

SCHOOL PRINCIPAL'S ADMINISTRATIVE LEADERSHIP IN ENHANCING SCHOOL MANAGEMENT EFFECTIVENESS: CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES IN THE DIGITAL EDUCATION ERA

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis peran kepala sekolah sebagai administrator dalam meningkatkan efektivitas manajemen sekolah, dengan fokus pada tiga aspek utama: kompetensi administratif kepala sekolah dalam mengelola administrasi kurikulum, kepegawaian, keuangan, sarana prasarana, dan kesiswaan; strategi implementasi manajemen pendidikan yang efektif; serta tantangan yang dihadapi. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus yang dilaksanakan di MTs Darul Fikri. Pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui wawancara mendalam semi-terstruktur terhadap kepala sekolah, guru, staf administrasi, dan komite sekolah; observasi partisipatif moderat selama tiga hari; serta studi dokumentasi. Analisis data menggunakan model interaktif Miles dan Huberman yang mencakup tahap reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan, dengan keabsahan data dijamin melalui triangulasi sumber, metode, dan waktu. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kepala sekolah memiliki peran penting dalam mengelola seluruh aspek administrasi sekolah meliputi kurikulum, kepegawaian, keuangan, sarana prasarana, dan kesiswaan secara sistematis, partisipatif, dan berorientasi pada peningkatan mutu. Strategi implementasi manajemen yang efektif mencakup perencanaan strategis berbasis analisis SWOT, pengorganisasian kolaboratif, pelaksanaan program yang adaptif, dan evaluasi formatif yang berkelanjutan. Namun, kepala sekolah menghadapi tiga tantangan utama, yaitu keterbatasan infrastruktur digitalisasi, cepatnya perubahan regulasi pendidikan, dan meningkatnya tuntutan akuntabilitas public. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa efektivitas manajemen sekolah sangat bergantung pada kapasitas kepala sekolah dalam menjalankan fungsi administrative secara terpadu, adaptif, dan akuntabel, didukung ketersediaan sumber daya yang memadai dan sistem regulasi yang kondusif.

Kata Kunci: Kepala Sekolah, Manajemen Sekolah, Supervisi Akademik, Administrasi Pendidikan

Abstract

This study aims to analyze the role of the school principal as an administrator in improving the effectiveness of school management, focusing on three main aspects: the principal's administrative competencies in managing curriculum administration, human resources, finance, facilities and infrastructure, and student affairs; strategies for implementing effective educational management; and the challenges faced. This study employs a qualitative approach using a case study design conducted at MTs Darul Fikri. Data collection was carried out through semi-structured in-depth interviews with the school principal, teachers, administrative staff, and the school committee; moderate participant observation over three days; and document analysis. Data analysis utilized the Miles and Huberman interactive model, which includes the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions, with data validity ensured through triangulation of sources, methods, and time. The research results indicate that school principals play a crucial role in managing all aspects of school administration—including curriculum, personnel, finance, facilities, and student affairs—in a systematic, participatory, and quality-improvement-oriented manner. Effective management implementation strategies include SWOT analysis-based strategic planning, collaborative organization, adaptive program implementation, and continuous formative evaluation. However, school principals face three major challenges: limited digital infrastructure, rapid changes in education regulations, and increasing demands for public accountability. This study concludes that the effectiveness of school management depends heavily on the principal's capacity to perform administrative functions in an integrated, adaptive, and accountable manner, supported by adequate resources and a conducive regulatory system.

Keywords: School Principal, School Management, Academic Supervision, Educational Administration

INTRODUCTION

The complexity of managing educational institutions in Indonesia has been increasing in line with demands for improved national education quality (Nugraha et al., 2023). Data from the 2018 BAN-S/M accreditation results show that out of 297,000 formal educational institutions, only 20.51% were accredited A and 55.31% were accredited B, indicating that educational quality has not yet been optimally achieved (Dewi & Ali, 2020). This phenomenon reflects systemic challenges in school management that require competent school leadership. In the digital era and with the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, school principals face increasingly complex administrative burdens, limited technology-based infrastructure, and uneven

teacher competencies (Karakose et al., 2024; Qu & Mydin, 2026; Saa, 2024). These conditions are exacerbated by rapid changes in education regulations and the public's growing demands for school accountability. Elementary schools in rural areas, in particular, still face technological infrastructure constraints that hinder the implementation of school management information systems (Kwashi et al., 2025; Mustafa, Thi, et al., 2024). This social reality underscores the urgency of strengthening the administrative role of school principals in creating effective school management that is responsive to the dynamics of contemporary education.

Various studies highlight the central role of school principals as administrators in improving educational quality. The use of digital applications improves data management quality and accelerates administrative decision-making processes (Arjiman, 2026; Pujiastuti et al., 2025). School principals who provide supervision and guidance to administrative staff have better document completeness and faster administrative responses (Opidianto, 2025). The implementation of systematic educational management through strategic planning, collaborative organization, and data-driven monitoring significantly enhances managerial effectiveness (Hallinger, 2016; Ross & Gray, 2015; Arfan et al., 2024).

Recent research also highlights the importance of school principals' managerial competencies in addressing the complexities of modern administration (Daulay et al., 2024; Kim et al., 2024). A study by Azizah et al. (2023) indicates that the effective implementation of school-based management requires school principals with the ability to plan strategic programs, organize resources optimally, and conduct data-driven evaluations (Azizah et al., 2023). Research by Dedik et al. (2025) found that systematic administrative management through clear task allocation, coordination among units, and orderly documentation increases school operational efficiency by up to 35% (Dedik et al., 2025). Meanwhile, a study by Mahasina & Sa'diyah (2024) confirms that school principals' leadership skills—including communication, decision-making, and problem-solving abilities—are positively correlated with the quality of school management (Mahasina & Sa'diyah, 2024). Comparative studies across various levels of education indicate that schools with principals holding educational management certifications achieve 40% higher administrative success rates compared to schools without certified principals (Hadiningrat et al., 2024).

This study employs the School-Based Management theory, which emphasizes the decentralization of authority to the school level (Patrinos et al., 2009). This theory classifies school-based management into four models: administrative control, which places full authority with the principal; professional control, which grants autonomy to teachers; community control, which involves community participation; and balanced control, which divides autonomy among the principal, teachers, and the community. Transformational leadership theory also serves as a foundation for understanding how school principals drive positive change through motivation,

inspiration, and staff empowerment (Hadiningrat et al., 2024). In an administrative context, this theory emphasizes that school principals must carry out the functions of planning, organizing, executing, and supervising in an integrated manner (Dedik et al., 2025). The theory of education quality-based management is also integrated to understand how school leadership, teacher professionalism, and community participation contribute to holistic improvements in educational quality.

The novelty of this study lies in three aspects that distinguish it from previous research. First, this study simultaneously integrates three dimensions—the administrative role of school principals, implementation strategies, and responses to contemporary challenges—into a single holistic and integrated analytical framework. Unlike previous studies, which generally examined a single dimension in isolation (Azizah et al., 2023; Opidianto, 2025), this study offers a comprehensive perspective on the ecosystem of school principals' administrative leadership. Second, this study was conducted within the context of the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum and the acceleration of educational digitalization—specifically in educational institutions with unique characteristics that blend general educational governance with religious values. The context of MTs as the subject of study has received limited attention in existing educational management literature, making the findings of this study a significant contribution to filling an empirical gap. Third, this study produces a conceptual model titled “Adaptive Collaborative Administrative Management,” which illustrates the dynamics of interaction between the principal's competencies, managerial strategies, and external challenge factors in shaping school management effectiveness. This model represents a new conceptual contribution that can serve as a reference for further research as well as the development of principal leadership training programs in the era of educational transformation.

This study aims to comprehensively analyze the role of school principals as administrators in enhancing school management effectiveness in the contemporary era. Specifically, this study aims: first, to identify the administrative competencies required for school principals to manage curriculum administration, student affairs, personnel, finance, facilities and infrastructure, and community relations optimally. Second, to analyze strategies for implementing effective educational management through the stages of strategic planning, collaborative organization, program implementation, and continuous evaluation. Third, to describe the administrative challenges faced by school principals in the context of educational digitalization, regulatory changes, and demands for public accountability. This study is expected to provide theoretical contributions to the development of educational management studies as well as practical benefits in the form of strategic recommendations for school principals to optimize their administrative roles in improving the quality of education sustainably.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study design to deeply investigate the role of school principals as administrators in enhancing the effectiveness of school management. The research was conducted at MTs Darul Fikri. Research participants included the school principal, administrative staff, and the school committee. The research was conducted over 2 weeks, with 1 week of field data collection and 2 weeks of data analysis.

Data collection was carried out using three main techniques to ensure data triangulation (Sugiyono, 2016). First, semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with 3 participants, lasting 60–90 minutes per session, using an interview guide containing 20 open-ended questions covering understanding of the administrator's role, strategies for performing administrative functions, challenges, solutions, and impacts on school management effectiveness. All interviews were recorded with the participants' consent. Second, moderate participant observation was conducted over 3 days. Third, a documentary study collected and analyzed administrative documents such as work programs, organizational structures, financial reports, student data, inventory of facilities and infrastructure, and supervision documents over the past three years. Data analysis utilized the interactive data analysis model by Miles and Huberman (1992), which consists of four components: data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions (Huberman & Michael, 1992).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Role of the School Principal in Curriculum Administration

Research findings indicate that school principals play a central role in managing curriculum administration as the primary foundation of the learning process in schools. School principals who effectively manage the curriculum are able to improve the quality of learning through systematic planning and ongoing supervision (Regassa & Mamo, 2024). Excerpts from interviews with school principals:

“I always ensure that the curriculum we implement aligns with students' needs and the times. At the start of each semester, we hold coordination meetings with all teachers to develop structured and focused learning programs. I also conduct regular monitoring to ensure implementation proceeds as planned.”

Teachers, as curriculum implementers, provide an important perspective regarding the principal's administrative role in creating a conducive learning ecosystem. The principal's openness to receiving feedback from teachers about curriculum implementation challenges and willingness to seek solutions together

fosters effective collaboration between management and implementers. This indicates that the principal's participatory leadership in curriculum administration enhances teachers' sense of ownership over the learning program and ultimately improves the quality of curriculum implementation. This finding aligns with Haudi's (2022) research, which shows that transformational and participatory leadership enhances teacher performance and learning effectiveness.

Challenges in curriculum administration were also identified, particularly regarding rapid changes in curriculum policy. Limited understanding and resources pose major obstacles in the curriculum transition process, requiring intensive guidance from the education office and school supervisors. These findings align with Opidianto's (2025) research, which identified that changes in educational regulations add to the complexity of the principal's administrative tasks and require a high degree of adaptability (Opidianto, 2025).

The Role of School Principals in Personnel Administration

School principals who are effective in personnel administration are able to place the right people in the right positions, create a fair and transparent system of task distribution, and develop the capacity of teachers and staff through continuous professional development programs. These practices demonstrate that effective school principals understand the importance of human resource capacity development as a strategy for improving educational quality; systematic personnel management significantly contributes to the school's organizational effectiveness. Results of interviews with school principals:

"I view teachers and staff as the school's most important assets. Therefore, I strive to place them according to their respective competencies and interests. I also create a fair and transparent schedule for task distribution. At the start of each school year, I hold a meeting to discuss the organizational structure and task distribution."

Administrative staff offer a different perspective on personnel management, emphasizing aspects of well-being and a well-organized administrative system. These findings confirm the importance of managerial and humanistic aspects in personnel administration, aligning with the research by Azizah et al. (2023) that school leadership prioritizing employee well-being and development enhances organizational motivation and performance (Azizah et al., 2023).

Challenges in personnel administration also arise regarding the limited authority of school principals in staff recruitment and transfers. This is particularly evident when schools require teachers with specific competencies. Additionally, the uneven distribution of workloads due to senior teachers' resistance to additional tasks

poses a challenge in fostering organizational fairness. These findings highlight the complexity of personnel administration, which depends not only on the principal's competence but also on regulatory systems and organizational culture, as identified (Dedik et al., 2025) that the implementation of personnel management requires a supportive system and adequate authority.

The Role of School Principals in Financial Administration

School principals who are effective in financial administration apply the principles of transparency, accountability, and participation at every stage of financial management. These participatory and transparent financial management practices align with the findings of Isa et al. (2020), who noted that school-based management with balanced control among school principals, teachers, and the community enhances accountability and the effectiveness of resource management. Results of interviews with administrative staff:

“We greatly appreciate the principal's openness in financial management. He always invites us to budget planning meetings and provides regular accountability reports every quarter. No funds are used without mutual approval. This fosters trust between the school and the community.”

The school committee, as the principal's partner in financial management, offers a positive assessment of transparency practices and participation in financial decision-making. The committee's involvement in budget planning and oversight of fund usage establishes a system of checks and balances that minimizes the risk of financial misuse. However, the challenge of budget constraints remains a structural obstacle to optimizing school programs. Limited BOS funds compared to the school's operational and development needs force school principals to prioritize programs and seek alternative funding sources. These findings indicate that while school principals possess strong administrative competencies, financial resource constraints act as a structural barrier to optimizing school programs, as noted by Mahasina & Sa'diyah, (2024), who noted that the effectiveness of school management is determined not only by the principal's competencies but also by the availability of adequate resources (Mahasina & Sa'diyah, 2024).

The Principal's Role in Facilities and Infrastructure Administration

The management of school facilities and infrastructure is a critical component supporting the learning process and school operations. An effective principal in facilities and infrastructure administration focuses not only on procuring new facilities but also on preventive maintenance and empowering the entire school community to maintain school assets, as found by (Mustafa, Nguyen, et al., 2024) that systematic

management of facilities and infrastructure increases school operational efficiency by up to 35%.

Teachers appreciate the principal's responsiveness in meeting learning resource needs and efforts to empower users in optimally utilizing facilities. The principal not only provides facilities but also ensures teachers have the competence to use them through training and mentoring. This practice demonstrates that effective infrastructure administration is not merely about procurement but also about user empowerment, aligning with Opidianto's (2025) findings that the principal's supervision and guidance regarding facility utilization enhance learning effectiveness (Opidianto, 2025).

However, infrastructure challenges remain a major obstacle, particularly in schools with older buildings or those located in rural areas. Building conditions requiring major renovations cannot be addressed with limited BOS funds. This finding underscores that infrastructure limitations are a systemic issue requiring policy intervention and budget allocation from the government, as identified in the research by Noor et al. (2023) that the success of school management depends not only on the principal's competence but also on supportive systems and conducive policies.

The Role of the Principal in Student Affair

Student affairs encompass various aspects, ranging from the admission of new students, academic and non-academic guidance, to student graduation. An effective principal in student affairs views students holistically, not merely as administrative units but as individuals whose potential needs to be nurtured and developed. Effective student management contributes to improvements in students' academic and non-academic achievements (Dasar et al., 2021; Koç & Koç, 2021). Excerpts from interviews with school principals:

"I ensure that the student admission process is transparent and accountable in accordance with applicable regulations. We publish all information on the school's website and social media. We have also established an integrated student database system to facilitate the monitoring of each student's academic and non-academic progress over time."

Student affairs staff provided a technical perspective on the importance of a well-organized data system and technology in improving administrative efficiency and communication with parents. The digitization of student affairs administration through online attendance applications, academic information systems, and automated notifications to parents enhances transparency and parental involvement in monitoring their children's progress. The digitization of student administration—specifically the use of digital applications—improves the efficiency of data

management and accelerates administrative decision-making processes related to student affairs.

However, challenges in student administration were also identified regarding the handling of students with behavioral issues. A non-discriminatory and inclusive approach toward all students, including those with special needs and students from low-income families, creates a safe and supportive school environment for all students. These findings indicate that a humanistic and inclusive student administration creates a school environment conducive to all students, aligning with the principles of school-based management that emphasize the participation and empowerment of all members of the school community.

Strategies for Implementing Effective Educational Management

a. Strategic Planning in Educational Management

Strategic planning serves as the cornerstone for implementing effective educational management at MTs Darul Fikri. This stage involves an in-depth analysis of the internal and external conditions of the educational institution, the establishment of a clear vision and mission, and the formulation of measurable long-term and short-term goals. In the context of modern education, strategic planning must consider technological developments, stakeholder needs, the socio-economic dynamics of the community, and the characteristics of the students.

The implementation of strategic planning requires the active involvement of all components of the educational organization, from leadership to educational staff and external stakeholders. SWOT analysis serves as a crucial tool for identifying internal strengths—such as teacher competencies and facilities—weaknesses—such as budget constraints or human resource limitations—external opportunities—such as government programs or partnerships—and threats—such as competition with other schools or policy changes. Based on this analysis, realistic and measurable development strategies can be formulated, taking into account available resource capacity as well as projected future needs in the short, medium, and long term. The results of the analysis must be well-documented and serve as a reference for setting program priorities, ensuring that every strategic decision has a strong foundation and can be accounted for to all educational stakeholders within the MTs Darul Fikri community as well as the broader public who utilize educational services.

The success of strategic planning also depends on the institution's ability to set program priorities and allocate budgets efficiently and effectively in line with actual needs. Budget planning must prioritize strategic programs that directly impact the improvement of learning quality and student achievement. Mechanisms for reviewing and revising the strategic plan must be established to accommodate policy changes or unforeseen circumstances. Interview Excerpt:

“At MTs Darul Fikri, we always begin the academic year with a large-scale planning meeting involving all teachers, the committee, and student representatives. From there, we develop priority programs based on the previous year’s evaluation, such as improving academic performance and strengthening Islamic character. All programs must be measurable with clear indicators so they can be evaluated later.”

b. Collaborative Organization

Collaborative organization serves as the second pillar in the implementation of effective educational management at MTs Darul Fikri. This organizational model emphasizes the proportional distribution of tasks based on competencies and a balanced workload, the formation of cohesive work teams with good chemistry, and the creation of an organizational structure that is flexible and responsive to changes in both internal and external environments. Collaboration in this context is not limited to interactions among teachers or internal staff within the school, but also involves synergy with parents, community leaders, education advocacy groups, other educational institutions, and various external partners.

The collaborative organizational structure prioritizes the formation of work teams based on specific functions and programs that have autonomy in operational decision-making while adhering to institutional policies. Each team is led by a coordinator responsible for coordinating members’ activities, facilitating effective communication among members, resolving internal conflicts that may arise, and reporting progress periodically to top management in a mutually agreed-upon format.

The effectiveness of collaborative organization also depends on the quality of communication and coordination among work units, which must be maintained consistently and continuously. Regular meetings, both formal and informal, serve as a crucial medium for synchronizing programs across teams, constructively resolving shared issues, evaluating implementation progress, and strengthening cohesion and solidarity among organizational members. Information technology can be leveraged to facilitate collaboration, particularly in documenting activities, sharing information and resources, coordinating between teams in real-time, and monitoring program implementation through easily accessible digital platforms. Through collaborative and democratic organization, workloads are distributed evenly and fairly, communication becomes more effective and smooth, conflicts are minimized, and each individual feels they have a significant contribution to the success of the educational institution, thereby substantially increasing motivation and work commitment at MTs Darul Fikri.

Interview Results:

“We formed several teams, such as the curriculum team, student affairs team, and facilities development team. Each team has a coordinator who can make operational decisions without having to wait for instructions from the principal. Interestingly, we also involve parents with specialized skills; for example, a

doctor assists with the school health program, and a businessperson helps with the student entrepreneurship program.”

c. Implementation of the Education Program

The success of the program’s implementation depends heavily on the availability of competent and motivated human resources, adequate facilities and infrastructure, sufficient and timely budgetary support, and an effective monitoring system that does not place an undue burden on field staff. Management must be able to create a conducive, harmonious, and productive work environment; provide technical support through training and mentoring; offer motivational support through recognition and rewards for implementers; and ensure that all activities proceed according to the established timeline without compromising the quality of outcomes. Visionary and supportive leadership is key to maintaining team morale during the program implementation process, which often faces various challenges and obstacles at MTs Darul Fikri in achieving the goal of quality education.

During implementation, flexibility is crucial given the dynamics and unforeseen situations that may require adjustments to strategies and tactics on the ground. A structured yet flexible monitoring and supervision system helps identify obstacles early on, enabling timely and targeted interventions before issues escalate. Mentoring and coaching for program implementers – especially those facing technical or motivational challenges – will sustainably enhance human resource capacity and ensure implementation quality standards remain consistent with established targets.

Intensive communication among work units is a determining factor in the success of the educational program implementation at MTs Darul Fikri in a comprehensive and integrated manner. Providing appreciation and recognition for achievements, no matter how small, will motivate implementers to deliver their best performance and increase loyalty to the institution. Direct leadership involvement in program implementation – not merely as evaluators but also as facilitators who assist and as problem solvers who provide solutions – creates a supportive, inspiring, and empowering work atmosphere, enabling all organizational members to contribute maximally according to their respective capacities. Periodic evaluation forums should also be held for collective reflection, identifying lessons learned, and continuous improvement of program implementation at MTs Darul Fikri.

d. Continuous Evaluation

Continuous evaluation is an essential component that ensures educational management at MTs Darul Fikri remains on the right track toward achieving the established goals. This evaluation process involves collecting quantitative data through achievement figures and statistics, as well as qualitative data through observation and in-depth interviews; analyzing achievements against set targets by comparing actual results with plans; identifying supporting factors that need to be

maintained and developed, as well as hindering factors that must be mitigated; and formulating concrete, applicable, and immediately implementable.

The implementation of continuous evaluation requires the development of evaluation instruments that are theoretically valid, reliable in measurement, and practical for use by various parties without requiring complex specialized training. Evaluation must be conducted in a tiered and hierarchical manner, starting from the implementation team level conducting self-assessments up to the institutional policy level conducting strategic evaluations, involving all stakeholders. Data and information obtained from evaluations must be followed up with corrective actions that are swift, precise, and measurable in their impact, so that deviations can be promptly corrected before they have a broader impact on the achievement of educational goals at MTs Darul Fikri as a whole and comprehensively.

The strength of continuous evaluation lies in its ability to detect problems earlier through an early warning system, thereby enabling more effective, efficient, and cost-effective interventions. Feedback obtained from evaluations serves as valuable input for refining ongoing programs as well as planning future programs based on accurate and reliable data. Systematic and well-organized documentation of evaluation results will form an institutional knowledge base that can be used for organizational learning, benchmarking with other schools, and as material for accreditation or external assessment. Transparency of evaluation results to stakeholders is also important for building public trust and accountability regarding educational management.

Administrative Challenges Faced by School Principals

a. The Challenges of Education Digitalization

The digitalization of education presents complex administrative challenges for the principal of MTs Darul Fikri in managing the transition from a conventional system to a digital technology-based system. Principals must address technical obstacles such as limited information technology infrastructure, the availability of sufficient digital devices for all students and teachers, stable and fast internet connectivity, and a secure data protection system to safeguard students' personal information and school data. Additional challenges arise from human resources, as not all teachers possess adequate digital literacy to operate online learning platforms and integrated educational management information systems. The principal needs to design ongoing training programs to enhance the digital competencies of teachers and administrative staff, provide responsive technical support when operational issues arise, and ensure that all stakeholders can adapt to the shift in administrative systems from manual to digital without disrupting the learning process and educational services at MTs Darul Fikri as a whole and on a sustainable basis.

The implementation of digitalization also requires the principal to manage the budget carefully for the procurement of hardware and licensed software that align with the school's needs and applicable regulations. Beyond financial considerations, operational technical challenges—such as migrating data from the old system to the new one, integrating various applications used for financial, personnel, academic, and student administration, and performing regular data backups to prevent the loss of critical information—constitute tasks requiring specialized expertise and intensive coordination with multiple parties. Resistance to change from some senior teachers accustomed to manual systems also presents a psychological challenge that must be managed through a persuasive and empathetic approach at MTs Darul Fikri.

The administrative challenges of digitization also encompass legal and ethical aspects, such as protecting the personal data of students and teachers in accordance with data protection regulations, preventing the misuse of technology for purposes inconsistent with educational values, and ensuring equitable digital access for all students without economic or geographical discrimination that could create a digital divide. The principal is also required to maintain a balance between technology adoption and the preservation of humanistic educational values that emphasize personal interaction, character guidance, and the development of soft skills—elements that cannot be fully replaced by digital technology in the increasingly complex and dynamic era of educational transformation at MTs Darul Fikri.

The Challenges of Changes in Education Regulations

The dynamic and often sudden changes in education regulations pose a serious administrative challenge for the principal of MTs Darul Fikri in ensuring compliance with government policies. The principal must stay constantly updated on new regulations issued by the Ministry of Education, the Provincial and District Education Offices, as well as other technical regulations related to the curriculum, assessment standards, teacher qualifications, accreditation requirements, and other operational aspects of the school that change periodically. Challenges arise when the dissemination of new regulations is not comprehensive or timely, forcing schools to learn and adapt on their own—with the risk of misinterpretation that could impact school performance evaluations or even result in administrative sanctions. Principals are required to possess a high level of policy literacy to understand the implications of each regulatory change on school operations, develop adaptation strategies that are swift yet measured, communicate changes to the entire school community in easily understandable language, and ensure consistent implementation without disrupting ongoing learning processes at MTs Darul Fikri.

The implementation of new curricula, such as the Merdeka Curriculum, requires fundamental changes in instructional administration, a learning outcomes-based assessment system, the development of contextual teaching modules, and more

comprehensive reporting of learning outcomes compared to previous systems. School principals must support teachers in understanding the philosophy and technical aspects of implementing the new curriculum. Regulatory changes related to the National Assessment, which replaces the National Exam, also shift the paradigm of student preparation from test-drilling toward the development of literacy and numeracy competencies, requiring a different learning approach and a more complex assessment administration system.

Another administrative challenge is aligning school legal documents – such as the school’s operational curriculum, standard operating procedures, academic regulations, student conduct policies, and various other technical guidelines – with the latest regulations, a process that demands extra time and effort from the school management team. Coordination with the Education Office to obtain clarification and technical assistance in implementing new regulations is often hindered by bureaucracy and slow responses from relevant parties, so schools must take the initiative to seek information from various sources and network with other schools to share experiences and best practices in facing the challenges of regulatory changes in the era of ongoing educational reform at MTs Darul Fikri. Interview Results:

“Regulatory changes happen very quickly; sometimes, just as we finish implementing one policy, a new one is already in place. We have to actively participate in outreach sessions organized by the department, join KKS groups to share information, and regularly review the latest guidelines. The biggest challenge is adapting the administrative processes and the mindset of teachers who are already accustomed to the old system; this requires intensive support.”

b. The Challenge of Public Accountability

The growing demand for public accountability poses a significant administrative challenge for the principal of MTs Darul Fikri in justifying the management of education to various stakeholders with differing levels of expectation. The principal must be able to present school performance reports that are transparent, accurate, and easily understood by the general public without an educational background, covering academic aspects such as learning outcomes and student achievements, financial aspects such as the use of BOS funds and other funding sources, aspects of infrastructure and the condition of school facilities, as well as aspects of character building and the holistic development of student potential. Modern society, which is increasingly critical and has broad access to information through social media and the internet, tends to demand real-time transparency and easy access to information, requiring school principals to manage a responsive and credible public information system without violating student privacy or exposing sensitive information that could be misused. Challenges arise when there is a gap between the public’s often unrealistic expectations and the school’s capacity and

limitations, requiring effective and educational communication to manage these expectations at MTs Darul Fikri.

Financial accountability is a sensitive area that requires school principals to manage financial administration in strict accordance with applicable regulations governing the management of state or educational institution finances. Every rupiah that comes in and goes out must be properly recorded and supported by documentation. Transparency regarding the use of funds must also be communicated regularly to the school committee and parents through plenary meetings or other communication channels to build trust and prevent the emergence of negative issues or slander that could damage the school's reputation and the principal's leadership credibility in the eyes of the community and other stakeholders at MTs Darul Fikri. Academic accountability requires the principal to demonstrate improvements in the quality of learning. The principal must establish a robust learning monitoring and evaluation system, conduct in-depth analysis of learning outcomes to identify areas requiring improvement, and design effective intervention programs to address learning loss or competency gaps among students. Challenges arise when external factors such as students' socioeconomic backgrounds, living environments, or low motivation to learn affect academic achievement, while the community tends to blame the school without understanding the complexity of the factors influencing educational success. The principal is expected to communicate the school's achievements and engage parents as partners in efforts to improve educational quality through intensive and sustained two-way communication at MTs Darul Fikri.

Interview Results:

"Public accountability is now very high, especially regarding finances and student performance. We are always transparent; every quarter, we submit a report on the use of BOS funds to the committee and post it on the bulletin board. For academics, we openly publish achievements and challenges, inviting parents to be partners rather than just critics. Honest communication and valid data are the keys."

These three administrative challenges—the digitization of education, regulatory changes, and demands for public accountability—are complex realities that school principals must face in the modern era with visionary, adaptive, and collaborative leadership. Success in managing these challenges requires strong managerial competencies, the ability to adapt to rapid changes, extensive networking with various stakeholders, and a high commitment to improving the quality of education. With the right strategies and support from the entire school community and the public, these administrative challenges can be effectively managed and even

transformed into opportunities for a shift toward a higher-quality, more transparent, and accountable school at MTs Darul Fikri.

CONCLUSION

The principal of MTs Darul Fikri has demonstrated adequate administrative competence in managing the curriculum, personnel, finances, facilities and infrastructure, and student affairs in a systematic, participatory, and quality-oriented manner. Effective management implementation strategies include SWOT analysis-based strategic planning, collaborative organization through autonomous work teams, adaptive program implementation, and continuous formative evaluation. However, the principal faces three major challenges: limitations in digital infrastructure, rapid changes in educational regulations—including the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum—and increasing demands for public accountability.

These findings confirm that the effectiveness of school management is the result of a dynamic interaction between administrative leadership capacity, adaptive managerial strategies, and the availability of conducive resources, as reflected in the “Adaptive Collaborative Administrative Management” model identified in this study. Therefore, it is recommended that the government strengthen managerial leadership training for school principals, accelerate technical assistance for the implementation of new policies, and ensure adequate digital infrastructure and budget allocation to realize quality, inclusive, and accountable education.

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