

The Principal's Strategy to Improve the Quality of Human Resources at MTs Baitul Makmur Curup

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Abstract

The principal's strategic role in managing human resources (HR) is key to improving the quality of education, particularly in private Islamic schools (madrasahs) that often face the challenge of limited resources. This study aims to analyze the principal's strategy in improving the quality of education through HR management at MTs Baitul Makmur Curup, a madrasah known for its progress and community appeal. The scope of the study includes HR planning, implementation strategies, and the applied evaluation and development cycle. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation studies, then analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldana. The results show that HR planning is carried out strategically and systematically, aligned with the madrasah's long-term vision and involving the foundation for accountability. The main strategy implemented is transformational leadership, in which the principal acts as a role model, instills a vision, and builds a proactive work culture. This strategy is supported by a comprehensive motivation and reward system, encompassing financial and non-financial aspects, as well as career development support. A mature evaluation-development cycle was also found, where the results of multidimensional performance evaluations were followed up concretely through specific development programs, such as relevant guidance and training to ensure continuous improvement.

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INTRODUCTION

Islamic education plays a crucial role in shaping a generation that excels not only academically but also possesses noble morals (Amrullah, 2023). Madrasahs, as religious-based educational institutions, are tasked with integrating Islamic knowledge and values

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into the teaching and learning process. However, private madrasahs often face complex challenges, particularly in terms of limited human resources (Rahman & Akbar, 2021).

Human resources, especially teaching staff and administrative staff, are key factors in creating a conducive and effective learning environment. Therefore, sound human resource management is essential to ensure that all educational components in a madrasa can function optimally. The principal plays a strategic role in managing these human resources to improve the quality of Islamic education in madrasahs (Triarsuci et al., 2024).

Challenges faced in human resource management include budget constraints, lack of ongoing training, and difficulties in maintaining teacher and staff motivation and commitment. Furthermore, technological developments and changing societal demands add to the complexity of managing teacher and staff motivation and commitment. Therefore, appropriate leadership strategies are required from school principals to enable madrasahs to adapt and continuously improve the quality of education they provide (Munawwarah et al., 2024).

Human resource management in Islamic education is important to support the teaching and learning process and the formation of morals, creating a learning environment in accordance with the holistic goals of Islamic education (Jamaludin et al., 2022). Effective human resource management in private madrasahs is important to improve the quality of education, produce competent graduates, and maintain Islamic values in the era of globalization (Ristanti, 2023).

Human resource management encompasses the planning, recruitment, and development of a workforce to support Islamic education. Well-managed human resources produce competent workers and improve the quality of education (Hartati et al., 2024a). Principal leadership involves designing, implementing, and evaluating strategies to improve human resource performance, motivate teachers and staff, and ensure the success of holistic Islamic education (Putra et al., 2024a).

Islamic education integrates knowledge and religious values to produce students who are competent, have noble morals, and have strong spirituality (Purnamasari et al., 2023). Human Resource Management Strategy is a set of policies and actions implemented to ensure that all HR components work synergistically. This includes ongoing training, rewards, and objective performance evaluation (Tahir et al., 2023).

Madrasahs are Islamic-based educational institutions that offer an integrated curriculum. In Indonesia, madrasahs play a crucial role in shaping a generation of

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excellence and Islamic character. In addition to providing general knowledge, madrasahs also emphasize moral and spiritual education (Setiawan et al., 2020).

The quality of education in Indonesia is measured based on eight National Education Quality Standards, which encompass important aspects of the education system. These standards include: first, content standards, which regulate the learning materials that students must master according to the applicable curriculum. Second, process standards, which ensure that the learning methods applied are effective, enjoyable, and appropriate to students' needs. Third, graduate competency standards, which establish graduation criteria to ensure students possess competencies appropriate to their level of education. Fourth, educator and education personnel standards, which guarantee the quality of teachers and support staff in supporting the learning process. Fifth, facility and infrastructure standards, which include facilities that support comfortable and safe teaching and learning activities. Sixth, financing standards, which ensure sufficient funding allocation to support the quality of education. Seventh, educational assessment standards, which regulate how to fairly and objectively assess and measure student competency achievement. Finally, management standards, which encompass transparent and effective school or educational institution governance. By implementing these eight standards, the quality of education can be continuously improved, producing qualified graduates who are ready to face global challenges (Badrudin et al., 2024).

Several previous studies have examined the role of human resource management (HRM) and leadership in improving educational quality, particularly in Islamic-based schools. Agustina et al. found that the transformational leadership of principals plays a significant role in improving teacher performance through motivation and clear direction. However, this research focused more on leadership models and did not delve deeply into comprehensive HRM management strategies (Agustina et al., 2024). Another study by Lestari et al. emphasized that the application of Islamic values in HR management can improve employee discipline and responsibility. However, this study focused more on Islamic ethics without linking it to overall HR strategic planning (Lestari et al., 2023).

Furthermore, Putra et al. highlighted the importance of teacher competency in improving the quality of education in Islamic secondary schools. They found a positive correlation between teacher competency and student learning outcomes, but this study was limited to teacher competency development without addressing recruitment strategies or performance evaluation (Putra et al., 2024b). Research by Saifullah revealed that work

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motivation and a conducive school environment have a significant impact on teacher performance, but the role of the principal in creating HR management strategies is not a primary focus (Saifullah, 2020).

These studies provide important insights into human resource management and leadership in education, but there are several aspects that distinguish this study from previous research. This research focuses not only on individual competencies and performance evaluation but also comprehensively covers planning, recruitment, development, motivation, and reward strategies. Furthermore, this study focuses on the role of the principal in designing and implementing human resource management strategies to improve educational quality at MTs Baitul Makmur Curup. Thus, this research provides a more comprehensive perspective and can contribute to the formulation of human resource management policies in educational institutions based on Islamic values.

MTs Baitul Makmur Curup, a private educational institution located in the city center, has proven itself to be a superior institution that continues to thrive amidst competition from public schools. Since its founding on May 17, 2000, by the Islamic Center Curup Foundation, this madrasah has earned high public trust, as evidenced by the number of applicants exceeding the available quota each year. This success is built on a reputation as an institution capable of integrating quality academic education with in-depth spiritual development and targeted student talent development, and is reinforced by the numerous achievements of its students.

The excellence and rapid development of MTs Baitul Makmur Curup is no coincidence, but rather the result of the implementation of a comprehensive educational system and professional management. Initial observations indicate the central role of the principal's visionary and progress-oriented leadership, particularly in prioritizing human resource (HR) development. The principal proactively designs teacher competency development programs, implements a fair reward system, and prioritizes the welfare of educators to improve the quality of education. This phenomenon underpins the researcher's interest in further examining the principal's strategies for planning, implementing, and evaluating HR management to improve the quality of Islamic education at the madrasah.

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study type to obtain a deep and holistic understanding of the central phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 2015, p. 137).

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The main focus of the case study is the human resource management strategy of the principal at MTs Baitul Makmur Curup. This location was chosen purposively, considering that the madrasah has shown significant progress, has a good reputation, and has proactive leadership from the principal, making it a rich and relevant case for research. The research subjects included the principal, teachers, and one educational staff member to obtain a comprehensive picture. This research was conducted in the 2024-2025 academic year. Data collection was conducted using three main techniques: non-participant observation to observe the implementation of HR strategies and work culture; in-depth interviews to explore the research subjects' perspectives; and documentary study of school archives such as strategic plans, HR records, and curriculum documents. Data analysis refers to the interactive model developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana, which consists of four activity flows: data collection, data reduction (sorting, focusing, and organizing data), data presentation (systematically arranging information in the form of narrative descriptions), and conclusion drawing and verification (Salim, 2006). To ensure the credibility of the findings, the researcher used data triangulation techniques, which include source triangulation (comparing data from various sources) and technical triangulation (re-checking interview data with observation data). As a case study, the findings of this study are not intended to be generalizable, but rather to provide an in-depth overview of the case under study, and its scope is limited to HR management strategies during that time period.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Principal Planning in Improving the Quality of Human Resources

Research findings consistently demonstrate that human resource planning at MTs Baitul Makmur Curup is not merely a reactive administrative activity, but rather a strategic process that serves as the foundation for all human resource management functions. The principal, in his role as leader, consciously designs an HR architecture that aligns with the madrasah's long-term vision and goals.

Human Resource Needs Planning

The main findings indicate that human resource planning at MTs Baitul Makmur Curup is carried out by considering the medium- and long-term madrasah programs, as well as student needs, which are then formally submitted to the foundation. This practice is a manifestation of the theory of Strategic Human Resource Management, an approach to managing human resources that supports the achievement of long-term organizational goals through a series of integrated policies and practices (Nisa et al., 2024).

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Human resource planning in education is a strategic process aimed at ensuring the availability of teaching staff and staff to meet the needs of the educational institution. This step involves several important steps, such as workforce needs analysis, recruitment planning, and competency mapping to align with curriculum demands and teaching strategies. Principals must be able to predict and respond proactively to human resource needs, both in the short and long term (Nurunnayah, 2023).

The principal doesn't simply fill vacant positions for teachers who retire or resign, but proactively projects the type and quality of human resources needed to support the madrasa's flagship programs in the future. The foundation's involvement in this process demonstrates an accountable and structured process, rather than a personal or fleeting decision. This demonstrates that human resource planning at this madrasa has shifted from an operational function to a strategic one, where human resources are viewed as an investment in achieving the school's vision: "Excellence in Achievement, Religious in Behavior."

Another finding emerged that the basis of this planning is an in-depth analysis of various factors such as curriculum demands, student population, and technological mastery. This directly implements the theory of Human Resource Needs Analysis, which states that effective workforce planning must begin with accurate needs identification (Heatubun et al., 2023).

Human resource planning involves analyzing needs and mapping competencies to align with teaching strategies. The workforce needs analysis is based on curriculum demands and teaching strategies. For example, changes to the national curriculum or the addition of new subjects require teachers with specific competencies, so human resource planning must include projections of the number and type of teachers needed. Furthermore, technology-based teaching strategies are increasingly relevant in the digital age, so educational institutions need to ensure that teachers have the digital skills to support interactive learning (Hidayatulloh, 2023).

By conducting a thorough needs analysis, principals can ensure that the recruitment process is more efficient and targeted. For example, by identifying the need for teachers with digital skills, madrasas can avoid "mishiring" and reduce potential costs for basic training later on. This is a smart risk mitigation measure, especially for private madrasas that may face budget constraints. This aligns with the findings of (Maizah & Ratnawati, 2024) and (Rambe et al., 2024), which highlights the challenges of limited resources in

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madrasahs. A well-thought-out planning strategy at MTs Baitul Makmur Curup provides the answer to how these limitations can be effectively addressed.

Recruitment and Selection Planning Analysis

Research findings indicate that recruitment criteria at MTs Baitul Makmur Curup are holistic, encompassing educational qualifications, technological mastery, professionalism, and a positive personality based on religious values. This represents a direct application of the concept of Human Resource Management in the Context of Islamic Education, as outlined in the theoretical framework (Hartati et al., 2024b). The theory states that in Islamic educational institutions, recruitment must ensure that prospective workers are not only professionally competent, but also have character and integrity that are in line with Islamic values because they will be role models (*uswah*) for students (Sawaluddin & Rustandi, 2020).

The principal is not just looking for an "employee," but also an "educator" in the broadest sense. The criterion of "good personality based on religious values" serves as the primary gateway for selecting candidates who align with the madrasah's values (Hasan, 2022). In this way, the madrasah strategically builds a solid foundation of human resources from the start, which is not only capable of teaching but also educating and shaping the character of students according to the madrasah's vision.

When compared with research (Tambak & Sukenti, 2020) In discussing the importance of the concept of the caliph in developing teacher professionalism, the findings at MTs Baitul Makmur Curup demonstrate how this spiritual concept is operationalized. Recruitment criteria emphasizing character and religious values are a concrete manifestation of efforts to identify individuals capable of carrying out the mandate of being a caliph in the field of education. This study complements these findings by providing practical implementation examples at the recruitment policy level.

Furthermore, research (Sari et al., 2020) highlights the importance of decisive and visionary leadership. The findings of this study demonstrate the mechanisms by which this vision is executed. The vision of "Religious in Behavior" will not be realized without religious human resources. Therefore, establishing recruitment criteria based on Islamic values is a tactical step for a visionary leader to translate their vision into reality. This study answers the "how" of Sari et al.'s findings, which focus more on the "what." Therefore, it can be concluded that recruitment and selection planning at MTs Baitul Makmur Curup is a strategic process consciously designed to filter and acquire talent that is not only

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technically competent but also fundamentally aligned with the spirit and vision of the Islamic educational institution.

Strategies Implemented by the Principal to Improve the Quality of Human Resources at MTs Baitul Makmur Curup

Research findings reveal that the strategies implemented by school principals are not merely procedural but also rooted in leadership principles and motivational psychology. These strategies serve as the driving force that transforms plans into concrete actions, impacting human resource performance and commitment. The discussion of this aspect will be divided into two main pillars of the strategies identified in the field.

Transformational Leadership Strategy Analysis

The research results show that the main strategy implemented by the Principal of MTs Baitul Makmur Curup centers on Transformational Leadership. This theory, as proposed by Bass and Avolio (2003), defines a transformational leader as someone who is able to provide inspiration, motivation, and encouragement for change, enabling followers to transcend personal interests to achieve shared goals (Julaiha, 2019).

Field findings clearly manifest these four dimensions of leadership:

- 1) Teachers and staff view the principal as a good role model in terms of discipline, professionalism, and commitment. The principal's commitment to arrive at 6:30 a.m. is a concrete example of leading by example (Efendi et al., 2023).

This role model is the most powerful form of nonverbal communication. When leaders demonstrate high standards through their own actions, their directives and policies have greater credibility and legitimacy in the eyes of their staff.

- 2) The principal consistently instills the madrasah's vision ("Excellent in Achievement, Religious in Behavior") to all school members (Bumay et al., 2022).

By providing a clear and inspiring vision, the principal not only issues orders but also provides meaning and purpose to the work of teachers and staff. This transforms daily tasks from mere routine to part of a larger mission, significantly increasing commitment and morale.

- 3) The principal's strategy for building an innovative and proactive work culture through open communication, listening to problems, and providing constructive feedback is a form of intellectual stimulation (Addin et al., 2020).

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By creating a safe space for discussion and expressing opinions, the principal encourages teachers to not only be implementers, but also critical and innovative thinkers in solving learning problems in the classroom.

- 4) The finding that the principal is willing to communicate personally to understand the obstacles faced by teachers and staff indicates the existence of individual considerations (Joen et al., 2022).

This approach makes teachers feel valued and understood as individuals, not just as resources. This personal attention is highly effective in building loyalty and addressing motivational issues at the individual level before they become collective problems.

Research conducted by Agustina et al. found that transformational leadership plays a significant role in improving teacher performance through motivation and clear direction. The findings at MTs Baitul Makmur Curup provide strong empirical validation for this conclusion. Furthermore, this study goes further by identifying the specific mechanisms of transformational leadership that operate in the field, namely through role modeling, personal communication, and instilling a vision (Agustina et al., 2024).

Likewise, these findings enrich the research results (Sari et al., 2020). This study highlights the importance of strong and visionary leadership from madrasah principals. This research details how strong leadership is operationalized in daily practice. A strong vision will have no impact if it is not translated into inspiring leadership interactions and behaviors. The principal of MTs Baitul Makmur Curup successfully did this, so that his vision is not only displayed on the walls but also lives on in the madrasah's work culture.

Motivation and Reward Strategies

The motivational strategy at MTs Baitul Makmur Curup has been proven to be highly aligned with the theories of work motivation explained in the theoretical basis, namely, Motivation and rewards are important components in human resource management (HR) to ensure that educators and staff work with high enthusiasm and contribute optimally. An effective motivation system not only drives productivity but also creates a positive and sustainable work environment. Appropriate rewards and incentives make the workforce feel appreciated, increase loyalty, and encourage their performance to achieve the goals of the educational institution (Sholeh, 2023).

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The findings indicate the implementation of a comprehensive reward system, encompassing both financial (salary increases, performance allowances, holiday bonuses, bonuses) and non-financial (public praise, certificates, batik/service uniforms) aspects.

This dual approach is highly effective because it addresses multiple levels of needs. Financial rewards satisfy basic needs and a sense of security, while non-financial rewards, such as public recognition, address higher-order psychological needs, namely the need for recognition and appreciation (esteem needs), which often serve as a more sustainable driver of motivation.

Furthermore, the principal's strategy of actively supporting teacher career development through facilitating workshops, training, and continuing education opportunities is a powerful long-term motivational strategy. This aligns with the theoretical basis that a clear career path helps the workforce plan for the future and feel motivated to continue developing. In addition to short-term rewards, schools also need to provide clear career paths for educators and staff. Structured career paths help the workforce plan their professional future and feel motivated to continue developing. For example, teachers who demonstrate good performance can be recommended for certification or continuing education programs, ultimately opening up opportunities for promotion. The assurance that efforts and achievements will be rewarded provides a sense of security and job satisfaction, which in turn increases productivity and the quality of education (Fadhilla, 2020).

By providing opportunities for growth, the principal demonstrates that the madrasah is investing in the future of its teachers. This not only improves competence but also fosters loyalty and commitment, as teachers see their professional future at the institution.

Research by Saifullah concluded that motivation and a conducive environment have a significant impact on teacher performance. The findings at MTs Baitul Makmur Curup confirm and provide further detail on this conclusion. This research demonstrates concretely how the principal actively creates this conducive and motivating environment, namely through a fair and transparent reward system and concrete career development support (Saifullah, 2020).

Meanwhile, when compared to research (Tambak & Sukenti, 2020), which emphasized strengthening motivation through spiritual concepts, these findings demonstrate a more pragmatic and balanced approach. The principal of MTs Baitul Makmur Curup successfully combined spiritual values reflected in his leadership with

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concrete and measurable worldly motivational strategies (financial rewards and career advancement).

This suggests that the most effective motivational strategies in modern Islamic educational institutions are likely holistic, capable of meeting the professional, financial, and spiritual needs of their teaching staff in a balanced manner.

CONCLUSION

Effective human resource management at MTs Baitul Makmur Curup, a key driver of educational quality, has been demonstrated to emerge from the synergy between the principal's transformational leadership and an integrated and sustainable management system. The principal serves not merely as a manager but as a visionary leader who operationalizes his vision through exemplary behavior, inspiring communication, and personal support. This leadership serves as the foundation for a strategic human resource architecture that begins with holistic planning and recruitment, where alignment with Islamic values is a key criterion to ensure that every educator also serves as a role model. The sustainability of this system is ensured by a robust evaluation-development cycle; performance evaluation is not a judgmental endpoint but rather a starting point for specific and constructive development programs, such as mentoring and relevant training. This research expands on previous studies by presenting an empirical model demonstrating how modern leadership and human resource management theories can be effectively implemented in the context of a private madrasah. The implication for education practitioners is that this research confirms that to overcome challenges and achieve excellence, the focus must shift from mere administrative management to strategic leadership that consciously builds, motivates, and develops human resources as the most valuable asset in achieving holistic quality Islamic education.

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