

Being Strategic Leader in Indonesian Islamic School: An Overview

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Abstract : *Strategic leadership is about transforming an organization through its vision and values, culture and climate, and structure and systems as well as through its strategy. Strategic leadership is about anticipating future but at the same times accomplishing stability day-to day activities, envision, think strategically and work with others to initiate changes that will create a viable and valuable future, and also delegating leadership to others. This paper will discuss about the implementation of strategic leadership in Indonesian Islamic School. By operating strategic leadership in Islamic School hopefully makes it improve and sustainable inside competitive era. By implementing strategic leadership, principles or school leaders can establish greater advantage, make stronger connections and contribute to their school's wellbeing. Strategic leadership will bring them to the right track in improving Indonesian islamic school through right strategy.*

Keywords: *Strategic leadership, strategic leader, Islamic School, leadership, education, islamic education*

I. Introduction

In Indonesia, schools have challenges to transfer from bureaucracy to academic unit. Despite that, the changes in education over last decade, bring a new challenge of competitive environment. Islamic school, as a part of the education in Indonesia also getting in this situation. Competition within the education sectors is spreading between islamic schools. Schools having to compete for students. Nothing different between public and private school. All funding for schools are based on the number of student's enrollment. To be survive in this competitive environment, schools must attract student. If they don't have any funding from students, ultimately the school will be closed. This situation become task of each islamic school to be focus on developing their school performance. Its make them to be able to develop and carry out strategies that will sustain their competitive advantage. This also requires a strategic capability of school principal, as Bush (2007) states they need the leadership of highly effective principals and the support of other senior and middle managers. Its needs ability to select the most appropriate vision, to define realistic purpose, to match resources and opportunities and to prepare and implement strategic plans. It is need ability namely strategic leadership.

Strategic leadership is not a new categorization or types of leadership, such as transformational leadership. Rather, it is the best considered as the strategic element within the broader leadership paradigm. The key success for those who led schools in the last two decades, in many countries, have been school effectiveness and school improvement. Even if such attempts at improvement are successful, the question that should be asked is, are they sustainable? Strategic leadership answering this question. It is a parrallel with leadership development view in which leaders not only improve on the "now" of the school improvement but concurrently build strategic capability within the school.

This paper will simply discuss about why and how strategic leadership understand especially for islamic school leader or principals. Applying this paradigm is an effort to achieve improving islamic school quality in proper theory and ethic that suitable with islamic principles and values. This paper will support school manager or principals focus in particular circumstance sustainable competitive advantage.

II. Islamic Education

There are several definitions of islamic education. Muhaimin (2009) revealed two of these definitions. First, islamic education is educational activities that held or built intentionally to manifest islamic principle and values. Second, islamic education is an educational system developed and spirited by islamic principle and values. There are different types of Islamic schools. First is traditional schools that just have religious instruction, in particular, memorization of the holy Qur'an. Second is modern islamic school that offer both religious studies and some secular subjects, such as math, science, and English.

Implementation of islamic education in Indonesia still not fulfill the aims and expectation of moslem community. Islamic education is more emphasis on "knowing" and "doing" aspect rather than "being" which is mean students undergo live accordance to islamic principles and values (Muhaimin, 2009). Islamic education should drew its substance from the everyday experiences and day-to-day problems of the early Muslim community. Islamic education often cannot blend with another secular programs or sciences. Likewise, islamic

education lack of relevance with social changes retarded adapt environment's need (Muhaimin, 2006). That's explanation is include in problems or challenges faced islamic school besides another eksternal problem. The pervasive influence of secular materialism and its value system seriously challenges religious-minded individuals and communities. Nevertheless, we still have to adopt and filtering values which not againts primary islamic source. To a large extent, the future will depend on how well we educate our children today and to what extent we are successful in transferring to them the sacred vision of life we have as Muslims.

Islamic education, first and foremost, must focus on teaching values and emphasize issues of identity and self-esteem; furthermore, it must address the real concerns of students, and it must emphasize and provide for training in leadership. Dawud Tauhidi said an effective islamic teaching and learning have important role such as: meaningful, integrative, value-based, challenging and active, which is discussed in detail in Expectations of Excellence: Curriculum Standards for Social Studies. Washington, DC. National Council for the Social Studies, 1996. Islamic teaching and learning is based on a dynamic view of Islam and Islamic education. This view is rooted in the belief that the mission of Islam is to positively affect and transform the world.

III. Indonesian Islamic School

Islamic school is more than an educational institution. It is the blue print of future islamic generation and future islamic society. Hopefully islamic schools can help establish islamic communities that manners, concepts, and values are derived from the islamic source; the Quran and sunnah of the prophet Mohammed. Islamic schools should be a driving force in reforming the society, and this very important and difficult task can be accomplished through the team-effort of all those involved in management such as the school board, the principal, staff, parents, students, and so the community at large. It is not sufficient to bring islamic schools the latest in technology and science. More than that, what is more important is to intertwine this with islamic source. The islamic schools outlook should be not solely as institution of reading and writing to enhance knowledge but also as institution of Dawah.

Islamic schools have uniqueness that differs with any educational institutions in its mission and philosophy. The ultimate goal of islamic schools should be to produce graduates who are not only rich in knowledge but who are noble in character and who can promote righteousness in society. There are several characteristic of islamic school such described:

- Islam as school's philosophical basis
- Islamic principle and values integrated in its curriculum
- Apply and develop instructional method to optimalized teaching learning process
- Precede qudwa hasanah in student character building
- Develop spirit amar ma'ruf nahi munkar in school environment
- Involved society and parent's role supporting to accomplish education's goal
- Educational activities oriented on quality education

Ministry of Religious Affairs release data in 2011-2012 that more than 90% of Islamic schools in Indonesia consist of private islamic school. It means that government has a big job to improve and control the quality of islamic school. Improvement of islamic school quality become essential issues because of its poorness. There is a large amount of islamic school doesn't have national accreditation as education institution (39%).

| Islamic school | Level of National Accreditation (%) | | | |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| | A | B | C | Non |
| Kinder Garten | 4.7 | 18.37 | 9.25 | 67.67 |
| Primary School | 7.65 | 40.86 | 26.05 | 25.43 |
| Junior High School | 8.38 | 37.44 | 22.64 | 31.53 |
| Senior High School | 12.06 | 32.62 | 22.57 | 32.74 |
| Average (%) | 8.20 | 32.32 | 20.13 | 39.34 |

Source: ministry of religious affairs 2013-2014
(<http://pendis.kemenag.go.id/file/dokumen/madrasahanalisis.pdf>)

Data shows that islamic school which has A accreditation is less than 10 %. It means that islamic school management needs improvement. If the quality of islamic school high, at the end it has consequences in elevating society trust to islamic institutions. Likewise, islamic school has good image in their mind. Islamic school which has good quality bring it into survivor organization. Nowadays, we are entering global competitive era. Islamic school needs a leader who understands this situation and winning it.

IV. Strategic Leadership

Historically, the study of leadership paradigm has focused on traits, behavior and more recently quality that created leadership (Reinhartz and Beach, 2004:11). The trait view of leadership focuss on having the right stuff and are concerned with characteristic of leaders and other perspective examines leaders behavior. In this paradigm, there are some types of leadership that characterized by behaviors, such as supportive leadership, directive leadership, participative leadership, etc. More recently, studies have looked more holistically at leader behavior and examined various qualities related to dynamics interaction between leader and followers. Qualities develop as individuals interact within context of the organization and reflect the give and take aspect of leadership process. In this contemporary leadership theory, emphasized the need to create a cooperative vision within non threatening learning environment. People today have the need to feel empower in their work and function best when thy continuously learning.

Understanding view of leadership, perhaps is best summaries by Harris and Lambert (2003:20), who talks about building leaderships capacity in schools. There is key assumption of leadership:

- Leadership is not trait theory, it is reciprocal learning processes that enable participants to construct and negotiate meanings leading to shared purpose of schooling.
- Leadership is about learning that lead to constructive change.
- Every one has the potential and right to work as a leader.
- Leading is a shared endeavour, the foundation for democratization of school.
- Leadership requires the redistribution of power and authority.

These five assumptions form the conceptual frame work for leadership capacity building for school improvement. It is refers to share learning leading to shared purpose and action. The head is one leader and very important leader, but he or she does not fill all or even most of leadership role in the building. That's why there is shared decision making. It is involves new rules and responsibilities that reframe all of our interaction together. From this assumption, It is being understand that everyone have leadership and just need chance to reveal it, and this require strategic leader, that will help his followers to use and enhance it. So, what strategic leadership is and what strategic leadership do?

Developing strategy needs time and resources. It requires time commitment and involved highly paid person to formulate it. Developing strategy implies long-term success of organization. Michael Wilkinson focused in 5 particular reasons why we need strategy.

1. Sets directions and establish priorities of the organization. Strategy defined organization way to success and outline priority that have to complete to make it into reality activities. Strategy will help people in organization know what they should working on and what should be working on first. Without clearly define particularly startegy and priority it can not bring you any success.
2. Get everyone on the same page. Every parts of the organization have different aims to achieve that pulling different direction. Strategy makes all parts; in education such as teachers, staffs, principals, etc; moving together to achieve goal of the organization
3. Simplifies decision making. When leadership facing trouble like saying no to new idea, potential initiative, etc; strategy will clearly outline organization priority activities that must completed to achieve success. It is more easier say no to non potential idea that pull organization out of the focus.
4. Drives aligment. Many organization having great hard working people that give best effort to gain its strategic success. Their activities based on priorities. Strategy serve the vehicles for answering 'how can we better lined all the resources to maximize our strategic success'.
5. Communicate the message. Strategy clarify to communicate the message. Many leaders walk around with fertile strategic that lock out into their head. Unfortunately, strategies is not write down on paper, it has been to communicate clearly.

Understanding strategy term, it was used originally on military. Oxford English Dictionary defined strategy as: 'The art of commander-in-chief; the art of projecting and directing the larger military movements and operations of campaign.' The term art means the way people face and solve their problem. Today, this term become word that used in any disciplines. Strategy was applied to almost every management activity by practitioners, consultants and academics (Eacott, 2007), and Strategy has always been considered the queen of the managerial disciplines (Boisot, 2003).

Strategy has been defined in several ways by the many writers, and Amstrong (2008: 22) has been collect that definitions from several author and formulated new definition. Amstrong defined strategy has two fundamental meaning. First, it is forward looking and about deciding where you want to go and how you mean to get there. The second meaning is conveyed by the concept of strategic fit. It means that organization or firm must match its capabilities and resources to the opportunities available in the external environment. It can be understand that emphasize strategy is focus on an actions that should do to gain the purpose by exploring resources and opportunities, and it doing so, being different from its competitor. Put in literary term. When we should finish our mathematic exam, we can finish it by common way or with some tricks that will make finish faster. Trick is same with strategy. Strategy will make us faster and different than others.

Armstrong states that strategic capability of organization depend on the strategic capability of its managers. It means that leader is important point of successful organization and we need strategic leader to gain this success. Phipps and Burbach, (2010) state that strategic leadership focuses on the way top-level leaders (i.e., executives) have an impact on organizational performance through their leadership. Davies and Davies (2008) have five concepts of strategy. First, it is concerned with the idea of direction-setting. To decide on the direction for the institution, it is necessary to understand its history and its current situation. Second, strategy is perspective, as a holistic way of looking at things. Third, strategy does not get involved in the detailed day-to-day activities but is concerned with the broad major dimensions of the organization. Fourth, a medium to longer-term time framework is useful when considering strategy. A final useful concept is that strategy can be used as a template against which to set shorter-term planning and activities.

Further, Davies and Davies argues that The function of strategy is to translate the moral purpose and vision into reality. The moral purpose which can be considered as 'why we do what we do'. The values that underpin this moral purpose are linked to the vision considering 'where we want to be and what sort of organization we want to be in the future'. Strategy is the means of linking this broad activity to shorter-term operational planning, thereby imbuing the responses to immediate events with elements of the cultural and value system.

Although educational institution differ along crucial dimensions from other kinds of organization (Glatter, 1972); and differs markedly from the management of organization (Bush, 1986), it is also a complex organization have to manage professionally. It is need strategic leadership. Schools or college have staff, students, and budget which run to several amout of money to gain the vision. There is evidence that strategic leaders sustain an effective organizational culture and infuse ethical value systems into an organization's culture (Hitt, Keats, & DeMarie, 1998; House & Aditya, 1997; Ireland & Hitt,1999).

For more than a decade, school effectiveness and school improvement of management have been the key and approach in management operations school (Scheerens, 1992; Reynold, et.al, 1996; Scheerens and Bosker, 1997). As Bollen (1996: 1) highlight that this body concept is trying to give answer to two fundamental question: what do schools really look like in their daily operations; and how do schools develop over time?. This concept come from fact that if we comparing schools one another, we can find there is effective school and there is ineffective school. That's way there is concept school improvement, develop and change from ineffective to effective.

While these developments may be welcomed or criticized, there is fundamental choices have to face by school leaders that precedes implementation of institutional advancement concept: Will the structure be used to strengthen management or to heighten leadership? Clugstone (1981) states that leadership concept is broadest and most useful sense in institutional advancement. This concept is not about when to lead and when to manage, but how leadership dwell. As a presence, leadership lives within the school community. Some individual contribute more to interesting awareness of leadership than others, but every one in the community have sense of it. Clugstone suggest that the dwelling place for leadership should be the institutional advancement organization.

Davies and Davies (2008), state that the more important is not about being success in their attempt to improve current patterns of schooling within the existing paradigm of education, but how to make it sustainable. There is renewed attention needs to be paid to ensure this sustainability, namely strategic leadership. Davies and Davies argue that what is needed is a concurrent or parallel view of leadership development in which leaders not only improve on the 'now' of school improvement but concurrently build strategic capability within the school.

Strategic leadership is distinguish from ongoing, routine, day to day leadership on three dimension: time, scale of issue and scope of action. As far as time is concerned, strategic leadership is more concerned with the longer term than shorter term. Issues tend to be national and international as well as local in their scale. Scope of action tends to be more school- wide than program focused. By implications the outcome are strategic for action, being more at the policy level in respect to their specification of broad guidelines for action Caldwell and Spinks (1992).

V. Operating Strategic Leadership In Indonesian Islamic School

The 21st Century brings new challenges and promises. Today the principalship is dynamic, complex, and demanding. The leadership must "appraise the present, anticipate the future, and help develop a school vision in collaboration with the various school stakeholders (Speck, 1999). Leaders should take the responsibility and action to influence and motivate a process that keeps everyone actively participate in answering the question. The board members are the visionaries-- the dreamers; but the administrators are the missionaries-- the doers. Both are important for the success of the Islamic school. leadership in Islamic schools should be a driving force in reforming the society, and this very important and difficult task can be accomplished through the team-effort of all those involved in leadership, the school board and the principal. According to Yasmeen and Kamran Qadri (2002) statement that represented in ISNA Education Forum at least

two conditions are essential for Islamic schools' total success. First, the vision, mission and goals of the institution should be solely to please Allah. Second, the professionalism in administration should not be affected by using religious examples from the Quran or Sunnah to manipulate the ones' personal need. This Islamic leadership concept more than less is the same as with strategic leadership concept.

Incorporating visionary and administrators, vision-mission and professionalism in administration or called visionary leadership-managerial leadership is not enough to get an Islamic school success in long-term viability. Although a combination of visionary and managerial leader can yield positive result in the short and long run, there are numerous practical obstacles that can prevent such an outcome (Rowe & Nejad, 2009). While managerial and visionary leaders are busy exploiting and exploring resource, strategic leaders exploit and explore in a way that maintain school institutional financial stability in the short term, while building a foundation for long-term viability.

Strategic leadership is more likely to create synergy by envisioning a desired future and growth strategy, while influencing employees to voluntarily make day to day decisions that will help maintain the financial stability of school institution, as well as its future viability. Strategic leadership is also about capturing and distributing entity. Strategic leader must have ability to anticipate, envision, maintain flexibility, think strategically and work with others to initiate changes that will create a viable and valuable future for the organization (Coulter, 2002). Strategic leadership is not only about combining short-term focused day-to-day activities and long-term wealth viability. But, most important pinpoints of this term are shared values and a clear vision, both of which enable and allow every part of the school to make decisions. Strategic leader should distribute and share values so can pushing out leadership in every parts of organization. Because of leadership is about the latent- potentially banked and available capacity in each person that needs to be comes out (Harris & Lambert, 2003). Strategic leader must empowering others to decentralise decision-making to the school level.

After we got some perspective of strategic leadership, now we should understand how its work for improving school and sustaining this improvement. Davies and Davies (2008) establish a list of significant characteristics that successful strategic leaders possessed. These were:

- Strategic leaders have a dissatisfaction or restlessness with the present. This first character very important to successful strategic leader. They must have dissatisfaction and restlessness that was born from the organisational reality of schools and the need for capability building prior to changing the current situation.
- Strategic leaders prioritize their own strategic thinking and learning. The second characteristic stressed on school leaders participating in the study referred to their own learning and the importance of new knowledge to promote the strategic direction for the school.
- Strategic leaders create mental models to frame their own understanding and practice. School leaders stressed the importance of having a theoretical model to support strategic developments and the importance of sharing that model with others in the organization.
- Strategic leaders have powerful personal and professional networks. Strategic leaders constantly scan their environment locally, regionally and internationally to develop new ideas and to benchmark current practice in their own schools with those of colleagues in the wide educational community

Caldwell and Spinks (1992) list what leaders actually do when there are engaged in strategic leadership:

- Keeping abreast of trend issues, threats and opportunity in the school environment and in society at large, nationally and internationally; discerning 'megatrends' and anticipating at their impact on education generally and on the school in particular;
- Sharing their knowledge with others in the school community and encouraging other school leaders to do the same in their areas of interest;
- Establishing structures and processes which enable the school to set priorities and formulate strategies which take account of likely and/or preferred future; being key source of expertise as occur;
- Ensuring that the attention of the school community is focused on matters of strategic importance;
- Monitoring and implementation of strategies as well as emerging strategic issues in wider environment; facilitating an ongoing process review.

As with strategic leadership characteristics, the NCSL study (2005), Davies and Davies (2008) were able to create a list of five key activities that strategic leaders involve themselves in. They are:

- Direction setting; Strategic leaders are concerned with not just managing the now but setting up a framework of where the organization needs to be in the future, setting a direction for the organization. The function of strategy is to translate the moral purpose and vision into reality.
- Translating strategy into action. Davies, B. (2002) suggests a four-stage ABCD approach of translating strategy into action. First the articulation of the strategy can take place in three ways; oral, written and structural. Second, it is necessary to build a common understanding of what is possible through shared

experiences and images. Third, the leadership needs to create through dialogue a shared conceptual or mental map of the future. Fourth, the leadership needs to define desired outcomes and the stages of achieving those outcomes. This will establish a clear picture of the new strategic architecture of the school

- Aligning the people and the organization to the strategy. There is a process to improve strategic capability. It is based on strategic conversations which built participation and motivation within their school.
- Determining effective intervention points. When individuals in the organization are ready for change, when the organization needs the change and when the external constraints and conditions force the change, all have to be. Such judgement is manifested in not only knowing what and knowing how but also knowing when and, as important, knowing what not to do.
- Developing strategic capabilities. If the school is to develop and be sustainable in the longer term, then it needs to develop strategic capabilities. Examples of these would be the fundamental understanding of teaching and learning rather than the ability to deliver the latest curriculum innovation; a problem-solving culture rather than a blame culture for the staff; and assessment for learning rather than assessment of learning. Creativity in problem-solving and teamworking are necessary to give the school deep-seated strategic capabilities or abilities

These activities can be parameter that recognize strategic leadership implementation at school organization. The National College For School Leadership research project by Barbara and Brent Davies in 2005 identified schools that were strategically led. We can also use this parameter to our islamic school by checking their process, approach and leadership. These following are some example of its symptoms:

Translating strategy into action; These three elements of articulation of the strategy are reflected in the following school leader responses in the NCSL study:

“I am constantly talking to the staff about where we are going and how they can contribute. I think it’s really, really critical that you find a way to communicate the basic organizational goals to the largest number of people possible”.

Developing strategic capabilities/ core competencies. Capability-building is central factor in a strategically focused school & one of the key activities of strategic leader.

School leaders in the study commented:

“The staff are very good ‘knowers’ but not very good ‘learners.’ We have to change that over the longer term to build a learning community. The more long-term things are those that you know where you want to get to but you are not quite sure yet how you are going to do it so you need to build some kind of capability within people – so for instance developing a learning focus school.

Strategic leaders have a dissatisfaction or restlessness with the present.

School leaders responses:

“everyone, whether you have an open mind or not is frustrated at times and it can be for very positive reasons and it can be for very negative reasons. It’s probably about sifting through those levels of anxiety, worry, concern, frustration an actually turning them into something more positive. One of the things that drives me is that I am never satisfied”

From those explanations we conclude there are essential point for the principal or Islamic school leader to notice,

1. Important to recognize differences between leader-manager and carry out in the proper timing of school strategic management.
2. Leader having point of view that every person; subordinates; having leadership ability in their own’s capability that need to be comes out. By delegating leadership to others a leader pulling it into decision-maker in every level hierarchy of school.
3. Focus is a key success. A strategic leader have to focusing a clearly vision of the school that going to be pinpoint of its competitive advantage.
4. In practicing strategic leadership in islamic school must be based on principles that primarily derived from key sources: the Quran, the Sunnah, The wise Calips and pious followers.

VI. Conclusion

Facing today’s challenges in education, Indonesian islamic educations mentioned the poorness of quality. Indonesian Islamic schools require improvement in all dimension to be able to take advantages from competitiveness. The way to accomplish this task they need a leader who has strategy. Not only the board members are the visionaries-- the dreamers; but the administrators are the missionaries-- the doers. Both are important for the success of the Indonesia Islamic school.

Strategic leadership is more likely to create synergy by envisioning a desired future and growth strategy, while influencing employees to voluntarily make day to day decisions that will help maintain the financial stability of school institution, as well as its future viability. Practicing strategic leadership in Indonesian Islamic school have several dimension that adapt Islamic principles and values. Practicing strategic leadership in Islamic school must be based on integrated principles that primarily derived from key sources: the Quran, the Sunnah, The wise Caliphs and pious followers. Strategic leader empowering others to come out their own leadership capability. Strategic leader also have to focusing a clearly vision of the school that going to be pinpoint of its competitive advantage. After all having strategy in leading next step is determine how and do it cause it drives better thinking, better decision, better result in school management.

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