



Improving the Managerial Capacity of Al Washliyah School Principals through a Strategic Workshop at the School Leaders Forum

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ABSTRACT

This community service program aimed to enhance the managerial capacity of school principals under the auspices of Al Washliyah through strategic workshops conducted within the School Leaders Forum. The program employed a Service-Learning approach that integrated academic knowledge with practical engagement to address real managerial challenges faced by school leaders in the era of educational reform and Society 5.0. The preparation stage involved a needs assessment, literature review, and SWOT analysis to ensure that the intervention was contextually relevant and responsive to institutional conditions. Based on this analysis, a competency-based workshop curriculum was developed, focusing on conceptual, technical, and interpersonal managerial skills. The program was implemented through a series of strategic workshop sessions covering educational strategic planning, alignment with the National Education Standards, digital leadership, teacher performance management, and stakeholder collaboration. The results indicate that the program contributed to improved strategic thinking, increased digital awareness, and strengthened supervisory and motivational competencies among participating principals. Furthermore, the School Leaders Forum functioned as an effective professional learning community that facilitated peer collaboration and reflective leadership practices. Overall, the program demonstrates that structured capacity-building initiatives conducted through professional forums can support the transformation of school principals into instructional and transformational leaders, thereby fostering sustainable improvements in school quality and organizational competitiveness.

Keywords: Managerial Capacity; School Principals; School Leaders Forum

INTRODUCTION

School principals occupy a central and strategic position in ensuring the effectiveness and continuity of educational processes within schools. As the primary instructional and managerial leaders, principals are responsible for coordinating human resources, managing financial and physical assets, and guiding institutional development toward educational goals. In the era of Society 5.0, educational leadership is confronted with increasing complexity due to rapid digital transformation, policy changes, and diverse stakeholder expectations. Without effective managerial competence, school objectives cannot be achieved optimally, and the quality of education is at risk of stagnation (Hayudiyani et al., 2022; Simatupang et al., 2023).

Globally and within Indonesia, educational reforms and policy shifts have intensified the challenges faced by school principals. Initiatives such as *Merdeka Belajar* require school leaders to demonstrate adaptive leadership, strategic planning, and the capacity to manage change effectively (Ernawati & Mardizal, 2024). Research indicates that principals must simultaneously ensure policy compliance, integrate digital tools, and maintain instructional quality—often under conditions of limited resources and resistance to change (Jonison et al., 2024). These demands highlight the necessity of strengthening both leadership and managerial competencies among school principals.

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Leadership style plays a decisive role in shaping school climate, teacher performance, and student outcomes. Transformational leadership, in particular, has been widely recognized as an effective approach for fostering innovation, motivation, and organizational commitment within schools. Empirical studies demonstrate that transformational leadership contributes significantly to improvements in student character development, teacher engagement, and overall school performance (Mulyanti et al., 2024; Rofiah et al., 2024). However, contemporary educational challenges also require principals to integrate situational and entrepreneurial leadership approaches to address dynamic and context-specific problems (Harun et al., 2024; Widiarti & Pangesti, 2024).

Within the Indonesian context, the strategic role of principals in improving school quality has been consistently emphasized. Several studies report that suboptimal leadership and weak managerial capacity among principals hinder efforts to enhance educational quality (Simatupang et al., 2023; Wartyo & Khairiah, 2022). Principals are expected not only to formulate a clear vision and foster a supportive school culture but also to supervise, evaluate, and continuously develop teacher professionalism (Budiati, 2022; Wahdah et al., 2023). These responsibilities underscore the importance of systematic capacity building for school leaders.

This challenge is particularly relevant for schools under the auspices of Al Washliyah, an Islamic socio-educational organization established in 1930 that manages hundreds of educational institutions across Indonesia (Ja'far, 2025; Putra et al., 2023). In Al Washliyah schools, leadership is not merely an administrative function but a moral and religious mandate that must be carried out with integrity and accountability. Nevertheless, many principals encounter competency barriers that limit their effectiveness in managing schools and motivating teachers, thereby affecting institutional performance and discipline.

Managerial competence encompasses conceptual skills for strategic planning, technical skills for administrative and resource management, and interpersonal skills for building effective communication and collaboration. Strengthening these competencies enables principals to move beyond routine administrative tasks and develop into transformational leaders capable of driving organizational change and improving school competitiveness in a global context (Miftah et al., 2024; Oktarizka & Haimah, 2023). Without targeted interventions, these competencies may remain underdeveloped, particularly in faith-based educational institutions facing rapid societal and technological change.

In response to these challenges, community service initiatives conducted by higher education institutions play a crucial role in providing practical solutions for educational stakeholders. The Community Service Program entitled *“Enhancing the Managerial Capacity of Al Washliyah School Principals through Strategic Workshops in the School Leaders Forum”* was designed to address existing competency gaps through a structured professional forum. By leveraging workshops, peer networking, and collaborative reflection within the School Leaders Forum, this program aims to strengthen principals' managerial capacities and transform them into effective change agents capable of improving teacher discipline, work motivation, and overall educational quality in the era of Society 5.0 (Feirsen & Weitzman, 2023; Irfan et al., 2022).

LITERATURE OR CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

Managerial and Leadership Roles of School Principals in Contemporary Education

School principals are widely recognized as the central figures responsible for ensuring the effectiveness, sustainability, and quality of educational institutions. Their roles extend beyond administrative supervision to include strategic planning, instructional leadership, and organizational development. Effective principals are expected to manage human resources, finances, infrastructure, and information systems while simultaneously fostering a positive school culture that supports teaching and learning (Simatupang et al., 2023; Wartyo & Khairiah, 2022). Inadequate leadership and

weak managerial capacity have been shown to directly hinder school improvement efforts and educational outcomes.

In the context of rapid educational change, principals face increasing pressure to adapt to policy reforms, accountability systems, and evolving societal expectations. Educational initiatives such as Indonesia's *Merdeka Belajar* policy demand that principals demonstrate flexibility, innovation, and strategic decision-making while maintaining compliance with national standards (Ernawati & Mardizal, 2024). These conditions require principals to possess not only strong leadership qualities but also robust managerial competencies to navigate institutional complexity effectively.

Leadership style plays a critical role in shaping school performance and organizational climate. Transformational leadership, characterized by vision-building, motivation, and empowerment, has been empirically linked to improved teacher performance, student character development, and overall school effectiveness (Mulyanti et al., 2024; Rofiah et al., 2024). However, contemporary challenges also necessitate adaptive combinations of situational and entrepreneurial leadership, enabling principals to respond to uncertainty, resource constraints, and diverse stakeholder demands (Harun et al., 2024; Widiyanti & Pangesti, 2024).

Managerial Competence and Its Contribution to School Quality Improvement

Managerial competence refers to the ability of school principals to plan, organize, implement, and evaluate educational programs systematically. Scholars generally categorize managerial competence into three interrelated dimensions: conceptual skills, technical skills, and interpersonal skills. Conceptual skills involve strategic thinking and long-term planning, technical skills relate to administrative and resource management, while interpersonal skills focus on communication, collaboration, and conflict resolution (Feirsen & Weitzman, 2023; Oktarizka & Haimah, 2023). Together, these competencies form the foundation for effective school management.

Empirical studies consistently demonstrate that principals with strong managerial competencies are better positioned to improve teacher performance and institutional efficiency. Effective supervision, transparent financial management, and structured administrative systems contribute to improved instructional quality and teacher professionalism (Budiati, 2022; Wahdah et al., 2023). Moreover, principals who actively engage in monitoring and evaluation practices can identify performance gaps and provide constructive feedback that supports continuous teacher development.

Despite their strategic importance, many principals face significant barriers in developing managerial competence. Limited access to professional training, bureaucratic constraints, and insufficient institutional support often restrict principals' capacity to implement meaningful change (Purnomo & Anshory, 2020; Widawati et al., 2024). These challenges are particularly evident in faith-based educational institutions such as those under the auspices of Al Washliyah, where leadership responsibilities encompass both managerial effectiveness and moral accountability. Consequently, systematic capacity-building initiatives are essential to enhance principals' managerial effectiveness and school competitiveness.

Professional Forums as a Strategy for Strengthening Managerial Capacity

Professional forums have emerged as an effective strategy for enhancing the managerial and leadership capacities of school principals. Forums such as the School Leaders Forum function as communities of practice that promote collaborative learning, reflective dialogue, and peer mentoring among educational leaders (Furneaux & Gohre, 2024; Irfan et al., 2022). Through structured interactions, principals are able to share experiences, exchange best practices, and collectively address common managerial challenges.

Workshops conducted within professional forums play a crucial role in translating theoretical knowledge into practical leadership skills. Facilitated workshops that incorporate case studies, group discussions, and problem-solving activities have been shown to enhance principals' strategic planning abilities, decision-making skills, and organizational management practices (Damayanti et al., 2023;

Irby et al., 2022). Such experiential learning approaches encourage active participation and deeper understanding of managerial concepts.

The integration of digital platforms has further strengthened the effectiveness of professional forums, particularly in post-pandemic educational contexts. Virtual meetings, online discussions, and digital resource sharing enable sustained engagement and continuous professional development despite geographical and time constraints (Pashmforoosh et al., 2023; Yusof et al., 2021). By leveraging professional forums as structured capacity-building mechanisms, school principals can enhance their managerial competencies, strengthen leadership effectiveness, and contribute to sustained improvements in school quality in the era of Society 5.0.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This community service program employed a Service Learning approach, which integrates academic learning with direct engagement in real-world community contexts to foster reflective and transformative learning experiences (Rusli, 2022). The program was implemented in the form of a strategic workshop conducted within the School Leaders Forum, emphasizing mindset transformation, leadership innovation, and technology mastery among school principals. The implementation began with a SWOT analysis to identify institutional strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats as the basis for strategic decision-making. Participants were actively involved in participatory discussions and seminar sessions designed to enhance collective managerial knowledge and leadership skills. Through this approach, principals were trained to develop a realistic Education Quality Plan (EQP) and to strengthen synergistic coordination among school stakeholders in achieving institutional educational goals.

The Community Service Program (PKM) was conducted over two days, from November 22 to 23, 2025, at Hotel Madani Medan. This initiative represented a collaborative effort between a team of lecturers from Universitas Tjut Nyak Dhien Medan and the Education Council of Al Jam'iyatul Washliyah, North Sumatra. The primary focus of the program was to provide practical and sustainable solutions to managerial challenges faced by school leaders through innovative and experience-based learning strategies. By utilizing a workshop-oriented Service Learning model, the program aimed to strengthen principals' managerial capacities and support their transformation into effective educational leaders capable of responding to contemporary educational demands.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Preparation Stage

The preparation stage of this Service Learning–based community service program was carried out through a series of systematic steps to ensure that the proposed intervention effectively addressed the fundamental challenges faced by Al Washliyah schools. The initial step involved justifying the need for strengthening the managerial capacity of school principals. The service team recognized that the role of the principal extends beyond administrative duties and represents a central leadership position that holds full responsibility for the success of educational processes. Accordingly, the preparation phase began with a comprehensive literature review and preliminary observations of leadership dynamics across schools, which revealed an urgent need to address competency gaps that had hindered the acceleration of school development.

A critical subsequent step was the implementation of an in-depth SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis aimed at mapping the actual conditions of educational institutions under the auspices of Al Washliyah. This analysis identified key internal strengths, such

as strong religious values and high organizational loyalty, while also revealing notable weaknesses, including limited mastery of information and communication technology (ICT) and a lack of innovation in change management practices. By examining external opportunities in the Society 5.0 era alongside the challenges of global competition, the team was able to design training modules that were not only theoretically grounded but also highly practical and contextually relevant to the needs of school principals.

The preparation phase then focused on the development of the Strategic Workshop Curriculum, which was structured around three core dimensions of managerial competence: conceptual, technical, and interpersonal skills. The conceptual component emphasized strategic vision development and decision-making processes, while the technical component provided guidance on managing the eight National Education Standards (NES) and developing an Education Quality Plan (EQP). The interpersonal dimension centered on trust-based and transformational leadership principles, which are closely aligned with Al Washliyah's institutional identity and moral values.

In addition to content development, the service team engaged in intensive coordination with the School Leaders Forum as the primary platform for program implementation. This coordination included scheduling arrangements, preparation of technological support systems for the workshop, and the development of self-assessment instruments to enable participants to independently evaluate their managerial capacities. The preparation stage concluded with the formulation of clear output targets, namely enabling school principals to transform into instructional leaders who not only manage administrative functions effectively but also inspire, motivate, and mobilize all school stakeholders toward the achievement of high-quality and competitive educational outcomes.

Implementation of Community Service Activities

The implementation of community service activities through the School Leaders Forum was designed as a strategic intervention to transform the role of Al Washliyah principals from mere administrative managers to visionary instructional leaders. The activity was divided into several key sessions covering conceptual, interpersonal, and technical competency dimensions in depth.

The first session focused on Strengthening Managerial Capacity and Strategic Leadership (Asyari et al., 2024). In this session, principals were equipped with the understanding that the success of a school organization is largely determined by the leader's ability to develop strategic plans and conduct effective supervision. Managerial competencies encompass educational planning, organizing, implementing, supervising, and evaluating (Prihatanti et al., 2024). The primary focus was on three strategic management processes: plan formulation, implementation, and strategic evaluation.

Participants were trained to develop an Education Quality Plan (EQP) with measurable success indicators. This planning should not remain merely on paper, but must be translated from the overall vision of the Al Washliyah organization into a realistic annual work program through a rigorous SWOT analysis. Principals were encouraged to understand that they are central figures responsible for the smooth running of the entire educational process, making the ability to manage human resources, finances, and facilities a key foundation that cannot be overlooked.

The second session discussed Quality Alignment Based on the 8 National Education Standards (SNP). As managers of educational institutions under Al Washliyah's auspices, principals must ensure that each unit meets graduate competency standards, content standards, processes, and assessment standards. This workshop provided technical guidance for principals on managing facilities and infrastructure to support effective teaching. Mastery of teaching and education staff standards was also emphasized, with principals holding the authority to place human resources according to their expertise (the right person in the right place) (Gule et al., 2024). This aims to ensure that the government's school autonomy can be creatively utilized to develop the unique potential of each Al Washliyah madrasah or school.



Figure 1. The team of lecturers delivered the material

The third session explored Digital Leadership and Adaptation to Society 5.0. In the era of digital transformation, principals are required to have strong Information and Communication Technology (ICT) application skills to improve the quality of school management. This workshop trained principals to integrate digital automation systems with human resources to create global competitiveness for Al Washliyah (Alif et al., 2022). This capability is considered crucial for principals to be able to innovate and make changes relevant to current developments, rather than simply carrying out old routines.

The fourth session focused on Teacher Performance Management through Supervision and Motivation. Principals were encouraged to position themselves as "teachers for teachers" or mentors who provide continuous guidance (Rambe et al., 2023). Through clinical supervision techniques, principals were taught how to directly observe the teaching and learning process and provide constructive feedback to solve learning problems in the classroom.

Furthermore, the role of motivator was emphasized; Principals must be able to create a conducive work environment to minimize teacher burnout and provide appreciation (rewards) for those who excel. This is crucial because a principal's managerial competence has been proven to be directly proportional to improved teacher performance and learning quality. Principals who fail to provide clear guidance or create a supportive environment can make it difficult for teachers to adapt to new demands, ultimately reducing their motivation and performance (Darmayanti & Bahri, 2024).

The fifth session discussed Creating a School Climate and Stakeholder Collaboration. Al Washliyah's principals were trained to build a positive, safe, and disciplined school atmosphere, starting with exemplary leadership. Democratic and participatory leadership is key, with teacher involvement in decision-making fostering a sense of ownership within the organization. Furthermore, the workshop emphasized the importance of public relations (PR) management. Principals must actively foster synergy with the school committee and parents, as community participation is a determining factor in educational quality, supporting both the financial and moral aspects of the school (Zarhasih et al., 2023).



Figure 2. Souvenir handover

Through a series of strategic workshops at the School Leaders Forum, Al Washliyah principals are expected to master not only technical administrative skills but also conceptual acumen to bring about positive change. The ultimate goal is to implement the results of this training to foster a sustainable culture of quality throughout the Al Washliyah educational environment. With trustworthy, professional, and innovative leadership, Al Washliyah schools will be better prepared to face the challenges of an increasingly dynamic era.

The series of PKM activities concluded with a symbolic handover of souvenirs from the implementing team to the partners. To conclude the entire agenda, a group photo session was held with the community service team, guests, and all participants as official documentation and a symbol of the synergy established during the activities.



Figure 3. Group photo

DISCUSSION

The findings of this community service program demonstrate that a well-structured preparation stage is fundamental to the effectiveness of managerial capacity-building initiatives for school principals. The use of a Service Learning approach, combined with literature review, field observation, and SWOT analysis, enabled the program to address real and context-specific challenges faced by schools under the auspices of Al Washliyah. This aligns with previous studies emphasizing that needs-based and context-sensitive interventions are more effective in strengthening school leadership capacity than generic training models (Feirsen & Weitzman, 2023; Oktarizka & Haimah, 2023). The identification of competency gaps at the preparation stage ensured that the intervention was strategically targeted rather than merely procedural.

The implementation of SWOT analysis as a foundational planning tool proved to be particularly significant in shaping relevant and applicable training content. By mapping internal strengths such as strong religious values and organizational loyalty alongside weaknesses in ICT mastery and change management, the program adopted a strategic approach to leadership development. This finding supports prior research indicating that principals who engage in reflective institutional analysis are better equipped to formulate realistic school improvement strategies (Harun et al., 2024; Prihatanti, 2024). Moreover, aligning institutional opportunities with the demands of Society 5.0 allowed the training modules to integrate global competitiveness and digital adaptability without neglecting local organizational values.

The strategic workshop curriculum, which emphasized conceptual, technical, and interpersonal competencies, reflects contemporary models of effective school leadership. The results indicate that strengthening principals' conceptual skills—particularly in strategic visioning and decision-making—enhanced their ability to translate organizational goals into measurable Education Quality Plans (EQP). This finding corroborates earlier studies suggesting that principals' strategic planning competence is a key determinant of school effectiveness and sustainable quality improvement (Miftah et al., 2024; Simatupang et al., 2023). The inclusion of technical competencies related to the eight National Education Standards further reinforced principals' capacity to operationalize policy requirements into school-level practices.

Furthermore, the integration of digital leadership and Society 5.0 adaptation within the workshop responded directly to contemporary educational challenges. The results indicate that principals gained increased awareness of the importance of ICT-based management systems and digital innovation in enhancing school governance. This supports prior findings that principals play a critical role in leading digital transformation and fostering innovation in educational institutions (Alif et al., 2022; Hayudiyani et al., 2022). Principals who are equipped with digital leadership competencies are more likely to implement efficient administrative systems and support teachers in adapting to technology-enhanced learning environments.

Finally, the emphasis on teacher performance management, school climate development, and stakeholder collaboration highlights the relational dimension of effective school leadership. The workshop findings suggest that principals who adopt supervisory, motivational, and participatory leadership practices are better positioned to improve teacher performance and organizational commitment. This is consistent with research demonstrating that managerial competence and transformational leadership positively influence teacher motivation, reduce burnout, and enhance instructional quality (Darmayanti & Bahri, 2024; Rambe et al., 2023; Zarhasih et al., 2023). Overall, the results indicate that strategic workshops conducted within a professional forum such as the School Leaders Forum can serve as an effective mechanism for transforming principals into instructional leaders capable of fostering a sustainable culture of quality and competitiveness in Islamic educational institutions.

CONCLUSIONS

This community service program demonstrates that strengthening the managerial capacity of school principals through a structured Service Learning approach and strategic workshops within the School Leaders Forum is an effective intervention for addressing leadership challenges in educational institutions. The program's systematic preparation, including needs assessment, SWOT analysis, and the development of a competency-based workshop curriculum, enabled school principals under the auspices of Al Washliyah to enhance their conceptual, technical, and interpersonal competencies. These improvements contributed to a clearer strategic orientation, increased readiness to implement Education Quality Plans, and a stronger capacity to manage schools in alignment with the demands of educational reform and Society 5.0.

Furthermore, the findings indicate that professional forums such as the School Leaders Forum serve as effective platforms for sustainable leadership development by fostering peer collaboration, reflective practice, and continuous learning. The integration of digital leadership, teacher performance management, and stakeholder collaboration within the training framework supported principals' transformation from administrative managers into instructional and transformational leaders. Consequently, this program has the potential to strengthen a culture of quality, innovation, and accountability within Al Washliyah schools, thereby enhancing their competitiveness and long-term educational outcomes.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declared that no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the authorship and publication of this article.

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