

The Leadership Role of The Director of The Islamic Boarding School in Developing a Culture of Quality at Trensains Muhammadiyah Senior High School, Sragen

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ABSTRACT

The role of a leader is an important point that needs to be considered for the organization to be implemented effectively, including in the development of a quality culture. This study aims to describe the leadership role of the Islamic boarding school director in developing a quality culture at SMA Trensains Muhammadiyah Sragen, along with the challenges and solutions. This study is classified as field research with a phenomenological approach. Data collection techniques through observation, interviews, and documentation were then analyzed in three steps: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion. Meanwhile, the validity of the data in this study was tested through technical triangulation and source triangulation. The results of the study revealed that the director plays an important role in developing a quality culture at SMA Trensains Muhammadiyah Sragen. Efforts made include ensuring the development of a quality culture in line with the school's vision and mission, building a good environment, establishing a unified curriculum, managing resources and budget optimally, establishing good communication between *asatidz/ah*, and building cooperative relationships with parents and the surrounding community. As for the challenges and solutions, first, in addressing the lack of teacher competency, the director seeks a language study forum. Second, in addressing the public stigma regarding expensive schools, the director developed a productive endowment managed by Lazismu Trensains.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Amidst the rapid advancement of human civilization, many new challenges are emerging, including in the field of education. One of these is the growing public interest in educational quality. Parents have traditionally tended to enroll their children in quality educational institutions, from preschool to university. This situation creates both a positive tradition and a challenge for educational institutions regarding the quality they offer [1]. This

is because strengthening the quality of education is one of the central elements in developing education in Indonesia in order to produce superior human resources [2].

In line with the growing public awareness of the urgency of high-quality education, improvements in educational quality need to be realized. One effort that can be implemented is by building and preserving a positive school culture [3]. A culture with positive values will increase solidarity and togetherness and create a comfortable and conducive school environment so that the quality of learning will also increase [4]. Therefore, the integration of culture and quality is the foundation for building high-quality education because it influences the quality of students. Quality culture can be defined as a set of values applied to achieve desired excellence [5].

In its implementation, not only the government bears full responsibility, but schools, as implementers of education, also play a role in the process. In this regard, school leaders, such as the principal or director of Islamic boarding schools, as the highest-ranking officials, are required to be able to lead and manage the school optimally to improve the quality of education [5]. In addition, all school residents, including teachers, staff, students, and so on, must also actively contribute to developing this quality culture [6].

In Law No 20 of 2003, the quality of education is one of the main principles in the administration of education [7]. Therefore, every educational institution, including Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), needs to develop a culture of quality, integrating both the pesantren culture and the school culture in general. Another characteristic is the integration of the government curriculum with the pesantren curriculum itself, which presents a unique challenge for these institutions in improving the quality of education [8].

In this regard, Muhammadiyah, specifically the Muhammadiyah Regional Leadership of Sragen, together with the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek), collaborated to establish a superior school in Sragen by establishing SMA Trensains Muhammadiyah Sragen. This initiative stemmed from Prof. Agus Purwanto's idea of establishing an educational institution that integrates Islamic boarding schools and science, making it both a distinctive feature and a challenge in competing with other educational institutions that had developed earlier [9].

SMA Trensains Muhammadiyah Sragen is the first Islamic boarding school and science-based high school in Indonesia [10]. Through Islamic boarding schools, students receive specialized guidance and education to develop their character. Furthermore, the instillation of religious values within the Islamic boarding school system fosters a positive culture within the school, which impacts the quality of the school [11]. Therefore, Islamic boarding schools play a role in developing a culture of quality at SMA Trensains Muhammadiyah Sragen.

As an Islamic boarding school, the highest leadership at SMA Trensains Muhammadiyah Sragen is held by a director, commonly called *mudir* or *ustadz*. As a leader, the director is the most important factor in guiding the institution towards success, including strengthening the school's culture of quality [12]. This is related to the leadership role of the director and the strategies implemented in facing various challenges, especially as the first Islamic science boarding school institution in Indonesia.

Several previous studies have revealed that Islamic boarding school leaders play a strategic role in improving the quality of education. Rofian's research shows that kiai, as the main figure in Islamic boarding schools, play a crucial role in ensuring quality within the boarding school, serving as educators, leaders, managers, innovators, motivators, and supervisors [13]. Mitsni expressed something similar in his research, that the role of kiai in improving the quality of Islamic boarding school education is to develop scientific traditions and increase the resources available at the boarding school [14]. However, both tend to focus on improving educational quality. This study, however, focuses on the role of the Islamic boarding school director in developing a culture of quality in the school, which is the research's primary focus.

Based on the initial research findings and the explanation above, the researcher is interested in examining the role of the Islamic boarding school director in developing a culture of quality in the school. The purpose of this study is to describe the leadership role of the Islamic boarding school director in developing a culture of quality at SMA Trensains Muhammadiyah Sragen, along with the challenges faced and their solutions. Theoretically, this research is expected to provide an overview and reference regarding the role of leadership in building a quality culture in pesantren-based schools. Practically, this research is expected to serve as a source of information for institutions as a consideration and improvement in developing a quality culture in schools.

2. METHOD

This research is classified as field research [15], which was conducted at SMA Trensains Muhammadiyah Sragen. Using a phenomenological approach [16], this study focuses on the leadership role of Islamic boarding school directors in developing a culture of quality in schools. The data sources for this study include two: primary data sources and secondary data sources. Primary data were obtained face-to-face through interviews with the directors and caretakers of the Trensains Islamic boarding school. Secondary data were collected through documents in the form of relevant journals or books. Data collection techniques were carried out through observation, interviews, and document reviews. In testing the validity of the data, this study applied data triangulation techniques, namely source triangulation and technical triangulation. Meanwhile, for data analysis, this study applied a three-step technique according to the views of Miles and Huberman, namely data reduction, data presentation, and concluding [17].

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 The Leadership Role of the Director of the Islamic Boarding School in Developing a Culture of Quality at SMA Trensains Muhammadiyah Sragen

Leadership is the ability of a person to influence others so that they can work together to achieve a common goal [18]. In developing a quality culture, a leader's leadership is essential for its effective implementation. Likewise, the type of leadership implemented by the leader will significantly influence their role in developing the desired quality culture [12].

The director of the Muhammadiyah Trensains Islamic Boarding School explained that a quality culture is a good tradition implemented with a quality-oriented approach to an

institution. In developing it, he emphasized the importance of vision and mission as a roadmap or benchmark for achieving the desired goals. He likened the vision and mission to train rails, with the train representing the institution or Trensains itself. The vision and mission serve as a path that must be followed. If the train is not on the right track, undesirable outcomes occur [19]. In this regard, the formulation of vision, mission, and objectives in educational institutions is a very crucial initial step in formulating strategic programs for developing a culture of quality [20].

In developing a culture of quality, a leader will have a significant influence in instilling the values that are built to create a positive culture within their environment [21]. At SMA Trensains Muhammadiyah Sragen, the values emphasized by the director of the Islamic boarding school are honesty, achievement, togetherness, collaboration, innovation, and communication. He emphasized that these values are emphasized in an effort to develop 21st-century skills in students to become quality graduates [19]. 21st-century skills, commonly known as "The 4C Skills," need to be developed to help prepare the 21st-century generation to face various global challenges and demands. These skills include collaboration, communication, problem-solving, critical thinking, and creativity and innovation [22].

Furthermore, another value emphasized by the director in developing a culture of quality at SMA Trensains Muhammadiyah Sragen is the provision of excellent service to students, such as providing personalized attention, spiritual guidance, meeting daily needs, and mentoring both during study and organizational activities [23]. The excellent service provided by the boarding school to its students will create a comfortable environment, making them feel at home and comfortable. This will encourage the development of a more optimal culture of quality [24].

The development of a culture of quality is also inseparable from a supportive school environment [12]. One of the director's efforts is to emphasize the instillation of good habits in the school. This is achieved by instilling Islamic values, characteristic of the Islamic boarding school, into the school's learning process, from the beginning of the learning process until the end. Among them are morning assembly before entering the class which includes joint prayer and morning reflection, checking the Qur'an, reading the Qur'an before starting the learning process, joint prayer at the end of the lesson, procurement of alms every Friday, implementation of congregational prayers, use of uniforms and attributes that are sharia-compliant, especially for female students such as wearing ciput and socks, and so on. Even outside of school hours, good habits are also implemented at the Trensains Muhammadiyah Sragen Islamic Boarding School. These include the presence of Islamic boarding school duty, Islamic studies after Maghrib prayers, evening study schedules, the use of English and Arabic as daily languages, and so on [23]. Implementing good habits will encourage the creation of a conducive and safe school environment for the school community, both in terms of social interactions and conducive teaching and learning activities, which will certainly encourage the development of the desired quality culture [25]. Good habits with religious values can also develop religious character in students [26].

At SMA Trensains Muhammadiyah Sragen, all parties are responsible for building a positive environment to foster a culture of quality. At the student level, there is the Muhammadiyah Student Association, which has several divisions, each with its own specific

role. These divisions are the Daily Executive Board, the Scientific Research Division, the Islamic Da'wah Study Division, the Cadre Development Division, the Arts, Culture, and Sports Appreciation Division, the Language Division, the Security Division, the Cleanliness Division, the Entrepreneurship Division, the Health Division, the Multimedia Division, and the Parks Division. In carrying out their duties, students will be guided by a supervisor who has been entrusted with responsibility and trust by the director. The supervisor is given the authority to direct, guide, and accompany students in the more specific aspects of the organization's operations, including making simple decisions. The director's role is to provide more general direction, oversee the organization's operations, provide motivation, and establish meaningful policies and decisions [23]. The synergy demonstrated between the director, caretakers, and students of Trensains in fostering a positive environment demonstrates that each individual plays a role in fostering a culture of quality at Trensains, in accordance with their respective responsibilities. Developing a culture of quality is the responsibility of every party involved in an institution, without exception [1].

Regarding the curriculum, the director and the leadership of Trensains determined that the curriculum implemented at Trensains is a unified curriculum which is a combination of the Islamic boarding school curriculum by the Ministry of Religion, the Ministry of Education and Culture curriculum, the Muhammadiyah curriculum, and the curriculum initiated by Trensains itself. He explained that integrating these four elements, each with its own unique value, is challenging. Therefore, modifications are necessary to align with Trensains' vision and mission. The implementation of the unified curriculum is subject to regular monitoring and evaluation, tailored to current needs and policies. Further improvements will be made to achieve a culture of quality and achieve the desired goals [19].

Another aspect related to developing a culture of quality is resource and budget management at the school [12]. In recruiting religious teachers and caretakers at the Trensains Islamic Boarding School, the director stipulates that the required educational standard is a bachelor's degree (S1). Furthermore, prospective religious teachers and caretakers undergo several selection stages to find the best teaching staff [23]. To improve competency, the director holds a special forum every Friday for *asatidz/ah*. One of the activities is to improve public speaking and language skills through short studies in English or Arabic.

Furthermore, the forum serves as a means of mental strengthening, motivation, and unifying the vision and mission to align with Trensains' goals. Furthermore, to review the performance of *asatidz/ah*, the director conducts evaluations through student questionnaires and in a special forum. Another effort is the implementation of rewards as a form of appreciation for exemplary and high-achieving teachers, as well as punishment for those who commit violations [19]. Good human resource management will encourage the creation of a competitive and high-quality work culture. Empowerment through ongoing training activities can also improve the professional competence of educators [27].

Regarding budget management, the director focuses on curriculum implementation and development to ensure quality learning for students. He also allocates funds for school infrastructure development to optimally achieve goals [19]. Budget management is crucial

because it can pose a significant challenge to developing a culture of quality if not managed properly [27].

Efforts to develop a culture of quality also depend on effective communication between leaders and their members [12]. At Trensains, communication between directors and administrators occurs both in person and through an online WhatsApp group. Furthermore, a special forum is held once a month to discuss matters related to Islamic boarding school management and to serve as a monthly evaluation. A special forum is also held between Trensains High School leaders, including the boarding school director, the principal, and all vice principals, every Wednesday for weekly meetings and evaluations. Furthermore, in decision-making, the director will first solicit input from all parties, followed by discussion or deliberation, so that the decision is not solely the result of one party but rather the result of collective deliberation [23]. Based on the leadership style applied, Trensains's director tends to adopt a democratic leadership style. This type of democratic leadership is characterized by decision-making based on deliberation or collective decisions, where the leader positions himself among his members [28].

Furthermore, in developing a culture of quality, the director also strives to establish good relationships with the community. Not only are the *asatidz/ah* involved in developing the culture of quality, but also the guardians of students and the surrounding community. At the beginning of the year, a *ta'aruf* forum is held for new students and their guardians as a means to explain matters relating to Trensains, including its vision, mission, and future goals. Similarly, student report card collection is preceded by a review, motivation, and reporting on matters related to Trensains development. Furthermore, the director, as leader, is responsive to constructive criticism and suggestions from both parents and the community for the purpose of improving and developing a culture of quality going forward [19]. In line with this, dynamic developments in society will foster a more optimal development of a culture of quality [12].

3.2 Challenges for Islamic Boarding School Directors in Developing a Quality Culture at Muhammadiyah Trensains High School, Sragen

In developing a culture of quality at SMA Trensains Muhammadiyah Sragen, the director faced two main challenges. First, the lack of educator competency in integrating the Quran and science, which involves the use of two languages for teaching assistants in classroom instruction. For example, math teachers teach in Arabic, physics teachers in Arabic, and so on. Given the fact that classroom instruction still tends to use Indonesian, the director has sought a solution by establishing a special competency-building forum held every Friday. The activity takes the form of a short study in Arabic or English to hone language skills and public speaking skills [19]. Continuous teacher training will encourage an increase in teacher competencies, which will ultimately impact the quality of learning and the development of a quality culture in schools [27].

Second, there is the public stigma that Trensains is a high-cost school. The director explained that the high cost at Trensains is due to Trensains' minimalist school system, with a capacity of only around 25 students per class. The disparity between the small number of students and the large budget required results in a high educational cost burden for each

individual. One of the director's efforts to address this is by establishing a productive waqf, which Trensains also manages through Lazismu Trensains. The goal is to help cover the institution's general needs, such as building construction, providing facilities, infrastructure, etc [19]. The implementation of a productive waqf that is managed well and professionally can be an effective strategy in strengthening the independence of Islamic educational institutions [29].

4. CONCLUSION

This study shows that the principal of Trensains Muhammadiyah Sragen High School, as the leader of the Islamic boarding school, plays an important role in developing a culture of quality at the school. Several efforts have been made, such as using the school's vision and mission as the basis for developing a culture of quality, building a positive environment for both students and teachers, applying a unified curriculum, optimizing resources and budgets, and building cooperative relationships with students' guardians and the surrounding community. In addition, the principal has also made decisions wisely in addressing challenges that arise by making efforts to manage them.

Theoretically, this study reinforces the concept that leadership plays a central role in the development of a quality culture in educational institutions. The principal is not only a policymaker but also a driver in building a quality culture in schools. Practically, this study can serve as a guideline for school leaders in pesantren-based schools, particularly in developing a sustainable quality culture. The limitation of this study is that it was conducted in only one educational institution, so it cannot be used as a benchmark for others. Therefore, future research is expected to involve other educational institutions in their studies. Overall, this study is expected to broaden the insights of educational institutions and the general public regarding the importance of the leader's role in building a quality culture.

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