



## STRATEGIES OF AN ISLAMIC EDUCATION FOUNDATION IN IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF MADRASAH PRINCIPAL PERFORMANCE

**Moh. Khoiruddin<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> Institut Agama Islam Al Khoziny Sidoarjo, Indonesia

Email Corresponding Author: [alaik59@gmail.com](mailto:alaik59@gmail.com)

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### ABSTRACT

This study examines the strategies the Islamic education Foundation uses to improve the performance of the madrasah principal. It starts from the premise that educational institutions need sound management and deliberate methods of development, and that the principal plays a strategic role in running the school. Better principal performance is believed to carry over directly into the performance of teachers and staff. The study is descriptive qualitative, with the principal of madrasah as its object. Data were collected through interviews, observation, and documentation, and analyzed through data reduction, data display, and verification. The foundation's strategies were: (1) administrative selection of prospective principals; (2) involvement of prospective principals in educational forums and organizations; (3) establishment of the Al Khoziny Teachers' Forum (GUA), which assesses the principal's performance across the roles of Educator, Manager, Administrator, Supervisor, Leader, Innovator, and Motivator; (4) opportunities for professional development training; and (5) authority for the principal to run the institution independently within applicable regulations, with the foundation remaining the organizer and supplying the Islamic concepts on which the institution's vision and mission rest. The principal's performance improved in several roles and stagnated in others, and these gains also influenced the performance of teachers and staff

**Keywords:** Al Khoziny; Foundation strategy; Madrasah principal; Performance quality

### ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini mengkaji strategi yang digunakan Yayasan pendididkan Islam untuk meningkatkan kinerja kepala madrasah. Penelitian ini berangkat dari premis bahwa lembaga pendidikan memerlukan manajemen yang baik dan metode pengembangan yang terencana, serta bahwa kepala madrasah memegang peranan strategis dalam menjalankan sekolah. Kinerja kepala madrasah yang lebih baik diyakini berdampak langsung pada kinerja guru dan pegawai. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian kualitatif deskriptif, dengan kepala madrasah sebagai objeknya. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara, observasi, dan dokumentasi, serta dianalisis melalui reduksi data, penyajian data, dan verifikasi. Strategi yayasan meliputi: (1) seleksi administratif calon kepala madrasah; (2) keterlibatan calon kepala madrasah dalam forum dan organisasi pendidikan; (3) pembentukan Forum Guru Al Khoziny (GUA), yang menilai kinerja kepala madrasah pada peran Educator, Manajer, Administrator, Supervisor, Leader, Innovator, dan Motivator; (4) pemberian kesempatan pelatihan pengembangan profesionalisme; dan (5) pemberian wewenang kepada kepala madrasah



*untuk mengelola lembaga secara independen dalam batas aturan yang berlaku, dengan yayasan tetap menjadi penyelenggara dan penyedia konsep keislaman yang menjadi dasar visi dan misi lembaga. Kinerja kepala madrasah mengalami peningkatan pada beberapa peran dan stagnasi pada peran lainnya, dan peningkatan tersebut juga mempengaruhi kinerja guru dan pegawai.*

**Kata Kunci:** Al Khoziny; kepala madrasah; mutu kinerja; strategi yayasan

## INTRODUCTION

Educational institutions need sound, appropriate management if they are to keep improving. Those who run them must develop their own methods and characteristics to achieve the vision and mission they set. Good quality also requires someone with a pivotal role in building and developing the institution, because a school is an organization that many people and groups must develop together. One of the most important roles in any educational institution is that of the school or madrasah principal (Mulyasa, 2013).

As manager of the institution, the principal functions as designer, organizer, implementer, manager of leadership personnel, and supervisor of the school's educational programs. As a designer of school development, the principal must state clear long-, medium-, and short-term plans. The long-term plan is written as a strategic plan covering vision, mission, goals, policies, strategies, and programs over 5 to 10 years. The medium-term plan covers strategies and programs to be carried out within 3 to 5 years. The short-term plan covers programs drawn up and carried out each school year (Wahjosumidjo, 2005).

The principal also plays a key part in moving school life toward its goals, and two points deserve attention. First, the principal is the central force that drives school life. Second, principals must understand their duties and functions if the school is to succeed, and must care about their staff and students (Suhardiman, 2012). Improving principal performance should therefore be a top priority in developing educational institutions.

MA Al Khoziny Buduran Sidoarjo operates under the Al Khoziny Foundation, which also oversees the Al Khoziny Islamic boarding school (*pesantren*) in Buduran, Sidoarjo. The foundation is a *pesantren*-based institution that places great value on Islamic culture. Besides the Madrasah Aliyah, it runs formal education at the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah and Madrasah Tsanawiyah levels, each with its own principal. Like most Islamic foundations, it also has a *pesantren* whose residents are students from these madrasah levels.

Leading a school or madrasah under a foundation requires the principal and the foundation chair to work in step, sharing a vision and mission that remain rooted in the foundation's identity as an Islamic institution while maintaining the quality of formal education. The aim is for the two to move together toward the same goals. This study focuses on one level, the Madrasah Aliyah, led by Mr. Mukmin, M.Pd.I.



Earlier studies have addressed principal performance and the role of foundations in educational quality. Sulaeman et al. (2024), in a multi-case study of MTs Al-Madina and MTs PII Salinggara in Pandeglang, found that foundations contribute to quality through curriculum development, teacher professionalism, facilities, and community relations, and that actively involved foundations can raise institutional quality considerably. Sumarni (2018) likewise stresses that foundations have important roles and functions in managing education, including as funders, supervisors, and setters of strategic policy.

On madrasah leadership, Rahmawati (2024) found that principals hold a central role in school-based management, chiefly through their roles as educator, manager, administrator, supervisor, leader, innovator, and motivator, and that improvements in madrasah quality depend heavily on how well principals perform these roles. Fauzi et al. (2026), studying service strategies to raise public interest in madrasahs and integrated Islamic schools, found that effective strategies include better academic quality, stronger Islamic character formation, and adequate facilities.

Other work points in the same direction. A study in *TADBIR: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam* (2025) shows that innovative leadership by principals in the digital era is vital to improving educational quality, and that principals must adapt to technological change and adopt innovative leadership strategies. Choirunisa et al. (2025) found that total quality management in Islamic educational institutions requires commitment from all stakeholders, including the foundation, principal, teachers, and staff.

Nurdin (2025) holds that applying TQM in modern Islamic education demands strong leadership, a customer focus, and continuous improvement, and that principals must translate TQM principles into daily managerial practice. Kusnadi Wijaya et al. (2026) found that empowering stakeholders in school-based management is an effective way to improve madrasah quality, through the active participation of the foundation, the madrasah committee, teachers, students, and the community.

Zulfa (2025), in a dissertation on the strategic management of madrasah principals, found that principals who can formulate and carry out suitable strategies strengthen their institutions' competitiveness. The study stresses SWOT analysis, a clear vision and mission, and the development of flagship programs. This agrees with Sulaeman et al. (2024), who emphasize the foundation's role in supporting the principal's strategies.

These studies nonetheless have limits. First, most look at principal performance in general and say little about what foundations specifically do to improve it. Second, few have systematically identified foundation strategies in pesantren-based Islamic institutions. Third, how foundations can raise principal



performance through teacher forums and professional training has been little explored. This study addresses these gaps.

Its aim is to analyze the strategies the Al Khoziny Foundation uses to improve the performance of the principal of MA Al Khoziny Buduran Sidoarjo. It asks three questions: (1) What strategies does the foundation use to improve the principal's performance? (2) How has the principal performed during the time in office? (3) What factors support and hinder improvement in the principal's performance?

The study matters in three ways. Theoretically, it contributes to Islamic education management theory, particularly on developing madrasah principal performance. Practically, its findings can guide foundations, principals, and policymakers in designing strategies to improve principal performance. Socially and religiously, it supports the development of good pesantren-based Islamic educational institutions.

## METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach, chosen because the aim is to understand a phenomenon in depth, not to test hypotheses or measure variables statistically. Bungin (2008) describes qualitative research as a process of exploring and understanding the meaning that individuals or groups attach to a social or human problem. Here, it allows the researcher to examine the meanings, values, and practices behind the foundation's strategies for improving principal performance.

The object of the study is the principal of MA Al Khoziny Buduran Sidoarjo, chosen because the principal is the central figure in running a madrasah and has a strategic role in improving educational quality. MA Al Khoziny is also a pesantren-based Islamic institution with distinctive characteristics, which makes it of interest to study.

The data come from primary and secondary sources. Primary sources are the principal, the foundation chair, teachers, and staff of MA Al Khoziny. Secondary sources are official madrasah documents such as the vision and mission, organizational structure, work programs, and activity reports. Sources were selected for relevance, credibility, and recency.

Data were collected by interview, observation, and documentation. In-depth interviews were held with the principal, foundation chair, teachers, and staff to learn about the foundation's strategies. Observation recorded the principal's activities in carrying out his roles and duties, and his interactions with teachers, staff, and students. Documentation gathered written material relevant to the topic, such as policy documents, performance reports, and activity records.



Data were analyzed through data reduction, data display, and verification. Moleong (2010) notes that qualitative analysis is interactive and continues until it is complete. First, the data were reduced by selecting relevant information and setting aside the rest. Second, they were displayed as a structured narrative. Third, they were verified by comparing information across sources to check consistency and accuracy.

Several strategies were used to ensure trustworthiness: source triangulation, comparing information from different sources; method triangulation, using several data collection methods to verify the findings; member checking, asking experts or colleagues in the field to verify the findings; and an audit trail, documenting the research process in enough detail for others to trace and verify it.

The study has several limitations. First, it covers a single institution, MA Al Khoziny Buduran Sidoarjo, so the findings may not generalize fully to other contexts. Second, it focuses on the foundation's strategies, so other aspects of principal performance may not have been explored in depth. Third, as a qualitative study, its findings are interpretive and contextual. Even so, it is expected to contribute meaningfully to Islamic education management.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the analysis of the data collected, processed, and interpreted in line with the study's aims. The results are organized under three headings: (1) the foundation's strategies for improving principal performance; (2) the principal's performance during his time in office at MA Al Khoziny; and (3) factors that support and hinder improvement. Interviews, observation, and documentation show that the Al Khoziny Foundation uses the following strategies.

### **Administrative selection of prospective principals.**

The foundation screens candidates administratively in line with Minister of National Education Regulation No. 13 of 2007 on the qualifications of principals of senior secondary schools and madrasahs (SMA/MA). Candidates must (1) be a teacher at an SMA/MAK; (2) hold a teaching certificate for SMA/MAK; and (3) hold a principal's certificate for SMA/MAK issued by a government-designated body. Beyond these administrative qualifications, the foundation also looks at personal qualities: good health, broad knowledge, belief in the organization's success, a clear grasp of its goals, stamina and enthusiasm, decisiveness, objectivity, fairness, command of human relations principles, communication skills, the ability to act as an adviser, and an overall picture of every aspect of the organization's activities (Mulyasa, 2013). This agrees with Rahmawati (2024), who



stresses that administrative selection is a crucial first step in ensuring the quality of principals.

### **Involvement of prospective principals in educational forums and organizations.**

The foundation encourages candidates to take an active part in educational forums and organizations at both local and national levels. The aim is to broaden their outlook, build their competence, and develop professional networks, so that they gain experience and knowledge relevant to the principal's role (Kompri, 2015). Fauzi et al. (2026) found that principals' involvement in educational forums contributes positively to their leadership competence and managerial ability.

### **The Al Khoziny Teachers' Forum (GUA).**

The foundation created GUA to collect the results of discussions among all members of the foundation, from both the Madrasah Tsanawiyah and the Madrasah Aliyah. The forum's purpose is to assess the principal's performance across the roles of Educator, Manager, Administrator, Supervisor, Leader, Innovator, and Motivator. Through it, the foundation can monitor the work of all its member institutions freely and change systems where a change would bring better results later. GUA is also a place to discuss problems at school and look for solutions together (Wibowo, 2012). This agrees with Sulaeman et al. (2024), who found that foundations that actively evaluate and monitor principals' performance drive sustained improvement in educational quality.

### **Opportunities for professional development training.**

The foundation lets principals attend professional development training, especially on the Merdeka Curriculum using the KBC (*Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta*, or Love-Based Curriculum) approach. The training aims to strengthen principals' competence in running an educational institution, particularly amid curriculum change and the demands of contemporary education. According to Syam (2019), teachers and principals play a strategic role in developing the Islamic religious education curriculum, especially in the era of Industrial Revolution 4.0, which demands adaptability and innovation. *TADBIR: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam* (2025) likewise stresses that innovative leadership by principals in the digital era is vital to educational quality.

### **Authority to manage the institution independently.**

The foundation gives the principal authority to run the institution independently, within applicable regulations. It remains the organizer of the madrasah and supplies the Islamic concepts on which the vision and mission are built. The vision of MA Al Khoziny is "to produce intellectuals of good character



(*akhlakul karimah*) within the framework of faith and piety." On this basis, the foundation hopes its graduates will be knowledgeable people grounded in faith and piety (Muis, 1991). Choirunisa et al. (2025) found that granting principals autonomy, while keeping the foundation's oversight, is an effective way to improve educational quality.

The foundation also acts as a consultative council for school activities and is responsible for any problems that arise at MA Al Khoziny. The purpose of this consultative function is to keep the madrasah's activities aligned with the foundation's expectations, which are also the madrasah's vision and mission. This fits the saying of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him): "*Khairun nas anfa'uhum lin nas*" (the best of people are those who are most beneficial to others). The Hadith shows that the Prophet urged Muslims to do good to others, and that a person's worth is measured by their usefulness to others. In this respect, the Al Khoziny Foundation has shown its character by consistently benefiting other Muslims, especially in nurturing Islamic scholarship (Gunawan, 2012).

### **The Principal's Performance During His Time in Office**

The principal of MA Al Khoziny has met the criteria of a good madrasah leader. Teachers, staff, and students regard him as a good leader throughout his tenure from 2022 to 2026. They point to his character and sense of responsibility, to his role as a good gathering point and link among members, to his example to teachers and students, and to his ability to organize, manage, and guide in line with his roles and duties.

An educational institution is judged good when led by a principal whose performance keeps improving, and a school is called high quality because its principal keeps trying to improve. Performance can be judged on three things: (1) input, meaning the ability or competence brought to the job; (2) process, meaning the procedures by which the work is done; and (3) output, meaning the results achieved in carrying out core tasks, functions, and responsibilities (Nawawi, 2006).

The research findings describe the principal's performance by role, as follows.

#### **Principal as Educator.**

The principal has used suitable strategies in this role. Performance as an educator is successful when a principal raises staff professionalism and creates a conducive climate for students. Day to day, he guides teachers in their duties and is always a point of resolution for problems that teachers or students bring. He also receives consultations from the whole school community. According to Mulyasa (2013), principals can improve their performance as educators by (a) sending teachers to training, (b) mobilizing a team to evaluate student learning outcomes, and (c) using learning time effectively at school. This agrees with Rahmawati (2024), who



found that principals who are effective educators raise teacher professionalism and create a good learning environment.

#### **Principal as Manager.**

In this role, the principal has planned new programs each year that are relevant to teachers and students according to need. Program planning also takes account of available facilities so that implementation goes as hoped. Results are evaluated at the end of each school year to find problems and correct them the following year (Daryanto, 2001). Nurdin (2025) found that effective management in Islamic educational institutions requires careful planning, consistent implementation, and continuous evaluation.

#### **Principal as Administrator.**

The principal carries out several administrative functions: (1) planning; (2) organizing the school; (3) acting as coordinator and director; and (4) managing personnel. In this area, however, his performance has not yet reached its potential, as seen in incomplete student data, the notices sent to teachers about the start of school, and the recording of facilities and infrastructure. Not everything administrative is deficient; monitoring of some school administration simply has not been maximized (Purwanto, 1995). This agrees with Kusnadi Wijaya et al. (2026), who found that administration is often a weak point in madrasah management, especially record-keeping and documentation.

#### **Principal as Supervisor.**

As supervisor, the principal serves his subordinates accommodatingly and in a friendly atmosphere, without losing authority or dampening staff morale. He is a good go-between when problems arise over planning, implementation, or assessment, whether between principal and staff or teachers, teacher and teacher, teacher and student, or student and student. The aim is to improve the quality of learning at school (Sagala, 2010). Fauzi et al. (2026) found that effective supervision by principals improves the quality of teaching and teachers' job satisfaction.

#### **Principal as Leader.**

His leadership style is democratic. A democratic leader stands among the group and keeps encouraging its members to work productively toward shared goals. Such a leader is cooperative, not dictatorial, stimulates group members, and takes account of their capacity and ability. Democratic leadership creates a family-like working environment in which staff do not lack confidence in their work. The principal emphasizes teamwork and good relations among members so that teachers and staff stay motivated (Wahyudi, 2015). *TADBIR: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam* (2025) found that democratic leadership by principals raises teacher and staff participation in decision-making and builds a positive organizational climate.



### **Principal as Innovator.**

An innovator shows in the way he works: constructively, creatively, by delegating, integratively, rationally and objectively, pragmatically, by example, with discipline, and adaptably and flexibly. In this role, the principal has introduced several new activities: (a) taking final-year students to education exhibitions; (b) helping final-year students obtain Bidikmisi scholarships; and (c) setting up the GUA forum to improve communication among teachers across the Al Khoziny Foundation (Asmani, 2012). Choirunisa et al. (2025) found that principals' innovations in the form of flagship programs improve the competitiveness of Islamic educational institutions.

### **Supporting and Hindering Factors**

Several factors support improvement in the principal's performance: (1) the foundation's support in the form of authority, training, and communication forums; (2) good cooperation between the principal and teachers, staff, and students; (3) the principal's awareness of the trust placed in him as head of the institution; and (4) democratic leadership that creates a harmonious working environment. This agrees with Sulaeman et al. (2024), who found that foundation support is a key factor in improving educational quality.

Hindering factors include: (1) limited resources, in both administrative staff and facilities; (2) insufficient monitoring of some school administration; (3) resistance to change, especially toward the new curriculum; and (4) too little time to manage every aspect of the madrasah well. These need to be addressed through measures such as building the capacity of administrative staff, providing adequate facilities, and offering continuous training for the principal and staff (Sinambela, 2012). Zulfa (2025) found that limited resources and resistance to change are the main obstacles to improving educational quality, and that adaptive, participatory strategies are therefore needed.

The findings have several implications, both theoretical and practical. Theoretically, the study enriches Islamic education management by adding the perspective of foundation strategy in improving principal performance. It also confirms that improving principal performance cannot be separated from the foundation's role as organizer of education. Practically, it offers guidance to foundations, principals, and policymakers in designing strategies to improve principal performance.

Several recommendations follow. First, the foundation should keep developing its strategies, especially for administration and supervision. Second, the principal should strengthen his competence in administration and personnel management. Third, the foundation and principal should build partnerships with other parties, including universities and training institutions, to raise



professionalism. Fourth, further research should test the effectiveness of the foundation's strategies empirically, using quantitative or qualitative methods.

## CONCLUSION

The Islamic Education Foundation's, Al Khoziny has strategies for improving the performance of the principal of MA Al Khoziny Buduran Sidoarjo are: (1) administrative selection of prospective principals; (2) involvement of prospective principals in educational forums and organizations; (3) the Al Khoziny Teachers' Forum (GUA), which assesses the principal's performance in his roles and duties; (4) opportunities for professional development training; and (5) authority to manage the institution independently within applicable regulations, with the foundation remaining the organizer and supplying the Islamic concepts that underlie the institution's vision and mission.

The principal's performance improved in some roles and stagnated in others. It improved as Educator, Manager, Supervisor, Leader, and Innovator. It stagnated as Administrator, especially in monitoring school administration. These improvements also affected teachers and staff, as shown by a more conducive working climate and higher morale.

The study's main contributions to the scholarship and practice of Islamic education management, particularly the development of principal performance, are: (1) a conceptual framework for the foundation's strategies in improving principal performance; (2) an identification of the roles and duties in which the principal improved and stagnated; and (3) implications and recommendations for developing Islamic education management. Future research should test the effectiveness of the foundation's strategies empirically, looking at their effect on student learning outcomes, character, and teacher competence

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