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IMPROVING SCHOOL ACCREDITATION THROUGH PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP: A CASE STUDY IN MADRASAH TSANAWIYYAH

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Abstract

Accreditation is a significant marker of school performance, influencing its competitiveness both nationally and internationally. This paper examines the role of the principal in improving accreditation at MTsS Ulumuddin, using a qualitative research approach. Data were gathered through interviews, observations, and documentation. The primary aim of this study is to explore how the leadership of the principal contributes to enhancing the school's accreditation status. The findings emphasize the principal's efforts in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum, fostering collaboration among teachers, students, and parents, and cultivating a culture of teacher reflection. These strategies directly contribute to improving the school's accreditation. Additionally, the principal ensures the integration of technology in the learning process, customizes the curriculum to meet the diverse needs of students, and manages the school budget efficiently and transparently. By focusing on these areas, the principal drives the achievement of higher educational standards, which is essential for improving school accreditation. The study underscores the importance of strong leadership in advancing educational quality and accreditation, highlighting the principal's proactive approach in aligning school operations with national standards and goals. Overall, this paper demonstrates that effective school leadership is a critical factor in improving both the accreditation process and educational outcomes.
Keywords: Leadership; Principal; Accreditation; Merdeka Curriculum; Educational Standards.

A. INTRODUCTION

Public trust in a school is strengthened by accreditation, because accreditation provides a clear indication of the extent of the quality and performance of the school. Schools that obtain accreditation are expected to show

better and more competitive performance improvements, both at the national and international levels. This improvement, in turn, will make a positive contribution to the progress of the education system as a whole (Karyanto, R. (2015).

Because accreditation provides a clear picture to the public about the performance and quality of the school, public trust in the institution also increases. It is expected that accredited institutions will perform better and be more competitive on a national and global scale.

The practice of performance evaluation that focuses on the continuity and sustainability of programs in an educational entity is known as accreditation. This accreditation aims to assess the extent to which educational institutions meet the established quality standards, as well as ensure that the programs implemented can provide optimal and sustainable results (Awaludin. (2017).

Therefore, accreditation aims to assess the quality and sustainability of educational programs in an institution to ensure that the educational programs implemented can take place effectively and sustainably, and contribute to improving the overall quality of education.

As the center of any educational institution, leadership plays a vital role in creating a pleasant learning environment, in addition to overseeing administrative tasks and resource management, effective leadership actively encourages positive interpersonal relationships (Rahmatullah, M. Ilyas, & Suljic, A. 2024).

As explained by Hasan, leadership plays a vital role in fostering interpersonal interactions and shaping values that are the basis for achieving educational goals. The impact of leadership on organizational effectiveness can be seen as a direct or indirect influence (Hasan. 2018).

A person's life can be better and of higher quality with education, to develop the independence of all potential students, Ki Hadjar developed education as a comprehensive effort. "Efforts to support the growth of character (inner strength), mind (intelligence), and physical children" is what is meant by education (Febriyanti, N. 2021).

Therefore, good leadership in educational institutions is very important to ensure the achievement of these goals, as well as optimizing the potential of students as a whole.

So it can be concluded that accreditation is one of the key factors in increasing public confidence in the quality and effectiveness of educational institutions. Accreditation is a clear indicator of how well a school meets the quality requirements set at the national and international levels through an impartial and methodical review procedure. The performance and competitiveness of accredited institutions are expected to improve, which in turn will improve the overall standard of education. Therefore, certification serves as a quality assurance and catalyst for sustainable development in educational institutions.

On the other hand, leadership plays a key role in the successful implementation of accreditation and improving the quality of education. Effective leadership is not only responsible for administrative management, but also in creating a conducive learning environment and encouraging positive interpersonal relationships (Rahman. 2020). Strong and visionary leadership will ensure that the goals of accreditation are achieved, as well as strengthen the commitment to continuous improvement (Rahmatullah, 2018). Therefore, a close relationship between accreditation and leadership is very important, because good leadership can encourage educational institutions to meet and exceed the set quality standards, while increasing the effectiveness of the organization in realizing educational goals.

In an effort to ensure that each component meets the accreditation criteria, the researcher chose MTsS Ulumuddin as the subject of the study because of its thorough preparation in facing accreditation, using proven methods and experiences, the school involved internal and external stakeholders in this process.

MTsS Ulumuddin's achievements, such as student success in academic and extracurricular competitions and effective principal administration, improve the school's standing in terms of accreditation. All of these achievements are the basis for the accreditation process to achieve optimal results, which should improve the standard of teaching at MTsS Ulumuddin as a whole.

Although MTsS Ulumuddin has made thorough preparations for accreditation by involving all internal and external parties, there are several areas that need attention. Changes in leadership, although positive, may pose challenges in policy transitions and management that can affect the effectiveness of preparation. In addition, although many achievements have been achieved, there has been no in-depth analysis of the direct contribution of these achievements to meeting accreditation standards, especially in terms of curriculum and learning management.

In addition, although involving external parties, this collaboration has not fully provided a significant impact on developing facilities and improving the quality of human resources. By strengthening the involvement of external parties, such as professional institutions or accreditation, MTsS Ulumuddin can obtain more objective input and improve areas that are still lacking, in order to ensure maximum and sustainable accreditation.

B. RESEARCH METHOD

This paper uses a qualitative research method, and the theme raised is the leadership of the principal in improving accreditation at MTsS Ulumuddin, while in an effort to understand the case study, the data collection techniques used are interviews, observations and documentation.

In this study, the key informants are the principal and teachers, where the data collected from interviews, observations and documentation will then be reduced to the results obtained and will be presented in a conclusion, this study

aims to see the role or skills of a principal in efforts to improve accreditation at MTsS Ulumuddin.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Madrasah/School Profile

Madrasah Tsanawiyah is a Junior High School Level Educational Institution equivalent to SMP which was established in 1991, where all provisions of its education system are combined between the Salafi Dayah curriculum, Gontor modern Islamic boarding school and the Ministry of Religion curriculum. MTs Ulumuddin was only legalized on February 18, 1993, with the Decree of the Ministry of Religion No. Wa./6/PP.03.2/64/1993 with statistical number 212110873019 (Indrapati, D. 2018).

Along with the development and demands of the times, MTsS Ulumuddin continues to make strategic efforts to improve the quality and quantity of education, this is evidenced by the issuance of an accreditation decree signed by BAN-S/M.PROV.NAD on 10-12-2007 with SK no; Dp.004745 and the last accreditation decree signed by the Head of BAN Sekolah/Madrasah Dr. Toni Toharuddin, M.Sc, on October 24, 2018 with No. SK: 514/BAN-SM/Aceh/SK/2018 with an accreditation score of A (Excellent) with a score of 92.

2. Development of the National Curriculum

The use of technology is one of the main focuses of the recently implemented Independent Curriculum, which has brought many improvements to learning. In order to teach effectively, teachers must now master computers and laptops (Khaidir Fadil, A. N. 2023). In addition to facilitating the delivery of material, technology also increases the effectiveness and efficiency of the teaching and learning process and gives students more access to interactive learning resources and information.

In addition, both inside and outside the classroom, technology gives children the opportunity to learn freely and independently. Students can access resources anytime and from any location thanks to e-learning platforms and digital-based learning applications, which reduce time and location constraints (Khaidir Fadil, A. N. 2023). Therefore, technology is very important to encourage more dynamic learning and help students achieve the abilities required by the curriculum.

Curriculum development at the education unit level is greatly influenced by the national curriculum, especially the Independent Curriculum (Rahmat Hidayat, A. 2019). This curriculum serves as a foundation, setting out learning objectives, basic skills, and criteria that students must meet. It also provides precise instructions to each educational unit on how to develop their own curriculum. This ensures that the implementation of the curriculum in the field and the country's educational vision are in line.

Although educational institutions are free to adjust their curriculum to local needs, the influence of the national curriculum is still focused on improving competencies that are relevant to contemporary demands, such as digital skills (Rahmat Hidayat, A. 2019). Therefore, in addition to providing academic guidelines, the national curriculum also serves as a foundation for equipping students with 21st-century skills that will be very important in the workplace in the future.

The independent curriculum emphasizes the importance of using technology to improve learning outcomes and provides students with flexible access to various resources, both inside and outside the classroom. By setting out the objectives and competencies that students must meet, this curriculum also serves as a basis for curriculum development at the educational unit level. The national curriculum is still centered on improving digital competencies that are relevant to addressing various difficulties in the 21st century, although with the freedom to adjust.

3. Participatory and Collaborative Learning Services

Teachers, students, and parents working together are essential to achieving the school's vision and goals. Regular meetings between parents and teachers to discuss school activities and student progress are one way the school supports this collaboration (Anita Indria, E. R. 2021). To ensure that everyone is involved in setting a clear and focused direction for educational goals, internal school meetings are also held to develop a shared vision and mission.

The school adapts content to each student's interests, learning preferences, and skill level in an effort to motivate active learning (Fitriyah, M. B. 2023). In addition, learning takes place in small groups, which gives students the opportunity to talk and support each other while increasing their involvement in decision-making regarding learning. In addition to increasing motivation, this method helps students improve their social and teamwork skills.

Annual meetings to discuss student learning and growth plans help increase parent involvement in the educational process. Parents can provide useful input in this regard, which is useful for assessing and improving educational initiatives (Anita Indria, E. R. 2021). As a result, collaboration between educators, students, and parents increases support for students' character and academic growth and facilitates the successful fulfillment of the school's vision and goals.

In order to realize the school's vision and goals, cooperation from parents, teachers, and students is needed; One method to foster positive relationships is to hold regular parent-teacher meetings. The school organizes teaching in small groups to improve social skills and active participation, while also adjusting teaching to students' interests and learning preferences. Collaboration is further strengthened by holding annual parent meetings, which allow them to provide useful feedback on their children's development and learning plans. Therefore,

strong collaboration among all stakeholders improves the character and academic growth of students as well as the success of the school's mission realization.

4. Reflection Culture

The school has developed a number of reflection activities, such as workshops, training, and Subject Teacher Deliberations (MGMP), to help teachers' professional growth. These programs are designed to provide educators with a place to assess their methods, exchange ideas, and find difficulties encountered during the teaching and learning process. It is hoped that by reflecting on their experiences and feedback, teachers will be able to improve the quality of their teaching (Sudargini, Y., & Purwanto, A. (2020).

Student feedback and examination of changes in behavior and attitudes are used to measure how well the reflection program is running. One important metric to determine whether the program is relevant and improves students' learning experiences is student feedback (Hill, J., & West, H. 2019). Furthermore, a more comprehensive assessment of the program's success in improving learning standards is possible by comparing the increase in students' understanding and application of the subject matter before and after the reflection program.

Improving the quality of learning is closely linked to the culture of reflection, which is at the heart of the process. Reflection helps teachers become more self-aware and improve their effectiveness by allowing them to assess and change their methods in response to criticism (Imam Nur Rohmat, M. N. 2023). In addition, this culture of reflection helps students understand their learning styles and identify their areas of strength and growth, resulting in a more adaptive and dynamic learning environment that promotes overall improvement in the quality of education (Ouyang, F., Zheng, L., & Jiao, P. 2022).

To enhance teacher professional development and improve teaching standards, the school has created reflection exercises such as workshops, trainings, and Subject Teacher Meetings (MGMP). With an emphasis on improving student understanding, the effectiveness of the reflection program is assessed through student feedback and evaluation of behavioral changes. By helping teachers become more effective educators and students recognize their own learning preferences, this culture of reflection fosters a more flexible learning environment and improves overall educational standards (Müller, C., & Mildenberger, T. 2021).

5. Learning Facilities and Infrastructure

Teachers, staff, and students are stakeholders involved in the periodic review of current facilities, which identifies the need for infrastructure and facilities to support the learning process in the educational unit (Tapung, M. 2024). A more comprehensive understanding of facilities that require repair or improvement can be done through this method. The purpose of this review procedure is to ensure that the current infrastructure and facilities meet the

learning requirements as best as possible and keep up with the latest developments in pedagogy and technology.

A number of key considerations are taken into account when deciding which facility and infrastructure purchases should be prioritized (He, S. Y., Kuo, Y.-H., & Sun, K. K. 2022). The first priority should be given to needs such as classrooms, laboratories, and technology that are directly related to student learning. After evaluating the available budget, the current condition of the facilities becomes the second priority. Therefore, infrastructure and facilities must be purchased according to urgent needs while also considering financial constraints and ensuring effective utilization.

Currently, the facilities and infrastructure available at MTsS Ulumuddin include a teacher's room, classrooms, library, science laboratory, language laboratory, sports facilities, and mosque. Although these facilities are quite complete, evaluation and improvement are continuously carried out to ensure that each facility functions optimally to support learning activities. Good management of these facilities and infrastructure is expected to create a comfortable learning environment and support students' academic development (Mulang, H. 2021).

Teachers, staff, and students periodically evaluate the infrastructure and facilities at MTsS Ulumuddin to determine what is needed to facilitate learning. Considering the available funds, classrooms, laboratories, and technology that directly enhance student learning are the main concerns. The school now has all the facilities needed, but continuous assessment and development are carried out to ensure that they maximize learning and foster an atmosphere that supports students' academic growth (Sugiyono, S. 2021).

6. Budget Use

Participatory planning that combines the foundation and components of the school is how the school manages the budget (Baharuddin. 2023). In order for planning to be carried out comprehensively, this procedure ensures that all stakeholders provide input. To prevent waste and ensure effective use of funds, periodic monitoring is carried out after budget planning is completed to ensure that expenditures are in accordance with the established plan.

Throughout the year, the budget must be monitored and supervised closely, with each expenditure carefully documented and then reported openly to the foundation and school committee. This allows everyone to understand and ensure how the budget is being used. The school also ensures that everyone feels involved in the monitoring process and welcomes staff input to improve budget utilization.

Based on monitoring findings and feedback, budget adjustments are made to maintain the effectiveness of budget management. If urgent needs or changes in program priorities are found, this procedure allows schools to modify the

distribution of funds while maintaining accountability and effectiveness of the use of money.

The quality of learning is positively influenced by effective financial management. The production of learning materials, improvement of teacher competencies, and renovation of educational facilities can all be realized through proper distribution of funds and effective use of funds. The budget serves as a resource and a key factor in improving educational standards in schools if it is transparent, so that all stakeholders can observe the results and encourage the achievement of learning goals (Jihadi, M. 2021).

In order to improve educational standards, budget management must be open, inclusive, and effective, schools can ensure the best use of finances through planning that involves all stakeholders, frequent monitoring, and budget modifications depending on input. This encourages the production of teaching materials, improvement of teacher competencies, and improvement of facilities, all of which directly lead to the achievement of higher education goals (Žalėnienė, I., & Pereira, P. 2021).

In the novelty image above, the role of the principal in improving educational accreditation at MTsS Ulumuddin, with a focus on managing the curriculum, facilities, budget, and learning services. The principal plays an important role in integrating various aspects of education to create a conducive learning environment that meets educational standards. Through curriculum management that is tailored to student needs and training to improve teacher competency, the principal ensures optimal teaching quality.

In addition, efficient budget management and improving facilities, although there are still shortcomings in some learning support facilities, also support a quality learning process. The principal is also active in reflecting on the achievements that have been achieved, in order to continuously improve the quality of education and achieve accreditation targets. Although there have been significant efforts to improve the quality of education, challenges in developing technology-based teaching facilities and methods still need to be overcome to achieve more optimal results (Ansari, A. S., Shah, S. S., & Khoso, I. 2022).

Table 1: Summary

Aspect	**Key Points**
Madrasah/School Profile	Established in 1991, accredited with "A" score in 2018, integrating multiple curricula.
Development of National Curriculum	Focuses on technology integration for independent learning and digital skills development.
Participatory and Collaborative Learning	Involves parents, teachers, and students; small group learning and annual meetings enhance collaboration.

Aspect	Key Points
Reflection Culture	Teachers engage in workshops and MGMP to improve teaching quality, with student feedback as a key measure.
Learning Facilities and Infrastructure	Periodic review of facilities, prioritizing classrooms, labs, and technology; ongoing improvements.
Budget Use	Participatory planning, continuous monitoring, and adjustments ensure effective and transparent budget use.

D. CONCLUSION

The principal's efforts at MTsS Ulumuddin in enhancing teaching standards directly contribute to the school's accreditation process. By implementing the Merdeka Curriculum, which prioritizes technology and digital skills development, the school improves the learning process's effectiveness and efficiency. This approach aligns with accreditation criteria, focusing on meeting the diverse needs of students and integrating technology into the classroom. Additionally, fostering close cooperation among educators, parents, and students helps create an inclusive and high-quality learning environment, a critical component in the accreditation assessment.

Reflection and continuous professional development play a crucial role in improving teaching quality. The principal encourages a culture of reflection through seminars and Subject Teacher Deliberations (MGMP), allowing teachers to refine their strategies based on feedback and assessments. These activities enhance the quality of student learning, aligning with accreditation requirements and improving overall educational standards. Regular evaluations of the school's infrastructure, facilities, and technology ensure that these resources effectively support the learning process, contributing to meeting accreditation standards.

Efficient management of the school's budget is essential for supporting quality improvements. The principal ensures that funds are allocated for the development of new facilities, enhancing teacher skills, and providing necessary educational resources. Involving stakeholders in planning and monitoring the budget ensures transparency and effectiveness, fostering an environment that supports higher educational standards. These efforts, combined with the use of technology, tailored curricula, and a focus on collaboration, directly contribute to achieving the school's accreditation goals and creating a more inclusive and high-quality educational environment.

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