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Superior Islamic school strategies in improving the quality of education through leader teachers and digital transformation

Suci Hidayati [1*], M Lutfi Mustofa [2], Nur Milan Siregar [3], M Lutfi [4]

[1, 3, 4] Islamic Education Management, UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, Malang, Indonesia
[2] Department of Islamic Studies Approach, UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, Indonesia

* Corresponding Author: **Suci Hidayati**

Article Info

Abstract

There is growing recognition in the world of education today that there is a belief in teacher agency and professional influence to be an important component in realizing improvements in the quality of learning and education systems in a comprehensive manner. The possibility and potential of teacher leadership has become a major issue in international discourse about a country's efforts to reform education according to the times. This study aims to examine further the superior school strategy in improving the quality of education through teacher leaders and digital transformation in Islamic educational institutions. Data collection techniques through observation, observation, documentation with qualitative research methods. The results of the research obtained that there are three main strategies that must be developed in Islamic schools in order to excel and have quality graduates so that they can improve the quality of Islamic Education Institutions evenly, namely (a) instilling character values in teachers as 'Leader Teachers', namely by improving moral character and performance character. (b) Prioritizing teacher competence as a Leader Teacher by thinking critically, creatively, communicatively and collaboratively as well as literacy with open horizons and (c) Managing learning through digital transformation with the method of mentoring and training teachers who will be digitally proficient in learning.

Introduction

The world of education in this era is experiencing many challenges so that there is recognition from several experts that teacher agency and professional influence are important components in realizing the improvement of the quality of learning and the education system within it. (Harris, Jones, and Huffman 2017; Campbell *et al*. 2018) [9, 12]. The possibility and potential of teacher leadership has become a major issue in international discourse on efforts to reform education in line with the times. This potential is reflected in contemporary publications that argue strongly that teachers should play more of a role. The central proposition is 'Flipping the System' (Evers and Kneyber 2015: Netolicky, Andrews, and Paterson 2018; Rycroft-Smith, & Dutaut, 2018) so that teachers become, creators, *influencers* and implementers of edu-cational change.

Experts argue that teachers as co-constructors in making educational changes are the main contributors in terms of determining policies in the learning process. The ideas and potential of teachers can encourage creativity and learning innovations that can later bring about changes in various aspects of the education system. Teachers in this digital era must really be the spearhead in carrying out educational reforms and building comprehensive educational changes. The expected end result will certainly be positive and can empower all the potential of existing human resources (Donaldson 2015) [5]. Conversely, if teachers are only recipients of change and passive tools for policy delivery, then the results will be far from expectations. A lot of literature reviews

how educational change can be more robust and optimal in achieving goals. One of them is by making teachers the center of change. Teachers can collaborate and provide leadership that has a major influence on the learning process so that student learning outcomes and the quality of school education are better (Hargreaves and Ainscow 2015; Harris, Jones, and Huffman 2017) [9].

Minister of Communication and Information, Johnny G. Plate (Ditjen Aptika, 2021) and founder of the Institute of Social Economic Digital (ISED), Sri Adiningsih (Sindonews.com, 2021) stated that Indonesia is also experiencing accelerated digital transformation in all sectors. Teachers and students today should have skills in accordance with the skill needs of the 21st century in line with the development of digital technology. Several research studies and reports have emerged in the last decade that have examined the main points of life needs. Aspects of career and learning skills that support the achievement of their future lives in the 21st century (Greiff *et al*., 2015; Abualrob, 2019) [14]. A teacher in the learning process must be able to bring his students to be skilled and competent with 21st century skills. There are four categories or aspects that must be mastered, namely critical thinking and problem solving, creativity, good communication, and working collaboratively (van Laar, 2017; Çevik & Şentürk, 2019; Şentürk, 2021). Not only in terms of teaching skill aspects, effective teachers are irespective in managing and creating the organizational culture of a school (Muijs and Reynolds, 2017). Good teachers who are responsive to individual needs, sensitive and pay genuine attention to learners as they teach will be more optimal in achieving learning objectives. Unfortunately, there are still many teachers who are not optimal in carrying out their duties as a leader in their classroom as a teacher.

Most education observers agree that teacher leadership should occur inside and outside the classroom to optimize instructional roles and practices in the schools where they teach. Rogers (2016) said that in addition to the issue of "teacher leader" which is widely highlighted related to current technology, digital transformation is also related to strategies where leadership or managers must be able to find ways to create innovations and new models of learning to optimize the needs and experiences of learners in schools. In line with this opinion, (Weller *et al*, 2013) also stated that digital transformation enables organizations to sustain themselves in an era of rapid change. However, in the field of education, especially those related to teacher competence, transformation still requires strategic direction in its implementation to achieve optimal learning objectives.

From the above background, it is necessary to further examine the importance of teacher leaders and digital transformation to improve the quality of education, especially in Islamic Education Institutions. The purpose of this research focuses on superior school strategies in improving the quality of education through teacher leaders and digital transformation. The hope to be obtained from the results of research through observations made is to obtain a strategy formulation that can be applied in various Islamic Education Institutions to improve the quality of Education, so that Islamic Education institutions are not left behind with public schools that are more considered by the government or private schools that are included in the superior category.

Literature Review
Leader Teacher
The quality of teachers is currently required to increase day by day. This is because of the title attached to teachers, professional teachers are required to carry out and participate in continuous teacher quality improvement activities (PKB). This improvement leads to almost all aspects, especially leadership. This aspect is considered very influential on the achievement of the goals of organizing the learning process. Mudasir (2011: 139) argues that teacher leadership is required to be connected to the situation in learning. This is intended to create learning situations effectively and efficiently. There are three forms of teacher leadership styles that are often found, namely; authoritarian style, participatory democratic style, and laissez faire. The three forms of leadership style in the concept of leadership proposed by (Sagala, 2013) that teachers should teach with a democratic leadership style based on trust in solving various problems and difficulties that arise during the learning process. In line with this opinion, (Rohani and Ahmadi, 2001) explained that this democratic leadership will form a close relationship between teachers and students. The existence of a close relationship between teachers and students will better understand each other and have a sense of mutual trust. This intertwining can create an optimal and productive learning climate. Likewise, (Neolaka, 2017) [17] emphasized in his writing that this aspect of leadership greatly influences students in terms of courage to express opinions and make decisions.

In Indonesia, the leadership aspect of teachers is currently the focus of development through the Guru Penggerak program implemented by the Ministry of Education and Culture-Ristek. The Guru Penggerak program is oriented towards creating a teacher figure as a leader or leader teacher. This means how a teacher is able to provide the best role to deliver students to get quality education. This leader teacher concept has substance in the insight of teacher leadership which makes and shapes the teacher as the central figure of the leader in learning. On the other hand, the role of teachers in the education process is slower with many administrative burdens that are actually less useful in learning. The important thing that needs to be done by teachers is how teachers as leaders are able to turn threats into opportunities and then identify existing opportunities and act effectively to find effective learning as well. (Valikangas & Georges L. Romme, 2017). From the results of research conducted by (Abd Rahim Mansyur, 2021) from the Indonesian Muslim University concluded that, there are two main things in teacher leadership. *First*, that teacher leadership is a teacher's ability to influence students to achieve learning goals by building communication that acts as an interactive, consultative, participatory figure or role model, and as a controller in the learning process. Teacher leadership can be said to be efficient if done democratically so that the classroom becomes comfortable and students can collaborate well. *Secondly*, with the concept of mobilizing teachers in the current independent curriculum, it can produce or print teachers as learning leaders who are central to future education and student-centered and empower fellow teachers in their area.

From the results of the research obtained, it has never been

discussed how schools in Indonesia, especially Islamic schools, choose strategies to improve the quality of education in terms of improving the competence, role and digital skills of teachers in the classroom. This is important, because without a good strategy, a teacher, especially a mobilizing teacher who must be able to invite and mobilize teachers in other schools, will experience various obstacles and it is difficult to invite teachers in their own school. Another factor that may be an obstacle is that the mobilizing teacher is preoccupied with the activity of providing teaching and coaching to teachers in the designated area. From some observations of the literature (sekolah.penggerak.kemdikbud.go.id) shows that this learning figure model is expected to foster and develop the potential of learners holistically, actively and proactively. Learners must be made the main center of the learning process in an effort to achieve learning objectives in a comprehensive and integrated manner. The concept of teacher leadership is expected to be a pilot or educational leader at the time in realizing a superior Indonesian generation.

Several literature reviews and syntheses have made it clear that critical thinking about the nature and outcomes of teacher leadership is highly influential in today's Education world (e.g. Harris and Muijs, 2002; York-Barr and Duke, 2005). The literature reviews presented by York-Barr and Duke (2005) and Wener and Campbell (2017) [12] on teacher leaders have been influential and highlighted in the world of Education. The reviews explain that the centrality of teachers has a major effect on the process of school transformation and institutional educational change. The role of teacher leaders has varied definitions, depending on where we take the school context and the research conducted. Education experts agree that teacher leadership occurs inside and outside the classroom to influence teaching practices or learning processes throughout the school. This means not only public schools that are guaranteed everything by the government but all schools that have officially carried out the education process.

Digital Transformation

Digital transformation is the integral use of digital to enable new types of innovation and creativity in a particular domain, rather than simply enhancing and supporting traditional methods. Digital transformation is defined as a change process that involves the use of digital technology or the development of new digital business models that create and provide more value to the company (Verhoef, *et al*., 2021) [20], improving customer experience, operational processes, and business models that create customer value (Morakanyane, *et al*., 2017) [18].

According to Cem Dilmegani (2022), the digital transformation of education must have three focuses, namely the *first* is accessibility, meaning that the existence of digital technology must be able to help students to more easily access the information or learning resources needed. *Second*, interactive learning, the existence of technology can be an alternative learning media chosen so that students are more enthusiastic about learning, and *third,* adaptive learning, the presence of digital technology today should be an element to support the learning process that can be adapted to the conditions, needs, and environment of students. The expected

digital transformation strategy of education is still not optimally achieved. This is due to many inhibiting factors and the geographical conditions of each region are quite varied.

M. Hasan Chabibie in his writing on the pusdatin.kemdikbud.go.id page, explained that there are three strategies to improve the quality and digital transformation of education. The three strategies are *first,* maximizing digital infrastructure. In this strategy, there are several aspects that need to be well prepared. Efforts can be made by maximizing digital infrastructure such as the availability of electricity and internet access evenly. Both are basic capital in the digital transformation of education. *Second, a* global vision in digital transformation. This means that today's young generation is an internationally connected generation with technological devices. The global vision in digital transformation, according to Chabibie, can later bring Indonesian education that is able to produce Indonesian humans who are equipped with competencies and recognized by the international community. On the other hand, character and moral education typical of the Indonesian nation, remains the basis as a cultural identity, and *Third*, the national digital learning system. Cross-aspect digital transformation needs to be developed in all interconnected aspects ranging from finance, education, health, smart cities, and governance, which become government policies or programs must be fully supported by the community.

Research Methods

This research uses a qualitative approach with a document study which is carried out in two stages, before and after the implementation of teacher learning activities inside and outside the classroom. This research was conducted on private school teachers in Singosari sub-district who were selected and in the superior category. The observation process at the initial stage can be seen from the administration of teacher teaching activities in the classroom which includes learning devices and teacher journals and class journals. This observation is carried out to measure how many teachers are able to be good leaders in their classes so that students feel comfortable when learning with these teachers because of the pleasant classroom atmosphere. Furthermore, the data obtained became a benchmark or comparison with the final data obtained in the second stage of observation. In the second observation, teachers were given direction, motivation and an overview of the importance of leader teachers in the current learning process.

Results and Discussion

Teacher leadership is the ability to influence students to achieve learning goals and to build communication with other educational ecosystems. The main role of the concept of teacher leadership is that the teacher becomes an interactive, consultative, participatory, and controlling figure. In the early stages of observation, data has been obtained that almost 60% of teachers are still the center of student learning resources. The remaining 40% of teachers have been able to become managers and implementers of humanist and fun learning. The following is the teacher data at the initial stage of observation of the suitability of the concept of leader teacher and digital transformation from the five schools used in the study.

Table 1: Teachers' suitability for implementing the leader teacher concept and early stage digital transformation

No.	School Name	Number of Teachers	As per Concept (Leader Teacher)	Not in accordance with the concept (Leader Teacher	Innovative and Digital Savvy
1.	SDI Bani Hasiyim	15 people	6 teachers	9 teachers	11 teachers
2.	SDI Alma 1 Sgs	17 people	7 teachers	10 teachers	7 teachers
3.	SMPI Bani Hasyim	13 people	5 teachers	8 teachers	9 teachers
4.	MTs. Alma 1 Sgs	20 people	8 teachers	12 teachers	9 teachers
5.	SMPI Alma Sgs	18 people	8 teachers	10 teachers	8 teachers

The data above was obtained from the initial stage of observation during three weeks of learning implementation both inside and outside the classroom. The data above shows that teacher leadership has not been implemented efficiently. However, most teachers are digitally proficient in the learning process, although there are still teachers in some schools who are not digitally proficient. In the next stage, it is necessary to provide understanding and direction to teachers so that they can use a democratic style. Teachers are advised to be more open, able to collaborate in the learning process in the classroom. Outside the classroom, teachers should be able to become a place for sharing students so that they can foster harmonious intimacy between teachers and students. Both strategies are in accordance with Islamic teachings that teachers should provide knowledge full of responsibility and love and can be an example or figure that is coveted by students. In the aspect of digital transformation, teachers should be able to utilize and manage internet-based learning needs properly and appropriately. To achieve a good implementation of digital transformation, schools must also facilitate by developing effective governance of internet network utilization (Al-Ruithe, 2018). The strategy that needs to be planned is to increase the knowledge and competence of teachers on the importance of digital proficiency in the learning process, so that students are more interested in learning and the application of digital transformation can help teachers in choosing interactive learning media.

From the observation of the stage after the direction and understanding of the teacher as a leader teacher and digital savvy, the following data was obtained:

Table 2: Teachers' suitability for implementing the leader teacher concept and late-stage digital transformation

No.	School Name	Number of Teachers	As per Concept (Leader Teacher)	Not in accordance with the concept (Leader Teacher	Innovative and Digital Savvy
1.	SDI Bani Hasiyim	15 people	13 teachers	2 teachers	14 teachers
2.	SDI Alma 1 Sgs	17 people	13 teachers	4 teachers	12 teachers
3.	SMPI Bani Hasyim	13 people	13 teachers	0	12 teachers
4.	MTs. Alma 1 Sgs	20 people	13 teachers	7 teachers	15 teachers
5.	SMPI Alma Sgs	18 people	12 teachers	6 teachers	13 teachers

The results in table 2 show that there is an increase in the understanding of teacher leadership and digital transformation in teachers who have been given understanding and direction. There are three key dimensions of teacher leadership, which have been supported by some worthy literature and can be considered in the broader context of educational change. *First*, the importance of teacher leadership goes beyond formal roles or responsibilities. *Second*, the notion of teacher leadership goes beyond formally assigned classroom roles to share practices and initiate change. *Third*, developing pedagogical excellence within their classrooms and beyond to influence more humanistic teaching. Substantially implementing the independent curriculum by optimizing the teacher as a leader teacher is in accordance with and rests on the educational philosophy of Ki Hadjar Dewantara where a learning leader must be able to humanize humans with the concept of "asih, asah and asuh" (in Javanese) which means that "asih", learning is full of love and does not choose favoritism or do not take sides with certain students, "asah", hone students' abilities by providing guidance and mentoring in earnest by exploring the potential that exists in students, and "asuh", provide examples and educate students so that positive character is formed in these students.

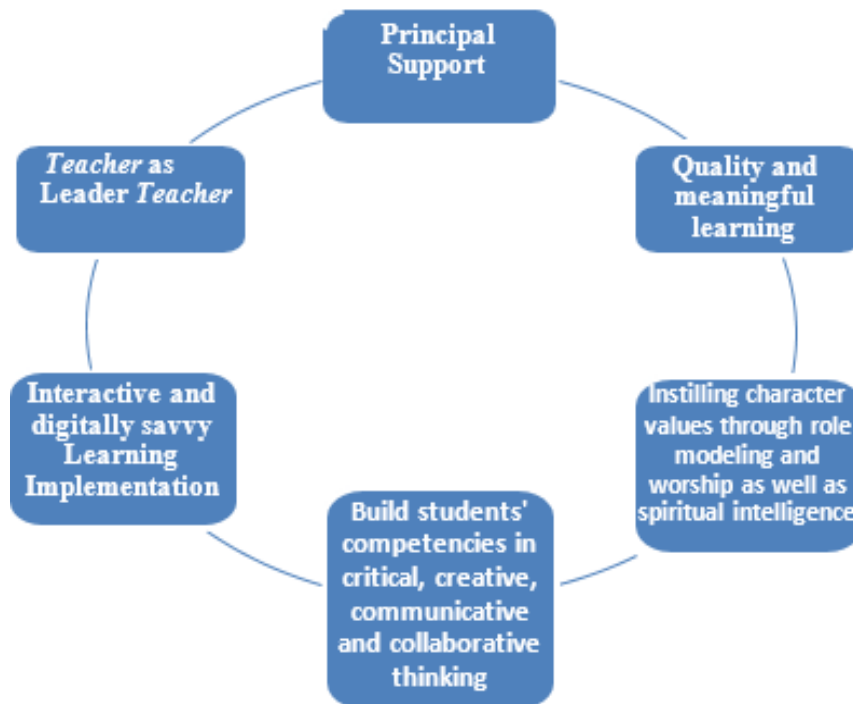**The strategies that can be formulated can be seen in the following chart**

Chart 1: Excellent school strategies in improving education quality through teacher leaders and digital transformation

The idea of teachers as leaders is expected to have a positive effect and change in schools, especially Islamic schools. In the chart above, we can see that the relationship or interrelationship between leaders, teachers, students and curriculum is an inseparable component. If there is a mutually supportive relationship both internally and externally, then the teacher will be easier to bring his students to achieve the expected learning objectives, and vice versa. At a higher level, the quality of education in each school will improve the national education system. There are many studies that prove that teacher leadership is instrumental in terms of the totality of working fully, collectively and collaboratively, which can significantly influence teaching policies and practices. One example of research that teacher leadership can influence policy and practice occurred in Ontario in 2007, under the name Teacher Learning and Leadership Program (TLLP) to support experienced teachers' self-directed professional learning, leadership skills and transfer of knowledge (Lieberman, Campbell, and Yashkina 2017) [12].

Conclusion
The findings that need to be done continuously and sustainably are training planning and creativity development for teachers as well as attention for stakeholders to focus on professional development and improving teacher competencies. Teachers are advised to be more open, able to collaborate in the learning process in the classroom while outside the classroom teachers should be able to be good friends for students. Islamic teachings recommend that teachers should be able to motivate their students not to despair and provide knowledge with responsibility and love. In carrying out the digital transformation of education, teachers should not be tired of learning and catching up. Many efforts must be made for better and more advanced educational changes. Government support is needed, teachers cannot walk alone but must work together. The government

also needs ideas, creative thinking, and real movements from all elements of the nation in particular, as a form of concern and active participation in building the nation's civilization.

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