

# **Strategic Leadership of The Principal in Improving Educational Quality at Mis Nidaul Insan Pantai Labu**

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## **Abstract**

This research aims to explore the strategies carried out by madrasah heads in improving the quality of education. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, data was collected through in-depth interviews with key informants of teachers, principals and guardians. The results of the study showed that the head of the madrasah implemented a routine supervision strategy, evaluative meetings, and systematic pedagogical coaching. This strategy is supported by the provision of symbolic incentives and the formation of a work culture that is psychosocially conducive. However, the resistance of some teachers to change is the main challenge in the optimal implementation of the strategy. These findings indicate that top-down leadership models need to be supported by the internalization of teachers' professional awareness as well as stronger institutional support. This research emphasizes that improving the quality of education in village madrassas requires transformative leadership that is able to integrate strategic planning, collective participation, and continuous coaching in one place.

**Keywords:** *Strategy; Head of Madrasah; quality of education; MIS Nidaul Insan*

**Abstrak:** Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengekplorasi strategi yang dilakukan kepala madrasah dalam meningkatkan mutu pendidikan. Menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif, data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam kepada informan kunci guru, kepala sekolah dan wali murid. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kepala madrasah menerapkan strategi supervisi rutin, rapat evaluatif, serta pembinaan pedagogis yang sistematis. Strategi ini didukung oleh pemberian insentif simbolik dan pembentukan budaya kerja yang kondusif secara psikososial. Temuan ini mengindikasikan bahwa model kepemimpinan top-down perlu ditopang oleh internalisasi kesadaran profesional guru serta dukungan kelembagaan yang lebih kuat. Penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa peningkatan mutu pendidikan di madrasah desa membutuhkan kepemimpinan transformatif yang mampu mengintegrasikan perencanaan strategis, partisipasi kolektif, dan pembinaan berkelanjutan dalam satu kesatuan.

**Kata Kunci:** *Strategi; Kepala Madrasah; Mutu Pendidikan; MIS Nidaul Insan*

## Introduction

To become a quality madrassas requires the implementation of good education quality management. In this case, the head of the madrasah plays a strategic role as the main person in charge of designing and implementing the strategy for developing the quality of education in the madrasah. Important decisions that have a great impact on the progress of madrassas are born from the strategic thinking of a madrasah head. Therefore, the existence and function of madrasah heads are very important to be studied, formulated, and developed in order to meet public expectations and realize madrasas that have high competitiveness (Malik et al., 2021).

In managing education, the head of the madrasah plays the role of leader, manager, administrator, and supervisor. This means that the head of the madrasah bears a great responsibility in carrying out his duties professionally. This responsibility is not only limited to physical development and the procurement of educational facilities, but also includes the development of the competence of educators/teachers, improving the quality of administrative services, and strengthening communication that actively involves parents and the community (Zai et al., 2022).

The problem of education quality is one of the central issues in the national education system, especially related to the low quality of education at various levels and educational units, especially at the primary and secondary education levels. Realizing this, the government has made various efforts to improve the quality of national education. These efforts include through the procurement of books and learning media, improving educational facilities and infrastructure, and improving the quality of school management (Marzuqi et al., 2020).

However, various indicators of quality of education show that these efforts have not fully yielded satisfactory results and have not shown significant improvement. In some urban areas, the improvement in the quality of education is indeed starting to show encouraging results. However, in many other areas, especially in educational institutions located in rural areas, the quality of education is still very concerning.

This condition is further exacerbated by the prolonged economic crisis and has developed into a multidimensional crisis, which has an impact on various aspects of life, including the decline in the quality of education. Therefore, to expand knowledge and find relevant facts about the problem of education quality, a more in-depth study is very important.

## Method

This study uses a qualitative approach to explore in depth the phenomenon of educational quality at MIS Nidaul Insan School Pantai Labu. Primary data was collected through in-depth interviews with schools—which include principals, teachers, and educators—as well as parents, to gain a direct perspective on the implementation and constraints of education quality. This interview is designed to capture the

views, experiences, and expectations of the participants regarding strategies to improve the quality of education in the school environment.

In addition, this study also collects secondary data from various sources such as journal articles, theses, internal school documents, and relevant scientific literature. This secondary data is used to provide a theoretical framework and enrich the analysis obtained from the interviews, thus providing a broader context on the issue of education quality nationally. All data that was successfully collected was then analyzed descriptively through the data triangulation stage. In this stage, the information obtained from the interviews is compared and validated with data from secondary sources. This triangulation technique is very important to ensure that research findings are consistent and accountable, so as to provide an accurate picture of the reality of the quality of education in schools.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **A Brief History of Neil Young's Story**

Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Private (MIS) Nidaul Insan is the only formal educational institution established in Central Village, Pantai Labu District, Deli Serdang Regency. This madrasah was established in 2010 on the basis of the strong spirit of the founders who were members of the big family of the Nidaul Insan Islamic Education Foundation, with the chairman of the foundation at that time being Mr. Iralludin.

Before the construction of the madrasah began, the land used had been donated by the Head of Madrasah MIS Nidaul Insan, namely Mr. Bustamir, S.Ag, who is also part of the foundation's extended family. The land has an area of about 403 square meters and was officially handed over on August 13, 2010. The basis for the idea of building this madrasah was also influenced by Mrs. Yusfemir, DRA, who had a big role in the initiation of the formation of this institution.

The construction of the madrasah was carried out gradually and through a long struggle and solid cooperation from the entire foundation family. The main purpose of the establishment of this madrasah is to advance the quality of life of the people of Central Village through Islamic religious education, which is expected to be able to equip the younger generation with knowledge and morals for the safety of life in this world and in the hereafter.

In the first year, this madrasah started its operations with three study rooms. Over time, construction continues until now MIS Nidaul Insan has adequate learning room facilities and other supporting facilities that also support the learning process. This development reflects the commitment of the foundation and the community in making madrassas a center of excellence in rural areas.

Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Private (MIS) Nidaul Insan is committed to creating students who not only have Islamic knowledge, but also reflect good character in accordance with Islamic values. Students are expected to be able to show respect for parents, teachers, and establish

good social relationships with their friends in the school environment and the community. The values of manners, politeness, and the spirit of learning are characteristic of students' daily lives. They are not only required to understand the lessons, but also instilled the importance of practicing knowledge in real life as part of the process of forming noble morals.

In the economic aspect, madrasas strive to provide good educational services by creating financial stability through various efforts. One concrete form is to carry out responsible financial management and build collaboration with students' parents. However, in this madrasah environment, there are still parents of students who have economic limitations to finance their children's education. Responding to these conditions, the madrasah, in this case the principal, provides a solution by offering an education fee payment system in installments through a savings program. This policy was taken as an effort to ease the burden on parents without sacrificing children's rights to obtain proper religious and public education.

The social life of students at MIS Nidaul Insan is also an important concern. In their daily lives, students are guided to follow the learning process well, maintain manners while in class, and show enthusiasm and cheerfulness during lessons. Creativity and innovation are the encouragement in creating a fun learning atmosphere. The students are also taught to cultivate mutual respect and strengthen brotherhood between friends. Not only that, they are trained to apply the knowledge gained and provide benefits to others, as part of strengthening social character and moral responsibility in society.

The positive culture built in this madrasah becomes part of the daily routine of students. They are accustomed to coming to school on time, even before the bell rings. After the entrance bell sounded, the students were directed to immediately march and recite the memorization of Juz Amma together. The tradition of greeting, reprimanding, and greeting teachers, both inside and outside the madrasah environment, has become a culture that continues to be instilled. Students are also required to obey the school regulations that have been agreed, carry out their obligations as students with full responsibility, and stay away from all forms of applicable prohibitions. In this case, the involvement of students in maintaining the safety, comfort, and cleanliness of the madrasah is part of character education that is carried out consistently.

In the 2023/2024 school year, the total number of students at MIS Nidaul Insan was recorded at 126 people. This number is divided into six grade levels, namely classes I to VI, with the following details: class I consists of 21 students, class II as many as 15 students, class III as many as 31 students, class IV as many as 13 students, class V as many as 23 students, and class VI also totals 23 students. This composition shows that madrassas have become the main choice of the surrounding community in sending their children to school.

The teaching and learning process in madrassas is carried out on a regular schedule. For grades I to III, learning activities take place from 07.30 to 11.00 WIB. As for grades IV to VI, learning is carried out until 12.30 WIB. Learning activities are not only carried out in the classroom, but can also be carried out outside the classroom at certain times according to thematic or contextual learning needs.

In supporting the learning process, the facilities and infrastructure available in madrassas are important components that continue to be considered. The madrasah building includes several study rooms, offices, halls that also function as prayer places, as well as toilet facilities for teachers and students. Based on the latest data, the condition of the classroom building consists of four rooms that are in good condition and two rooms that are in a slightly damaged condition. Meanwhile, the principal's room/administration, hall, and toilet facilities are all still in good condition.

The teaching and learning equipment is also quite adequate. The madrasah has 125 student seats and 63 tables in good condition, as well as several chairs and teachers' desks. There are also whiteboards, fans, projectors, laptops, printers, bookshelves, cabinets, and supporting equipment for extracurricular activities such as balls, soccer goals, hadroh drums, and drum bands. Although some equipment such as laptops and some chairs were damaged, in general this completeness was enough to support the effective learning process.

### **Stages of Planning to Develop the Quality of Education**

To understand how the process of madrasah heads in planning to develop the quality of education, the researcher conducted a series of interviews and direct observations at MIrS Nirdaul Insan, a madrasah located in Central Village, Pantai Labu District. The interview began with a question to the head of the madrasah about whether the institution had ever prepared a strategic plan for the development of the quality of education. The head of the madrasah stated that the preparation of the strategic plan had indeed been carried out, usually once a year. The preparation is also a reference in designing activity plans and madrasah budgets which will then be reported digitally through the e-RKAM (Electronic Madrasah Activity Plan and Budget) application.

Furthermore, the researcher delved deeper into the parties involved in the preparation of the strategy. The head of the madrasah explained that the process of formulating the strategy was not carried out unilaterally, but involved the foundation family, teachers, and madrasah staff through a deliberative forum or joint meeting. This participatory approach shows a collective commitment in designing the future of madrasah education.

Interviews were then continued with teachers in the same madrasas, to find out their views on involvement in the preparation and implementation of education quality strategies. One of the teachers said that the head of the madrasah regularly holds meetings to discuss

madrasah development strategies. In the meeting, the teachers were invited to convey suggestions and inputs related to the development of the madrasah. Teachers feel given space to voice their opinions, including identifying shortcomings that still need to be corrected together.

However, when asked about the successful implementation of the strategy that has been designed, the teacher stated that most of the plans have indeed begun to be realized, although not all of them can be implemented as expected. The main obstacle that is often faced is limited funds and time, which causes some programs to be postponed or cannot be implemented optimally.

The head of the madrasah also emphasized the same thing when asked about the development that has not yet been realized. He said that there are still many aspects that have not been realized, such as a graduate program that is able to memorize two verses of the Qur'an and 40 hadiths, increasing the discipline and creativity of teachers in teaching, providing more complete facilities, and achieving the target number of students who have not met expectations. This effort was hampered by external factors such as budget limitations, the economic condition of the surrounding community which was still relatively low, and the existence of other formal elementary schools in the same village, which became competitors in attracting new students.

To clarify the root of the problem that caused the education quality development strategy to not be fully successful, the researcher initiated a group discussion with the head of the madrasah, teachers, and staff. In the forum, various views emerged that showed the complexity of the problem. The teacher said that one of the big challenges is the lack of involvement of students' guardians in continuing educational programs, such as memorizing the Quran, at home. The head of the madrasah added that the obstacles in the provision of facilities are mainly caused by the lack of financial support and high operational costs that are not proportional to the economic capabilities of the surrounding community. In addition, the number of students has not reached the target due to the availability of other alternative formal schools in the village.

### **School Principal's Strategy in Improving the Quality of Education**

#### **1. Developing Teacher Competencies at MIS Nidaul Insan**

The results of the study showed that madrasah heads implemented teacher competency development strategies through routine supervision, monthly evaluative meetings, and the provision of pedagogical direction. The head of the madrasah emphasized the importance of continuous learning planning and evaluation. However, the resistance of some teachers in implementing the directive has become an obstacle that has not been completely resolved. These findings suggest that top-down strategies have not been fully effective without the internalization of professional awareness from teachers (Sutrisno et al., 2022).

On the other hand, teachers such as Mrs. Syafridainir and Mrs. Mutiara Nurjannah acknowledged the encouragement to participate in

training, both offline and online, as well as the initiative of madrasah heads in forming a learning culture that is adaptive to the Independent Curriculum. The madrasah head's strategy in motivating teachers is also implemented through the provision of symbolic incentives such as uniforms and annual recreational activities. This approach shows that there are efforts to build a psychosocially conducive work climate, although it has not touched the aspect of performance-based incentives comprehensively.

The focus group discussions showed that teachers expect systemic reinforcement in competency development, including access to structured and ongoing training. This indicates that the strategy of the head of the madrasah requires strengthening in terms of institutional policies and external support (Annisa Alfath et al., 2022).

### 1. Development of Facilities and Infrastructure

The strategy of madrasah heads in the development of facilities and infrastructure is still limited to routine maintenance and gradual procurement based on budget availability. The head of the madrasah admitted that limited funds are the main obstacle in the provision of facilities such as libraries, UKS, and internet networks. This shows that the development strategy is not based on long-term planning that is strategic and oriented towards the fulfillment of National Education Standards (Ismail et al., 2021).

The administrative staff said that maintenance is carried out through the division of internal tasks, such as the responsibility of facilities by TU teachers and staff. Teachers also play a role in instilling student discipline through a cleanliness picket schedule. This strategy reflects a participatory approach based on local resources, but is not yet supported by an integrated monitoring and evaluation system of facilities.

The lack of collaboration with external stakeholders—both the government and the community—indicates that madrasas have not maximized the potential of partnerships in the development of facilities. Therefore, a strategy based on budget advocacy and institutional networks is needed to accelerate the fulfillment of educational infrastructure needs (Suban & Ilham, 2023).

## Conclusions

The process of improving the quality of education requires firm commitment and transformative leadership, starting from the principal as the main driving force, by involving all elements of the school in a participatory manner. The findings show that madrasah heads have implemented a quality improvement strategy through a systematic approach starting from the initial planning stage. This stage includes identifying learning needs, evaluating teacher competencies, and mapping available resources.

Furthermore, the head of the madrasah develops the implementation of strategies based on academic supervision and strengthening the collaborative culture among teachers. In the context of

madrassas in rural areas, this strategy shows courage in initiating change even though it is limited by resources. The approach of madrasah heads is not only administrative, but also touches on motivational and psychosocial aspects, through the provision of symbolic incentives and collective activities that build social cohesion.

However, the effectiveness of the strategy still faces challenges in the form of internal resistance from teachers who have not fully internalized the value of professionalism and the urgency of pedagogical innovation. This shows that improving the quality of education requires systemic policy support, structured continuous training, and reflective spaces that allow teachers to develop sustainably. Thus, the strategy of madrasah heads in village-based schools represents an adaptive participatory leadership model, but requires strengthening institutional aspects and integrating quality improvement programs across sectors.

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