



The Role of The Principal in Improving Teachers' Creativity

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Abstract

This study explores the principal's role in improving teacher creativity at MA Al Ittihad, Kampar Regency. The study employed a qualitative approach within a field research design. The research subjects was the principal of MA Al Ittihad. The data collection techniques used interviews, observation, and documentation, while the data analysis technique adopted the data reduction model, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The results showed that the principal had taken various steps to improve teachers' creativity, such as providing direct examples through room design, directing teachers' creative activities, giving appreciation through awards and bonuses to teachers who innovate, and providing facilities and budgets for creative activities. Principals also offer opportunities for teachers and students to compete in creative events, both at the local and provincial levels. The implications of this study show the importance of the principal's role in creating a climate that supports teacher creativity, which in turn can improve the quality of learning and student achievement. This research also contributes to the development of school management that focuses on empowering educators' creativity.

Keywords: leadership, principal, role, teacher creativity

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A. Introduction

Progress in education plays a crucial role in the development of a nation. Education plays a role as one of the ways to develop potential individuals. Education can enhance human resources' quality, impacting a country's development. Education helps to improve individuals' knowledge and skills to produce quality individuals (Indrawati & Kuncoro, 2021). This is expected to be capable of being open-minded, expanding insight, and controlling technology and science knowledge so that it can make a real contribution to progress in national development.

The implementation of education is focused on efforts to improve quality education. Fulfilment criteria for organizing education require preparation and human involvement in sustainable education. The teacher determines whether it is successful or not. Teachers are the spearhead and must be active as a professional workforce (Lestari et al., 2021). Teachers are important components of education implementation and impact on the quality of educational outcomes. Teachers not only teach, but they also receive a mandate to guide and provide direction to students during the learning process. Teachers are strategically responsible for preparing the nation's future by successfully equipping participants with knowledge, forming morals and a noble character, having a high learning ethos, and being ready for competition with others (Anwar, 2020).

The implementation process of education aims to produce changes in individual behavior, especially regarding ability. The learning outcomes are obtained in the form of new knowledge and experiences, which are greatly influenced by the role of teachers in the learning process (Yuhana & Aminy, 2019). Without optimal teacher involvement, learning activities will not be successful and run optimally. Therefore, the increase in quality education and teacher quality is very important. The success of educational goals depends on the contribution of teachers because they have a strategic role in directing, guiding, and motivating students to achieve their maximum potential. However, the reality shows that the role and function of teachers in learning still tend to dominate, with approaches that are often less innovative. In the education structure, teachers occupy the leading position as a determinant of implementing high-quality education. Sustainable quality learning activity highly depends on the teacher's competence, professionalism, and optimistic personality (Simangunsong et al., 2023).

One of the important aspects that a teacher must have is creativity. Teacher creativity is important in creating innovative, interactive, and enjoyable learning experiences. This can enhance students' learning motivation, positively impacting their learning outcomes. Creative teachers who can design learning methods that are informative, interesting, relevant, and contextually appropriate need students (Simangunsong et al., 2023). However, many teachers encounter significant challenges in their professional development (Mahmud et al., 2022). The phenomenon in many schools shows that teacher creativity has not been a priority in developing their professionalism. Learning methods are still conventional and monotonous, which is not in line with the needs of students in today's digital world (Kadarsih et al., 2020). In addition, various factors, such as limitations of facilities, lack of training, and lack of motivation and support from the environment, frequently become obstacles (Purwanto, 2021). These obstacles prevent teachers' creativity from developing optimally, impacting the quality of learning outcomes (Harun et al., 2021).

In this context, the principal has a strategic role in encouraging the development of teacher creativity. As a leader in an educational institution, the principal is responsible for creating a supportive work environment, providing clear direction, and providing adequate facilities to support innovation in learning (Said, 2018). The principal also plays a role in providing training and opportunities. The principal is responsible for developing the professionalism of teachers, enabling them to maximize their potential creativity. Previous research has shown that the principal's leadership significantly impacts the improvement of creativity and professionalism among teachers. Much research (Hanim et al., 2020; Tishana, 2023; Soh, 2017; Zhang et al., 2020; Amtu et al., 2019; Da'as, 2022) shows that good leadership, a supportive learning environment, and professional development programs are all important for supporting teachers to be creative.

MA Al Ittihad Kampar Regency is one of the educational institutions under the Al Ittihad Putra Bangsa Foundation, which is committed to becoming a high-quality and favorite school in its region. The role of the principal is very significant in improving the management of the institution's education, including developing teacher creativity. Initial observations showed that the principal at MA Al Ittihad plays a key role in various aspects, from making decisions to granting authority to teachers and staff. This leadership encourages progress in academics and non-academics and creates a neat, beautiful, and comfortable school atmosphere for learning. With the vision of being a "Digital Based Creative Madrasah," this school aims to achieve significant accomplishments in science, arts, and creativity. The urgency of this research lies in the importance of examining how principals can further optimize teacher creativity to support school vision and improve quality education.

The uniqueness of this research lies in its focus on the role of the principal as a catalyst in increasing teacher creativity in the Madrasah Aliyah environment, especially at MA Al Ittihad Kampar Regency. Unlike previous research emphasizing leadership principles in general, this study focuses on integrating leadership with values, art, and creativity. The principal at MA Al Ittihad shows an innovative approach involving various party educators, staff, students, and other external parties to realize education based on creativity. This contributes practically and enriches the literature on education leadership in digital-based and creative madrasahs. The point of this study is to look into how the principal at MA Al Ittihad Kampar Regency helped teachers be more creative. It will look at the strategies used and how they affected both creativity in the classroom and new ideas.

B. Literature Review

The principal has a central position in the education system as a leader responsible for the school's overall success. Based on Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture Republic of Indonesia Number 6 of 2018 concerning the Assignment of Teachers as School Principals, the principal functions as an administrator and a leader. Learning on duty facilitates improvement in teacher competence and quality learning. From a grand theory perspective, the concept of transformational leadership developed by Asad et al. (2021) emphasizes the importance of leaders in providing inspiration, motivation, and positive influence to subordinates to achieve results above expectations. In the context of education, the principal is required to be a transformational leader capable of encouraging teachers to develop their creativity in the learning process (Yin et al., 2020)

The role of the principal covers various integrated aspects with their strategies, such as forming a culture of innovative organization, training program development for teachers, and creating a reward system that encourages creativity. In particular, the principal is responsible for creating a physically and psychologically conducive work environment. In this case, the principal must understand the characteristics and potential of each teacher so that they can provide appropriate support following individual needs. Teacher creativity is one of the important elements in achieving adaptive and responsive learning to challenge the 21st century, including the utilization of technology information and communication (ICT) (Mahfudh & Imron, 2020). Therefore, the principal must ensure teachers access technology and innovation training to create relevant and engaging student learning experiences.

On a broader scale, the principal's role also encompasses managing school resources to support educational programs that emphasize creativity. The principal must be able to manage facilities, build collaboration with external parties, and develop supportive policies for innovative learning. This role influences teacher quality and directly impacts student learning outcomes and the school's reputation in the community. Previous research results have shown the significant role of the principal in improving teacher creativity. The principal who implemented a policy based on leadership transformation improved teacher professionalism and created a more innovative learning environment (Hanim et al., 2020). This study underlines the importance of support from principals in overcoming obstacles teachers face, such as limited facilities and motivation (Tishana, 2023). Furthermore, it highlights how principals who actively provide training and mentoring can encourage teachers to adopt new teaching methods. This aligns with other research findings, which show that the principal, an inspiring and capable leader, creates an environment supportive of work, creativity, and innovation in elementary schools (Soh, 2017).

Another study confirms the importance of training programs designed by the principal to improve teachers' ability to innovate (Zhang et al., 2020). Principals who are proactive in implementing learning-based leadership strategies can create effective and innovative schools. In addition, another research highlights the importance of implementing learning principles in an organization to improve teacher creativity (Amtu et al., 2019). Riswandi shows that the principal who implements learning principles collaboratively can encourage teachers to be more creative. Although these various studies provide valuable insights, most have not explicitly discussed the role of school principals in the educational context based on creativity and digitalization. This research fills the gap with the study of the role of the principal at MA Al Ittihad Kampar Regency, which has the concept of "Digital-Based Creative Madrasah."

C. Method

This research used a qualitative approach, using field research conducted at MA Al Ittihad Kampar Regency. The subject studied in this study was the principal of MA Al Ittihad. The researcher observed directly how the principal interacted with teachers, as well as the efforts made by the principal to increase teacher creativity in learning activities. Observation focused on the dynamics between the principal and teachers and the implementation of supportive policies and creativity, such as training programs or technology in learning. In addition, researchers collected data through in-depth interviews with the principal, several teachers, supporting staff, and the foundation management to obtain their perspectives on the role of the principal

in encouraging teacher creativity. This interview aims to explore the understanding of the policies implemented and how the policies impact the development of teachers (Cresswell, 2019).

Besides interviews and observations, data were also collected through documentation that includes records, field reports, school activity reports, and documents related to policies that develop teacher creativity at MA Al Ittihad. Data from this document will provide a clearer picture of the steps concretely taken by the principal in improving teacher creativity. For data analysis, this study used the procedure of data reduction, where researchers will summarize and select relevant data and identify emerging patterns from the results of observations and interviews. Furthermore, the data that has been chosen will be presented in the form of an easy summary or description that is understood. Finally, the withdrawal conclusions are drawn using a method to analyze the data as a whole to conclude the role of the principal in improving teacher creativity at the school (Salim & Syahrums, 2012).

D. Findings

The results presented in this section show steps that the principal has taken to encourage and facilitate teacher creativity and the impact on achievements and developments in creativity in the school environment. These findings will be analysed through data triangulation, merging information from various sources to show the consistency and credibility of research results.

1. Interview Results

Interview results with the MA Al Ittihad's principal disclose various steps taken to improve teachers' creativity at the school. The principal explained that providing direct examples in creative activities is important. He says:

"We often design rooms, offices, and classes at the beginning of each school year to create a more interesting and creative learning atmosphere."

In addition, he also revealed that every year, teachers are given directions to engage in various creative activities, such as designing class themes, class wall magazines, and art performance activity concepts.

"Every year, we give teachers the chance to be creative with designing different classes and supporting creative outside learning activities."

Regarding appreciation for teacher creativity, the principal said that he gave an award in the form of bonuses to teachers who create or implement digital learning media or other creative activities.

"Giving motivation to creative teachers is very important to encourage them to remain innovative."

Not only that, he also added that the facilities' support is needed to increase teacher creativity; therefore, the school provides a budget for creative activities and digital learning media.

"We are always ready to support teacher activities that focus on improving creativity with provided budgets, especially for that."

The principal also revealed the importance of giving a chance to teachers and students to compete in the event creatively, both at the local and provincial levels.

"This competition is not only an arena to prove creativity but also a motivation for them to continue innovating."

This policy hopes to create a supportive climate of creativity for teachers and students at MA Al Ittihad. The interview results show that the principal plays an active role in providing examples and direct guidance to teachers and providing appreciation and facilities to support creative activity. This creates a conducive atmosphere for teachers to be more innovative in learning.

2. Activities and Achievements Creativity

Through the steps taken by the principal, various activities and achievements in the field of creativity are also recorded well. The following table presents a list of related activities and achievements with teacher creativity at MA Al Ittihad:

Table 1. Activities and Achievements Teacher Creativity at MA Al Ittihad

TYPE OF ACTIVITY	ACTIVITY NAME
1. Learning to Teach	Designing Class Displays Designing Learning Videos & PPTs Designing Class Bulletin Board Designing Learning Media Designing Crafts & Handicrafts Designing Methods & Learning Activities Designing Module/LKS/ Student Assignment Concept Designing Art Performance Concept Designing a Provincial-Level Bazaar Stand
2. Competition Art	Poem Writing Competition (1st Place 2020) Provincial Level Speech Competition (3rd Place 2021) Provincial Level Adhan Competition (1st Place, 3rd Place 2022) Provincial Level Hadroh Competition (2nd Place 2022) Provincial Level Sholawat Cover Competition (1st Place 2023) 78th Indonesian Independence Day Parade & Carnival (1st Place 2023) National Calligraphy Competition (2nd, 3rd Place 2023) Provincial Level Hadroh Competition (2nd Place 2023) Provincial Level Stand Up Competition (Winner) Favorites of 2023 79th Indonesian Independence Day Parade & Carnival (1st Place 2024) National Calligraphy Competition (1st Place 2024) Adhan Competition (1st Place, 3 Years 2024)
3. Publication & Promotion	School Profile Video Concept Billboard / Banner / Promotion Draft Flyer/ Brochure / Pamphlet Concept for School Promotion
4. Social Community	Designing Religious Event Decoration Designing Indonesian Independence Day Event Decoration Designing Hajj Event Decoration Becoming an event entertainer in the community

Source: MA Al Ittihad Archives & Documentation

Data obtained from observation shows that success in increasing teacher creativity is reflected in teaching and learning activities, extracurricular activities, and achievements in art and school promotion. In this case, the principal successfully integrated creativity into various aspects of school life.

E. Discussion

This study adopted the data triangulation method, which combines interviews, observations, and documentation to ensure the validity and credibility of the findings. This triangulation shows that all data sources are mutually supportive and strengthens the conclusion that the principal has a key role in pushing teacher creativity. The role of the principal at MA Al Ittihad is crucial in creating a supportive environment for teacher creativity. Through interviews, observations, and documentation, it was found that the steps taken by the principal, such as providing examples of creative activities, direction to teachers, and appreciation and facilities, have been proven effective in improving teacher creativity.

The principal said he prioritizes giving examples and appreciation to encourage teachers to be more creative in teaching and other activities. This aligns with observation results showing that various design classes, art activities, and other creative projects can easily be found in the school environment. The documentation obtained, such as photos of activities, achievement reports, and promotional media, further confirms that the principal efforts in creating a climate conducive to creativity have produced actual results. Previous research also shows that effective leadership and support from principals can improve teacher motivation and performance, which in turn contributes to improved creativity in teaching (Sufi & Efastri, 2023).

The observations reveal that the teachers at MA Al Ittihad actively participate in various creatively designed activities. For instance, the school implements a collaborative art project involving students and teachers and an innovative class in the development room. Documentation that includes activity and achievement reports also shows that the school has succeeded in creating a supportive environment for creativity. Other studies also emphasize the importance of support from principals in creating a culture of innovation in schools (Rahayu et al., 2022).

The principal said that this support includes training and workshops designed to improve teaching skills and teacher creativity. By providing opportunities for teachers to learn and develop, the principal creates an encouraging atmosphere of innovation. Research shows that ongoing training and support from school leaders can improve teachers' Additionally, the principal expressed his appreciation for teachers who demonstrate creativity in their teaching methods (Sastradiharja et al., 2022).

Additionally, the principal expressed his appreciation for teachers who demonstrate creativity in their teaching methods. This appreciation can take the form of formal and informal awards, as well as informal recognition, which can provide additional motivation for teachers to continue innovating. Research shows that recognition of teacher performance can increase satisfaction with their work and commitment to school, which in turn has a positive impact on performance and creativity (Suryapermana & Rosidah, 2020).

The facilities provided by the principal also contribute to improving teacher creativity. With adequate space for creative activities, innovative learning tools, and other resources, the principal creates a supportive environment for exploration and experimentation in teaching. Research shows that the teaching environment and supportive physical facilities can increase teacher motivation and creativity in designing intriguing and effective learning (Sastradiharja et al., 2022).

All data sources support the finding that the principal has a key role in pushing teacher creativity, both through policies, provision of facilities, or awards for achievements achieved by teachers and students. These results show the significant

roles of a principal in creating a creative and innovative school environment. Other studies also emphasize that principals who are proactive in supporting teacher creativity can create a positive and innovative school culture (Rahayu et al., 2022).

In this context, it is important to consider that success in creating a supportive environment for creativity depends not only on the policies implemented but also on their ability to build positive relationships with teachers. A positive relationship between principals and teachers can improve communication and collaboration, which are key elements in creating a supportive environment for creativity. Research shows that inclusive and collaborative leadership can increase teacher engagement in the decision-making process and decisions and innovation in schools (Sufi & Efastri, 2023).

This finding strengthens literature that previously emphasized that the principal has an important role as an agent of change in schools. In this context, the principal does not only act as an administrator but also as a facilitator and motivator who helps teachers develop their potential and creativity. With a conducive climate, such as providing moral, material, and intellectual support, the principal is successful in building a culture of innovative work among teachers. This has implications for increasing quality learning at school. However, this study also suggests that the principal requires support from factors such as school policies that foster creativity, professional training for teachers, and collaboration among educators. Therefore, the principal needs to continue developing strategies to deal with challenges that may arise, such as limitations on source power or resistance to change.

Implications from this research emphasize the important role principals play in creating a school climate conducive to developing teacher creativity. The principal needs to continue honing his leadership ability by providing moral, material, and intellectual support to teachers, as well as facilitating them in developing innovative learning. In addition, policy education needs to be directed at strengthening training programs for principals so that they are able to become effective agents of change in schools. The results of this study encourage teachers to be more open to principal guidance and opportunities so they can trust themselves to be creative and innovative. This research also opens up opportunities for further study about factors external to others, such as support technology, collaboration between educators, and involvement in the school community, which can further strengthen teacher creativity and improve quality education.

F. Conclusion

The results of this study have significant implications for various parties. For the principal, this study confirms its importance to keep going and develop a strategy for proactive leadership, such as increasing the intensity of communication with teachers, expanding access to creativity sources, and integrating technology in support of creative activity. For teachers, these results are a motivation to participate more in innovation programs and utilize support principals to improve their creativity in learning. For policymakers in education, this research serves as a foundation for designing training programs. This research encompasses aspects of innovation and creativity in leadership for school principals. In addition, this study opens up opportunities to increase synergy between principals, teachers, students, and the community in creating a more innovative educational environment. The best way for a principal to support teachers' creativity is for them to be more involved in

training teachers, work with external organizations to offer professional support, and make the creative competitions bigger by extending them to the regional or national level. Additionally, periodic evaluation of the implemented programs and facilities is necessary to ensure their effectiveness. This research has limitations on coverage since it only involved one institution, MA Al Ittihad, so the results may not be fully generalizable to other schools with different characteristics. Furthermore, this study did not conduct a quantitative assessment of the principal's influence on teacher creativity, indicating the need for a more detailed investigation into this specific relationship. Further research can expand coverage locations and integrate a quantitative approach to get a more comprehensive picture.

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