

Principal's Strategy in Implementing a Culture of Quality in Elementary School: A Perspective of David Hunger and Wheelen

Haya Nabila¹, Makherus Sholeh^{✉1}, Ethem Gürhan²

¹ Universitas Islam Negeri Antasari Banjarmasin

² Ministry of National Education, Türkiye.

ABSTRACT

✉ **Corresponding author:**
Makherus Sholeh
makheruss@gmail.com

Received: 17 May 2025
Revised: 08 February 2026
Accepted: 10 February 2026
Published: 30 March 2026

This study is situated within the broader discourse on educational quality culture and strategic leadership, particularly in faith-based schooling contexts where institutional effectiveness is closely linked to value internalization and stakeholder alignment. This study aims to examine principals' strategic management processes in implementing and sustaining quality culture in Islamic elementary schools. A qualitative multi-case study design was employed involving semi-structured interviews, non-participant observations, and document analysis, analyzed using an interactive data analysis model consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. Quality culture development operates through an integrated strategic cycle encompassing environmental scanning, participatory planning, value-based implementation, and reflective evaluation. Applications of this study: The findings are applicable to educational leadership, school management, quality assurance systems, and faith-based education development. The study integrates the Hunger and Wheelen strategic management framework with Islamic value institutionalization processes, producing an empirically grounded strategic leadership model for supporting quality culture development. Sustainable quality culture in Islamic elementary education is achieved through cyclical strategic alignment integrating institutional diagnostics, stakeholder engagement, ritualized character habituation, and developmental supervision systems.

Keywords: *David Hunger; Educational Quality Culture; Faith-Based Schooling; Islamic Elementary Schools; Strategic Leadership; Stakeholder Engagement; Strategic Management; Wheelen.*



 : <https://doi.org/10.47766/idarrah.v9i2.6083>

Copyright (c) 2025 Idarah (Jurnal Pendidikan dan Kependidikan)

INTRODUCTION

The international educational system has established educational quality as its primary goal, which requires schools to function as special organizations that must achieve academic results while developing students' character and benefiting their communities (Osman, 2019). The increasing focus on quality culture research shows that shared values, institutional norms, and leadership practices are essential components that determine school performance sustainability (Donkoh et al., 2023). The concept of quality culture describes an organizational system that establishes institutional routines that combine collective obligations with established behavior patterns and methods for ongoing development (Abdullah, 2019; Harvey & Stensaker, 2008). The process of executing quality visions throughout organizations depends on leadership, which establishes procedures that determine how educational institutions perform and students achieve their development goals (Hallinger et al., 2025; Kholis, 2022).

The research shows that school leadership creates effective cultural programs through its three main responsibilities of strategic planning, instructional leadership, and stakeholder engagement work. The research demonstrates that sustainable school improvement depends on three factors, which include vision alignment, participatory governance, and organizational learning (Day et al., 2016; Leithwood et al., 2020). The existing literature has developed its content through secular educational systems, which operate under performance-driven governance frameworks that assess institutional quality through accountability standards and academic performance metrics. The existing viewpoints fail to explain how faith-based educational institutions build their quality culture because these institutions establish moral development and value acquisition as their fundamental educational objectives.

The Indonesian education system has made quality culture development into a main goal because educational reforms need to create complete educational systems that combine academic success with character development. The research demonstrates that school leaders function as the main drivers who develop school culture while they create stronger connections with stakeholders and maintain ongoing school development projects (Kholis, 2022; Sallis, 2002). Research on Islamic schooling in Indonesia shows that quality culture development depends on three factors, which include religious identity development, moral training, and trust within the community (Hadisi et al., 2025; Mahmud & Ramli, 2025; Mansur & Sholeh, 2024). Students need to develop academic skills, which schools must teach them, together with spiritual growth, proper behavior, and civic duties.

Organizational culture theory functions as a fundamental framework that helps researchers study sustainability practices within organizations through their collective beliefs and cultural traditions (Schein, 2010). Character education research demonstrates that schools maintain students' moral progress through three methods,

which include developing habits, showing examples, and establishing shared customs (Badriyah, 2025; Lickona, 2012; Osman, 2019). Indonesian research about character education demonstrates that character development in students results from combining religious values with school customs and leadership methods (Irbathy et al., 2025; Mansur & Sholeh, 2024).

While many studies have explored school leadership and educational quality, such as building a religious culture in schools focusing on planning, implementation and evaluation (Rahmayanti & Arif, 2021; Maarif et al., 2020; Pamuji et al., 2024). The influence of organizational culture on teacher performance and teacher motivation (Asmawan et al., 2024; Huda et al., 2025; Syaputra & Santosa, 2022). The academic field of educational leadership, together with quality management research, still lacks studies that connect strategic management frameworks to faith-based quality culture development. Existing quality culture studies have predominantly emphasized organizational climate and accountability systems. The existing field of character education research has dedicated its focus to studying pedagogical methods and developmental processes. The relationship between strategic leadership cycles and religious value institutionalization needs more conceptual study. The present study uses (Hunger & Wheelen, 2003) strategic management framework to investigate how principals create and maintain quality culture through their integrated leadership systems at Islamic elementary schools.

The study investigates how principals use their strategic management methods to create a quality culture through their environmental scanning practices, their strategic planning methods, their implementation mechanisms, and their evaluation systems. The research uses a qualitative multiple case approach to develop an evidence-based strategic leadership model, which demonstrates how value-based quality culture becomes part of faith-based elementary educational systems.

METHOD

This study used a qualitative multiple-case study design to investigate how school principals developed and maintained a quality culture through their strategic leadership methods. The researchers used multiple case studies to make it possible to study different strategic management methods used by organizations in various operational environments. The researchers conducted their study in two Islamic elementary schools, which they selected because both SDIT Al Firdaus and SDIT Ukhuwah earned recognition for their dedication to character education and their efforts to build quality educational programs. The researchers conducted their field research for six months, which enabled them to develop a comprehensive understanding of the situation.

Researchers gathered data through three methods: they conducted semi-structured interviews, performed non-participant observations, and analyzed documents. The research involved 12 informants who included 2 school principals as main informants and 8 teachers and 2 administrative staff members. The researchers used multiple interview sessions to achieve data saturation while they worked to resolve new emerging themes. The researchers conducted non-participant observations throughout the entire fieldwork period to study school leadership practices, program implementation, stakeholder engagement activities, and daily cultural routines. The research team used documentary evidence from strategic planning records, academic calendars, supervision reports, and institutional policy documents to validate their field findings and enhance the strength of their evidence.

The research employed a multi-method qualitative approach encompassing interviews, observations, and document analysis to ensure credibility through extended engagement and triangulation. Dependability was maintained via comprehensive documentation of data collection, coding, and analytic decisions, enabling transparency and reproducibility (Miles et al., 2014). The team applied an interactive qualitative data analysis involving data condensation, display, and conclusion drawing through iterative cycles, identifying five key themes related to environmental scanning, strategic planning, execution, and assessment. Cross-case synthesis of leadership styles informed a strategic framework for cultivating cultural values. Ethical rigor was upheld by securing institutional approval, obtaining informed consent, and safeguarding participant confidentiality with coded identifiers. Drawing on expertise in educational leadership and Islamic education, researchers combined observations, peer feedback, and evidence evaluation. Reflexive practices and systematic monitoring minimized bias, fostering an insightful analysis of leadership within religious educational contexts.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The discoveries demonstrate that environmental scanning functions as an essential strategic activity that both SDIT Al-Firdaus and SDIT Ukhuwah school principals use to create and maintain their quality culture. The process requires organizations to methodically identify their internal strengths, the needs of their stakeholders, and the external regulatory framework that governs their quality enhancement efforts. Environmental scanning does not serve only as an administrative evaluation tool because it functions as a strategic assessment tool that helps leaders make decisions and organizations change their operations.

Environmental Scanning

Both schools prioritize assessing human resource conditions and organizational participation as central to sustaining their quality culture. SDIT Al-Firdaus uses environmental scanning to identify issues caused by the frequent turnover of newly trained teachers, which disrupts program execution and hinders student character development. In response, leadership seeks to enhance collegial relationships and internal communication to boost teacher commitment. In contrast, SDIT Ukhuwah conducts internal assessments focusing on teacher involvement, organizational cohesion, and reflective participation through regular reflection and evaluation meetings. These forums foster shared accountability and support quality initiatives. Both institutions recognize stakeholder alignment, especially parental involvement, as crucial for success. They hold structured parent meetings and educational sessions to align school and home character education. Additionally, SDIT Ukhuwah extends engagement to community members through social partnerships, highlighting the role of a wider social system in nurturing student character.

The two schools show their distinctive character through their different approaches to institutional collaboration, which they establish with their partner organizations. SDIT Al-Firdaus uses parent-school alignment as its main external strategy, while SDIT Ukhuwah builds partnerships with educational authorities, religious organizations, and supervisory bodies to establish its institutional networks. The organization used this networking orientation to establish partnership activities, joint events, and coordination forums, which showed its capacity to conduct external research activities.

The environmental scanning methods of organizations need to include policy responsiveness as their fundamental element. The two principals exhibit adaptive leadership through their understanding of changes in regulations. The interview results, together with the institutional planning documents, reveal that educational reforms and policy demands internal to the institution function as advantages that strengthen existing character-based educational standards. The organization demonstrates strategic flexibility through its adaptive approach, which enables it to link its core values with changing governmental standards. Table 1 shows the cross-case synthesis of environmental scanning methods that researchers used together with interview data that represent their findings.

Table 1. Cross-Case Analysis of Environmental Scanning Strategies with Interview Evidence

| Strategic Dimension | Key Aspect | Sub- | SDIT Al-Firdaus (Evidence) | SDIT Ukhuwah (Evidence) | Cross-Case Interpretation |
|----------------------|--------------------------|------|---|---|--|
| Internal Environment | Human Resource Stability | | <i>"Yes, perhaps in terms of human resources, one factor is that we are a private school, so there is sometimes teacher turnover... most teachers are newly graduated, they catch on quickly"</i> | <i>"All of us certainly face challenges because everyone moving forward has challenges to advance and develop... when someone is passive, how do"</i> | Both schools face HR challenges, though Al-Firdaus structurally (turnover) and Ukhuwah |

| | | | | |
|----------------------|------------------------------|---|---|--|
| | | <i>but may lack experience, so they feel hesitant."</i> | <i>we as school management trigger change?"</i> | motivationally (participation). |
| Internal Environment | Organizational Participation | <i>"We routinely conduct evaluations at the end of each semester and also hold work meetings before the new academic year, so that all parties feel involved."</i> | <i>"We have monthly and weekly reflection meetings... that's where we receive input from teachers and staff regarding how the school is doing."</i> | Participatory governance practices are institutionalized in both schools through structured reflection forums. |
| External Environment | Parental Engagement | <i>"External factors, particularly in education, cannot be separated from parents... therefore, school programs must be communicated to parents."</i> | <i>"We have established good communication with parents and the community... the community also participates in social activities."</i> | Parents function as co-educators supporting character and quality culture beyond school settings. |
| External Environment | Institutional Collaboration | <i>"Programs must be communicated to parents at least once per semester to convey quality culture and character education."</i> | <i>"It's important for us to always collaborate and build partnerships... with the education office, the Ministry of Religious Affairs, and supervisors."</i> | Collaboration intensity differs, with Ukhuwah demonstrating broader institutional networking. |
| Policy Context | Policy Adaptation | <i>"We have been implementing character education long before the independent curriculum... we should not eliminate the good that already exists, but strengthen it."</i> | <i>"When faced with pressure from policy changes, we respond to it as motivation for improvement... what matters is staying focused on school quality."</i> | Both principals demonstrate adaptive leadership in responding to regulatory change. |

The environmental scanning strategies used by SDIT Al-Firdaus and SDIT Ukhuwah demonstrate that leadership situational awareness functions as a critical factor that determines the progression of quality culture development. The evidence-based strategic foundation that principals establish through human resource diagnostics, participatory climate monitoring, stakeholder mapping, institutional networking, and policy interpretation guides all future planning, implementation, and evaluation activities in Islamic elementary school settings.

Strategic Planning Strategy

The research shows that strategic planning serves as an essential process that organizations use to develop quality culture programs based on their environmental scanning results. The planning process at SDIT Al-Firdaus and SDIT Ukhuwah operates as an interactive assessment method that combines institutional evaluation with leadership guidance and stakeholder participation. The current situation establishes a foundation for strategic management, which enables organizations to develop their institutional priorities through diagnostic analysis.

The planning cycle in both cases begins with evaluation as its main entry point. The planning process starts with organizations assessing their current quality culture programs to determine which aspects need sustainability maintenance, institutional development, and priority areas. The interview results show that both principals use evaluation methods to establish their strategic plans for organizational development and new initiatives. The observational evidence supports these accounts through its

documentation of formal evaluation meetings, annual work forums, and planning workshops, which assess program effectiveness before strategic decision-making processes.

The orientation of leadership establishes the core path that organizations will follow according to their planning processes. At SDIT Al-Firdaus, planning processes receive their main guidance from transformational leadership demonstration, which the principal uses to show his expected behavior through his discipline and value control practices. The leadership patterns that staff show during institutional meetings and their school activities create a role model system that functions as a cultural reference point for strategic decision-making. SDIT Ukhuwah implements its leadership model by enhancing the management team's structure to create better leadership systems. The planning process includes leadership units that work together to create operational programs that reflect the institutional vision. The organizational structure implements a distributed leadership system, which enables teams to execute their strategic plans together.

Human resource development is fundamental to planning operations in both schools, with teachers recognized as key agents in fostering a culture of quality. SDIT Al-Firdaus emphasizes motivational communication, professional mentoring, and value-based guidance, while SDIT Ukhuwah focuses on emotional engagement, systematic coaching, and collaborative empowerment. Capacity building—including training, professional development, and mentoring—is integral to their strategic planning.

The two educational institutions employ participatory planning involving teachers, administrative staff, parents, and foundation members, fostering shared ownership through dialogical decision-making rather than top-down orders. This inclusive approach enhances program execution across institutional levels. The vision and mission guide planning priorities; SDIT Al-Firdaus aims to cultivate a Qur'anic generation through literacy, memorization, and character rituals, whereas SDIT Ukhuwah evaluates program effectiveness to ensure alignment with its institutional values. Together, these elements demonstrate how human resource development, stakeholder participation, and organizational identity shape strategic planning.

The operational systems used for communication purposes create essential infrastructure that helps to maintain planning consistency. The two schools established permanent communication pathways that operate through their work meetings, reflection forums, and academic scheduling platforms. Observational evidence shows that strategic plans use both formal directives and consultative dialogues to share information, which allows organizations to gather feedback and improve their programs. Table 2 presents a cross-case analysis of strategic planning methods, which includes evidence from multiple interviews.

Table 2. Cross-Case Analysis of Strategic Planning Strategies with Interview Evidence

| Strategic Dimension | Key Sub-Aspect | SDIT Al-Firdaus (Evidence) | SDIT Ukhuwah (Evidence) | Cross-Case Interpretation |
|----------------------------|---|---|--|--|
| Strategic Planning Process | Evaluation-Based Planning | <i>"The first step is to evaluate which aspects of the quality culture need to be maintained and which new inputs can better help achieve the school's vision and mission. Then, after the evaluation, we formulate how the quality culture can actually be implemented."</i> | <i>"After planning, there must be action, then control, guidance, and finally evaluation."</i> | Both schools ground planning in systematic evaluation, positioning reflection as the entry point of strategic formulation. |
| Leadership Orientation | Transformational Leadership Modeling | <i>"Discipline is part of the quality culture, not only for students but also for teachers; the principal must set an example."</i> | <i>"The first step is to strengthen the management team; our leadership strength begins there."</i> | Leadership functions as the primary driver of quality planning, though expressed through role modeling (Al-Firdaus) and structural team strengthening (Ukhuwah). |
| Human Resource Strategy | Teacher Motivation & Professional Development | <i>"If the quality culture comes from the leadership... we must explain why discipline and quality culture are important."</i> | <i>"The approach we build is emotional... teachers and staff must feel they are an important part of doing it together."</i> | Both schools emphasize teacher empowerment, combining motivational communication with emotional engagement strategies. |
| Stakeholder Participation | Participatory Decision-Making | <i>"Our approach is not only top-down... but also from teachers to leadership."</i> | <i>"Everyone is involved: teachers, students, parents, foundations, management, including staff."</i> | Planning is participatory across both schools, integrating multi-stakeholder input into strategic formulation. |
| Vision Alignment | Vision–Mission Integration | <i>"The quality culture must support the vision of creating a Qur'anic generation... morning surah review and Asma'ul Husna are part of it."</i> | <i>"We always see whether programs align with the school's vision and mission... the direction must follow it."</i> | Strategic planning is vision-driven, ensuring all programs reinforce institutional identity and character goals. |
| Communication Strategy | Strategic Communication Channels | <i>"We explain discipline culture to teachers while also listening to their program recommendations."</i> | <i>"Strategic plans are communicated through work meetings and the academic calendar."</i> | Two-way communication systems function as coordination mechanisms sustaining planning coherence. |

The planning methods used by SDIT Al-Firdaus and SDIT Ukhuwah demonstrate that Islamic elementary schools develop their strategic plans through more than just their technical program development processes. The process includes leadership modeling, participatory governance, human resource empowerment, and value alignment processes, which together create the institutional framework needed to establish a culture of quality implementation within organizations.

Implementation Strategy

The results demonstrate that SDIT Al-Firdaus and SDIT Ukhuwah established their quality culture strategies through their three operational systems, which include teacher empowerment and their stakeholder collaboration system. The strategic management cycle designation of this stage functions as a bridge between institutional vision development and its educational implementation, which takes place throughout everyday school operations.

Religious habituation programs form the primary operational base through which both institutions establish their quality culture standards. SDIT Al-Firdaus plans to implement its tahfidz learning program together with daily congregational prayers, Qur'anic recitation, and structured worship routines into its school timetable. The school uses religious practices as essential teaching tools, which help shape student character development, according to three types of school activities, which include classroom work, prayer supervision, and memorization sessions. SDIT Ukhuwah uses religious habituation as a part of its daily behavioral routines because students practice their prayer times, their ablution process, and their discipline through their ritual activities. The direct observation of student movements shows that their worship preparation process includes dedicated staff who supervise their activities while they develop discipline through these processes.

The two educational institutions cultivate a culture of quality through comprehensive character development programs that go beyond ritual practices. SDIT Al-Firdaus integrates sunnah fasting, literacy growth, and ethical thinking to foster students' spirituality and responsibility. Character education is delivered through fasting, literacy assessments, moral instruction, and a mentorship program that promotes empathy, teamwork, and leadership. Teacher development is critical, employing spiritual coaching, Qur'anic recitation, and value-based professional guidance to shape moral role models. Teacher performance is monitored through weekly assessments, mentoring, and structured feedback, enhancing empowerment and educational quality. Collaboration with parents and the community sustains program operations beyond school hours, embedding quality culture throughout the wider social system.

The implementation process requires monitoring systems, which function as essential elements of the execution process. The supervisory system at SDIT Al-Firdaus implements dialogical problem-solving methods, which require a listening approach and reflective mediation for handling implementation challenges. SDIT Ukhuwah uses systematic coaching methods, which include evaluation processes that occur at regular intervals. The two methods share common elements because both include supervisory frameworks that aim to help their staff progress instead of enforcing rules. Table 3 displays the implementation methods used in this study, which were validated by interview data that represent the research sample.

Table 3. Cross-Case Analysis of Implementation Strategies with Interview Evidence

| Strategic Dimension | Key Sub-Aspect | SDIT Al-Firdaus (Evidence) | SDIT Ukhuwah (Evidence) | Cross-Case Interpretation |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|--|---|
| Program Implementation | Religious Habituation Programs | <i>"More than 80% of parents expect their children to be able to read and memorize the Qur'an... therefore our flagship programs include tahfidz and daily worship routines."</i> | <i>"We habituate students to pray on time, perform wudu properly, and arrange their shoes neatly in designated areas."</i> | Both schools embed religious habituation as the core operationalization of quality culture and character formation. |
| Program Implementation | Character Development Activities | <i>"Our quality culture also includes a collective sunnah fasting program once a month."</i> | <i>"Character building is implemented through daily habituation and structured student activities."</i> | Character reinforcement is institutionalized through routine religious and behavioral practices. |
| Student Development | Environmental & Social Responsibility | <i>"Trash bins are the responsibility of each class... students take turns cleaning the school yard."</i> | <i>"Students are involved in social and mentoring programs that build responsibility."</i> | Both schools operationalize character values through participatory social responsibility programs. |
| Teacher Development | Professional & Spiritual Coaching | <i>"Every Saturday we have joint Qur'an recitation... the Qur'anic generation program is not only for students but also for teachers."</i> | <i>"We conduct weekly evaluations and provide coaching if teachers face difficulties in implementation."</i> | Teacher role modeling is strengthened through spiritual guidance and performance mentoring. |
| Stakeholder Collaboration | Parent & Community Engagement | <i>"We communicate with parents at least once at the beginning of each semester."</i> | <i>"We have built good communication with parents and the community... including social service and mentoring programs."</i> | Implementation is reinforced through school-family-community collaboration. |
| Monitoring Mechanism | Program Supervision & Follow-Up | <i>"If there are teachers who disagree or face difficulties, we first listen before taking action."</i> | <i>"If teachers have not carried out programs properly, we provide coaching to identify the problems."</i> | Supervisory approaches differ, but both emphasize supportive monitoring over punitive control. |

The implementation strategies at SDIT Al-Firdaus and SDIT Ukhuwah show that religious habituation and character development programs, teacher modeling, stakeholder participation, and flexible supervision systems sustain operational quality culture at their schools. The educational institutions use their strategic planning processes to create actual practices that determine their educational standards and student development.

Evaluation Strategy

The research results show that SDIT Al-Firdaus and SDIT Ukhuwah schools use their assessment methods as essential mechanisms that help them maintain their quality culture programs. The strategic management cycle includes its evaluation stage, which functions to assess program results while it controls institutional operations and supports character development and strategic development work.

Both institutions use routine monitoring as their basic method for evaluating performance. Program supervision occurs on a regular basis according to interview evidence, which shows that this practice maintains the continuous application of quality culture standards. School leaders conducted supervisory visits, classroom monitoring, and ritual activity oversight, all of which support the accounts made by observers. The institution uses evaluation methods that become part of their standard procedures instead of waiting until assessments are completed.

The two schools display different patterns of supervisory practices, which show their distinct supervisory approaches. Schools use reflective and dialogical methods for evaluation at SDIT Al-Firdaus. The leadership team uses active listening, conflict mediation, and team decision-making for handling implementation issues. The evaluation process, which occurs during supervisory sessions and teacher consultations, establishes a method for enhancing professional development by building staff capacities instead of enforcing institutional rules. The organization SDIT Ukhuwah manages its coaching process through a formalized coaching system, which receives ongoing monitoring through scheduled supervisory evaluations. The institution established three evaluation methods, which include weekly assessments, performance tracking sessions, and mentoring programs, as its standard evaluation system. The structured system verifies program execution through its professional development system, which assists teachers who face execution difficulties.

The evaluation process in both schools emphasizes stakeholder feedback, notably from parents, students, and community members, through community forums that assess institutional quality. Formal evaluation meetings institutionalize collective review: SDIT Al-Firdaus uses coordination and teacher forums, while SDIT Ukhuwah employs participatory FSOG assemblies involving parents, foundation members, and administrators. This shared governance ensures accountability and alignment with the school's vision, mission, and character development goals. Evaluation criteria include academic achievement, behavioral change, worship practices, and moral growth. Documentation and institutional reports support ongoing planning and performance assessments. The process generates strategic feedback loops that enhance program structures and inform future planning, establishing a cyclical system for managing and monitoring quality culture. Table 4

presents a cross-case synthesis that displays evaluation practices that represent interview evidence.

Table 4. Cross-Case Analysis of Evaluation Strategies with Interview Evidence

| Strategic Dimension | Key Sub-Aspect | SDIT Al-Firdaus (Evidence) | SDIT Ukhuwah (Evidence) | Cross-Case Interpretation |
|-------------------------|----------------------------------|---|---|--|
| Evaluation System | Routine Program Monitoring | <i>"We conduct weekly monitoring and supervision to ensure that quality culture programs are implemented consistently."</i> | <i>"Evaluation is carried out regularly, both weekly and at the end of each semester."</i> | Both schools institutionalize periodic monitoring systems to maintain program consistency. |
| Evaluation Approach | Reflective Supervision | <i>"When obstacles arise, we prioritize dialogue and listen first before taking action."</i> | <i>"We provide coaching and guidance when teachers encounter difficulties in implementation."</i> | Supervisory models emphasize developmental reflection rather than punitive control. |
| Stakeholder Feedback | Parent & Student Input | <i>"We receive input from parents regarding student character development and daily habits."</i> | <i>"Parents provide feedback through forums and communication platforms."</i> | Stakeholder voices function as external evaluation instruments. |
| Institutional Forum | Formal Evaluation Meetings | <i>"Teacher meetings and coordination forums are conducted to review program outcomes."</i> | <i>"We have evaluation forums such as FSOG meetings involving parents and school management."</i> | Collective forums institutionalize participatory evaluation practices. |
| Performance Measurement | Quality Indicators Alignment | <i>"We evaluate whether programs align with the school's quality targets and character goals."</i> | <i>"All programs are assessed based on vision-mission achievement indicators."</i> | Evaluation systems are vision-driven and indicator-based across both cases. |
| Follow-Up Mechanism | Program Improvement & Adjustment | <i>"Evaluation results become the basis for program refinement and future planning."</i> | <i>"Findings from supervision and evaluation are used to redesign implementation strategies."</i> | Evaluation outcomes function as feedback loops informing strategic renewal. |

Overall, the evaluation strategies implemented at SDIT Al-Firdaus and SDIT Ukhuwah demonstrate that institutional control systems extend beyond performance measurement to encompass reflective supervision, stakeholder accountability, participatory governance, and strategic renewal processes. Through these integrated mechanisms, evaluation serves as a regulatory pillar sustaining the continuity and adaptability of quality culture within Islamic elementary school contexts.

Cross-Theme Synthesis of Strategic Quality Culture Development

The cross-theme findings demonstrate that quality culture development at SDIT Al-Firdaus and SDIT Ukhuwah operates through an integrated strategic management cycle, which includes environmental scanning, planning,

implementation, and evaluation. The multiple dimensions of this study function as unified leadership processes that operate in tandem with their administrative functions. Environmental scanning creates the diagnostic framework that school principals use to assess their institutions' abilities, their stakeholders' needs, and their existing policy frameworks, which they use to determine strategic goals.

Strategic planning transforms diagnostic findings into institutional agendas, which establish leadership modeling and participatory governance and vision alignment as their fundamental elements. This stage reflects a cultural design process that organizations use to create program frameworks that include their fundamental values and stakeholder commitments. Implementation proceeds to put these strategic goals into practice through systems of religious habituation and character education programs, teacher empowerment systems, and collaborative structures that operate in the daily activities of the school.

Evaluation completes the strategic cycle by functioning as both a control and renewal mechanism. The program uses monitoring systems, reflective supervision, stakeholder feedback, and performance measurement practices to maintain accountability while creating feedback loops that guide future planning improvements. Figure 1 establishes an integrated comparative mapping system that shows how strategic orientations operate throughout both schools by synthesizing these cross-stage dynamics.

Figure 1. Strategic Leadership Model in Implementing Quality Culture Based on the Hunger and Wheelen Framework



Source: Created with the assistance of ChatGPT (OpenAI), adapted by the researcher.

Figure 1 shows that the development of a quality culture in Islamic elementary education is driven by an integrated, cyclical strategic leadership process comprising environmental scanning, strategic planning, implementation, and evaluation. Environmental scanning serves as a diagnostic foundation for school leaders to assess internal capacities, stakeholder expectations, and policy dynamics. These insights are then transformed into strategic planning processes that are participatory, vision-driven, and grounded in institutional values. Importantly, leadership in this model is not merely administrative but value-oriented, embedding Islamic principles into organizational decision-making. This ensures that planning is not only technically sound but also culturally and morally aligned with the institution's identity.

The implementation phase operationalizes strategic intentions into daily practices through religious habituation, character education, teacher empowerment, and stakeholder collaboration, thereby translating abstract values into observable institutional routines. Evaluation, in turn, functions as both a control and renewal mechanism, incorporating reflective supervision, stakeholder feedback, and performance measurement to sustain accountability and continuous improvement. The cyclical feedback loop connecting evaluation to environmental scanning

highlights the model's dynamic and adaptive nature. Thus, the framework contributes theoretically by extending conventional strategic management models into a value-based leadership paradigm, in which the sustainability of a quality culture is achieved through the integration of managerial processes and spiritual-ethical commitments within educational organizations.

The analysis reveals that both schools follow a similar strategic cycle, yet their differing leadership styles produce distinct outcomes. SDIT Al-Firdaus demonstrates stronger internal cultural cohesion, while SDIT Ukhuwah emphasizes community engagement and institutional partnerships. Despite these differences, both embed Islamic character values at the core of their quality culture strategies. The development of sustainable quality culture progresses through diagnostic awareness, participatory planning, value-driven implementation, and reflective evaluation. In faith-based elementary schools, strategic leadership blends managerial expertise with religious practices, creating a value-based governance system. Unlike traditional strategic management, which treats planning stages as separate, these institutions integrate moral and spiritual identity throughout. This cultural embedding shapes leadership impact on education, highlighting the critical role of contextual and cultural factors in influencing teaching and learning.

Environmental scanning in both cases extends beyond structural diagnostics and regulatory responsiveness. International research on instructional leadership shows that leadership affects teacher practices and school cultures across different contexts, although direct impacts differ based on collegial relationships (Hsieh et al., 2025). The research introduces a moral-ecological framework which requires principals to evaluate their school capacity and policy requirements together with parental religious practice and community trust, and Islamic character objectives. The systematic reviews show that instructional leadership develops organizational culture through multiple pathways that interact with teacher dedication to their work in different contexts (Othman & Busari, 2025).

The strategic planning process at both institutions demonstrates the international standards of participatory governance and vision alignment. Research on instructional leadership and school effectiveness highlights that leaders who integrate vision and supportive culture significantly influence school practices (Aydm et al., 2025; Hallinger et al., 2025). The present findings support this body of research but extend it by showing that planning in Islamic elementary schools functions as a normative filtering mechanism. Programs are selected not solely for operational feasibility, which includes their institutional religious identity, but also for their actual implementation abilities, which leads to different results in various cultural settings because of context-specific leadership methods.

The implementation practices demonstrate that organizations maintain their sustainable quality culture through daily routines, which establish their ceremonial habits. The research study on school improvement demonstrates that successful reforms require schools to develop permanent systems that become part of their regular operations (Aydın et al., 2025). The instructional leadership research shows that teachers need collaborative work and instructional backing to grow professionally and maintain their well-being, which requires continual connection instead of single-time programs (Azmi & Musa, 2025). Organizations establish a quality culture through their continuous use of symbolic actions, which leaders display and stakeholders use for cooperation.

The evaluation methods used in schools demonstrate a mixed supervisory system that combines monitoring activities with developmental coaching. Global accountability systems require organizations to demonstrate their performance through measurable indicators, but current research on leadership indicates that educational results improve when teachers receive reflective supervision with professional development support (Hallinger et al., 2025). Islamic elementary schools use supervision to deliver professional evaluation and ethical guidance while maintaining their requirement for organizational accountability and their need for spiritual development. The evidence demonstrates that instructional leadership makes a positive impact on teacher performance when schools have a supportive culture and strong relational systems, but not when they use only compliance approaches.

Business operations of strategic management systems maintain their structural framework, yet display different patterns of execution between different company operations. One school prioritized internal cultural consolidation, whereas the other emphasized institutional networking and stakeholder engagement. The research on leadership patterns shows that organizations that succeed follow practices that match their particular situations while preserving their main objectives, according to research that studies instructional leadership across various educational settings. The research shows that strategic cycles can transfer their structural elements between different contexts while their core components remain distinct according to the institutional development stage and the local religious matrix.

The research findings establish a link between international quality culture debates and sustainable educational development in faith-based institutions which requires both managerial alignment and moral coherence. The study shows that spiritual identity serves as a mediating construct that helps religious schools achieve mainstream leadership theory according to existing academic research. The process of establishing sustainable quality culture requires organizations to repeat their diagnostic assessment activities while they engage stakeholders in planning work, perform established procedures, and assess their results. Strategic leadership

functions as an organizational driver because it guides operational processes of faith-based institutions according to their cultural practices, which improves our understanding of how these organizations maintain their standards in complicated policy situations

CONCLUSION

The study shows that Islamic elementary schools establish their quality culture through systematic leadership processes, which include environmental assessment, strategic plan development and execution, and performance assessment methods. The research shows that school principals function as key figures who connect institutional evaluations with joint decision-making processes and value-based methods and reflective assessment systems, which support educational standards and character development initiatives. The quality culture of an organization develops through continuous strategic alignment processes that institutional leaders use to manage their organization as part of their regular leadership activities. The study shows that both public schools and faith-based educational institutions can use the Hunger and Wheelen strategic management framework for their operations. The research results present a model of quality culture sustainability that cultural organizations can use by combining stakeholder moral alignment with spiritual identity and character development through strategic leadership processes. This framework enables educational leaders to develop holistic value-based improvement methods that they can adjust to various socio-cultural environments while adding new theoretical insights to the global quality culture discussion.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abdullah, M. (2019). School Culture to Serve Performance of Madrasah in Indonesia. *QIJIS (Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies)*, 7(1), 71. <https://doi.org/10.21043/qijis.v7i1.4809>
- Asmawan, Moh. C., Ulfatin, N., Wiyono, B. B., & Burhanuddin, B. (2024). The Role of School Members in Organizational Culture for Work Skills' Formation: Responding to Era of The Industrial Revolution 4.0 Challenges. *Jurnal Kependidikan: Jurnal Hasil Penelitian Dan Kajian Kepustakaan Di Bidang Pendidikan, Pengajaran Dan Pembelajaran*, 10(1), 113. <https://doi.org/10.33394/jk.v10i1.10588>
- Aydın, B., Fokkema, M., Eryilmaz, N., Muijs, D., Scherer, R., & Pietsch, M. (2025). How school leadership and innovation shape instructional pathways to student achievement across nations: Evidence from multilevel structural equation modeling and decision tree analysis. *Studies in Educational Evaluation*, 87, 101521. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.stueduc.2025.101521>

- Azmi, N., & Musa, K. (2025). The Role of Instructional Leadership, Teacher Efficacy, and Collaborative Practices in Shaping Teacher Development and Well-Being: A Systematic Review Of Current Educational Research. *International Journal of Education Psychology and Counseling*, 10(61), 657. <https://doi.org/10.35631/IJEPC.1061046>
- Badriyah, B. (2025). Rethinking Character Education in Islamic Elementary Schools: Trends, Transformations, and Strategic Solutions in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. *Ta'limDiniyah: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam (Journal of Islamic Education Studies)*, 5(2), 69–83. <https://doi.org/10.53515/tdjpai.v5i2.186>
- Day, C., Gu, Q., & Sammons, P. (2016). The Impact of Leadership on Student Outcomes: How Successful School Leaders Use Transformational and Instructional Strategies to Make a Difference. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 52(2), 221–258. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X15616863>
- Donkoh, R., Lee, W. O., Ahoto, A. T., Donkor, J., Twerefoo, P. O., Akotey, M. K., & Ntim, S. Y. (2023). Effects of educational management on quality education in rural and urban primary schools in Ghana. *Heliyon*, 9(11), e21325. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2023.e21325>
- Hadisi, L., La Fua, J., Dirman, D., Assingkily, M. S., Harson, H., & Harisatyma, N. K. A. (2025). The Role of Spiritual Leadership in Internalizing Environmental Values in Islamic Eco-Madrasah. *Nazhruna: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 8(3), 732–748. <https://doi.org/10.31538/nzh.v8i3.141>
- Hallinger, P., Liu, S., & Chen, L. (2025). Principal Instructional Leadership and Teacher Attitudes: A Meta-Analytic Review, 1989–2024. *European Journal of Education*, 60(4), e70199. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ejed.70199>
- Harvey, L., & Stensaker, B. (2008). Quality Culture: Understandings, boundaries and linkages. *European Journal of Education*, 43(4), 427–442. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1465-3435.2008.00367.x>
- Hsieh, C., Khau, A. H., Song, Y., & Li, H.-C. (2025). Impact of school leadership on teachers' instructional practices: Examining mediating roles of collegiality and teacher autonomy using Vietnam TALIS 2018. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 132, 102621. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2025.102621>
- Huda, W., Joko Raharjo, T., Suharini, E., & Prihatin, T. (2025). Organizational Culture and Self-Efficacy with Work Motivation and Leadership as Key Factors. *Qubahan Academic Journal*, 4(4), 383–410. <https://doi.org/10.48161/qaj.v4n4a1220>
- Hunger, J. D., & Wheelen, T. L. (2003). *Strategic management* (5th ed.). Andi.
- Irbathy, S. A., Mukminin, M. A., Abdurakhmovich, A., & Ramdhan, T. W. (2025). Developing a Religion Tolerance-Based Character Education Framework for Elementary School Students. *Al-Adzka: Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Guru Madrasah Ibtidaiyah*, 15(1), 37–54. <https://doi.org/10.18592/aladzkapgmi.v15i1.14540>

- Jesica Dwi Rahmayanti & Muhamad Arif. (2021). Penerapan Full Day School Dalam Mengembangkan Budaya Religius di Sekolah Dasar Muhammadiyah 1 Menganti Gresik. *eL Bidayah: Journal of Islamic Elementary Education*, 3(1), 11–31. <https://doi.org/10.33367/jiee.v3i1.1551>
- Kholis, N. (2022). The Legacy of a School: Developing Better Schools Based on Mutual Cooperation. *Journal of Social Studies Education Research*, 13(1), 104–124. <https://jsser.org/index.php/jsser/article/view/3675>
- Leithwood, K., Sun, J., & Schumacker, R. (2020). How School Leadership Influences Student Learning: A Test of “The Four Paths Model.” *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 56(4), 570–599. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X19878772>
- Lickona, T. (2012). *Educating for Character: How Our Schools Can Teach Respect and Responsibility*. Bantam Books.
- Maarif, M. A., Wardi, M., & Amartika, S. (2020). The Implementation Strategy of Religious Culture in Madrasah. *Tarbawi: Jurnal Keilmuan Manajemen Pendidikan*, 6(02), 163. <https://doi.org/10.32678/tarbawi.v6i02.2962>
- Mahmud, M. E., & Ramli, A. (2025). Islamic Spiritual Leadership Model to Enhance Madrasah Quality Culture and Achieve Sustainable Development Goals. *Al-Hayat: Journal of Islamic Education*, 9(3), 628–643. <https://doi.org/10.35723/ajie.v9i3.132>
- Mansur, M., & Sholeh, M. (2024). Implementing Character Education Based on Local Wisdom in a Public Islamic Elementary School. *Journal of Integrated Elementary Education*, 4(1), 54–70. <https://doi.org/10.21580/jieed.v4i1.20238>
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (Edition 3). Sage.
- Osman, Y. (2019). The significance in using role models to influence primary school children’s moral development: Pilot study. *Journal of Moral Education*, 48(3), 316–331. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057240.2018.1556154>
- Othman, C., & Busari, A. H. (2025). Instructional leadership as a catalyst for organizational commitment: Insights from a systematic literature review. *International Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education (IJERE)*, 14(1), 198. <https://doi.org/10.11591/ijere.v14i1.30474>
- Pamuji, Z., Roqib, Moh., Basit, A., & Yahya, M. S. (2024). Implementation of Religious Culture to Develop Children’s Character in Early Childhood Education. *JPUD - Jurnal Pendidikan Usia Dini*, 18(1), 81–98. <https://doi.org/10.21009/JPUD.181.06>
- Sallis, E. (2002). *Total Quality Management in Education*. Styli Publishing Inc.
- Schein, E. H. (2010). *Organizational culture and leadership* (4. ed). Jossey-Bass.
- Syaputra, A., & Santosa, A. B. (2022). The Contribution of Organizational Culture in Schools to Improving Teacher Performance. *Tarbawi: Jurnal Keilmuan Manajemen Pendidikan*, 8(01), 49–58. <https://doi.org/10.32678/tarbawi.v8i01.5752>

