Management of Madrasah Leadership: Between Change and Resistance

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses management of leadership in the madrasah environment. The main focus of this article is on the challenges faced by madrasah leaders in managing change and resistance from stakeholders. This research is a qualitative study that draws on practical experiences of leadership management in the madrasah environment. The case study approach can provide a detailed picture of the situations and challenges faced by madrasah leaders in managing change and resistance, as well as the strategies used to address them. In the case study, data can be obtained through interviews, observations, and document analysis to provide a more comprehensive picture of the case being studied. Through literature review and practical experiences, this article discusses several effective leadership management strategies for managing change and resistance in the madrasah environment. This article also discusses the importance of effective communication and participation from all relevant parties in the leadership management process in madrasah. This article is expected to contribute to the development of leadership management in the madrasah environment and strengthen the role of madrasah in shaping the character and personality of the younger generation. The results presented show that: First, school leadership management can respond to resistance from school communities by acting as a source of information, initiator of innovation programs, and agent/driving force in overcoming school community resistance to curriculum changes. Good school leadership management can help improve the quality of education in madrasahs, strengthen leadership positions inside and outside the school, and create a conducive and innovative working environment for teachers and school staff. Second, in order to overcome school community resistance to curriculum changes, visionary, participative leadership that is capable of initiating innovation programs is required. The school principal as a leader must understand the conditions and characteristics of the madrasah, be able to communicate clear and consistent vision and goals, and motivate teachers and school staff to work together in overcoming these challenges.

Keywords: management, leadership, madrasah.

INTRODUCTION

Disruption is no longer a mere concept; the fact that education, particularly learning practices in schools, has undergone significant changes is undeniable. Issues such as post-pandemic learning, the use of digital technology in education, and curriculum change policies have become some of the hottest topics. In response to these challenges, an ideal school community would be adaptive and open to learning and embracing new things. However, the stagnancy of past educational models and practices creates resistance among school members. At this point, the leadership management by school principals as top leaders influences the level of acceptance among school members, which in turn affects the

organizational culture and performance of the institution.

Change management and leadership management are two closely intertwined concepts. Both of these concepts, on a larger scale, form a conceptual framework known as Organizational Culture. As a field of study, these concepts have been extensively researched in government service organizations and commercial trading companies, which contextually have more common organizational culture characteristics. This research provides an alternative perspective that focuses on the object of the school organization model, specifically the madrasah. School/madrasah organizations have a unique organizational culture, compared to general organizations and even other educational/school organizations.

This study aims to 1) identify factors causing school resistance to curriculum changes, and 2) examine the policy responses of school principals to the existing resistance. These two factors will explain the contextual problem faced in a change and how the school principal's leadership in the form of actions and policies responds to this resistance.

Change and resistance are common phenomena in organizational management dynamics, including in madrasahs (Demak et al., 2022; Fulu & Miedema, 2016). Moreover, in the disruptive era of education, where volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity (VUCA) are inevitable, madrasahs are required to be able to respond and adapt (Nurbayan et al., 2021; Somantri, 2021). The object of curriculum change in this study is merely a context to see a transformative problem that always creates resistance. Essentially, what needs to be shown is how leadership management plays a role in the pull between change and resistance.

Madrasah Leadership Management

Madrasah Leadership Management can provide a deeper understanding of leadership concepts in madrasah (Devi & Subiyantoro, 2021; Fathih et al., 2021; Zaini & Syafaruddin, 2020). This theory refers to the ways used to lead and manage madrasah effectively, including decision-making, communication, motivation, human resource development, and conflict management.

One relevant leadership theory in this context is Contingency Theory. This theory argues that there is no one leadership style that is right for all situations (Otley, 2016; Shao et al., 2016). A leader must be able to adapt their leadership style to the conditions and tasks at hand. In the context of madrasah, a leader must be able to adjust their leadership style to the characteristics of the madrasah, environmental conditions, as well as the goals and strategies for madrasah development.

In addition, Transformational Leadership theory is also relevant in this context. This theory emphasizes the importance of a leader in inspiring, guiding, and motivating their subordinates to achieve shared goals (Akdere & Egan, 2020; Al-Husseini et al., 2021; Jia et al., 2018; Yin et al., 2019). A transformational leader will help develop the potential of their subordinates so that they can contribute optimally to achieving the vision and mission of the madrasah.

However, in practice, proposed changes in madrasah leadership management are often met with resistance. This can happen due to several factors, such as a lack of understanding and support from stakeholders, uncertainty and fear of change, or differences in views on the goals and strategies for madrasah development.

The Merdeka Curriculum

The Merdeka Curriculum is a curriculum concept that emphasizes local wisdom and the characteristics of learners (Aflisia et al., 2019; Fitrahayunitisna & Zulvarina, 2017). The implementation of this curriculum in madrasahs must be led by an effective madrasah leader who is capable of overcoming resistance that may arise.

In the context of madrasahs, resistance to curriculum changes can come from various parties, including teachers and learners. Therefore, a madrasah leader must be able to manage changes well using the Theory of Change Management (Hasanah, 2017; Misbah et al., 2019; Sumadi & Ma'ruf, 2020). An initial step that can be taken is to involve all stakeholders in the curriculum development process to ensure that the curriculum aligns with the madrasah's vision and mission, as well as consider the

characteristics of learners and the needs of the surrounding community.

Furthermore, the madrasah leader must be able to implement curriculum changes gradually and participatively. This step can help reduce resistance from teachers and learners, as well as help identify problems and improvements that need to be made during the implementation process (Hisbullah, 2020; Nurdin, 2020). The madrasah leader must also provide sufficient support and resources for teachers and learners during the implementation process, such as training and professional development for teachers, as well as adequate facilities and learning resources for learners.

In conclusion, the development of quality and relevant curriculum for learners in madrasahs can be done using the Merdeka Curriculum concept. However, curriculum changes are often faced with resistance from various parties, so a madrasah leader must understand and manage changes well using the Theory of Change Management. This can be done by involving all stakeholders in the curriculum development and implementation process, as well as providing sufficient support and resources during the implementation process.

METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative approach, which involves collecting descriptive and detailed data with a focus on the meaning given by the research participants. The research design used in this study is a case study, as this method can be used to collect data from several participants or cases that are considered to represent the phenomenon under investigation.

The study was conducted in four primary schools (Madrasah Ibtidaiyah) located in the Luwu Regency, both public and private, involving school principals, teachers, educational staff, and school committees as school community members. The research was conducted at the end of 2022, coinciding with the preparation for the gradual implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka in the academic year 2022/2023 and

fully implemented in the academic year 2024/2025.

Data was collected through interviews and observations. Interviews were conducted face-to-face, through telephone, or video call, and involved structured and unstructured questions related to the research topic. Observations involved direct observation of the participants and their environment, and were conducted through both participant and non-participant observation.

The data analysis technique used in this study includes thematic analysis or content analysis. This method involves grouping data into themes or categories related to the research topic, followed by interpretation of the meaning contained within each theme or category..

RESULTS

Resistance Factors of School Communities towards Curriculum Changes

Reluctance to Learn New Things

The results of the interviews indicate that some teachers question the necessity of learning a new curriculum system as a difficult task. Curriculum changes not only affect administrative aspects but also the technical aspects of learning in the classroom. Therefore, curriculum changes are considered complex, as the results of the interviews show:

> "Every change in the curriculum increases the burden on teachers; they have to learn many new things, which is difficult for me."

Resistance to curriculum changes is not only found in teachers but also in educational staff. As the results of the interviews show:

> "It's not just about teaching; curriculum changes also affect school administration, including derivative programs from the curriculum. We have to learn new report formats and new applications, which add to our workload."

Consequences of curriculum change on learning tools

The textual curriculum is the first and foremost point of focus that is most felt by school

members. In the preliminary stages of curriculum change, such as in 2022, the central and regional governments, including teacher organizations and education institutions, conducted many socialization programs that focused on disseminating the textual curriculum. During this period, teachers faced resistance due to the difficulty of understanding the textual curriculum, particularly the consequences of preparing learning tools that teachers must do. "It's very complicated to learn about learning tools, not to mention the new curriculum, we still have many things we don't understand about the old curriculum."

The consequences of curriculum change on teacher administration become a dominant factor of resistance to curriculum change policies.

Assuming that changes do not affect quality

The interesting factor of resistance is identified from the assumption of the school community stating that curriculum changes do not have an impact on the quality of learning. The curriculum changes are seen as only a matter of terminology and do not address the essence of educational problems.

> "Unfortunately, every change in the curriculum only changes the terminology, the content is the same, it does not solve the problem."

Management Response: School Principal Leadership

Becoming a source of information

A significant leadership role played by the school principal is to become a "source of information". "To respond to curriculum changes, I always update information from the principal's WA group and from internet sources so that I can convey the new curriculum concept to the school community on various occasions."

> "Many teachers are still confused, as not all of them are given the opportunity to participate in training or at least socialization, so I always share information with them."

Initiating Innovation Programs

In response to the curriculum changes, the progressive characteristic of the school principal plays a significant leadership role in initiating innovation programs. For example, at Masrasah..., the principal provides printed guidebooks and reference documents on the latest curriculum. "I prepare example documents to facilitate discussion."

There is also a benchmarking program for school communities to visit leading schools as an example of the implementation of independent curricula. In addition, there is a collaborative program between schools and independent education organizations as an alternative innovative program in response to curriculum changes.

In principle, these programs are innovations and initiatives of the school principal to minimize resistance without relying solely on the limited programs provided by the government.

Becoming an Agent/Mover

The government places school principals as role models through the teacher mover program. It is hoped that the school principal not only serves as an example but also as a driving force for curriculum change.

DISCUSSION

Resistance Factors of School Communities towards Curriculum Changes

First, reluctance to learn something new is one of the factors that can cause resistance to changes in the curriculum among school communities. The relevant theory related to this phenomenon is the change resistance theory (Brisset, 2017; J. S. Lee et al., 2015; Nkomo et al., 2019).

According to this theory, resistance to change can arise due to several factors, including reluctance to learn something new. These factors include uncertainty about the change, concern about the loss of benefits or the status quo, distrust of decision-makers' expertise, and concern about changes in routines or work processes.

In addition, there is another theory that can explain reluctance to learn something new, namely the social learning theory (Busey & Walker, 2017; Zembylas, 2021). According to this theory, individuals tend to learn something new if they see that the behavior provides benefits or positive outcomes in their social environment. If individuals do not see the benefit of learning something new, they are likely to be unwilling to do so.

Therefore, to overcome reluctance to learn something new as a factor of resistance to changes in the curriculum, effective communication strategies are needed to help school communities understand the benefits of the changes. Additionally, the introduction of the new curriculum should be done gradually and accompanied by sufficient training and support, so that school communities feel more confident and ready to learn something new. Furthermore, the participation of school communities in the planning and implementation process of the curriculum changes can help them feel more involved and have a better understanding of the goals and benefits of the changes.

Secondly, the consequences of curriculum changes on learning tools are one of the factors that can lead to resistance towards curriculum changes among school community members. The relevant theory concerning this phenomenon is organizational change theory (Bruskin, 2019; Fisher et al., 2021; Hanelt et al., 2021; Schwarz & Stensaker, 2016).

According to this theory, curriculum changes can cause changes in the structure, process, and learning tools used in schools. This can cause discomfort and anxiety among school community members, which in turn can trigger resistance towards the changes. Additionally, changes in learning tools may require additional costs in terms of time, energy, and financial resources, which can exacerbate resistance towards the changes.

In addition to organizational change theory, there is also another theory that can explain the consequences of curriculum changes on learning tools, namely adjustment theory (Celadyn, 2020; Gašević et al., 2016; Jena, 2015). According to this theory, individuals tend to experience stress or discomfort when faced with change, but they can adjust to the changes if they feel they have sufficient abilities and support.

Therefore, to address resistance towards curriculum changes related to the consequences of changes in learning tools, efforts must be made to prepare and facilitate the school community's adjustment to the changes. This can be done by providing adequate training and support related to the use of new learning tools, as well as considering practical factors such as costs and resource availability. Additionally, open and transparent communication with the school community can help reduce anxiety and increase their participation in the change process.

Thirdly, assuming that changes will not impact quality is one of the factors that can lead to resistance to curriculum changes among school communities. The relevant theory related to this phenomenon is the self-actualization theory (Compton, 2018; Krems et al., 2017; Whitehead, 2017). According to this theory, individuals have a need to feel accepted, recognized, and valued by their social environment. If individuals feel that the curriculum changes will not meet these needs or even compromise the existing quality of education, they may lack enthusiasm to support the changes.

Additionally, there is also another theory that can explain the assumption that changes will not impact quality as a factor of resistance to curriculum changes, namely the social cognitive theory (Burnes, 2015; Kursan Milaković, 2021). According to this theory, individuals' perceptions of their environment and specific situations can influence their behavior towards change. If individuals believe that curriculum changes will not improve the quality of education or even compromise it, they are likely to be reluctant to support the changes.

Therefore, to overcome resistance to curriculum changes related to the assumption that changes will not impact quality, efforts must be made to build a better understanding of the goals and benefits of the curriculum changes. This can be done by providing clear and detailed information about the changes and engaging in dialogue with school communities to understand their concerns and expectations of the changes.

Additionally, regular evaluations of the impact of the curriculum changes on the quality of education should be conducted to prove that the changes are genuinely beneficial for the school community and the quality of education as a whole.

Management Response to School Principal's Leadership.

First, the relevant theory related to being a source of information in the management response of a school principal's leadership is organizational communication theory (Bush, 2020; Hussin & Al Abri, 2015; Sun & Henderson, 2017). According to this theory, communication is a crucial process in an organization, and the school principal as a leader must be able to communicate well and be a reliable source of information for the school community. As a source of information, the principal should be able to provide clear, accurate, and up-to-date information regarding various aspects related to school activities, including learning programs, employee development, and school financial conditions.

Moreover, organizational communication theory emphasizes the importance of bidirectional communication. This means that the principal should not only be a source of information but also be able to listen and understand the views and input of the school community, including teachers, students, and parents. In this way, the principal can build a better relationship with the school community, increase their participation in school activities, and reduce the potential for conflict or resistance to proposed policies and changes.

Therefore, the school principal needs to pay attention to the importance of communication in leadership management, especially in situations that require a quick response to changes or problems that arise. Additionally, the principal should be able to use various available communication media, such as email, school newspapers, school websites, or social media, to ensure that information related to school activities is effectively and timely conveyed. By being a reliable source of information and being able to communicate well, the principal can build trust and engagement with the school community and create a more harmonious and productive school environment.

Second, the relevant theory related to initiating innovation programs in response to school leadership management is the innovation theory (Cai & Tang, 2021; Holdsworth & Maynes, 2017; C. Lee et al., 2016). The innovation theory suggests that innovation is a process that involves change and new development in an organization or system. Innovation is one way that school principals can face challenges and changes within and outside the school.

As a leader, the school principal must be able to become an innovator in initiating innovation programs that can help improve the quality of education in the school. In carrying out innovation, the school principal needs to identify the problems that exist in the school and find the right solutions by involving all relevant parties, such as teachers, students, and parents.

The innovation theory also emphasizes the importance of factors that can influence the success of innovation programs, such as organizational support, a conducive innovation environment, and effective communication. The school principal needs to ensure that the initiated innovation programs can obtain support from all parties in the school, including support from external parties such as the education department, companies, or the surrounding community.

In addition, the school principal also needs to create a conducive innovation environment by providing space and opportunities for teachers and students to innovate, for example, by providing scholarships, training, or supporting facilities. In this case, the school principal needs to show an open and proactive attitude towards change and pay attention to the needs and desires of all parties in the school.

In initiating innovation programs, the school principal also needs to use effective and persuasive communication to influence the views and attitudes of school stakeholders towards the proposed innovation programs. In this case, the school principal needs to be able to identify and understand the needs and interests of all parties involved, as well as invite them to actively participate in the innovation program.

By initiating appropriate and effective innovation programs, the school principal can help improve the quality of education in the school, create a conducive innovation environment, and strengthen their leadership position within and outside the school..

Third, the relevant theory regarding being an agent/driving force in the management response of school leadership is the theory of transformational leadership (Matthews, 2020; Yost et al., 2015; Zhou et al., 2020). The theory of transformational leadership emphasizes the leader's role in inspiring, motivating, and directing subordinates to achieve greater and better goals. In the context of school leadership, transformational leadership is translated as the ability of school principals to inspire and motivate teachers and school staff to make changes and achieve better goals in improving the quality of education in the school.

As an agent/driving force in the management response of school leadership, school principals must have the ability to lead and mobilize the entire school staff in realizing the school's vision and mission. School principals must be able to provide a clear vision and inspire teachers and school staff to commit to achieving shared goals.

In addition, school principals also need to be able to motivate teachers and school staff to actively participate in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of school programs. School principals must be able to demonstrate an empowerment-oriented attitude and provide opportunities for the development of teachers' and school staff's capabilities in realizing the school's vision and mission.

In performing the role as an agent/driving force, school principals also need to have the ability to form an effective team and manage cooperation among team members. In this regard, school principals must be able to understand the strengths and weaknesses of each team member, as well as placing them in the right position and providing the necessary support.

Furthermore, school principals also need to have the ability to foster good relationships with the community and other relevant parties, such as education offices, companies, or the surrounding community. In this regard, school principals must be able to demonstrate an empowerment-oriented attitude and build collaborations with all parties to achieve shared goals.

By playing the role as an agent/driving force in the management response of school leadership, school principals can help improve the quality of education in the school, strengthen the position of leadership inside and outside the school, as well as create a conducive and innovative work environment for teachers and school staff.

Several findings were obtained in this study, including:

- Presenting a case study on the resistance of school community to curriculum changes in madrasahs, which is a specific context that has not been extensively discussed in the literature.

- Explaining how school leadership management can respond to school community resistance to curriculum changes in madrasahs, by referring to relevant leadership and management theories.

- Describing three main factors that cause school community resistance to curriculum changes, namely reluctance to learn new things, assumption that changes do not affect quality, and consequences of changes on learning devices.

- Describing how the school principal can act as a source of information, initiator of innovation programs, and agent/motivator in overcoming school community resistance to curriculum changes, by referring to relevant leadership and management theories.

- Describing how good school leadership management can help improve the quality of education in madrasahs, strengthen the position of leadership inside and outside the school, as well as create a conducive and innovative working environment for teachers and school staff.

CONCLUSION

Resistance of school community to curriculum changes in madrasah is a common problem that

can hinder educational progress. There are three main factors that cause resistance of school community to curriculum changes, which are reluctance to learn new things, assumption that changes do not impact quality, and consequences of changes on learning tools.

The management of school principal leadership can respond to the resistance of school community by acting as a source of information, initiator of innovation programs, and agent/mover in addressing resistance to curriculum changes. Good school principal leadership management can help improve the quality of education in madrasah, strengthen leadership positions both within and outside the school, as well as create a conducive and innovative working environment for teachers and staff.

In order to overcome the resistance of school community to curriculum changes, visionary, participative, and initiative-oriented leadership is required. The school principal as a leader must understand the conditions and characteristics of the madrasah, be able to communicate a clear and consistent vision and goals, and motivate teachers and school staff to work together in addressing resistance and achieving common goals.

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