



## **Beyond Administration: Instructional Leadership Strategies of Principals in Managing Learning Guidance Programs in Islamic Schools**

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### **Abstract**

This study explores principals' instructional leadership strategies in managing learning guidance programs in Islamic schools. The study was motivated by the growing need for school leadership practices that extend beyond administrative functions and focus on instructional improvement, teacher development, and student support. Employing a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through semi-structured interviews, observations, and document analysis involving principals, teachers, and school members directly engaged in learning guidance activities. Data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña through data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings reveal that principals implemented several strategic practices, including establishing instructional vision and direction, promoting collaborative leadership, conducting academic supervision, integrating digital innovation, applying adaptive leadership approaches, and strengthening school culture. These strategies contributed to improving the effectiveness and sustainability of learning guidance programs while fostering teacher engagement and institutional commitment. The findings further indicate that leadership in Islamic schools integrates instructional practices with ethical and institutional values, creating a more holistic approach to educational management. This study contributes to the growing discussion on instructional leadership by providing contextual insights into how principals manage learning guidance programs within Islamic educational institutions.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

School principal leadership plays a central role in determining the effectiveness of educational implementation, particularly in improving learning quality and directing institutional achievement. In the evolving landscape of contemporary education, the role of principals is no longer understood merely as administrative managers responsible for organizational and bureaucratic functions. Instead, principals are increasingly expected to act as instructional leaders who directly influence teaching and learning processes. This shift requires school leaders to establish a clear vision, cultivate academic culture, facilitate teacher development, and create

supportive learning environments that contribute to student achievement and institutional effectiveness.<sup>1</sup>

Numerous studies have demonstrated that instructional leadership is significantly associated with school effectiveness and educational quality improvement. Principals who actively engage in instructional processes tend to enhance teacher professionalism, strengthen academic coordination, and create educational systems that are more adaptive to changing conditions.<sup>2</sup> Within Islamic school contexts, principals often carry broader responsibilities because educational goals extend beyond academic performance to include character formation, spiritual development, and the reinforcement of Islamic values within school culture.<sup>3</sup>

In Islamic schools, leadership practices are frequently shaped by religious, social, and cultural values embedded within institutional identity. Existing studies suggest that Islamic educational leadership emphasizes exemplary conduct, morality, justice, spirituality, and social relationships as fundamental dimensions of leadership practice.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, the *Islamic-Oriented Educational Leadership* model highlights the integration of Islamic values with leadership practices through holistic educational approaches and the cultivation of morally and professionally effective leaders.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, leadership in Islamic schools functions not only as an organizational mechanism but also as a process of value internalization within educational environments.

At the same time, learning guidance programs constitute an essential component in supporting educational processes. Such programs not only assist students in overcoming learning difficulties but also facilitate academic development, strengthen learning motivation, and improve students' capacity to adapt to educational challenges. The effectiveness of these programs is closely influenced by leadership and management practices implemented by school principals through planning, implementation, supervision, and program evaluation processes.

Previous studies have examined principal leadership within Islamic educational settings, academic supervision, educational quality improvement, and teacher professional development.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> John Corrigan and Mark Merry, "Principal Leadership in a Time of Change," *Frontiers in Education* 7 (May 2022), <https://doi.org/10.3389/educ.2022.897620>; Mumtaz et al., "Instructional Leadership and School Effectiveness: A Correlational Study at Secondary Level Institutions in the Context of District Bannu," *Qlantic Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities* 5, no. 1 (2024): 176–83, <https://doi.org/10.55737/qjssh.679125316>.

<sup>2</sup> Nedim Özdemir et al., "A Systematic Review of Research on the Relationship between School Leadership and Student Achievement: An Updated Framework and Future Direction," *Educational Management Administration & Leadership* 52, no. 5 (2024): 1020–46, <https://doi.org/10.1177/17411432221118662>.

<sup>3</sup> Muli Umiaty Noer, "The Principal Leadership in Indonesian Islamic School: The Strategy in Shaping the Academic Professionalism," *Eduvest - Journal of Universal Studies* 3, no. 6 (2023): 1186–94, <https://doi.org/10.59188/eduvest.v3i6.851>.

<sup>4</sup> Saidah Mohd Said et al., "Unveiling the Excellent Leadership Qualities and Practices of Principals in Islamic Schools: A Systematic Literature Review," *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research* 22, no. 9 (2023), <https://www.ijlter.org/index.php/ijlter/article/view/8203>.

<sup>5</sup> Ayesah A. Alazmi and Tony Bush, "An Islamic-Oriented Educational Leadership Model: Towards a New Theory of School Leadership in Muslim Societies," *Journal of Educational Administration and History* 56, no. 3 (2024): 312–34, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220620.2023.2292573>.

<sup>6</sup> Guntur Rijaluddin et al., "Academic Supervision Strategies of School Principals to Enhance Teacher Performance in Islamic Religious Education Instruction," *At Tuots: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, December 31, 2025, 720–31, <https://doi.org/10.51468/jpi.v7i1.1077>; Farah Ruhmi and Lia Yuliana, "Patterns of Principal Academic Supervision in the Digital Age at Madrasah Tsanawiyah," *AL-ISHLAH: Jurnal Pendidikan* 17, no. 1 (2025): 141–51,

Other studies have also discussed school leadership transformation in the context of digitalization and educational change.<sup>7</sup> However, much of this research tends to discuss leadership, supervision, and educational management separately. Studies specifically examining how principals apply instructional leadership strategies in managing learning guidance programs within Islamic schools remain relatively limited.

This gap highlights the need for a more comprehensive understanding of how school principals move beyond traditional administrative functions and adopt instructional leadership strategies in managing learning guidance programs. Therefore, this study aims to analyze principals' instructional leadership strategies in managing learning guidance programs in Islamic schools, particularly in relation to planning, implementation, supervision, and the development of supportive learning cultures. The findings are expected to contribute conceptually to the growing discourse on Islamic educational leadership while also providing practical implications for school management and educational practice in value-based educational institutions.

## METHOD

This study employed a qualitative case study approach to explore principals' leadership strategies in managing learning guidance programs in Islamic schools. A case study design was selected because it enables an in-depth understanding of leadership practices within their real institutional context, particularly regarding how principals formulate, implement, and evaluate learning guidance programs. Qualitative inquiry is considered suitable for examining complex social interactions, decision-making processes, and contextual factors influencing educational leadership practices.<sup>8</sup> The research was conducted in an Islamic school setting where learning guidance programs function as part of the institutional strategy to support students' academic achievement and character development. Participants were selected purposively based on their direct involvement in the implementation of learning guidance activities. They included the school principal, vice principals, teachers, learning guidance coordinators, and several students. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, direct observation, and document analysis. Interviews focused on leadership strategies, decision-making processes, supervision mechanisms, and challenges encountered in managing learning guidance programs.

Data analysis followed the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing.<sup>9</sup> Interview transcripts, observation notes, and institutional documents were coded and categorized thematically to identify

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<https://doi.org/10.35445/alishlah.v17i1.6050>; Herry Sanoto et al., "Enhancing Teacher Quality: The Role of Digitalization in Transforming Educational Supervision," *AL-ISHLAH: Jurnal Pendidikan* 16, no. 2 (2024): 2595–607, <https://doi.org/10.35445/alishlah.v16i2.4990>.

<sup>7</sup> Muhammad Thohri, "Islamic School Leadership Model: The Challenge in Digital Era," *AL-ISHLAH: Jurnal Pendidikan* 14, no. 1 (2022): 225–32, <https://doi.org/10.35445/alishlah.v14i1.1939>; Zobi Mazhabi, "Investigating Leadership Attributes and Strategies during Times of Crisis and Educational Change: A Story of Public Primary School Principals in Lombok, Indonesia," *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, January 12, 2025, 17411432241300280, <https://doi.org/10.1177/17411432241300280>.

<sup>8</sup> John W. Creswell and Vicki L. Plano Clark, *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research* (SAGE Publications, 2017).

<sup>9</sup> Matthew B. Miles et al., *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook*, 3rd ed. (SAGE Publications, 2014).

recurring leadership patterns and strategic practices. To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, triangulation of data sources and methods was employed by comparing information obtained from different participants and research instruments. Ethical considerations were maintained throughout the research process. Participants were informed about the objectives of the study, and their participation was voluntary. Confidentiality and anonymity were ensured by using pseudonyms and limiting identifiable information. This procedure aimed to protect participants while maintaining the credibility and integrity of the research findings.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Establishing Vision and Instructional Direction in Learning Guidance Programs**

The findings indicate that the principal's leadership role extends beyond administrative responsibilities toward instructional leadership practices that shape the direction of learning guidance programs. The principal positioned learning guidance not merely as an additional school activity but as a strategic mechanism to support academic improvement and student development. A clear vision was formulated and communicated to teachers and school members to ensure that learning guidance activities aligned with broader institutional goals.

Interview findings revealed that learning guidance programs were designed through collaborative planning involving teachers and coordinators. The principal emphasized that the program should become an integral component of the school's learning culture rather than a separate intervention. One participant explained:

*“Learning guidance is not simply an additional tutoring activity. We designed it as part of the school's educational strategy to ensure that students receive continuous academic support according to their needs.”* (Principal interview)

This finding suggests that principals acted as instructional leaders by establishing a shared educational vision and creating alignment between institutional objectives and learning practices. Effective school leadership increasingly requires principals to focus on instructional aspects rather than relying solely on managerial authority.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, instructional leadership has been identified as a significant factor influencing school effectiveness and educational outcomes.<sup>11</sup>

Within Islamic school contexts, leadership practices are also strongly influenced by ethical values and institutional culture. Islamic educational leadership emphasizes role modeling, value orientation, and the integration of educational goals with moral and spiritual development.<sup>12</sup> Previous studies further indicate that leadership in Islamic schools combines managerial, transformational, and value-based dimensions to strengthen school effectiveness and institutional identity.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Corrigan and Merry, “Principal Leadership in a Time of Change.”

<sup>11</sup> Mumtaz et al., “Instructional Leadership and School Effectiveness.”

<sup>12</sup> Alazmi and Bush, “An Islamic-Oriented Educational Leadership Model.”

<sup>13</sup> Said et al., “Unveiling the Excellent Leadership Qualities and Practices of Principals in Islamic Schools”; Erika Setyanti Kusumaputri et al., “The Case Study of Islamic-Education Leadership Model: What We Can Learn from the Dynamics of Principals' Leadership in Indonesian Excellence Islamic Boarding-Schools,” *Jurnal Psikologi* 50, no. 1 (2023): 18–44, <https://doi.org/10.22146/jpsi.78892>.

Therefore, the principal's strategy in establishing vision and instructional direction demonstrates that effective management of learning guidance programs requires leadership that integrates organizational goals, instructional priorities, and the distinctive values embedded within Islamic educational institutions.

### **Collaborative Leadership and Teacher Empowerment in Learning Guidance Implementation**

The findings show that principals implemented collaborative leadership practices by actively involving teachers in planning and executing learning guidance programs. Rather than centralizing authority, principals encouraged shared responsibility and collective participation to ensure that learning guidance activities addressed students' academic needs effectively. Teachers were positioned not merely as implementers but as strategic partners in educational decision-making.

Interview data indicated that regular coordination meetings and reflective discussions became important mechanisms for strengthening collaboration among school members. Teachers were encouraged to identify students' learning difficulties, propose intervention strategies, and provide feedback regarding program implementation. One teacher stated:

*“The principal gives us space to discuss students' learning challenges and encourages us to contribute ideas. Decisions are usually made collectively, so we feel directly involved in the program.”* (Teacher interview)

This finding illustrates that collaborative leadership strengthens teacher participation and fosters a stronger sense of ownership toward school programs. Effective principals increasingly adopt integrated leadership approaches that combine instructional, transformational, and collaborative dimensions to improve school performance.<sup>14</sup> Similarly, collaborative practices create supportive learning environments and improve organizational effectiveness during educational change.<sup>15</sup>

In Islamic school contexts, collaboration also reflects collective values and social responsibility embedded within institutional culture. Leadership in Islamic educational institutions emphasizes relationship-building, communication, and shared moral commitments among school members.<sup>16</sup> Leadership practices based on Islamic values encourage inclusivity and active engagement, contributing to stronger educational communities.<sup>17</sup>

Therefore, collaborative leadership within learning guidance programs demonstrates that successful educational management depends not only on principal authority but also on the capacity to empower teachers and develop collective commitment toward educational goals.

### **Academic Supervision as a Strategy for Improving Learning Guidance Quality**

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<sup>14</sup> Rudolph Peter Cornelissen and Juliana Smith, “Leadership Approaches of Principals Heading National Strategy Learner Attainment Schools in South Africa,” *International Journal of Educational Leadership and Management* 10, no. 1 (2022): 56–83, <https://doi.org/10.17583/ijelm.7966>.

<sup>15</sup> Mazhabi, “Investigating Leadership Attributes and Strategies during Times of Crisis and Educational Change.”

<sup>16</sup> Said et al., “Unveiling the Excellent Leadership Qualities and Practices of Principals in Islamic Schools.”

<sup>17</sup> Alazmi and Bush, “An Islamic-Oriented Educational Leadership Model.”

The findings reveal that academic supervision became an essential strategy employed by principals to ensure the effectiveness of learning guidance programs. Supervision was conducted not merely as an evaluative activity but as a continuous developmental process aimed at strengthening teachers' instructional capacity and improving program quality. Principals regularly monitored implementation, observed instructional practices, and provided constructive feedback to teachers involved in learning guidance activities.

Interview findings showed that supervision activities included classroom observations, individual discussions, and reflective evaluations after program implementation. Rather than emphasizing control mechanisms, supervision was carried out through mentoring and professional support. One participant explained: *"After learning guidance sessions, the principal usually discusses strengths and weaknesses with teachers. The purpose is improvement, not evaluation alone."* (Teacher interview)

These findings support previous studies indicating that effective supervision contributes significantly to teacher performance and instructional quality.<sup>18</sup> Academic supervision in contemporary educational settings increasingly emphasizes collaborative and adaptive approaches rather than traditional top-down monitoring systems.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, instructional leadership practices directly influence school effectiveness through sustained guidance and professional support.<sup>20</sup> In Islamic schools, supervision also reflects educational values emphasizing care, responsibility, and professional development. Thus, supervision functions not only as administrative oversight but as an instructional strategy to sustain learning quality and teacher growth.

### **Integrating Digital Innovation in Learning Guidance Management**

The findings also demonstrate that principals increasingly incorporated digital technology into the management of learning guidance programs. The use of digital platforms facilitated communication, monitoring, documentation, and coordination processes, making learning guidance activities more flexible and efficient. Technology was utilized not only for administrative purposes but also to support instructional interactions and student learning assistance. Interview data revealed that digital communication platforms and online monitoring tools enabled faster coordination among teachers and school leaders. One participant noted: *"Digital platforms help us coordinate learning guidance schedules and monitor students more efficiently because information can be shared immediately."* (Learning guidance coordinator interview)

These findings align with studies suggesting that school leadership in the digital era requires adaptability and openness toward technological change.<sup>21</sup> Digital leadership competencies have become increasingly important as school leaders face educational transformation and technological

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<sup>18</sup> Dety Mulyanti, "Educational Supervision to Improve Teachers' Learning Quality and Performance in the New Normal Era," *AL-ISHLAH: Jurnal Pendidikan* 15, no. 3 (2023): 3749–55, <https://doi.org/10.35445/alishlah.v15i3.3780>.

<sup>19</sup> Lidya Puspita Sari et al., "More Adaptive Educational Supervision: A Study of Principle Variance," *Indonesian Journal on Learning and Advanced Education (IJOLAE)*, January 31, 2026, 224–45, <https://doi.org/10.23917/ijolae.v8i1.7984>.

<sup>20</sup> Mumtaz et al., "Instructional Leadership and School Effectiveness."

<sup>21</sup> Thohri, "Islamic School Leadership Model."

integration.<sup>22</sup> Research also shows that digital supervision systems improve efficiency and facilitate educational management processes.<sup>23</sup> Within Islamic educational institutions, technological innovation does not replace institutional values but supports the achievement of educational goals more effectively. Therefore, digital integration in learning guidance management reflects leadership adaptability in responding to changing educational environments while maintaining the institution's educational mission and values.

### **Managing Challenges and Adaptive Leadership Practices**

The findings indicate that principals encountered several challenges in managing learning guidance programs, including differences in teacher readiness, limited instructional time, varying student needs, and technological adaptation issues. These challenges required principals to adopt adaptive leadership practices rather than relying on fixed administrative procedures. Leadership flexibility became essential in responding to dynamic educational conditions and ensuring program continuity. Interview findings revealed that principals adjusted implementation strategies according to emerging circumstances and institutional needs. One participant explained:

*“Not all situations can be handled with one approach. Sometimes the program schedule, mentoring strategies, or teacher assignments must be adjusted according to students' conditions.”* (Principal interview)

This finding suggests that adaptive leadership plays a critical role in maintaining program effectiveness during educational changes and institutional challenges. Previous studies indicate that successful school leaders demonstrate openness, collaboration, and innovation when facing uncertainty and change.<sup>24</sup> Similarly, leadership during periods of disruption requires flexibility and strategic responsiveness to contextual challenges.<sup>25</sup> Within Islamic schools, adaptive leadership also reflects the balance between preserving institutional values and responding to changing educational demands. Effective leadership therefore requires contextual sensitivity and strategic decision-making that supports sustainable educational practices.<sup>26</sup>

### **Strengthening School Culture and Sustainable Learning Guidance Programs**

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<sup>22</sup> John Olayemi Okunlola and Suraiya Rathankoomar Naicker, “Principals' Digital Leadership Competencies in the Fourth Industrial Revolution: Teachers' Perspectives,” *Education Sciences* 15, no. 6 (2025), <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci15060656>.

<sup>23</sup> Sanoto et al., “Enhancing Teacher Quality.”

<sup>24</sup> Mazhabi, “Investigating Leadership Attributes and Strategies during Times of Crisis and Educational Change.”

<sup>25</sup> Khalida Parveen et al., “Identifying the Leadership Challenges of K-12 Public Schools During COVID-19 Disruption: A Systematic Literature Review,” *Frontiers in Psychology* 13 (March 2022), <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.875646>.

<sup>26</sup> Saefudin Saefudin, “Digital Transformation in Islamic Education: A Strategic Framework for IT-Based Instructional Design,” *Kawruh: Journal of Islamic Studies* 1, no. 1 (2026): 14–28; Faisol Hakim, “A Model for Vocational Curriculum Management in Senior High Schools to Enhance Graduate Independence,” *Nawasena: Interdisciplinary Journal of Islamic Studies* 1, no. 1 (2026): 24–36; Muhammad Rayyan Huzaifi, “Digitalizing Pesantren Leadership Supervision in Strengthening Entrepreneurship and Social Media-Based Alumni Networks,” *Hastabrata: Journal of Business and Management Studies* 1, no. 1 (2026): 1–9; Muhamad Abdul Muid, “Information Literacy Skills of Students in Pesantren Environments: A SCONUL Seven Pillars Analysis in Language Learning Contexts,” *Literaturia: Journal of Linguistics, Literature, and Language Teaching* 1, no. 1 (2026): 17–26.

The findings further show that principals attempted to sustain learning guidance programs by strengthening school culture and institutional commitment. Learning guidance activities were embedded into school routines and educational practices rather than implemented as temporary programs. This strategy aimed to create continuity and shared responsibility among school members. Interview data revealed that principals promoted values such as discipline, collaboration, and collective commitment through regular school activities. One teacher stated:

*“The principal always emphasizes that learning guidance is part of our school culture. Therefore, all teachers are expected to participate and support students continuously.”*  
(Teacher interview)

This finding aligns with studies emphasizing that school leadership significantly influences organizational culture and educational effectiveness.<sup>27</sup> Islamic educational institutions particularly rely on value-based cultures that shape daily educational practices and student development.<sup>28</sup> Leadership within Islamic schools therefore extends beyond management functions toward creating an educational environment rooted in shared values and institutional identity. Therefore, strengthening school culture becomes an important strategy for ensuring that learning guidance programs remain sustainable and continue contributing to students’ academic and personal development over time.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study demonstrates that principals’ leadership in managing learning guidance programs in Islamic schools extends beyond conventional administrative responsibilities toward instructional and strategic leadership practices. The findings reveal that effective principals establish a clear instructional vision, encourage collaborative participation, implement academic supervision, integrate digital innovation, apply adaptive leadership strategies, and strengthen school culture to sustain learning guidance programs. These leadership practices contribute not only to improving the implementation of learning guidance activities but also to supporting teacher development and student learning outcomes. In Islamic school contexts, leadership is closely connected with institutional values, collective responsibility, and moral commitments, making leadership practices more holistic and contextually grounded. Therefore, successful management of learning guidance programs requires an integrated leadership approach that combines instructional effectiveness with value-based educational principles.

This study has several limitations. The research was conducted within a limited institutional context and relied primarily on qualitative findings from a specific Islamic school setting; therefore, the results may not fully represent broader educational contexts. In addition, the study focused mainly on leadership strategies from participants’ perspectives without examining measurable

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<sup>27</sup> Lili Abdullah Rozak et al., “Principal Leadership and Student Achievement,” February 12, 2021, 45–49, <https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.210212.009>.

<sup>28</sup> Burhanudin Abdul Karim Mantau and Ruwiah Abdullah Buhungo, “The Culture and Tradition of Educational Practice In Madrasah,” *Tafkir: Interdisciplinary Journal of Islamic Education* 5, no. 2 (2024): 202–16, <https://doi.org/10.31538/tijie.v5i2.890>.

impacts on student achievement or long-term institutional performance. Future studies are recommended to involve broader research settings across different Islamic educational institutions and employ comparative or mixed-method approaches. Further research may also investigate the relationship between instructional leadership strategies, learning guidance effectiveness, and student outcomes in order to provide a more comprehensive understanding of leadership practices in Islamic schools.

## **DECLARATION OF AI AND AI ASSISTED TECHNOLOGIES IN THE WRITING PROCESS**

In the preparation of this manuscript, the author(s) utilized ChatGPT to assist with auditing the bibliography for formatting accuracy and refining the articulation of theoretical constructs. All outputs were subsequently reviewed and revised by the author(s), who assume full responsibility for the final content of the publication.

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