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Principal's Leadership in Education Innovation

(Case study at MTsN Model Amuntai)

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Abstract—This study was aimed at understanding and describing the leadership of Madrasah principal in carrying out the education innovation. This study focused on activities of the principal of Madrasah Model Amuntai in the education innovation. This study was qualitative in nature, using case study design. Data were collected using three techniques: observation, interview, and documentary. The data were interpreted using phenomenological perspective. Validity of the data was attained through depth of observation, triangulation, and *debriefing*. The results of this study showed that the principal of Madrasah Model Amuntai has innovated the following educational activities: (1) implementing *integrated learning*, improving learning strategies, and being more selective in the new student enrollment. There was less or no innovation in financial management, facilities and infrastructure, and public relation, (2) There was less innovation in human resources and evaluation, (3) the nature of the behavior of the principal is *task oriented behavior*, and occasionally *relation oriented behavior* in instructive, consultative, participative and delegative styles, (4) the implementation of education innovation is driven by strong ideology of the spirit of perseverance (*ruhul jihad*).

Keywords—Leadership; Islamic School Principal; Education Innovation

I. INTRODUCTION

Societies of the world have been changing. The changes are due to the dynamics of global information era. Rural societies are no exception to these changes. They tend to shift to more materialistic and capitalistic way of life. Madrasahs, which are built by-and-for-community education institutions, are now viewed by the society as unprofessional lack of quality in terms of managerial practices.

Reference [5] lists the following weak spots of Madrasahs: (1) emphasizing matters over methodology, (2) preference to rote memorization over analysis and dialogue, (3) putting more importance to vertical over lateral way of thinking, (4) inclining the left brain over the right brain (5) teaching religious subjects atraditionally rather than rationally, and (6) overemphasizing on knowledge as final product rather than on its methodological process.

The abovementioned phenomena are common in most madrasahs in Indonesia, especially in South Kalimantan. The phenomena seem worse in private Islamic education subsector. To name some factors that cause these phenomena would

include weak leadership, i.e. the one which is unable to encourage, motivate, influence, drive, and develop human resources to its best potentials.

Based on the above problems of Madrasahs, in the periode of 1997 to 2002 Asian Development Bank (ADB) and Minsitry of Religious Affairs (Mora) launched a project to upgrade and improve quality of both public and private Madrasahs. The first two years of the project was for civil works while the rest is for trainings. Such trainings were intended to improve human resources of Madrasahs. These trainings included In-service Trainings which cover Kelompok Kepala Madrasah (KKM) for principals, Kelompok Kerja Guru (KKG) for Islamic elementary school teachers, Musyawarah Guru Mata Pelajaran (MGMP) for subject matter teachers of junior high level, librarianship training, financial management training, supervision training, and BP3 (parent-teacher association) training. The projects were implemented in six provinces, of which South Kalimantan was one of them.

Basic framework of the In-service Trainings was that upon participating in the training activities, all parties (stake holders) of Madrasahs; principals, teachers, treasurers, librarians, and parent-teachers association members would actively involve in the process innovation for the betterment of madrasah quality. Reference [1] suggests that successful schools are those that are able to make innovations. Innovations are more of leadership matter. This means that in order for a madrasah to develop, it needs to have a visionary principal, the one who keeps making innovation to cope with new development.

The most strategic innovations of education include strategy, design, awareness, vision, mission, scheduling, job distribution, making use of infrastructure, good supervision and guidance, and control in both educational and administrative processes. Considering the huge amount of tasks to undertake, the efforts should be carried out step by step yet continuously.

This study is a report of research on one of the six target madrasah receiving benefits of ADB-Mora Basic Education Project. This study was carried out in Madrasah Tsanawiyah Negeri (MTsN) Model Amuntai, Hulu Sungai Utara Regency, South Kalimantan. Preliminary observation and interview with the principal and vice principal for curriculum of MTsN Model Amuntai as well as Head of MT's sub-section of Mora office of Hulu Sungai Utara Regency revealed that some innovations have been implemented to some degree, including teaching-learning strategy, breakthrough of cooperation with

stakeholders, utilization of available learning sources, incorporation of local content in the curriculum, teachers and personnel coaching. As for some activities that have not been optimally implemented including insufficient and inappropriate supervision to teaching and learning process, ineffective and inefficient processes of new students intake, students' discipline supervision, and underused or ineffective use infrastructures.

This study is about Leadership of Madrasah Principals in Education Innovation (Case study in MTsN Model Amuntai). Question to be answered in this study being how is the leadership of MTsN Model Amuntai in impelementing education innovation. This question is elaborated in four more detailed foci: the background of the implementation of education innovation, the implementation process, efforts made by the principal of MTsN Model Amuntai in such process, and behaviors of the principal in the process of education innovation.

II. METHOD

This study is qualitative in nature and designed as a case study. Techniques of data collecting used were interviews, observation, and documentary. Checks of data validity include: (1) *triangulation*, for both sources and instruments of data collecting; (2) *member check*; and (3) Peer discussion.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study revealed that the main reason of the principal and school personnel in implementing education innovation is to make MTsN Model Amuntai as a modern and effective madrasah. The aspects of education innovation which have been implemented are curriculum, infrastructures, finance, teaching and learning strategies, new students' enrollment, and supervision of teacher personnel. Efforts and behaviors of the principal include adapting to immediate situation and available condition and act accordingly, and in the processs of the implementation the principal used participative, instructive, delegative, and consultative approaches.

A. Background of the Implementation of Education Innovation in MTsN Amuntai

People act accordingly to their environment. They learn and analyze their physical and non-physical surrounding and react to them in accordance with their needs for development. Due to differences in physical and non-physical world, people have different motivation in their actions and reaction to their respective immediate situation and condition. The difference of responses by people may also be due to difference of personnel and social background.

The principal of MTsN Amuntai has envisioned his school to become an ideal and effective school with positive ethos and supportive climate. This vision was motivated by the school's previous stigma as less wanted, underachieved, less prestigious, and unqualified. In the efforts of actualizing the vision, the principal has done some innovations in the management of curriculum, infrastructure, finance, teaching

learning strategy, teacher personnel, and public relation. The importance of setting a goal to achieve in education institution is to have clear and achievable vision and mission.

During the last three years, MTsN Model Amuntai has enjoyed significant development. There have been more public awareness and interest in enrolling their children in MTsN Model Amuntai.

Attitude and perspective of a principal as a leader plays an important role in the innovation of Madrasah. Leadership paradigm of the principal of MTsN Amuntai include (1) striving to create conducive atmosphere for learning, (2) motivating and encouraging teachers to get involved and committed to the improvement, development, and progress of the school, and to have high morale and ethos, and (3) making efforts to gain public trust and support, and this could only be achieved through inclusive approach, open financial management, effective and direct communication, and good service to the community.

B. Physical and Non-physical Innovation

Education innovation means new changes taking place qualitatively differentiated from previous condition, and purposely carried out to increase ability in achieving specified goals. Education innovation refers to new ideas, things, methods perceived and observed by an individual or society in the forms of invention or discovery used to achieve educational goals or to solve education questions. Yet, innovation may be perceived differently by different people or institution. For one it is an innovation, while others that is not the case.

Education innovation in MTsN Model Amuntai new ideas, things, and methods taking place in MTsN Model Amuntai observable as new by school personnel were used to solve problems and to achieve goals set by MTsN Model Amuntai in its vision and mission.

Such innovations are indicated by 1) the improved infrastructure, 2) the improved or higher quality of students achievement, 3) the qualified output, (more students accepted in better accredited high schools, 4) higher enrollment of students (from 340 to 678 more than 90% increasing).

The followings are aspects of innovation taking place Madrasah Tsanawiyah Model Amuntai in the last 3 years:

1) Curriculum

Curriculum innovation implemented by principal of MTsN Model Amuntai included modifying the curriculum, i.e. three more hours into the schedule (from 45 hours per week to 48 hours per week). The increase is added to equalize with SMP (general school) academic curriculum, while maintaining the religious subjects. This is in line with what Soedijarto argues that curriculum is the strategic framework of materials of education in order to achieve educational goals which are relevant to current changes in society. Therefore, curriculum innovation is necessary. Reference [4] stated that curriculum innovation may be in changes of its contents and organization,

or objectives. Innovation takes place in three steps: (1) needs assessment of development, (2) planning of development, (3) implementation of planning of development.

This study reveals that the principal of MTsN Model Amuntai has implemented innovation in the form of *integrated learning*; that is integrating contents of academic subjects into religious subjects. Teachers are required to incorporate the teaching of sciences in Al-Qur'an and Hadits or vice versa.

2) Finance

Funding or finance is a very significant source in teaching and learning process. If it is managed professionally, other sections of the school activities will also run effectively. Financial management in MTsN Model Amuntai has adopted the School Based Management since 2001. The principal of MTsN Model Amuntai adopted open management for financial innovation. The management of financial sources comes in two steps; one-man receipt, one-man disbursement and control, and process of buying or using of fund delegated to the teachers and personnel. This practice is in line with the concept of *self-managing school* as the actualization of School-Based Management [3], that is involving subordinates or personnel to manage fund in such an effective and efficient way.

3) Teachers Personnel Management

Teachers and personnel management is key success for an education institution. Motivating and encouraging teachers and personnel in order to develop the teachers to the best of their potentials are efforts that have been made by the principal of MTsN Model. However, these efforts have not yet been done maximally. Therefore, we can say because what have been done by the principal are not different from what other principals usually do in their respective madrasah, the principal has not done any innovation in this aspect.

4) Public Relation

Public or society is partners, as well as users or beneficiaries of education institution. Vision and mission of an education institution should reflect the public needs. The higher the level of society living standard, the higher their needs for quality education that provides products of society members (students) who can adapt and adopt the new higher standard of living. The principal of MTsN Model Amuntai has done some innovations in this aspect. Through School-Based management society, parents are involved in formulating and decision making. He has begun the reach-out program with all stakeholders.

C. Efforts Made by the Principal for Education Innovation

1) Striving for Excellent School Goal

Besides presenting himself personally as role model by being humble, open, objective, rational, and consultative, the principal has also taken other professional measures, one of which is very selective enrollment of students. One of the key factors for successful school is the quality of input. In addition

to that, he also provides good quality education infrastructures.

2) Human Resource Development and Empowerment

Three aspects of education innovation are necessary cover of the teaching and learning process, school internal and external factors, and suprastructure or regulation. The other factors may include human resource development and pattern of interaction of the leader and the group he or she leads. Principal shall distribute jobs professionally and proportionally. Teachers and personnel in MTsN Model Amuntai are so varied in terms of their educational, socio-economic standing, and other personal and social differences of background. With his skill and Islamic religious knowledge and belief, the principal has been able to manage to motivate and encourage each individual in the school to carry out and finish each of their main jobs. He based his view on the teaching of the Holy Quran that every believer is brother and sister, so be kind to each other.

This explains that the principal of MTsN Model Amuntai has so far been setting the un-actualized ideals of innovation, there has been no real action. Human resources have been developed through mainstream methods; in-service trainings, seminars, and workshops which are usually top-down instruction from the regional office of Mora.

3) Evaluation of Innovation Implementation

Evaluation is carried out by principal of MTsN Model Amuntai based needs, situational and step by step. When problems arise especially in teaching and learning process, evaluation is made, decision making is achieved through consensus of individuals involved in the process under the coordination of vice principal for curriculum. When the innovation is deemed incompatible with students needs, coordinator and the team will ponder or speculate new alternative breakthrough. While step by step evaluation is for students' grade reports cards for each semester, and for every year end. This will show or prove the degree of success and failure.

4) Institutionalization of Innovation

In general, the implementation of education in MTsN Model Amuntai has been in process. The ideas and ideals of development of MTsN Model Amuntai so far has been from the principal, and in the process still depends very much on the elaboration from the principal to the school personnel, teacher and staffs alike. Therefore, in view of management principles, success or even failure of MTsN Model Amuntai principal in his role in organizing, mobilizing, and trusting to his subordinates are very much in process, we cannot declare its success in a tested point.

D. Behaviors and Attitudes of the Principal

The management implemented by the principal of MTsN Model Amuntai is adopted and adapted from Western theories which are simplified or actualized in accordance with

real condition. Innovation is planned in Snow ball model, a continuous staging.

In terms of organization, what has been done in the last three years by the principal MTsN Model Amuntai can be said as considerably good, especially in mobilizing, influencing, and empowering as well as coaching-guiding school personnel.

In fact, the principal of MTsN Model Amuntai has always got all school personnel especially teachers involved in materializing his ideas of making the school as the ideal school. In its operation, the leadership performed by the principal is task-oriented behavior. Effectiveness of a principal leadership according to [2] is that of "high-high leader", that is based on high task and high relationship. However, what has been displayed by the principal MTsN Amuntai is high task oriented, while maintaining low relationship. But, it is worth noting that the principal has been able to assess the actual and real condition surrounding his school, both physically and non-physically.

Reference [6] states that there are three aspects of behaviors of personnel in accepting ideas of innovation and tasks from their leader, commitment, compliance, and avoidance. Most school personnel are committed to what has been set by the principal along with steps decided in consensus to be carried together. This is due to the principal's openness to minor change of decision in relation with the actual situation and condition. In addition, he has always got all personnel involved in all processes.

In doing so, the principal has kept telling the school personnel that what they have been doing is not a matter of worldly or profane activities, there will be spiritual rewards based on Islamic religious belief.

Model of leadership implemented by the principal of MTsN Model Amuntai is situational leadership. The situational model of his leadership may be instructive, consultative, participative, and delegative.

Instructive leadership is applied especially for new personnel and/or low performance personnel. Consultative leadership is for personnel with capability yet lower motivation. In the process principal gives a wider freedom to the personnel in conveying their opinions, and keeps appreciating them. Participative model is for personnel with lower ability, but higher willingness. In his view, this kind of personnel is participants and partners. Delegative model is for personnel with high ability and high willingness. It is then conclusive that the leadership model applied by the principal is situational model.

This study confirms that in light of management and leadership agents of change (innovation) in MTsN Model Amuntai has been from **internal and external**. This differs from Baffadal's study [2] which stated that agents of innovation in schools are of school supervisors from the government office. Therefore, instead of deconfirming previous studies, this study adds more insight to theory of

agents of innovation in MTsN Model Amuntai consist of the principal as internal agent and government supervision officials as external agent.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

In general, the leadership of MTsN Model Amuntai principal in education innovation has been visible in teaching and learning strategies, new students enrollment, and curriculum. Managements of infrastructure, finance, personnel, and public relation have been neglected. If there were innovations, there have been very conceptual, not yet implemented.

However, MTsN Model Amuntai has the potential to develop due to its location.

- The reason behind the implementation of education innovation is to make MTsN Model Amuntai as ideal, modern, and effective school.
- Education innovations implemented including: (1) Curriculum- the incorporation and integration of academic knowledge or sciences into religious subject matters or vice versa. (2) Infrastructure – there has been less innovation. MTsN Model Amuntai has been playing the role of initiative giver to the government and project funder (ADB). (3) Finance - *open management* concept from School-Based Management principles has been implemented. (4) Teaching learning strategies – there have been team teaching and rotation class, and active learning approach implemented at this school. (5) New students enrollment – more selective students enrollment process is implemented. To guarantee smooth process of learning in this Islamic school, MTsN Model Amuntai accepts only prospective students with Arabic letters literacy (can read and memorize some verses of the Holy Quran). (6) Public relation – the school has extended its reach for wider community involvement and cooperation.
- There has been less concrete effort by the principal due to unavailability of the master plan.
- The leadership approaches adopted by the principal of MTsN Model Amuntai in education innovation were participative, instructive, delegative, and consultative.

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