internal and external analysis. In the internal stage, the Madrasah Principal conducts internal strengthening of Madrasah in dealing with problems that may arise, such as: managing the needs, competencies, and harmonization of teachers and staff, strengthening the Madrasah administration system, regular meetings every 2 months, improving the standards of Madrasah facilities, and improving quality. Input, process, and output of students both academically and non-academically (Interviews to the vice of Principal curriculum MAN 2 Manggarai), document study of meeting notes, on January 25, 2021, 11.30-13.30 WITA), While external strategies for Madrasah, such as promoting Madrasah to the community, collaborating with other agencies and institutions, connecting friendships with the surrounding community, and making MAN 2 Manggarai a center for religious activities for the community around the Madrasah. (Interview with the deputy Principal of Public Relations of MAN 2 Manggarai, the study of meeting notes documentation, on January 29, 2021, 11.30-13.30 WITA).

Meanwhile, the approach used by the Principal of MAN 2 Manggarai uses three approaches in implementing crisis management, namely (a) The Escaping Approach. In this approach, it is necessary to continuously follow the internal and external environment and improve the prediction methods about the future before the crisis. To prevent the impact of a negative crisis, the management of the peak must determine the needs and values of key organizations to set a goal that is projected, (b) The Solving Approach. The approach is dependent on the prediction of conditions before the crisis and the steps that the right time for the settlement of problems during the crisis.

During the crisis, the conditions should be understood and identified clearly and behave realistically and patient. In addition, several efforts such as a systematic collection of information for effective decision making, extra opportunities for staff at various levels, reduction of time pressure, and detailed identification of sources of crisis should be carried out, (c) The Proactive
Approach According to this protective approach, The management summit must produce alternative solutions to potential crises. Because prevention, firm construction that can harmonize the production and marketing activities of those with the condition of the crisis can be financially successful while their competitors are in a state of panic. The Reactive Approach recovery approach may be selected by the top leaders in the face of a crisis that was not unexpected. In the condition of some sort is, usually the leader making aggressive decisions through meetings During the meeting, during the crisis (M. Ibn Ahmad, 2020).

The Characteristics of MAN 2 Manggarai which is able to compete with public schools

The principal’s strategy in improving the image of the Madrasah includes teachers, staff and students. Characteristics of teachers and staff: a) must master the use of computers and have expertise that can be developed according to their fields, b) maintain good relations between Madrasah with parents (committees), government agencies, and the business world d) be responsible for procuring study tours and comparative studies, maintain relationships, communicate humanely to fellow teachers and fellow students. Meanwhile, the characteristics of students include a) Good morals (practising smiles, greetings, politeness, and courtesy), b) Excellence in Achievement: academic and non-academic, devout religion (dressing cover the aurat, carrying out all mandatory and sunnah religious orders both while in the Madrasah and outside the Madrasah.

Madrasah principals build Madrasah internal strengths, including managing the needs, competencies, and harmonization of teachers and staff, strengthening the Madrasah administration system, regular meetings every 2 months, improving Madrasah facility standards, and improving the quality of student input, process, and output both academically and academic. Meanwhile, the external strength of the Principal of Madrasah conducts promotion of Madrasah in the community, collaborates with other agencies and institutions, and maintains a friendship with the founding foundations and the surrounding community. Regarding the process of forming a strategic plan, starting from (1) the formulation of the plan including Identification of the environment to be entered by the leader to determine the mission to achieve the aspired vision in the environment, conduct an internal and external environmental analysis to measure strengths and weaknesses as well as opportunities and threats that will be faced and determine goals and targets, (2) Strategy implementation, always honest, integrity that can encourage the trust of Madrasah residents, be communicative and be professional in their duties, (3) evaluation: solve every problem looking for a solution based on knowledge and experience that is in accordance with the problem.

In the strategic management process for the Principal of Madrasah in education, strategy is defined as a planning method or a series of activities designed for a particular educational goal, which means that strategy is a plan that contains a series of activities designed to achieve certain educational goals. With a strategy, an institution will be able to obtain a strong position or position in its territory. This is because the institution has better knowledge and experience in approaching to meet the needs and desires of the community in the area it reaches (Sanjaya, 2006:126).

Implementing strategic management to improve the image of MAN 2 Manggarai is carried out through structural development. Program development which must be supported by an institution with a solid leader, adequate resource allocation, appropriate policies, culture, situation and conditions for the successful implementation of the strategy. This is in accordance with the opinion of Hariadi (2005:5) (Prasetyo & Anwar, 2021a) that method means a method that can be used to implement a strategy while someone carries out a technique in order to implement a method. Such as the imaging method carried out by the Principal of Madrasah, the program runs effectively and efficiently by taking into account the conditions and situations.

While the evaluation of the implementation of the strategy will help the leader reassess whether the assumptions regarding changes in the institutional environment that have been made so far are still feasible. The credibility of a leader is tested by making a sharp assessment of the changes in the environment the institution is facing so that the mission and vision made will be in accordance with the realities that already exist in the field.
Regarding the field phenomena and the research results that have been discussed, this study strengthens the theory that the concept of cooperation is the spearhead of organizational success. Cooperation does not have to be involved in doing the work, but suggestions, opinions and being present in planning something for success are forms of cooperation. Cooperation has the principle of mutual trust, mutual respect for people’s abilities, complementing each other and fulfilling an activity that has positive implications for strengthening understanding of crisis management in improving the image of Madrasah so that the existence of Madrasah is able to compete with other schools in the covid-19 situation.

CONCLUSION

The concept of strategic management to improve the image of MAN 2 Manggarai carried out by the Principal of the Madrasah involves all stakeholders with a humanist and religious approach. The Principal of MAN 2 Manggarai collaborates, coordinates, is responsible, cooperates, and is transparent in achieving education demands. Madrasah has always been the community’s favourite choice to send their children to school. The strategy model for improving the image of education at MAN 2 Manggarai uses the Escaping Approach. This approach continually follows the internal and external environment and improves prediction methods about the future before the crisis. The Madrasah Principal’s Strategic Management to improve the image has been proven to increase public confidence in sending their children to MAN 2 Manggarai Ruteng. This study implies that the leader has the main role in developing and framing the Madrasah image. It indicates that all the madrasah principals have to show their intention toward it.

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