

THE ROLE OF LEADERSHIP AND STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT IN ENHANCING THE QUALITY OF ISLAMIC EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

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Abstract

This article examines the urgency of implementing leadership and strategic management to enhance the quality of Islamic educational institutions, particularly in remote areas. Islamic education faces significant challenges, such as educational disparities between rural and urban areas, limited infrastructure, and low technological access. This study emphasizes that effective strategic management, encompassing strategy formulation, implementation, and evaluation, is crucial for improving the quality of Islamic educational institutions. In this context, transformational leadership plays a central role, highlighting the importance of relevant vision and mission, efficient resource management, and collaboration with stakeholders. Furthermore, integrating Islamic values and technological innovation is a key focus in addressing the disruption era. With this approach, Islamic educational institutions are expected to produce competent individuals with strong Islamic character.

Keywords: Leadership, Strategic Management, Islamic Education, Disruption Era, Educational Disparity

Abstrak

Artikel ini membahas urgensi penerapan kepemimpinan dan manajemen strategis dalam meningkatkan mutu lembaga pendidikan Islam, terutama di wilayah terpencil. Pendidikan Islam menghadapi tantangan besar, seperti kesenjangan pendidikan antara desa dan kota, keterbatasan infrastruktur, dan rendahnya akses teknologi. Penelitian ini menyoroti bahwa manajemen strategis yang efektif, meliputi perumusan, implementasi, dan evaluasi strategi, sangat penting untuk memperbaiki kualitas lembaga pendidikan Islam. Dalam konteks ini, kepemimpinan transformasional memainkan peran sentral, dengan menekankan pentingnya visi-misi yang relevan, pengelolaan sumber daya yang efisien, serta kolaborasi dengan stakeholder. Selain itu, integrasi nilai-nilai Islam dan inovasi teknologi menjadi fokus utama dalam menghadapi era disrupsi. Dengan pendekatan ini, lembaga pendidikan Islam diharapkan dapat mencetak generasi yang kompeten dan berkarakter Islami.

Kata Kunci: Kepemimpinan, Manajemen Strategis, Pendidikan Islam, Era Disrupsi, Kesenjangan Pendidikan

I. PENDAHULUAN

Education remains a cornerstone of many societal advancements. As Paulo Freire posits, education serves as a tool that individuals continuously utilize to achieve specific goals. Freire emphasized that education should cultivate critical awareness within society, enabling individuals to recognize their social context and position—whether as oppressors or liberators of the oppressed (Maruapey & Freire, 2023). However, achieving this level of awareness requires considerable effort and time. This challenge is particularly evident in the disparity between educational institutions in rural and urban areas (Aditia, 2022). For instance, the gap in school participation rates between these regions has reached as high as 30.14 percent. Furthermore, from 2011 to 2013, dropout rates across various educational levels increased significantly. The dropout rate for primary schools rose to 25.75 percent, while the number of students leaving junior high school reached 270,296. Meanwhile, 127,452 high school students and 171,605 vocational school students dropped out (Anwar, 2022). These statistics highlight

the low level of access to education for Indonesian children.

This educational disparity between rural and urban areas poses a significant challenge, particularly for Islamic educational institutions in rural regions, which must strive to address and reduce this gap. However, this responsibility is a collective one; individuals with the means to enact change, particularly policymakers and stakeholders in the education sector, bear a more significant burden (Arif, 2013). Collaboration among educational stakeholders is crucial to formulating policies that significantly improve educational institutions in remote areas (Pratiwi et. al., 2022). Through these efforts, the gap in educational access can be narrowed, allowing all individuals equal opportunities to obtain quality education. Such initiatives, however, are not without obstacles. The unequal distribution of infrastructure and technological access presents a significant challenge (Iswahyudi et al., 2023). Consequently, leadership in educational institutions must foster creativity in overcoming these barriers and improving institutional quality. Limited resources further exacerbate these challenges, requiring leaders of Islamic educational institutions to manage existing resources while identifying opportunities for institutional development efficiently. Previous studies have extensively discussed the role of leadership in managing educational institutions and the importance of strategic management in ensuring institutional sustainability, such as research by Junaidah and Faujiah (Junaidah et al., 2020) (Faujiah et. al., 2023). However, specific studies addressing the challenges and management strategies of Islamic educational institutions in rural areas, particularly in the context of educational disparities in Indonesia, remain limited. This research contributes by providing an in-depth analysis of how Islamic educational institutions can overcome specific challenges through the implementation of adaptive strategic management. This approach is not only relevant for addressing the era of disruption but also serves as a foundation for developing education rooted in Islamic values amidst global dynamics.

From the above discussion, it is evident that the implementation of strategic management is crucial for Islamic educational institutions. This task presents both a responsibility and a challenge for Islamic educational institutions' leaders, particularly in remote areas, to improve the quality of education and maintain its relevance to the demands of the disruptive era.

II. METODE

This study employs a library research methodology, focusing on the collection and analysis of data from various written sources such as books, journal articles, research reports, and relevant official documents (Roosinda, 2021). The objective is to gain an in-depth understanding of the role of leadership and strategic management in improving the quality of Islamic educational institutions, particularly in remote areas. Data collection was conducted through literature searches on academic platforms like Google Scholar and nationally and internationally indexed journals. Keywords used in the search process included "educational strategic management," "Islamic education leadership," and "educational inequality." Once the literature was gathered, a selection process was conducted based on relevance, validity, and the timeliness of the information.

Data analysis was carried out using descriptive and interpretative methods. The process began with identifying key themes from the collected literature, such as management strategies, challenges in Islamic education, and leadership roles. Subsequently, findings were compared and synthesized with Islamic education theories and strategic management principles to develop a relevant conceptual framework. The validity of the data was ensured through source triangulation, which involved cross-referencing information from various literature to confirm the accuracy of the research findings (Ulfatin, 2022).

Through this methodology, the study aims to significantly contribute to addressing the challenges faced by Islamic education, especially in remote areas, by proposing strategic solutions that can be effectively implemented.

III. RESULT AND DISSCUSSION

Strategic Management of Islamic Educational Institutions

Strategic management comprises two key concepts: management and strategy. Management refers to the process of organizing, directing, and controlling resources efficiently to achieve specific objectives (Syahkuan et al, 2022). Meanwhile, strategy denotes something fundamental, essential, and impactful in achieving specific goals (Tokhirov, 2021). From these definitions, strategic management can be defined as a series of planning, implementation, and evaluation of strategic decisions across functions, enabling an organization to achieve its objectives (Sidiq, 2015). These efforts significantly influence the improvement of educational institutions, particularly Islamic educational institutions.

Strategic Management of Islamic Educational Institutions is a systematic endeavor to plan, implement, and evaluate strategies aimed at achieving the objectives of Islamic educational institutions effectively and sustainably (Faujiah, 2023). In addressing the challenges and dynamics of the times, strategic management is critical to ensuring that Islamic educational institutions can compete and contribute to developing high-quality human resources grounded in Islamic values. The urgency of strategic management in Islamic educational institutions lies in its necessity to address internal and external challenges (Rahmi et al., 2020). Through strategic management, Islamic educational institutions can enhance educational quality, competitiveness, and relevance in this era of disruption.

Based on the explanation, strategic management is a process involving the planning, implementation, and evaluation of integrated strategic decisions to achieve organizational goals efficiently and effectively. In the context of Islamic educational institutions, strategic management plays a vital role in ensuring sustainability, quality improvement, and institutional relevance amidst the dynamics of the times. Systematic implementation of strategic management enables Islamic educational institutions to address internal challenges, such as limited resources, and compete amidst external changes, including social and technological disruptions. Therefore, strategic management is an urgent necessity for Islamic educational institutions to build high-quality human resources, strengthen competitiveness, and remain firmly rooted in Islamic values while navigating the era of globalization.

Steps in Strategic Management of Islamic Educational Institutions

The steps in strategic management within Islamic educational institutions represent a systematic process to formulate, implement, and evaluate strategies to achieve a high-quality and competitive educational institution (Junaidah et al., 2020). These steps are as follows:

1. Strategy Formulation

In the strategy formulation process, several stages must be considered and implemented by leaders in Islamic educational institutions. *First*, external environment analysis involves assessing the external conditions that influence the institution (Umam, 2019). This step is essential for identifying opportunities and threats faced by Islamic educational institutions. The external environment includes trends, events, and forces beyond the direct control of the institution, such as political changes, technological advancements, and dynamic social factors (Kusumaningrum et al., 2024). By analyzing the external environment, Islamic educational institutions can become more responsive to changes and adapt effectively to external dynamics.

Second, internal environment analysis helps Islamic educational institutions understand their organizational conditions. This analysis covers factors that directly impact the institution's success, such as the integration of a clear and measurable vision and mission, the quality of

human resources and their development, and the adequacy of facilities (Puspita, 2014). A thorough understanding of these aspects enables the institution to identify strengths to leverage, weaknesses to address, and priorities for further development.

Finally, the formulation of vision and mission is a strategic step that requires an in-depth analysis of the internal environment. The internal environment includes key components such as human resources, curriculum, facilities, funding, and organizational culture, all of which form the foundation of the institution's operations (Hadi, 2020). Based on this analysis, the vision and mission of Islamic educational institutions must be formulated with a clear orientation toward long-term goals while ensuring their relevance to both internal and external environments (Purwaningsih, 2023). By capitalizing on internal strengths and addressing existing weaknesses, the vision and mission can guide Islamic educational institutions toward achieving their overarching objectives.

2. Strategic Management Implementation

The implementation phase of strategic management involves several critical steps. *First*, program development is a crucial aspect of realizing the goals of educational institutions (Faujiah et al., 2023). Through thorough planning, precise resource allocation, and continuous evaluation, institutions can ensure that the implementation and development of programs effectively achieve their objectives (Muttaqien et al., 2023). Therefore, in the application and development of programs, strategic management implementation must carefully consider the resources available within the institution.

Second, resource management is the core of strategic management (Dasuki, 2021). Resource management must be carried out meticulously to ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of achieving the institution's goals (Winarti et al., 2021). Proper management of resources, including human resources, finances, and facilities, is essential for sustaining the institution's growth and competitive edge.

Third, collaboration and partnerships are integral steps in achieving the objectives of educational institutions. Collaboration can involve various parties that contribute to the improvement of the institution, such as partnerships with companies, other educational institutions, and international organizations (Kholil, 2021). These collaborations aim to enhance the quality of education. For instance, partnerships between educational institutions and international organizations can facilitate student exchange programs, providing broader experiences for learners. Similarly, cooperation with companies can open opportunities for workforce absorption and internship programs, further enriching the educational process and aligning it with practical, real-world applications.

3. Strategy Evaluation and Control

The final stage in the strategic management process is evaluation. In the context of Islamic educational institutions, strategy evaluation involves several key steps to ensure that all plans proceed as intended and to allow for adjustments if deviations occur (Purwaningsih et al., 2021). *First*, monitoring is a critical tool for maintaining the quality, efficiency, and relevance of programs to Islamic educational institutions' objectives (Sholeh et al., 2023). Monitoring is a systematic process undertaken to oversee the implementation of programs and policies, ensuring they align with established plans and targets. Effective monitoring provides a foundation for continuous improvement, maintains accountability, and strengthens public trust in Islamic educational institutions.

Second, performance evaluation involves assessing the performance of individuals, teams, and the institution as a whole. In educational institutions, this evaluation ensures that all components are functioning according to plan. Furthermore, performance evaluation is essential for maintaining and enhancing the quality of Islamic educational institutions (Effendi,

2021). A well-planned, systematic, and improvement-oriented evaluation ensures that every element works optimally toward achieving strategic objectives. Performance evaluations based on principles of transparency, accountability, and Islamic values also increase stakeholder trust and reinforce the institution's role as a high-quality educational center.

Third, continuous improvement is a systematic process aimed at enhancing the quality, effectiveness, and efficiency of all aspects of Islamic educational institutions (Mubarak, 2019). This effort ensures that these institutions remain relevant to the demands of the times. By focusing on human resource development, curriculum enhancement, technological integration, and system refinement, institutions can continuously evolve, contribute more significantly to society, and strengthen their competitiveness in the global era (Irawan et al., 2022). Continuous improvement is vital for Islamic educational institutions because knowledge is as dynamic as the technological advancements that shape the modern world.

Leadership and strategic management are fundamental efforts by educational institutions to continually improve their systems (Chkheidze, 2023). This necessity arises from the demands of the disruption era, which compels educational institutions to adapt to social and technological changes (Hudia, 2023). Within the educational context, the responsibility for driving these improvements falls on policymakers, stakeholders, and key figures within the institutions who have greater access and influence in initiating such reforms.

Strategic management in Islamic educational institutions must be designed to respond to the rapid social and technological dynamics characteristic of the disruption era (Sodiki et al., 2024). These changes require institutions not only to maintain relevance but also to ensure sustainability and competitiveness. In the context of Islamic education, adaptation to these changes must remain rooted in Islamic values while embracing appropriate innovations. Thus, the vision and mission of Islamic educational institutions need to be refined to reflect a commitment to Islamic principles while addressing contemporary challenges. This vision should encompass the development of a strong Islamic character, 21st-century skills such as digital literacy and creativity, and the enhancement of soft skills such as communication and problem-solving.

The integration of technology is a pressing need in navigating the disruption era. Strategic management must incorporate the development of technological infrastructure, digitalization of administration, and digital literacy training for teachers and students (Hugo, 2024). Additionally, the curriculum must be designed adaptively to incorporate Islamic values while remaining relevant to global needs, such as through Syariah-based entrepreneurship education. Transformational leadership is also pivotal, with leaders of Islamic educational institutions needing to inspire, motivate, and facilitate innovation and adaptation across all levels of the institution.

Enhanced collaboration with stakeholders is equally vital, including strategic partnerships with government, industry, and the community to strengthen resources and create synergies in educational development (Penuel et al., 2020). A continuous evaluation system must be implemented to identify areas requiring improvement, with evaluation results serving as the basis for strategy adjustments in curriculum, human resource management, and facility administration (Jhanna Uy et al., 2019). Furthermore, a culture of innovation and lifelong learning should be instilled across all institutional elements to foster creativity and maintain relevance in a rapidly changing era.

Amid technological advancements, Islamic character education is increasingly essential to shield students from the negative influences of the digital age. Islamic education must instill noble values such as honesty, responsibility, and tolerance, integrating them with the wise use of technology. Through this approach, strategic management in Islamic educational institutions can continuously evolve, adapt to the times, and make a significant contribution to shaping an excellent Islamic generation prepared to face global challenges.

IV. CONCLUSION

This study emphasizes the critical role of leadership and strategic management in improving the quality of Islamic educational institutions, particularly in underdeveloped rural areas. The disparity in access and quality of education between urban and rural regions presents a significant challenge that demands serious attention from educational leaders. Through the application of strategic management—encompassing the formulation, implementation, and evaluation of strategies—Islamic educational institutions can adapt to the disruption era, enhance competitiveness, and remain relevant to contemporary needs.

The outlined strategic steps include external and internal environment analysis, vision and mission formulation, program development, resource management, collaboration with various stakeholders, and continuous evaluation. Additionally, the integration of technology and Islamic character education are highlighted as key priorities to ensure that institutions can nurture an excellent Islamic generation prepared to face global challenges.

The study concludes that the success of Islamic educational institutions relies heavily on innovative leadership and the effective implementation of strategic management grounded in Islamic values.

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