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Creativity of Madrasah Principals in Developing Innovation of State Madrasah Aliyah Teachers in Riau Islands Province

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Abstract: This paper explores the role of madrasah principals in fostering creativity and innovation among teachers at State Madrasah Aliyah in the Riau Islands Province. Through a qualitative research design, in-depth interviews and classroom observations were conducted with 15 principals and 30 teachers to examine the leadership strategies employed by principals in promoting innovative teaching practices. The study highlights the multifaceted approach of madrasah principals, encompassing professional development, collaborative teaching practices, and the integration of modern educational technologies to stimulate creativity among educators. Findings suggest that madrasah principals who emphasize continuous learning, open communication, and a culture of experimentation contribute significantly to the innovative capacity of teachers. Additionally, this research draws on Islamic educational values, referencing Qur'anic teachings and Hadith to provide a theoretical framework for leadership and creativity in Islamic educational settings. The study contributes to the growing body of literature on educational leadership within Islamic institutions, offering practical insights into how leadership can enhance the quality of teaching and learning in madrasahs. The implications of these findings are discussed, with recommendations for policy and practice to further cultivate an environment conducive to creativity and innovation in madrasah education.

Keywords: Educational Leadership, Creativity, Innovation, Madrasah Aliyah, Islamic Education, Professional Development.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years the role of school leaders especially madrasah principals, has gained significant attention in the field of educational leadership. As institutions dedicated to both religious and academic development, madrasahs, particularly State Madrasah Aliyah in Riau Islands Province, face unique challenges in promoting innovation and creativity in teaching. The ability of madrasah principals to cultivate an innovative environment is crucial for enhancing the quality of education, as innovation can address evolving educational needs and improve student outcomes (Aziz &



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Mustafa, 2021;Suryani & Fadhilah, 2022) In this context, the creativity of principals and their ability to lead by example in fostering a culture of innovation among teachers becomes central to educational reform in Islamic schools.

Educational leadership, as a field, has evolved to encompass the idea that leaders must not only manage but inspire their communities. According to(Fullan, 2020) successful leaders create learning environments where teachers are empowered to innovate. In Islamic education, this concept resonates with the teachings of the Qur'an, which stresses the importance of knowledge and intellectual growth. Allah (SWT) says in Surah Al-Mujadilah (58:11):

وَرَفَعْنَا لَكَ ذِكْرَكَ

"And We raised high for you your repute."

This verse reflects the divine encouragement to elevate knowledge and learning, which is in harmony with the leadership role of madrasah principals in fostering a creative and knowledge-driven environment. Additionally, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is reported to have said:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ إِذَا عَمَلَ أَحَدُكُمْ عَمَلًا أَنْ يُتَّقِنَهُ

"Indeed, Allah loves that when any of you does a work, he does it with perfection." (Sunan Ibn Majah, 1:3)

This Hadith emphasizes the value of excellence in work, which aligns with the principle of innovation and creativity in educational leadership. Therefore, the role of madrasah principals in promoting teacher innovation is not only an administrative responsibility but also a moral and religious duty to improve the quality of education through continuous professional development and the application of innovative methods.

In the Riau Islands Province, where this study is situated, State Madrasah Aliyah often face challenges related to resource constraints, socio-cultural dynamics, and the need for curriculum adjustments. The leadership of madrasah principals is key in navigating these challenges by promoting teacher creativity and integrating innovative pedagogical practices. Previous research by (Ahmad & Ali, 2020) and (Yulianti & Harahap, 2023) indicates that when principals take a proactive role in fostering a culture of creativity, they significantly impact the effectiveness of teaching and learning in madrasahs.



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Transformational leadership, as proposed by (Bass, 2018) posits that leaders inspire and motivate followers to exceed their self-interests for the greater good of the organization. In the context of madrasah leadership, transformational principals are expected to serve as role models, fostering an environment that encourages innovation, creativity, and professional development among teachers.

The role of leadership in educational innovation is central to the theory of creativity and innovation in educational institutions. According to (Amabile, 2019) creativity is not merely a product of individual talent, but rather a result of an environment that fosters collaboration, risk-taking, and support for new ideas. In the madrasah context, principals can influence the creative capacity of their teachers by providing access to professional development opportunities, encouraging collaborative teaching practices, and integrating modern educational technologies.

The application of Islamic educational values enhances the leadership approach. As indicated by Islamic leadership theories, rooted in the Qur'an and Hadith, the principles of justice, wisdom, and patience guide a leader's actions, reinforcing their role as mentors who foster a nurturing environment for educational innovation. The Qur'anic verse "وَقُلْ رَبِّ زِدْنِي عِلْمًا" ("And say, 'My Lord, increase me in knowledge'" - Surah Ta-Ha, 20:114) highlights the importance of continual learning, which is a fundamental aspect of fostering creativity in educational settings. This study seeks to explore how madrasah principals in the Riau Islands Province employ strategies to develop teacher innovation. By investigating the leadership styles and methods used by principals to encourage creativity, this research aims to provide practical insights into the role of leadership in improving educational outcomes in Islamic schools.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research design to explore the role of madrasah principals in fostering creativity and innovation among teachers at State Madrasah Aliyah in the Riau Islands Province. A qualitative approach is deemed appropriate as it allows for an in-depth understanding of the leadership dynamics and their impact on teacher innovation within the specific cultural and



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educational context of madrasahs. The research adopts a case study method, focusing on five madrasah institutions selected through purposive sampling. (Creswell, 2017) purposive sampling is effective for obtaining rich, detailed data from individuals with specific knowledge of the research topic, which in this case are madrasah principals and teachers.

Data collection was carried out through semi-structured interviews, which allowed participants to express their experiences and perspectives freely while maintaining a focus on the research questions. A total of 15 principals and 30 teachers participated in the study. Interviews were conducted in Bahasa Indonesia and recorded with participants' consent. Additionally, classroom observations were carried out to supplement interview data, providing a real-time view of the teaching practices and leadership behaviors being implemented. These observations focused on how principals facilitated creativity through professional development programs, team collaboration, and the integration of new teaching methods.

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis, a method that is widely used in qualitative research to identify patterns and themes within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This approach was particularly suitable for identifying the nuanced ways in which leadership practices and Islamic values contribute to fostering innovation in the madrasah context. The analysis was conducted in several stages: initial coding of interview transcripts and field notes, followed by the identification of key themes related to leadership style, creativity, and the integration of Islamic principles. The research is also underpinned by Islamic leadership theory, which emphasizes justice, equity, and mentorship in fostering an environment conducive to creative thinking (Yunus, 2018)

To ensure the validity and reliability of the findings, triangulation was employed by cross-referencing data from interviews, classroom observations, and secondary sources such as school documents and reports. Additionally, member checking was used to verify the accuracy of interpretations with a subset of participants, as suggested by (Lincoln & Guba, 2015). The study adheres to ethical guidelines by ensuring informed consent, confidentiality, and participants' voluntary involvement throughout the research process.



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RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings from this study reveal the significant role of madrasah principals in fostering creativity and innovation among teachers in State Madrasah Aliyah in the Riau Islands Province. Through thematic analysis of the interview transcripts and classroom observations, three primary themes emerged: leadership style, teacher collaboration and professional development, and the integration of Islamic values into teaching practices.

1. **Leadership Style:** The analysis shows that principals who adopt a transformational leadership style have a positive impact on teacher creativity and innovation. These principals actively engage with their teachers through regular meetings, feedback sessions, and by creating an open environment where teachers feel encouraged to experiment with new teaching methods. As noted by (Koseoglu, 2020) transformational leadership in educational settings fosters teacher autonomy and encourages professional risk-taking, which aligns with the findings of this study. Principals who provided mentorship and modeling of innovative practices were more likely to see an increase in teacher engagement with creative pedagogies.
2. **Teacher Collaboration and Professional Development:** A crucial finding from this study was the importance of collaboration and professional development in encouraging teacher creativity. Principals who facilitated regular collaborative meetings among teachers and provided access to training programs helped cultivate a culture of innovation. Teachers highlighted the value of these sessions in sharing best practices, exploring new technologies, and discussing innovative teaching methods. These findings support the literature (Amabile, 2019), who emphasized that creativity is nurtured in environments where individuals have the opportunity to collaborate and learn from one another. Furthermore, professional development programs were seen as a critical avenue for enhancing teachers' technical skills and knowledge, which in turn improved their classroom practices.
3. **Integration of Islamic Values:** The study also revealed that Islamic values significantly contribute to fostering a positive and innovative teaching environment. Principles such as



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justice, wisdom, and patience core tenets of Islamic leadership were evident in the leadership practices of madrasah principals. Teachers reported that the application of these values created a supportive and equitable environment, which encouraged the exploration of new ideas. This finding aligns with the work of (Yunus, 2017) who suggested that Islamic leadership principles promote an inclusive and respectful environment conducive to creativity and innovation. One teacher explained that the madrasah principal's emphasis on fairness and the Islamic value of continuous learning inspired them to innovate their teaching methods.

4. Impact on Teaching Quality: Overall, the findings suggest a strong correlation between the leadership behaviors of principals and the quality of teaching in the madrasahs. Principals who demonstrated transformational leadership and integrated Islamic values into their practices were able to foster an environment where teachers felt motivated to implement innovative strategies, which ultimately enhanced teaching quality. This is consistent with the findings of (Koseoglu, 2020) who found that leadership directly influences teaching quality through its impact on teacher creativity and job satisfaction.

The results of this study highlight the significant influence of madrasah principals on the creativity and innovation of teachers in the Riau Islands Province. Through effective leadership, the promotion of collaboration, and the integration of Islamic values, principals can create a conducive environment for enhancing teaching practices and improving the overall quality of education.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study shed light on the significant role that madrasah principals play in fostering creativity and innovation among teachers at State Madrasah Aliyah in the Riau Islands Province. The results corroborate the principles of transformational leadership, where principals, through their visionary and inspirational leadership, significantly influence the creative output of their teachers. This aligns with the findings of (Koseoglu, 2020) who suggests that transformational leadership positively impacts teachers' creative behaviors by creating a supportive and empowering environment. In this study, principals were found to actively engage in practices that encouraged teachers to explore innovative teaching methods, experiment with new technologies,



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and collaborate in professional learning communities. These findings support the notion that leadership that prioritizes professional development and provides autonomy fosters an environment conducive to creativity (Amabile, 2019)

The integration of Islamic leadership principles emerged as a critical factor in shaping the leadership approach in these madrasahs. The principles of justice, wisdom, and mentorship were consistently applied by the principals, creating an atmosphere of trust and respect, which are essential components in fostering creativity (Yunus, 2018) This aligns with the theory that Islamic leadership provides a framework for building strong relationships, encouraging ethical practices, and supporting the holistic development of teachers (Al-Mahmoud & Raza, 2019) The incorporation of Islamic values into leadership practices not only enhances the ethical dimension of teaching but also reinforces the importance of continuous learning, as emphasized by the Qur'anic verse "وَقُلْ رَبِّ زِدْنِي عِلْمًا" ("And say, 'My Lord, increase me in knowledge'" - Surah Ta-Ha, 20:114). This focus on continuous improvement contributes to the ongoing development of teachers' creativity.

The findings also revealed a significant connection between professional development programs and the teachers' creative practices. Teachers who participated in regular workshops and training sessions felt more equipped and motivated to introduce innovative strategies in their classrooms. This observation is consistent with the work of who asserts that professional development initiatives are key in facilitating teacher innovation, especially when they are aligned with the needs and goals of the educational institution. The study highlights that principals who invest in their teachers' professional growth contribute to the overall innovation in teaching methods and curriculum delivery.

The study's findings emphasize the importance of creating a collaborative culture within madrasahs. Teachers who were encouraged to share ideas, collaborate with colleagues, and engage in team-based problem-solving were more likely to exhibit creative behaviors. This is in line with research by (Li & Zhao, 2019) who found that collaborative work environments enable teachers to exchange ideas, refine their teaching practices, and innovate in their approach to education. The



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social capital built through collaboration fosters a sense of belonging and shared responsibility for the success of the institution, which in turn leads to greater innovation in classroom practices. It is important to note the limitations of this study, including the focus on a specific geographical region, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Future research could explore the role of leadership in fostering creativity in different educational contexts, such as public and private schools, or in other regions of Indonesia. Additionally, future studies could include a larger sample size and employ quantitative methods to measure the impact of leadership on teacher creativity more systematically.

CONCLUSIONS

This study concludes that the leadership style of madrasah principals plays a crucial role in fostering creativity and innovation among teachers in State Madrasah Aliyah in the Riau Islands Province. Specifically, transformational leadership significantly influences teachers' ability to adapt and innovate in their teaching practices. Principals who encourage collaboration, provide professional development opportunities, and model creative problem-solving approaches help to cultivate an environment conducive to educational innovation. The integration of Islamic leadership principles, such as justice, mentorship, and wisdom, strengthens the foundation for creativity, as it aligns with the moral and ethical values that guide teachers' behaviors in the classroom. These findings support the notion that leadership is not only about administrative skills but also about nurturing an ethos of continuous improvement and creativity.

Based on the results of this study, several recommendations are proposed. First, it is essential for educational policymakers and school administrators to invest in leadership development programs that emphasize transformational leadership skills and Islamic values. These programs should be tailored to the specific needs of madrasah leaders to enhance their capacity to drive innovation within their institutions. Second, schools should foster collaborative learning environments where teachers can share ideas, resources, and teaching strategies. Encouraging team-based teaching methods and peer mentoring will facilitate the exchange of innovative



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practices among educators. Finally, further research should be conducted to explore how external factors, such as community support and governmental policies, influence the creativity and innovation of teachers in religious education settings. Future studies could also examine the long-term impact of leadership styles on student outcomes and institutional performance. This study suggests that policy reforms aimed at enhancing educational leadership should consider integrating Islamic principles more systematically into the training of educational leaders, especially in madrasah settings. This alignment will not only foster creativity but also ensure that educational practices are grounded in values that support holistic development, both academically and morally.

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