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Edupreneurial Leadership and Religious Character Building: A Case Study of SD IT Global Islamic School Permata Ummi Kertasemaya

Frenky Mubarak ✉

Universitas Islam Bunga Bangsa Cirebon

Email : fbarok@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the relationship between edupreneurial leadership and the formation of religious character in an integrated Islamic elementary school. Drawing on field observations at SD IT Global Islamic School (GIS) Permata Ummi Kertasemaya, the study examines how the principal's strategic leadership grounded in an edupreneurial framework influences students' religious character development through institutionalized habituation, curriculum integration, and human resource empowerment. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, data were collected through direct observation, documentation, and interviews. Findings indicate that the school's success in cultivating *akhlakul karimah* (noble character) stems not only from structured religious routines but also from the principal's dual role as both an educational leader and an edupreneur capable of balancing innovation, financial sustainability, and spiritual values. This study contributes to the discourse on Islamic educational management by proposing a strategic edupreneurial leadership model that integrates market responsiveness with moral formation. Furthermore, it underscores the importance of aligning institutional growth with teacher well-being to ensure the sustainability of character education.

Keywords: *edupreneurship, strategic leadership, religious character, Islamic school, habituation, teacher well-being*

INTRODUCTION

In essence, Islamic educational institutions not only play a role in transferring knowledge, but also have a greater responsibility in instilling and internalizing Islamic values. Through this process, it is hoped that a human person with Islamic character can be formed, where Islamic values are reflected in the system and curriculum applied (Sukhoiri, 2022).

This is in line with Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System (UU Sisdiknas), especially Article 3, which states that national education functions to develop abilities and form a dignified character and civilization of the nation in order to educate the life of the nation. Education also aims to develop the potential of students to become human beings who believe and fear God Almighty, have noble character, are healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent, and become democratic and responsible citizens (Department of National Education of the Republic of Indonesia, 2003).

Thus, Islamic Education has a strategic role in realizing the goals of national education as mandated in Law Number 20 of 2003, which is to form Indonesian people who have faith, piety, and noble character. With the foundation of monotheistic, moral, and scientific values, Islamic education is in line with the vision of national education that emphasizes a balance between intellectual, moral, and spiritual development. The integration of Islamic values can be carried out through strengthening character education, religious school culture, and learning methods that emphasize example, habituation, and moral reflection. Universal values such as honesty, responsibility, tolerance, and gratitude are not only relevant in the religious context, but also in building the nation's identity in the midst of the challenges of globalization. Despite challenges such as teacher competency limitations, lack of contextual teaching materials, and resistance to faith-based approaches, strategies such as teacher training, inclusive curriculum development, stakeholder collaboration, and the use of technology can strengthen this integration. Thus, Islamic education is not only part of the national education system, but also serves as a catalyst in forming a generation that excels academically, is globally competitive, and has noble character (Nurfadila et al., 2024).

In the context of contemporary Islamic education, there is an urgent need for a leadership model that is able to bridge the spiritual demands and dynamics of the education market. Yuliawati et al. (2025) emphasized that school principals play a central role in the formation of religious character through the strategic management of habituation programs, academic supervision, and strengthening school culture (Yuliawati et al., 2025). However, their study focuses on state madrassas that are relatively protected from market competition pressures, so

they have not touched on the increasingly relevant entrepreneurial dimension in the private school ecosystem. Therefore, this article tries to use the concept of edupreneurship as a response to the complexity of modern education management, where schools are not only a vehicle for moral development, but also an entity that must be innovative, financially sustainable, and responsive to the needs of stakeholders. This research expands on that discourse by showing how edupreneurial leadership which combines spiritual vision, managerial strategy, and market sensitivity can be an effective catalyst for the internalization of religious values. This is also in line with the findings of Amirudin and Abu Bakar (2023) in their literature study which concluded that democratic, visionary, and transformational leadership styles have a positive influence on teacher performance and school culture (Amirudin & Abu Bakar, 2023). However, this article goes a step further by emphasizing that long-term success depends not only on the principal's technical competence, but also on his or her commitment to teacher well-being as the ethical foundation of edupreneurial practice. Thus, this research fills the gap between educational leadership theory and the operational reality of private Islamic schools operating in a competitive ecosystem, while enriching the conceptual framework on the integration between entrepreneurship and character building based on Qur'anic values.

In the contemporary educational landscape in Indonesia, Islamic schools are increasingly expected to fulfill two mandates at once: producing academically competent graduates while cultivating a strong religious character. On the other hand, they must also operate in a competitive education market that demands innovation, branding, and financial autonomy the hallmark of edupreneurship. This paradigm shift demands school leaders who are not only spiritual advisors, but also strategic managers and entrepreneurial thinkers.

Edupreneurship as explained by Nurjaya et al. (2020), is the integration of entrepreneurial concepts and attitudes into the world of education, with the aim of forming the character of edupreneur in students, not just making them entrepreneurs (Nurjaya et al., 2020). Thus, edupreneurship is not only about creating entrepreneurship, but instilling entrepreneurial values such as hard work, honesty, creativity, resilience, future orientation, and responsibility through the learning process in the classroom. These values are expected to be owned and become a character for the managers of private educational institutions, especially Islamic schools which in establishing schools are not only an obligation to teach knowledge to the younger generation, but also a place to work professionally to meet the living needs of education providers.

Based on this, the character of edupreneurship must be possessed by every manager of educational institutions, especially policy makers. Recent research by

Yuliawati et al. (2025) confirms the central role of school principals in shaping religious character through the strategic management of habituation programs. However, their study focused on state madrassas and did not consider the entrepreneurial dynamics that exist in private Islamic schools (Yuliawati et al., 2025). This article bridges this gap by analyzing SD IT Global Islamic School Permata Ummi Kertasemaya, a thriving private Islamic primary school in Indramayu and a real example of edupreneurial leadership in practice.

SD IT Global Islamic School Permata Ummi Kertasemaya is located at Blok. Aruman RT. 001 PC. 001 Kertasemaya Village, Kertasemaya District, Indramayu Regency 45274. The school was established in 2013 with only four students, the school now serves 470 students spread across 21 classes, supported by 59 educators and education staff (Nova Mega Persada, SE, M.Pd, personal communication, September 25, 2025). Its growth reflects strong trust from stakeholders, effective imagery, and holistic integration between the national curriculum and the Islamic curriculum. However, behind its external success lies a deeper question: How does edupreneurial leadership contribute to the internalization of religious values among students?

In the context of the management of educational institutions, the strategic leadership of the principal oriented towards edupreneurial values is an important factor in ensuring the sustainability of the institution as well as the formation of the character of students. This kind of leadership not only emphasizes the managerial aspect, but also places the welfare of human resources at the core of the vision and mission of education. This view is in line with the findings of the research of Siti Fatmawati and colleagues, who affirm that the implementation of adaptive and inclusive financial management plays a significant role in strengthening the financial sustainability of educational institutions. Thus, the integration of strategic leadership and innovative financial management is an important prerequisite for schools to survive and thrive in the midst of the challenges of the ever-changing world of education (Fatmawati & Mulyawan, 2024).

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative descriptive case study design. Data were collected through field observations, document analysis, and informal interviews with education staff and students on September 25, 2025. The location of this research is at SD IT Global Islamic School Permata Ummi Kertasemaya which is located in Blok. Aruman RT. 001 PC. 001 Kertasemaya Village, Kertasemaya District, Indramayu Regency 45274

The research location was chosen because of its reputation as an integrated model of Islamic education and its clear edupreneurial characteristics. Data were analyzed thematically using categories: formulation, implementation, and evaluation of religious character formation programs, enriched with edupreneurial dimensions such as innovation, financial strategy, and stakeholder engagement.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Strategic Formulation: Vision Integration between Faith and Entrepreneurship

Under the leadership of Nova Mega Persada, S.E., M.Pd., the Integrated Islamic Elementary School (SDIT) GIS formulated a vision that holistically aligns the formation of Islamic character with the demands of 21st century competencies. The vision is formulated as: "To become an integrated Islamic Elementary School that is able to produce a Qur'anic Generation that is Rabbani, Smart, Tough, and Noble in character, through memorization of 2 Juz of the Qur'an and 99 Asmaul Husna" (Putra, 2022).

The vision is not only aspirational, but also operational, in line with the transformational leadership theory initiated by Bernard M. Bass, in which leaders are able to inspire educational communities to achieve common goals that go beyond individual interests. By applying the "4I" principles, namely: Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, and Individualized Consideration, school principals can become agents of change who are able to inspire, empower, and transform all school residents towards achieving holistic educational goals academic, moral, and spiritual (Harsoyo, 2022).

In the context of the development of contemporary Islamic education, transformational leadership as formulated by Bernard M. Bass is a strategic foundation in realizing holistic curricular integration especially between the Independent Curriculum and the Integrated Islamic-based Special Curriculum applied at SDIT GIS Permata Ummi Kertasemaya Indramayu. According to Drake and Burns, an integrated curriculum is not just a combination of materials, but a process of making connections: across disciplines, relevance to real life, and an emphasis on intact skills and values. This integration, in their view, is a matter of degrees and methods not black-and-white, but a spectrum that allows for various forms, ranging from intradisciplinary to transdisciplinary (Nurhidin & Habibah, 2021, p. 181).

This is where the role of transformational leadership becomes crucial. Through its four main pillars Idealized Influence (II), Inspirational Motivation

(IM), Intellectual Stimulation (IS), and Individualized Consideration (IC) principals or educational leaders at SDIT GIS Permata Ummi can:

- 1) Becoming a role model (II) in combining Islamic values with the principles of the Independent Curriculum such as freedom of learning, differentiation, and projects to strengthen the profile of Pancasila students without sacrificing the Islamic identity that is the soul of the school's distinctive curriculum.
- 2) Inspiring a shared vision (IM) that curriculum integration is not an administrative burden, but an opportunity to create a meaningful, relevant, and noble learning experience in line with the goal of Islamic education that balances 'knowledge, charity, and morality.
- 3) Stimulate critical and innovative (IS) thinking among teachers to design learning that connects the Qur'an, hadith, and monotheistic values with the context of students' lives, local issues, and global challenges for example through Qur'anic value-based literacy projects or exploration of science as a form of natural tadabbur
- 4) Providing individualized attention (IC) to teachers and staff in the process of curriculum transition and adaptation, with a mentoring approach that understands the background of each of their competencies, challenges, and potential so that curriculum integration is not a compulsion, but rather a collective movement that grows from within.

Thus, transformational leadership not only facilitates the technical fusion between the two curricula, but also revives the spirit of integration itself: creating a space where the general sciences and religious sciences enrich each other, where learning is not fragmented, and where each student grows as a whole person faithful, knowledgeable, and contributing to society. This is in line with Drake and Burns' view that successful curriculum integration is one that builds meaning through living connections, not just formal structures.

In practice at SDIT GIS Permata Ummi, this integration is seen in the learning design that combines the theme of the Independent Curriculum (e.g. "Bhinneka Tunggal Ika") with integrated Islamic values such as ta'aruf, tasamuh, and ukhuwah insaniyah, which are taught through a thematic-interdisciplinary approach, spiritual reflection, and real social action. All of this is only possible if led by transformational leaders who are able to move the hearts, minds, and actions of all school citizens towards a transformative vision of education both intellectually and spiritually.

Furthermore, the application of innovative pedagogies such as Deep Learning which emphasizes critical thinking, collaboration, and reflection is combined with UMMI's Qur'ani method. This method not only teaches tajweed, but also combines it with traditional melodies such as maqam Bayati and the

cultivation of moral values, in line with the principles of value-based character education which emphasizes moral internalization through aesthetic and spiritual experience.

The next strategic formulation that is implemented is the implementation of a transparent financial sustainability model. At the beginning of each school year, the school systematically describes all learning needs and school activities to be carried out, complete with details of financing that have been comprehensively accumulated. This approach emphasizes that school budget allocation is fully integrated with the annual work program, thus avoiding incidental or unplanned activities. Although program planning and budgets have been prepared in a coherent and structured manner, schools still complement the implementation of education with an affirmative policy in the form of providing 50% scholarships for students from underprivileged families. This policy explicitly reflects the principles of 'adl (justice) and syumuliyah (comprehensiveness) in Islamic economics, which are central values in contemporary Islamic educational thought affirming the commitment of educational institutions not only to managerial efficiency, but also to social justice and educational inclusivity.

Finally, in the evaluation process, SDIT GIS Kertasemaya does not only rely on cognitive indicators as a benchmark for learning success. The school views education as an effort to form values holistically, so that spiritual aspects such as increasing memorization of the Qur'an and mastering of Asmaul Husna are evaluated systematically and continuously, as well as measuring the growth of the number of students. This approach is in line with the Islamic educational paradigm which places tarbiyah ruhiyah (soul development) at the core of the teaching-learning process, which aims to form a kamil person who is balanced between intellectual, spiritual, and moral dimensions.

2. Implementation: Habituation as an Edupreneurial Practice

At the Integrated Islamic Elementary School (SDIT) GIS Kertasemaya, the development of religious character is systematically designed through daily habituation that integrates the values of the prophetic tradition (al-sunnah al-tarbawiyah) with the principles of contemporary pedagogy. This approach not only aims to form ritual obedience, but also instills noble morals and independence through repetitive and meaningful daily practices. Spiritual routines such as congregational Dhuha prayers, ablution before starting study activities, and recitation of the Qur'an every morning are the foundation for the formation of continuous religious awareness (Al-Abrasyi, 1994). In addition, daily practices such as washing dishes yourself, removing footwear before

entering the classroom, and maintaining the cleanliness of the school environment are designed as a form of tarbiyah 'amaliyyah coaching through real actions – that foster the value of independence (istiqlāl), responsibility, and manners in social interaction (Tilaar, 2004).

Furthermore, the disciplinary system at SDIT GIS Kertasemaya applies a non-punitive approach based on restorative justice, which emphasizes the restoration of social relations rather than punishment alone. For example, when a student interrupts his friend, he is invited to take remedial action such as helping or apologizing as a form of moral responsibility. This approach is in line with the principles of Islamic education that emphasizes 'adl (justice) and rahmah (compassion), while reflecting modern psychopedagogical insights on the importance of empathy and self-regulation in children's moral development (Fauzan, 2021).

What distinguishes this model is the way it is implemented: these practices are not implemented top-down or administrative, but are embedded in the school culture as lived practice. The principal plays a central role as a facilitator and evaluator through weekly class visits and regular coaching for teachers, thereby ensuring the consistency and sustainability of these values in daily interactions (Zakiyah, 2020). Thus, SDIT GIS Kertasemaya not only teaches values, but creates an educational ecosystem that allows these values to be lived and internalized by all school residents – a tangible manifestation of the concept of tarbiyah syāmilah (holistic education) in the context of integrated Islamic basic education.

3. Human Resource Empowerment: The Ethical Core of Edupreneurship

Although the Kertasemaya GIS Integrated Islamic Elementary School (SDIT) shows strong characteristics as an edupreneurial institution including through social media-based imaging strategies, the implementation of full-day school programs, and the implementation of 16 types of diverse extracurricular activities – there is a critical challenge that needs to be considered: ensuring the welfare of teachers. As noted in various recent studies, sustainable edupreneurship is not only oriented towards external growth (such as marketing and diversification of services), but also on internal strengthening through investment in human capital (Nurhadi & Fauzan, 2023; Hidayat & Zulkarnain, 2024). Although schools have allocated "teacher development funds", fundamental aspects such as long-term financial security, comprehensive health benefits, and clear career paths are still not adequately institutionalized.

This research confirms that authentic edupreneurship in the context of Islamic education must place the welfare of educators as the main foundation, in

line with the principles of *tawazun* (balance) and *maslahah* (public welfare) in Islamic economics (Dhofier, 2022). The role of school principals as educational leaders and strategic human resource managers is crucial in realizing this. At SDIT GIS, initial efforts have been made through a structured human resource management mechanism, including: (1) weekly academic supervision every Friday to ensure the quality of learning; (2) routine training for teachers in the application of innovative learning methods, such as project-based learning and an integrative approach based on Qur'an values; and (3) annual strategic planning and evaluation involving all staff in the preparation of institutional targets (Ramli, 2023).

However, the long-term sustainability of edupreneurial institutions cannot rely solely on moral commitments or sporadic initiatives. It requires institutionalization that is, integrating teacher welfare into the school governance system as a core performance indicator, not just an operational expenditure post (Mulyasa, 2022). This includes setting decent remuneration standards, sustainable health insurance schemes, and transparent career development pathways—from entry-level teachers to mentoring or program heads. As emphasized by Hidayat (2020), teachers who are materially and psychologically prosperous tend to be more creative, loyal, and effective in transforming the values of Islamic education to students (Hidayat, 2022).

Thus, the edupreneurial transformation in integrated Islamic schools must go beyond market logic and enter the realm of institutional ethics. As stated by Anwar (2024), "edupreneurship rooted in Islamic values is not only about how the school survives financially, but how it glorifies its bearers the teachers as the main mandate and investment of the ummah." Without it, external growth risks becoming fragile, and the vision of *tarbiyah*-based holistic education will lose its human foundation (Anwar, 2024).

4. Evaluation: Multi-Stakeholder Accountability

The evaluation of character formation at the Integrated Islamic Elementary School (SDIT) GIS Kertasemaya applies a holistic and participatory multi-stakeholder accountability approach. The assessment process is not only centered on teachers or school institutions, but actively involves students, parents, and the community. Evaluation is carried out through three main mechanisms: (1) daily observation of student behavior—such as politeness in interaction, calmness during study, and responsibility for assignments—which reflects the internalization of moral values; (2) systematic parental feedback collected through monthly parenting sessions and ongoing interactions in WhatsApp groups, which allows for a two-way dialogue between schools and families; and

(3) providing direct leadership opportunities to students, such as leading congregational prayers for those who demonstrate spiritual and moral discipline. This approach not only measures results, but also the process of internalizing value in the real-life context of everyday life.

This evaluation model is in line with the tricentral framework of character education proposed by Yuliawati et al. (2025) – namely the integration of the role of class, school, and home as the three main axes of character development (Yuliawati et al., 2025). However, SDIT GIS Kertasemaya expands the model by utilizing digital communication technology and strengthening local community involvement, which is a hallmark of contemporary edupreneurial institutions. The use of digital platforms such as WhatsApp not only speeds up communication flows, but also creates a transparent collaborative space between schools and families, thus allowing for responsive adjustments to coaching strategies (Ramli, 2023). On the other hand, the provision of leadership roles to students reflects the principle of *tarbiyah 'amaliyyah* – learning through real practice – which according to Hidayat (2020) is the most effective method in instilling moral values in a sustainable manner (Hidayat, 2022).

This multi-stakeholder approach is also in line with the principle of accountability in the governance of Islamic education based on *maslahah* (public benefit) and *shura* (deliberation), as affirmed in contemporary Islamic education thinking (Zakiyah, 2020). By involving various parties in the evaluation process, schools not only ensure the validity of character assessments, but also build a reinforcing educational ecosystem. This is important in the context of edupreneurial, where the sustainability of the institution is not only measured by the financial aspect or the growth of the number of students, but also by the quality of the formation of people who have noble character and contribute positively to society.

Thus, the evaluation model at SDIT GIS Kertasemaya represents an evolution from a traditional approach to an inclusive, digital, and value-based education accountability system a strategic response to the demands of 21st-century education that emphasizes collaboration, ethical reflection, and character-based leadership.

CONCLUSION

SD IT Global Islamic School Permata Ummi Kertasemaya is a real representation of how edupreneurial leadership can strengthen the formation of religious character, as long as it is directed by a strategic vision, sensitivity to local cultural values, and a commitment to entrepreneurship based on ethics. In this context, the role of the principal goes beyond conventional administrative

functions; He acts not only as an operations manager, but also as a moral architect who consciously designs a holistic educational ecosystem, where faith, meaningful learning, and pedagogical innovation reinforce each other.

This role is in line with the principles of leadership in Islam which emphasize moral responsibility and justice. Allah SWT says in the Qur'an:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَانِ وَإِيتَاءِ ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ

“Indeed, Allah commands (you) to be just, to do ihsan (goodness), and to give to one's relatives.” (QS. An-Nahl [16]: 90)

This verse emphasizes that every leader including the principal must integrate justice (al-'adl), moral excellence (al-iḥsān), and social concern in every policy, including in managing educational institutions. As an edupreneur, the principal demonstrates visionary ability, creativity in designing educational solutions, and the capacity to lead and manage change strategically.

More than just an administrator, he is the main driver in creating a learning environment that is sustainable, inclusive, and oriented towards the formation of akhlāq al-karīmah. This is in line with the words of the Prophet ﷺ :

إِنَّمَا بُعِثْتُ لِأَتَمِّمَ صَالِحَ الْأَخْلَاقِ

“Indeed, I have been sent to perfect noble morals.” (HR. al-Baihaqi, dihasankan oleh al-Albani)

Therefore, religious character education is not just a curricular complement, but the core of the prophetic mission that must be realized in institutional practice. Within this framework, the principal acts as the heir of the prophetic mission (waratsat al-anbiyā') in the realm of education, as affirmed in the hadith:

الْغُلَمَاءُ وَرَثَةُ الْأَنْبِيَاءِ

“The scholars are the heirs of the prophets.” (HR. Abu Dawud dan at-Tirmidzi)

To ensure the relevance and effectiveness of its educational practices, the institution consistently conducts annual strategic evaluations and encourages the implementation of classroom action research as a means of critical reflection and continuous refinement in the process of forming students' religious character. This evaluative approach also reflects the principle of muḥāsabah al-nafs (self-introspection) taught in Islam, as stated by Allah SWT:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَلْتَنْظُرْ نَفْسٌ مَّا قَدَّمَتْ لِغَدٍ

“O you who have believed, fear Allah and let each one of you pay attention to what he has done for tomorrow.” (QS. Al-Ḥasyr [59]: 18)

Thus, edupreneurial leadership rooted in Qur'anic and Sunnah values not only encourages institutional innovation and sustainability, but also ensures that every strategic step remains within the corridor of the formation of a kamil person a whole human being who believes, has noble character, and contributes to the good of the ummah.

However, this study reminds that institutional growth is not to be equated with educational success. True edupreneurship in Islamic education must place the welfare of teachers as an integral part of the business model not as a fringe element.

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