Contextual Leadership Strategies in Facing the Challenges of Cultural Change in Islamic Education

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ABSTRACT

The main problem is the lack of flexibility of leaders in integrating cultural change without sacrificing Islamic principles. This study aims to analyze how contextual leadership can be applied in facing the challenges of cultural change in Islamic educational institutions. The novelty of this research lies in an integrative approach that connects contextual leadership strategies with the principles of Islamic education. This research uses the type of Case Study research with interview data collection methods, observations, and literature studies of SMP Islam Ar-Rahmat Majalengka. The results of the study show that contextual leadership is effective in maintaining a balance between Islamic values and global cultural dynamics. The social implication is the creation of an adaptive Islamic education environment, inclusive, and adherence to Islamic values in the midst of changing times. The results of the study show that the COMPACT (Communication, Participation, Collaboration) strategy is the main approach in leadership in this school. Open and Islamic values-based communication strengthens transparency and trust between school leaders, teachers, students, and parents. The active participation of all education stakeholders supports deliberation-based decision-making (shura). This research emphasizes the importance of collaboration with external communities and institutions contributes to maintaining a balance between Islamic traditions and the demands of modern education.

Keywords: contextual leadership, cultural change, Islamic education

INTRODUCTION

Modernisation brought about fundamental changes in the approach to the delivery of Islamic education[1], including the social and culture change. Changes in people's culture in interacting with each other are becoming increasingly interesting to talk about.[2] Traditional value structures and systems are increasingly challenged by contemporary demands for flexibility, innovation, and relevance. Islamic educational institutions, rooted in classical traditions and communal values, now face the dilemma of maintaining religious authenticity while adapting to rapid cultural shifts.[3] These dynamic tensions often lead to challenges in leadership, curriculum development, and the preservation of institutional identity.

In response to this challenge, Islamic education leadership should adopt contextual strategies that are responsive to cultural change while remaining anchored in Islamic principles. Leadership must not only serve as a custodian of Islamic traditions but also act as a transformative agent that critically and creatively engages with contemporary cultural shifts. By understanding and interacting with local and global cultural dynamics, leaders can foster an educational environment that remains true to Islamic values while being relevant to the needs of modern society. Several aspects of education are included in the concept of Islamic education, including divinity and morality.[4]

The object of this research is leadership practices in selected Islamic educational institutions that actively respond to cultural change. These institutions offer unique leadership models that seek a balance between preserving religious values and embracing necessary innovation, making them ideal subjects for exploring the nuances of contextual leadership in Islamic education. To analyze this phenomenon, this study adopts a sociocultural leadership perspective, especially drawn from Anthony Giddens' structuring theory[5] and Bass and Avolio's transformational leadership framework[6]. This theoretical lens allows for an examination of how Islamic educational leaders navigate, negotiate, and build new practices in evolving cultural structures without sacrificing the foundations of their religion.[7] The initial argument of this study is that successful Islamic educational leadership in the modern era requires a contextual approach[8], which is well aware of cultural transformation while being based on Islamic values. The focus of

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[1] Abdullah A Afifi and Ferdi Yufriadi, 'THE COEXISTENCE OF KAUM MUDO AND KAUM TUO : THE TRANSFORMATION OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION IN MINANGKABAU', 6.1 (2024).

[2] Abdul Bashith, 'Pergulatan Agama Dalam Perubahan Budaya':, 50, 1–18.

[3] Aylin Yılmaz Gezgin and Mustafa Atilla Arıcıoğlu, 'Industry 4.0 and Management 4.0: Examining the Impact of Environmental, Cultural, and Technological Changes', *Sustainability (Switzerland)*, 17.8 (2025) <https://doi.org/10.3390/su17083601>.

[4] Sitti Jamilah, 'Moderate Islamic Education to Enhance Nationalism among Indonesian Islamic Student Organizations in the Era of Society 5.0', *Journal of Social Studies Education Research*, 12.3 (2021), 79–100.

[5] Ira Chatterjee, Jagat Kunwar, and Frank Den Hond, 'Anthony Giddens and Structuration Theory', *Management, Organizations and Contemporary Social Theory*, 2019, 60–79 <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429279591-4>.

[6] Bernard M. Bass and Bruce J. Avolio, *Improving Organizational Effectiveness Through Transformational Leadership*, ed. by Bernard M. Bass and Bruce J. Avolio (New Delhi: Sage Publication, 1994).

[7] Erika Setyanti Kusumaputri, Hanifah Latif Muslimah, and Enny Iroh Hayati, 'The Case Study of Islamic-Education Leadership Model: What We Can Learn from the Dynamics of Principals' Leadership in Indonesian Excellence Islamic Boarding-Schools', *Jurnal Psikologi*, 50.1 (2023), 18 <https://doi.org/10.22146/jpsi.78892>.

[8] Kusumaputri, Muslimah, and Hayati.

this research is to identify and analyze the strategies used by Islamic education leaders to manage cultural change and propose contextual leadership models that can inform future practices.

Several recent studies support the relevance of this study: (1) Wioleta Kucharska & Teresa Rebelo (2022) found that tacit knowledge sharing and the adaptability of change driven by a learning culture are important links linking transformational leadership with innovation.[9] (2) Akrim and Umiarso (2023) found that corporate charismatic leadership transforms spirituality in developing solidarity, work, and religious commitment to Islamic boarding school education.[10] (3) Mohammad Noman (2020) Context, culture, and leadership are features of educational organizations, but the relationship between the three is poorly understood. Often leadership theories are disseminated as if they would be applicable in all situations, but research on successful school leaders has found that leadership is highly contextual and that the success of educational leaders depends on how leaders adapt their practices according to contextual factors. Contextual leadership transcends the rigid, and sometimes overlapping, boundaries of existing educational leadership theories and models and brings context to the central stage of educational leaders' practice. Culture can be considered as one of the context factors, but it is a complicated factor with many dimensions. Successful educational leaders are those who master the arts of creating a balance between a variety of cultural contexts that act on the basis of their institutions and, through their contextual practices, study the arts successfully lead their institutions by creating an inclusive multicultural environment. Successful school leaders are those who are culturally sensitive, but not contextually constrained.[11] (4) Atqoh, Zohriah, and Fauzi (2023) that Hersey and Blanchard's model of situational leadership consists of four styles—telling, selling, participating, and delegating—and that each style varies in task orientation and relationships depending on the situation. This study, through qualitative library research, emphasizes the understanding and analysis of this style to determine its appropriate application in different leadership contexts.[12] (5) Hermawana, Sutisna, and Yuliawati (2024) explore how the Panjang Taliat ritual in Cirebon functions as a dynamic blend between Islamic teachings and Javanese cultural traditions, which not only serves as a religious ceremony but also as a medium of Islamic education, cultural identity, and social cohesion. Despite theological debates, this ritual is seen by the community as a respectful expression of ancestral heritage and continues to evolve by addressing modern issues such as environmental sustainability and inclusivity, demonstrating its continued relevance in contemporary society.[13]

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[9] Wioleta Kucharska and Teresa Rebelo, 'Transformational Leadership for Researcher's Innovativeness in the Context of Tacit Knowledge and Change Adaptability', *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 00.00 (2022), 1–22 <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603124.2022.2068189>.

[10] Akrim Akrim and Umiarso Umiarso, 'Charismatic Leadership and Silah Rituality in The Educational Culture of Boarding Schools', *Al-Tanzim: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam*, 7.2 (2023), 594–609 <https://doi.org/10.33650/al-tanzim.v7i2.5562>.

[11] Atqoh, Anis Zohriah, and Anis Fauzi, 'The Application of Hersey and Blandhard's Situational Leadership Model in Educational Institutions', *Journal on Education*, 06.01 (2023), 3663–70.

[12] Khomsinnudin and others, 'Modernity and Locality: Building Sustainable Islamic Education', *Journal of Education Research*, 5.4 (2024), 4418–28.

[13] Moh Hisyam and others, 'Leadership, Islamic Spirituality, and Javanese Mysticism: Cultural Analysis of Islamic Education of Panjang Jimat in Cirebon', *Eduprof : Islamic Education Journal*, 6 (2024) <https://doi.org/10.47453/eduprof.v6i2.296>.

Although these studies provide important insights, they often focus on adaptation or preservation separately. Few have thoroughly explored how leaders simultaneously adapt to cultural change while actively preserving and renewing Islamic values through contextual strategies. This leaves a gap for a more integrative leadership model. Thus, this research offers a distinctive contribution by proposing a comprehensive model of contextual leadership in Islamic education that bridges the gap between tradition and modernity. The urgency of this research lies in its theoretical contribution to the study of Islamic leadership and its practical relevance for leaders seeking to maintain educational excellence in the midst of accelerating cultural transformation.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study method to explore in depth the phenomenon of contextual leadership in overcoming cultural change at Ar Rahmat Islamic Junior High School Majalengka. The case study approach was chosen to provide rich contextual insights into how leadership strategies are implemented in a dynamic Islamic education environment.

The subjects of the study include the principal as the main leader, teachers as policy implementers and adaptors to cultural change, students, and parents as the school community that experiences the impact. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with stakeholders, participatory observation of the COMPACT (Communication, Participation, Collaboration) strategy in school management, and analysis of relevant policy documentation and school reports.

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006)[14] through the stages of data reduction, categorization based on elements of the COMPACT strategy, and conclusion drawn. To ensure validity and reliability, this study uses source triangulation (comparing information between principals, teachers, students, and parents) and triangulation methods (combining interviews, observations, and document analysis) following Sugiyono (2023).[15]

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Understanding of Contextual Leadership

The results of the interview show that the Principal of SMP Islam Ar Rahmat Majalengka does not explicitly implement contextual leadership but has a sufficient understanding of the concept. In practice, principals follow the motto of COMPACT (Communication, Participation, and Collaboration) which effectively reflects the principles of contextual leadership. Through the COMPACT approach: (1) Open communication is maintained with teachers, students, and parents; (2) Active participation in school activities is encouraged; (3) Strong collaboration between schools and Islamic boarding schools is fostered to create a harmonious environment. This approach shows how contextual leadership is applied in practice, even if it is not explicitly labeled as such.

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[14] _____, 'Analisis Tematik Braun Dan Clarke - Bagaimana Melakukan Proses Enam Langkah Dalam Proyek Penelitian Kualitatif Anda', *Web Page* <https://www.thedegreedoctor.com/blog/braun-and-clarke-thematic-analysis-how-to-do-the-six-step-process-in-your-qualitative-research-project> [accessed 14 June 2025].
[15] Sugiyono, *Metode Penelitian Studi Kasus*, Edisi ke-1 (Bandung, 2023).

Based on the results of interviews and observations at the research site, it was found that an indirect contextual leadership approach has been applied at Ar Rahmat Majalengka Islamic Junior High School. In this case, it is believed that with contextual leadership, the principal can lead the school effectively. As stated by Shmuel Stashevsky and Ronald J. Burke (2006),[16] "As contextual leadership itself, the consequences of the methods presented are also highly reliable." This reflects a leader's ability to diagnose surrounding conditions. Similarly, according to Hariyadi (2023),[17] contextual leadership is a leader's diagnostic-intuitive skills to utilize resources in achieving goals. That is, a leader may not only try to influence group members through direct supervising (e. g., directing, monitoring, rewarding, and punishing) but also try to establish effective culture and norms which in turn influence group members' attitudes and behaviors.[18]

COMPACT (Communication, Participation, and Collaboration) is a guiding motto applied at SMP Islam Ar Rahmat as the foundation and direction of leadership. These three elements embody key components of contextual leadership. To achieve this, effective communication is established among all key sectors. According to Hariyadi (2023), [19] communication and relationship maintenance are needed to get support from stakeholders. As Moir (2017) states, "what is currently happening in the wider environment will affect the surrounding environment."[20] Similarly, Rosna et al. (2016)[21] emphasize that contextual leadership involves communicating clear visions and goals, focusing on academic achievement and co-curricular activities, people development, and creating a positive work environment, all of which are essential components of successful leadership. The ability to communicate clear visions and goals is a distinctive characteristic of contextual leadership.

Participation relates to the involvement of all stakeholders, teachers, students, parents, and the community, in decision-making. In this case, good collaboration is established between certain parties and schools. At SMP Islam Ar Rahmat, where the school operates closely (even integrally) with the pesantren system (requiring students to live in dormitories), the active participation of all stakeholders is essential in policymaking. Regarding the pattern of participation, Atqoh et al. (2023)[22] stated that leaders do not give much direct orders but rather emphasize relationships and teamwork. In addition, Hidayat (2023)[23] highlights that leaders and followers exchange ideas in decision-making, with the leader's main role being to facilitate and communicate. Further, the

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[16] Shmuel Stashevsky and Ronald J. Burke, 'Leadership in Organizations', *International Journal of Manpower*, 27.1 (2006) <https://doi.org/10.1108/ijm.2006.01627aaa.001>.

[17] Rahmat Hariyadi, 'Kepemimpinan Kontekstual Kepala Madrasah Intidaiyah Dan SD Islam Di Kota Salatiga, Jawa Tengah', 19.Mi (2023), 25–38.

[18] Tomoki Sekiguchi, 'Contextual Leadership Behavior: Proposal of A New Contract', 56.1 (2005).

[19] Hariyadi.

[20] Mark J Moir, 'Contextual Leadership : Context as a Mediator of Leader Effectiveness', 3.4 (2017), 3–4 <https://doi.org/10.19080/PBSIJ.2017.03.5556>.

[21] Mohammad Noman Rosna, Awang Hashim, and Sarimah Shaik Abdullah, 'Contextual Leadership Practices: The Case of a Successful School Principal in Malaysia', *Sage Journal*, 46.3 (2016) <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1741143216665840?download=true&journalCode=emad>.

[22] Atqoh, Zohriah, and Fauzi.

[23] Nurul Hidayat, Djamhur Hamid, and Ika Ruhana, 'The Influence of Situational Leadership Style and Organizational Culture on Job Satisfaction', *Journal of S1 Business Administration, Universitas Brawijaya*, IV.2 (2023).

leader can promote tolerance, understanding, and empathy among students, ultimately fostering a more harmonious and accepting school community.[24]

Collaboration reflects the obligation of leaders in Islamic educational institutions to involve all elements in policymaking. As stated by Amin (2022)[25], leaders in Islamic educational institutions must be able to mobilize all elements of human resources, including educators, administrative staff, and parents or guardians, to collaborate in building education. Similarly, Azmi (2021)[26] emphasizes that leadership is basically the ability to guide, guide, focus, and mobilize people to collaborate in achieving predetermined goals. Furthermore, Kasmawati (2019)[27] highlighted that the role of school principals in fostering collaboration within schools is very important.

In contextual leadership, teachers play the role of facilitators for effective communication, actively engage students in class discussions, and collaborate with fellow teachers and pesantren caregivers to create a holistic learning environment. Kasmawati (2020)[28] stated that teachers also function as facilitators who make learning materials easily accessible and as managers who create a conducive learning atmosphere. Similarly, Nuh (2023) in Zahro (2024)[29] emphasizes that educators play the role of facilitators who support and guide students, focusing on fostering their independence in the learning process. These attributes describe contextual leadership, which according to Moir (2009) prescribes the situating of leadership strategies and approaches, based on the particular characteristics of the context.[30] A contextual model of leadership embraces the role of leadership as a framing force of our individual and collective perceptions in relation to the broader influential situational setting.[31]

Cultural Change in Islamic Education

Based on the teacher's response, the principal is very responsive in overcoming cultural change while maintaining an Islamic identity.[32] He also encouraged teachers to continue their professional development. One of the cultural changes observed in schools is the rapid digital transformation in society. However, schools ensure that Islamic identity remains intact amid these

[24] Dwi Mariyono, Maskuri, and Muhammad Djunaidi Ghony, 'Entrepreneurial Basic Capital and Its Contribution to Developing Multicultural Islamic Education', *Journal of Education and Learning*, 19.2 (2025), 684–98 <https://doi.org/10.11591/edulearn.v19i2.21554>.

[25] Muhammad Amin, 'CHARACTERISTICS OF IDEAL ISLAMIC EDUCATION LEADERSHIP IN THE DIGITAL ERA', 3 (2022), 21–30.

[26] Ahmad Azmy, *Kontekstulitas Kepemimpinan Bisnis 'Originalitas Pemikiran Pengelolaan Organisasi Dan Sumberdaya Manusia'*, ed. by Ahmad Azmy (Depok: Yayasan Wakaf Paramadita, 2021).

[27] Yuni Kasmawati, 'Pentingnya Budaya Kolaboratif : Suatu Tinjauan Literatur', *Jurnal Manajemen Strategi Dan Aplikasi Bisnis*, 2.2 (2019), 203–14 <https://doi.org/10.36407/jmsab.v2i2.97>.

[28] Yuni Kasmawati, 'Peningkatan Prestasi Siswa Melalui Pengembangan Profesional Guru : Suatu Tinjauan Literatur', *Jurnal Maksipreneur*, 10.1 (2020), 13–30.

[29] Ula Masrurotuz Zahro, 'Kepemimpinan Islami Dalam Mengantisipasi Perubahan Pendidikan Ke Era Digital', 2.1 (2024), 29–38.

[30] Kuroakegha Bio Basuo, 'CONTEXTUAL LEADERSHIP AND ORGANISATIONAL VITALITY OF COMMERCIAL BANKS IN BAYELSA STATE, NIGERIA.', *European Journal of Management and Business Economics*, 9.2 (2024), 67–74.

[31] Moir.

[32] Stevany Afrizal and others, 'Perubahan Sosial Pada Budaya Digital Dalam Karakter Anak', *Prosiding Seminar Nasional Pendidikan FKIP*, 3.1 (2020), 429–36.

changes, especially in religious practices such as *Dhuha* prayers, *Dhuhr* prayers, and reciting prayers before and after lessons. It preserves the Islamic character of the different schools.[33] Islamic education, as a system, can be defined as a comprehensive concept, component, and activity based on Islamic values, which aims to equip individuals with the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to fulfill their role as stewards *(caliphs)* on Earth. Islamic education is taught about the relationship with the creator, fellow human beings, and nature (Samsudin, 2019).[34]

Students mentioned that the principal is open to hearing their aspirations, either through student council activities, open discussions, or student meetings. This openness is well received by students as an integral part of their school experience. A leader must be a role model by implementing transparent school management, empowering individuals to participate in school programs based on their capacity, and being approachable both in person and through other communication channels.[35] The openness of school leadership also reflects "relational transparency," which involves sharing information openly, expressing genuine thoughts and emotions, and encouraging honest communication.[36] Strategies for securing and gaining more resources and improving the effectiveness and efficiency of schools are considered to be of outstanding importance.[37]

Parents recognize that school leaders provide opportunities for parental involvement in school activities, including discussions, parenting programs, and supervision of their children's academic and spiritual development. Parenting programs are designed to help parents create a literacy-rich environment and encourage students to develop reading habits.[38] Academic supervision allows for better monitoring of student progress, reinforces parents' belief that Islamic education integrates physical and spiritual development, sharpen intellectual, emotional, and spiritual intelligence. [39]

The results of the interview show that the principal of Ar Rahmat Junior High School is very understanding of cultural changes in Islamic education. These cultural changes include: (1) the digitalization of technology and education, (2) the globalization and cultural shift of youth, (3) the evolving expectations of parents and society, and (4) education policies and government regulations. Technological advancements, including internet access and social media, also have

[33] Febby Ismail and others, *Manajemen Personalia Pendidikan Islam*, ed. by Zaenudin Na'im, November 2 (Cijerah - Kota Bandung: CV Media Sains Indonesia, 2020).

[34] Ahmad Azhari and others, 'The Education Concept from the Perspective of K.H. Muhammad Zaini Bin Abdul Ghani and Its Relevance to Contemporary Islamic Education', *IJISH (International Journal of Islamic Studies and Humanities)*, 6.2 (2023), 145–60 <https://doi.org/10.26555/ijish.v6i2.8692>.

[35] Aan Komariah, 'AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP KEPALA SEKOLAH DALAM', 229, 194–200.

[36] Masduki Asbari, 'PENGARUH AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP TERHADAP MENTALITAS', *Bisnis Management Journal*, 17 (No. 1) (2021), 73–88.

[37] Stefan Brauckmann and Petros Pashiardis, 'Entrepreneurial Leadership in Schools: Linking Creativity with Accountability', *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 25.5 (2020), 787–801 <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603124.2020.1804624>.

[38] Bahraini Choliddiya Uddin, Noorna Dewi Firnanda, and Uliastutik, 'Nodel Blended Learning Sebagai Strategi', 4.3 (2024), 531–43.

[39] Ade Imelda Primayanti, 'Strategi Pendidikan Islam Menghadapi Problematika Globalisasi', *Al-Hikmah: Jurnal Agama Dan Ilmu Pengetahuan*, 12.1 (2015), 46–60 <https://doi.org/10.25299/jaip.2015.vol12(1).1447>.

an impact on socio-cultural dynamics.[40] The rapid growth of information technology that continues to disrupt human life globally is predicted to intensify.[41]

Globalization brings both positive and negative effects to Muslims, posing a challenge for Islamic education to mitigate negative impacts while nurturing a resilient generation of Muslims.[42] It must be acknowledged that the influence of global culture is significant, evident in the increasing dominance of global trends in *pleasure* (entertainment), *fashion* and *food* among teenagers[43]. Even school-age children are increasingly exposed to the aggressive reach of globalization. Many children are negatively affected, as seen in the emergence of social phenomena associated with moral degradation.

Globalization brings both positive and negative effects to Muslims, posing challenges for Islamic education to overcome the negative impacts and nurture a competent generation of Muslims. It must be acknowledged that the influence of global culture is significant, evident in the increasing emphasis on global trends in *pleasure*, *fashion*, and *food* among teenagers. Even school-age children are increasingly exposed to the aggressive reach of globalization. Many are negatively affected by its impact, as seen in the proliferation of societal phenomena that are closely linked to moral degradation.[44] This includes the technological developments that have brought cultural changes. Technological advances have had a negative impact. Various human activities today have been disrupted by technology that has developed. Unfortunately, this does not have an entirely positive impact because the negative impact is also unstoppable.[45]

On the other hand, shifting expectations of parents and society also affect Islamic education. There is a growing demand for Islamic educational institutions to produce intellectually and devout individuals—intellectually rooted scholars and intellectuals deeply rooted in the faith.[46] Here, "community" refers to the elderly and society at large, who expect these institutions to bridge the gap between modern knowledge and religious integrity. The main challenges faced in the school environment include: (1) Changes in teaching methods, (2) Shifts in teacher-student relationships and interaction patterns, (3) Transformation of students' lifestyles and values.

In response to these challenges, principals must provide proactive leadership that is not constrained by budget constraints, maximize the use of social media, adopt a solution-oriented mindset, and remain open to change—including in teaching methodologies.[47] A leader must be adaptive to ever-evolving circumstances, open-minded, and receptive to continuous and rapid change.[48]

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[40] Nurhidayat and others, 'Dampak Perubahan Sosial Budaya bagi Pendidikan Masyarakat di Lingkungan Pantai Indah Madasari', *JSTAF*, 02 No. 2 Juli 2023 (2023), 242–52 <https://doi.org/10.62515/staf>.
[41] Nisfu Kurniyatillah and others, 'Al-Muaddib :JurnalIlmu-IlmuSosial Dan Keislaman KEPEMIMPINAN OTORITER DALAM MANAJEMEN PENDIDIKAN ISLAM', *Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Sosial Dan Keislaman*, 5.1 (2020), 160–74 <http://dx.doi.org/10.31604/muaddib.v5i1.160-174>.
[42] Primayanti.
[43] Primayanti.
[44] Afrizal and others.
[45] Azhari and others.
[46] Amin.
[47] Amin.
[48] Yuli Supriani and others, 'Peran Manajemen Kepemimpinan Dalam Pengelolaan Lembaga Pendidikan Islam', *JIIP - Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Pendidikan*, 5.1 (2022), 332–38 <https://doi.org/10.54371/jiip.v5i1.417>.

According to informants, teacher guidance, strict supervision in schools and Islamic boarding schools, and strong communication with parents are essential to ensure that students' behavior is in harmony with Islamic values. These behaviors include honesty, justice, spirituality, good deeds (charity), self-awareness, effectiveness, efficiency, vision, transparency, intelligence, and humility.[49] Spirituality and righteous deeds are reflected in one's dedication to worship, which aims to purify the heart from negative qualities and bring the individual closer to God.[50] Worship is an integral part of the curriculum, with practices such as prayer, fasting, and remembering Allah *(dhikr)* serving to cleanse one's heart and strengthen one's relationship with Allah.[51] Another significant value that emerges is *morality*, which refers to a person's behavior or behavior.[52] *Morality* is related to human behavior and is closely related to character.[53] Character is an inherent trait in a person that sets them apart from others.[54] Good character consists of knowing the good, wanting the good, and doing the good.[55]

The principal holds regular meetings with parents to provide updates on the children's progress and the cultural challenges they face, as well as to guide parents on how to support their children's education at home. This practice is considered important, as this meeting reflects a collaborative vision. Collaboration is a hallmark of effective leadership[56], fostering a strong relationship between principals and parents. The cultural challenges mentioned earlier underscore that overcoming them is a shared responsibility.[57]

Contextual Leadership Strategies in Facing the Challenges of Cultural Change in Islamic Education

As a leader, the Principal of Ar Rahmat Majalengka Islamic Junior High School has taken several strategic steps to address cultural change in Islamic education: (1) Understanding the Islamic Context, Integrating Islamic values with a modern approach while preserving the sharia maqashid (the purpose of Islamic law), (2) Building an Adaptive Culture, Encouraging communication and discussion that are open to responding to changes in an Islamic manner, (3) Strengthening the Curriculum, Integrating Islamic knowledge with modern science to ensure global relevance (4) Teacher Development, Training of teachers to understand social change and act as Islamic mentors, (5) Community Collaboration, Partnering with Islamic institutions to

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[49] Luluk Maktumah and Minhaji Minhaji, 'Prophetic Leadership Dan Implementasinya Dalam Lembaga Pendidikan Islam', *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam Indonesia*, 4.2 (2020), 133–48 <https://doi.org/10.35316/jpii.v4i2.196>.

[50] Nur Syahid, 'KONSEP PENDIDIKAN HOLISTIK DALAM FILSAFAT PENDIDIKAN ISLAM : STUDI ATAS PENGEMBANGAN KONSEP PENDIDIKAN YANG BERBASIS', *MODELING: Jurnal Program Studi PGMI*, 11 (2024), 1185–96.

[51] Syahid.

[52] Marhani, *Diskursus Teoritis Akhlak Al Ghazali*, ed. by Muhiddin Bakry, I, Desembe (Parepare, Sluawesi Selatan: IAIN Parepare Nusantara Press, 2020).

[53] Marhani.

[54] Dr. Heri Gunawan, *Pendidikan Karakter (Konsep Dan Implementasi)*, ed. by Asep Saepulrohim, Edisi Revi (Bandung: Alfabeta, 2022).

[55] Thomas Lickona, *Educating for Caracter*, ed. by Uyu Wahyudin, ke-3 (Jakarta: Bumi Aksara, 2013).

[56] Dian Rosinawati and others, *Kepemimpinan Kewirausahaan Di Bidang Pendidikan*, 2021, VI <http://journal.bungabangsacirebon.ac.id/index.php/eduvis/>.

[57] MARWAN SYABAN, 'Konsep Dasar Manajemen Pendidikan Islam', *Al-Wardah*, 12.2 (2019), 131 <https://doi.org/10.46339/al-wardah.v12i2.141>.

strengthen education based on Islamic values, (6) Utilizing Islamic Technology – Incorporating technology in education and digital life while

The first step taken is to understand the Islamic context. The contextual leadership approach in Islamic schools can be attributed to Schein's theory of *"Organizational Culture and Leadership*[58]*",* which emphasizes that leaders must first understand the values and culture of an organization before implementing change. As the theory states: *"Culture influences what kind of leadership even works. Leadership, in turn, operates within the culture as a context, using it, opposing it, reforming it, or perhaps even reinventing it."* [59]

Leaders must wisely manage these changes, ensuring that Islamic core values such as honesty (*amanah*), trust, and satisfaction (*qana'ah*) remain the basis in all decisions and actions.[60] The leaders also act as a bridge between the Islamic values taught in schools and the practical challenges of daily life.[61] In the context of Islam, leadership should be based on Ibn Ashur's *maqashid sharia* (Islamic legal goals), as quoted in Toriqudin (2013), [62]ensuring that any changes remain in harmony with Islamic principles. This framework prioritizes the preservation of faith, life, intelligence, lineage, and property, guiding leaders to balance tradition and modernity while upholding religious integrity.

Building an adaptive culture is an important next step for a leader in overcoming the challenges of cultural change. According to Kotter (1996), organizational culture change cannot occur instantly but must go through a gradual process, starting with open communication.[63] Kotter emphasized that effective communication helps to: build mutual understanding, reduce resistance to change, ensure that all stakeholders feel involved in the transformation process

In the context of Islamic schools, the principle of deliberation (shur), as emphasized by Al-Mawardi in Rahmawati (2018),[64] highlights that deliberation is an ideal leadership mechanism for decision-making involving many parties. Through deliberation, leaders not only listen to aspirations but also ensure that any changes gain legitimacy from the entire school community, including teachers, students, parents, and education staff.

Strengthening the curriculum in Islamic schools is an important step in addressing cultural change, ensuring that education remains relevant to modern developments while maintaining its Islamic identity. An integrative curriculum that aligns the values of the Qur'an and Sunnah with modern knowledge is key to shaping a religious-based yet globally adaptive generation.[65] The theory of social construction by Berger and Luckmann (1966) emphasizes that internalizing religious values through education must be balanced with the strengthening of critical-analytical competence, allowing students to navigate cultural challenges without losing their spiritual

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[58] Edgar H. Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 4th edn (New York: Jossey-Bass Inc Pub, 2010).

[59] Ronald Riggio and others, *CULTURAL DYNAMICS An Interpretive Approach* (Cambridge University Press, 2022) <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009002066>.

[60] Zahro.

[61] Zahro.

[62] Moh Toriquddin, 'Teori Maqashid Syariah Perspektif Ibnu Ashur', *Ulul Albab*, 14.2 (2013), 194–212.

[63] Zahro.

[64] Rahmawati, 'Sistem Pemerintahan Islam Menurut Al-Mawardi Dan Aplikasinya Di Indonesia', *Jurnal Syari'ah Dan Hukum*, 16.2 (2018), 264–83.

[65] Muslih, 'MENGGAGAS UNIVERSITAS ISLAM IDEAL : Studi Terhadap Pemikiran Syed Ali Ashraf', *MIQOT*, XXXIX.1 (2015), 184–98.

roots.[66] According to UNESCO (2025), faith-based schools that are successful in maintaining curriculum relevance often apply a "dual movement" approach—contextually reinterpreting religious texts while adopting pedagogical innovations such as STEM education and digital literacy. Thus, the strengthening of the curriculum not only serves as a fortress of identity but also as a bridge of constructive dialogue between tradition and modernity.[67]

According to Guskey (2003), Guskey and Yoon (2008) in Kasmawati (2020), [68]professional development is most effective when certain key aspects are prioritized, such as improving the teacher's content knowledge and pedagogical skills. From an Islamic perspective, the role of teachers goes beyond academics—they also serve as murabbi (mentors) who shape the character, morals, and spirituality of students. As emphasized by Al-Ghazali in Ihya Ulumuddin, teachers must embody Islamic values, integrating intellectual, emotional, and spiritual development to cultivate intelligent, virtuous, and socially responsible individuals (Al-Ghazali, n.d.).[69] Thus, teacher development in Islamic schools must align modern professional principles with spiritual values, ensuring relevance to the dynamics of global education while encouraging the holistic development of students.

Epstein (2001) emphasizes that effective education requires collaboration between schools, parents, social organizations, and religious institutions.[70] This is evident in mentoring programs by community leaders, community-based extracurricular activities, and family education initiatives aimed at addressing socio-cultural challenges. In the Islamic context, the concept of ukhuwah Islamiyah (Islamic brotherhood), as outlined by Ibn Taymiyyah, reinforces this view by asserting that education should be integrated into the broader social system. These include mosques, Islamic boarding schools, and Islamic organizations, ensuring that students develop strong character, a sense of unity, and communal responsibility.[71] Therefore, knowledge is not solely for personal interests but must contribute to the welfare of the people.[72] Both perspectives affirm that community involvement creates a holistic educational ecosystem that supports students' moral, academic, and social development.

According to Mishra & Koehler (2006), technology in education must be contextually integrated with learning needs and values to maximize its benefits, such as increasing learning effectiveness, access to information, and interactive experiences. [73] In Islamic schools, this can be implemented through: Islamic learning apps (e.g., digital platforms for learning the Qur'an, hadith, and Islamic studies), the use of social media, and educational podcasts to creatively disseminate

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[66] Titi Anriani and Khoerudin Nasution, 'Adaptasi Mahasiswa Perantau Di Kota Yogyakarta: Perspektif Teori Konstruksi Sosial Peter L. Berger', *Huma: Jurna Sosiologi*, 3.2 (2024), 168–77.

[67] UNESCO, 'Rangkuman Laporan Pemantauan Pendidikan Global 2021/2', *Web Page*, 2021 <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000380076_ind> [accessed 10 February 2025].

[68] Kasmawati, 'Peningkatan Prestasi Siswa Melalui Pengembangan Profesional Guru : Suatu Tinjauan Literatur'.

[69] Marhani.

[70] Ni Nyoman Padmadewi and others, 'Memberdayakan Keterlibatan Orang Tua Dalam Pembelajaran Literasi Di Sekolah Dasar', *Jurnal Ilmu Sosial Dan Humaniora*, 7.1 (2018), 64–76.

[71] Halimah, *Konsep Ukhuwah Qur'ani Dan Aplikasinya Dalam Kehidupan Politik*, ed. by Nawirudin (Tangerang: Sejahtera Kita, 2022).

[72] Padmadewi and others.

[73] Akhwani and Dewi Widiana Rahayu, 'Analisis Komponen TPACK Guru SD Sebagai Kerangka Kompetensi Guru Profesional Di Abad 21', *Jurnal Basicedu*, 5.4 (2021), 1918–25.

Islamic values. From an Islamic perspective, technological integration must adhere to the principle of maslahah (public interest), as proposed by Al-Syatibi. This means that technology must provide benefits without contradicting sharia principles.[74] Therefore, Islamic schools must develop technology policies that prevent the misuse of harmful content while teaching digital literacy based on Islamic ethics. This ensures that students can use technology wisely, productively, and in harmony with Islamic moral values in the digital world (Mishra & Koehler, 2006; Melis, 2016). By aligning pedagogical principles with Islamic values, schools can create a holistic and meaningful educational technology ecosystem.

According to the students, the principal provides direct guidance and provides examples through discipline and the application of rules that balance technology with Islamic values. Student mentoring is an important aspect of student management, which aims to structure and guide students effectively.[75] The existence of school principals in Islamic schools or madrasas plays a fundamental role in shaping the excellence of the institution over time.[76] One of the main strengths to emphasize is ensuring that students can use technology wisely, remain disciplined, and uphold good morals, even when exposed to external cultural influences.

According to the teacher, the application of the principles of COMPACT (Communication, Participation, and Collaboration), training on the integration of technology in learning, and guidance for teachers to instill Islamic values in each lesson are the main strategies. It is believed that the principal has effectively implemented contextual leadership in his practice. Through contextual leadership, teachers become more innovative in their teaching methods, utilize technology effectively, and remain committed to character-based Islamic education. According to parents, the principal actively communicates with them, organizes seminars on Islamic parenting, and involves parents in shaping their children's character both at home and at school. The success of this approach is evident as students maintain a strong understanding of Islam, demonstrate Islamic behavior in all aspects of life, and develop the ability to wisely filter out external cultural influences.

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[74] Melis, 'Pemikiran Tokoh Ekonomi Muslim: Imam AlSyatibi', *Ilamic Bankong*, 2.1 Agustus 2016 (2016), 51–62.
[75] R Hidayat and C Wijaya, *Ayat-Ayat Al-Qur'an Tentang Manajemen Pendidikan Islam*, *Lembaga Peduli Pengembangan Pendidikan Indonesia*, 2017.
[76] Nur Fauziah, 'Fungsi Leadership Dalam Pengelolaan Lembaga Pendidikan Islam', *IQ (Ilmu Al-Qur'an): Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 3.02 (2021), 245–64 <https://doi.org/10.37542/iq.v3i02.132>.

Figure 1. Interview with the Principal of SMP Islam Ar-Rahmat Majalengka, Andri Dian Suandri, S.Pd. (Left)
The Principal is guiding the students. (Right)

CONCLUSION

The principal's leadership successfully integrates core Islamic values – such as morality, spirituality, and tauhid – with contemporary demands like technological advancement, globalization, and social transformation. Key strategies such as COMPACT (Communication, Participation, Collaboration), integrative curriculum enhancement, ongoing teacher development, and ethical technology use fostered an educational environment that is both adaptive and inclusive. These efforts enabled the school to maintain its religious authenticity while addressing shifting societal needs. A crucial finding is the principal's contextual sensitivity: the ability to anchor leadership in local pesantren traditions while remaining responsive to global educational trends. This balance, achieved without compromising the principles of maqashid shariah (the objectives of Islamic law), underpins the school's success in cultural transformation.

This study contributes to the discourse on Islamic educational leadership by proposing a model that combines transformational leadership with sociocultural responsiveness, interpreted through Giddens' structuration theory. It illustrates how Islamic school leaders can function as both preservers of tradition and agents of change.. Practically, the findings highlight the need for professional development programs that cultivate cultural sensitivity, promote collaborative engagement among stakeholders, and encourage strategic innovation within Islamic educational values. Policymakers and education leaders are encouraged to adopt leadership approaches that are both principled and adaptable—upholding Islamic identity while effectively addressing evolving cultural dynamics. However, the study's single-case design presents limitations in terms of contextual leadership generalizability. Recommended for future research involving a broader sample of Islamic educational institutions across various cultural contexts is to validate and refine this leadership model.

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