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PRINCIPAL STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT FOR IMPROVING GRADUATE QUALITY IN TAHFIDZUL QUR'AN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOLS IN LAMPUNG

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ABSTRAK

Sekolah menengah pertama swasta berbasis pesantren dituntut mempertahankan kepercayaan masyarakat sekaligus menghasilkan lulusan yang kuat secara akademik, religius, dan berkarakter. Artikel hasil konversi disertasi ini mengkaji bagaimana kepala sekolah memformulasikan, mengimplementasikan, dan mengevaluasi strategi peningkatan mutu lulusan pada tiga SMP Tahfidzul Qur'an di Provinsi Lampung. Persoalan ini penting karena program tahfidz berfungsi sebagai identitas keagamaan sekaligus strategi diferensiasi lembaga di tengah persaingan sekolah swasta.Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif lapangan berorientasi fenomenologis pada SMP Tahfidzul Qur'an Hidayatul Mubtadiien Lampung Timur, SMPIT Al-Qurro Litahfidhil Quran Bandar Lampung, dan SMP Tahfidz Qur'an Nurul Mutaqin Lampung Utara. Data diperoleh melalui observasi nonpartisipan, wawancara kepala sekolah dan guru, serta dokumentasi, kemudian dianalisis melalui reduksi data, penyajian data, penarikan/verifikasi kesimpulan, dan triangulasi sumber. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa formulasi strategi mencakup visi-misi, analisis internal-eksternal, rencana jangka pendek-menengah-panjang, dan keunggulan tahfidz; implementasi melalui kebijakan partisipatif, motivasi, alokasi SDM, dan budaya kerja; evaluasi melalui monitoring, ukuran kinerja, dan tindakan korektif.Penelitian menyimpulkan bahwa mutu lulusan menguat ketika tahfidz diintegrasikan dengan kurikulum akademik, sistem pesantren, pengembangan guru, komunikasi orang tua, dan evaluasi berkelanjutan. Sekolah disarankan menyeimbangkan target hafalan dengan pemahaman makna Al-Qur'an, memperluas program akademik dan ekstrakurikuler, memperkuat sarana serta profesionalitas guru, dan menggunakan indikator mutu lulusan yang terukur.

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Keywords:
Strategic Management; Principal Leadership; Graduate Quality; Tahfidzul Qur'an; Islamic Education

ABSTRACT

Private junior high schools integrated with Islamic boarding schools must sustain public trust while producing graduates who are academically capable, religiously grounded, and strong in character. This study examines how principals formulate, implement, and evaluate strategies for improving graduate quality in three Tahfidzul Qur'an junior high schools in Lampung Province. Qur'an memorization operates both as religious identity and as institutional differentiation in a competitive private-school environment. The study employed qualitative field research with a phenomenological orientation at SMP Tahfidzul Qur'an Hidayatul Mubtadiien in East Lampung, SMPIT Al-Qurro Litahfidhil Quran in Bandar Lampung, and SMP Tahfidz Qur'an Nurul Mutaqin in North Lampung. Data were collected through non-participant observation, interviews, and documentation, then analyzed through reduction, display, conclusion drawing/verification, and source triangulation. Findings show that formulation involved vision-mission development, internal-external analysis, time-phased planning, and Tahfidz strategy; implementation used participatory policy, staff motivation, human-resource allocation, and work culture; evaluation used monitoring, performance standards, and corrective action. The study concludes that graduate quality improves when Tahfidz is integrated with the academic curriculum, pesantren support, teacher development, parent communication, and evaluation. Schools should balance memorization targets with understanding Qur'anic meaning, broaden academic and extracurricular development, strengthen facilities and professionalism, and apply graduate-outcome indicators.

A. INTRODUCTION

Graduate quality is a multidimensional outcome of schooling, reflected in academic attainment, character, learning habits, religious competence, and readiness for further education and social life. These outcomes are shaped by curriculum, teacher quality, organizational climate, resources, and stakeholder support; principal leadership therefore works strategically rather than only administratively. Meta-analytic evidence reports a positive relationship between principal leadership and student achievement while stressing that leadership effects are contextual and often indirect (Wu & Shen 2022; Shen & Wu 2025).

In Indonesian schools, principals translate institutional aspirations into programs, organize teachers, supervise learning, and build cultures that sustain improvement. Transformational leadership and organizational culture are associated with teacher performance, while leadership competence in managerial and supervisory work contributes to educational quality (Raharja, Nashir, & Andriani 2022; Musriadi, Nasrun, & Ansary 2022; Limbong & Keling 2026). For private schools, these functions are especially important because limited resources and competition for students require clear priorities.

Strategic quality management treats improvement as a recurring cycle. Studies in Islamic education emphasize continuous improvement, stakeholder communication, staff development, evaluation, and alignment between institutional mission and

operational practice (Muslim & Syafii 2022). Strategic management must also respond to professionalism and digital change (Sakarina et al. 2022), while TQM-oriented research shows that planning becomes meaningful when followed by implementation, measurement, and corrective improvement (Syarifudin 2023).

Formulation requires schools to identify internal and external conditions, set goals, and choose feasible priorities. SWOT-based work in Islamic education illustrates how systematic environmental analysis can direct limited resources (Halim et al. 2023). Pesantren-based research further shows that stakeholder deliberation and Islamic values can strengthen strategic planning (Purnomo, Mulyadi, & Slamet 2024). In a disruptive environment, strategy must also support competitive positioning and institutional adaptability (Kamaludin, Taulany, & Slamet 2024; Abdullah et al. 2024).

Tahfidzul Qur'an programs add specific managerial demands: memorization targets must be connected with curriculum time, teacher responsibilities, mentoring, assessment, motivation, and character formation. Research highlights the importance of human-resource management in tahfidz education (Fitriani & Iswantir 2023), structured program management for character outcomes (Sulastri, Wiyani, & Anam 2024), systematic design and evaluation of memorization programs (Santika & Rahimah 2024), and educational networks surrounding Qur'an memorization pesantren (Zulhannan & Musyarrofah 2024). Recent evidence also indicates that well-managed tahfidz programs can support academic achievement when integrated with school curriculum and parental involvement (Putra, Hidayat, & Puspitasari 2026).

Principal strategy influences quality through organization, teacher performance, facilities, and institutional coordination. Studies report that principals improve school quality by organizing, actuating, and controlling school work (Putra et al. 2023), while successful-school research emphasizes leadership strategies that mobilize people and resources (Ismaya et al. 2023). Managerial competence, learning leadership, and facility feasibility are also interconnected with school quality (Laela, Hanafi, & Sudadio 2023). Research in Islamic boarding-school settings similarly links principal leadership, teacher performance, and systematic quality management (Khairunnisa, Zohriah, & Iriyadi 2024; Mukaromah, Fuadi, & Daryono 2024).

This study examines three private Tahfidzul Qur'an junior high schools in Lampung Province: SMP Tahfidzul Qur'an Hidayatul Mubtadiien in East Lampung, SMPIT Al-Qurro Litahfidhil Quran in Bandar Lampung, and SMP Tahfidz Qur'an Nurul Mutaqin in North Lampung. All are connected to pesantren or foundations and use Qur'an memorization as a prominent program, but they differ in local context, resources, organizational culture, and institutional maturity. The research asks how principals formulate, implement, and evaluate strategies for improving academic and non-academic graduate quality, and how a shared Tahfidz identity is adapted across the three sites.

B. METHOD

The study used field research with a qualitative, phenomenological orientation because the inquiry focused on decisions, practices, and meanings through which principals managed graduate quality. The unit of analysis was principal strategic management across formulation, implementation, evaluation, and academic/non-academic graduate outcomes.

Research was conducted from May 2024 at SMP Tahfidzul Qur'an Hidayatul Mubtadiien, Sekampung Udik, East Lampung; SMPIT Al-Qurro Litahfidhil Quran, Labuhan Ratu, Bandar Lampung; and SMP Tahfidz Qur'an Nurul Mutaqin, Kotabumi Selatan, North Lampung. The sites were purposively selected because each is a private junior high school with a prominent Tahfidzul Qur'an program and a close relationship with a pesantren or educational foundation.

Primary data came from principals, teachers, field observations, and notes; secondary data came from curriculum documents, organizational profiles, program records, photographs, and other school documents. Data were collected through non-participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. Interviews explored strategic decisions, resource conditions, staff motivation and allocation, work culture, supervision, and graduate-quality programs.

Analysis followed an interactive process of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Evidence was categorized by research sub-focus and compared across the three sites to identify common patterns and distinctive practices. Trustworthiness was strengthened through source triangulation by comparing statements from principals and teachers with observations and documents, while credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability were addressed through contextual description and a traceable analytic process.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Findings

All three schools displayed a common strategic-management cycle. Formulation involved vision, mission and objectives, analysis of internal-external conditions, time-phased planning, and selection of Tahfidzul Qur'an as a distinctive program. Implementation relied on policy, motivation, human-resource allocation, and work culture. Evaluation used monitoring, performance standards, and corrective action. Graduate quality was understood in both academic and non-academic terms, although the emphasis and resources differed across sites.

Strategic Formulation Across the Three Schools

Hidayatul Mubtadiien formulated strategy through stakeholder deliberation and sought balance between school and pesantren goals. Its internal-external reading was optimistic but tied to available resources and the strong support of Pondok Pesantren Hidayatul Mubtadiien. Short-, medium-, and long-term planning emphasized higher Tahfidz standards, although the field analysis identified a need for greater balance with academic and other non-academic development. Tahfidz was embedded in the mission, while the Pesantren Digital system added an administrative and parent-information innovation.

Al-Qurro also used deliberation but with a more explicitly visionary orientation. The school recognized constraints in community support, recruitment, and staffing, so periodic self-evaluation and internal human-resource improvement became important planning elements. Qur'an memorization formed the main institutional identity and was supported by halaqah-based religious activities, although those activities were still less formalized than a structured madrasah diniyah curriculum.

Nurul Mutaqin formulated vision, mission, and objectives collectively through a curriculum-development team. Its approach emphasized effectiveness, public

socialization, family relationships, and electronic media. The school was relatively optimistic about development and combined Tahfidzul Qur'an with madrasah diniyah and social support through an LKSA. Across the three sites, formulation therefore connected institutional identity, resources, stakeholder expectations, and competitive positioning rather than stopping at written vision statements.

Strategy Implementation: Policy, Motivation, Human Resources, and Work Culture

At Hidayatul Mubtadiien, policies were developed through deliberation and adjusted to social conditions and available resources. Staff motivation emphasized rewards and a family atmosphere; recruitment considered educational background and capability; assignments were adjusted to institutional needs. Work culture emphasized courtesy, family relations, and routine habituation or istiqomah. This relational model supported cohesion but still required clear professional standards and adequate resources.

Al-Qurro used adaptive policies that were periodically reviewed. Motivation relied on emotional cohesion among teachers, employees, pesantren mentors, and foundation managers, including routine weekly interaction. Staffing followed background and capability, and work culture emphasized egalitarian relations within the institutional family. The main limitation was the number of available teachers, which affected the capacity to sustain academic learning, Tahfidz mentoring, and halaqah simultaneously.

Nurul Mutaqin made agreed policies more visibly normative by displaying rules and expectations. Motivation relied on the principal's example and direct mentoring; recruitment and placement considered competence and educational background; work culture emphasized discipline while retaining family values in problem solving. Thus, all schools used the same broad implementation components but adapted them through different combinations of rewards, relationships, modeling, rules, and discipline.

Strategic Evaluation: Monitoring, Performance Measurement, and Corrective Action

Hidayatul Mubtadiien combined direct observation with indirect information from trusted sources. Vision, mission, and objectives served as major performance references, while corrective action targeted both human and physical resources. The approach would be stronger with more explicit behavioral and output indicators to complement broad institutional statements.

Al-Qurro used a sequence of planning, supervision, and control, measuring performance against the vision, mission, objectives, and school curriculum document. Corrective action emphasized staff coaching, while the field analysis stressed that facilities and organizational support should also be considered when explaining performance gaps.

Nurul Mutaqin relied on direct accompaniment and observation. Rules and employees' main duties and functions were used as standards, and correction was handled through private consultation and follow-up. Across sites, evaluation was most meaningful when information was compared with a clear standard and then translated into improvement rather than remaining only a supervision activity.

Cross-Site Strategic Comparison

Table 1 summarizes the dominant strategic patterns identified across the three cases. The entries synthesize the schools' formulation, implementation, evaluation, and graduate-quality emphases rather than treating the sites as identical models.

Table 1. Cross-Site Comparison of Principal Strategic Management

Dimension	SMP TQ Hidayatul Mubtadiien	SMPIT Al-Qurro Litahfidhil Quran	SMP TQ Nurul Mutaqin
Formulation	Comprehensive stakeholder deliberation; optimistic-realistic resource reading; curriculum/Tahfidz focus; Pesantren Digital.	Visionary deliberation; cautious resource analysis; periodic self-evaluation; Tahfidz and halaqah identity.	Collective and effectiveness-oriented planning; optimistic development; public outreach; Tahfidz, diniyah, and social-support identity.
Implementation	Conditional policy; rewards; professional/needs-based staffing; family and istiqomah work culture.	Adaptive policy; emotional cohesion; professional/needs-based staffing; egalitarian work culture.	Normative policy; exemplary leadership and mentoring; professional/needs-based staffing; disciplined work culture.
Evaluation	Direct/indirect monitoring; vision-mission measures; improvement of human and physical resources.	Planning-supervision-control; curriculum-document measures; staff coaching.	Direct accompaniment; rules and job duties as measures; private consultation and follow-up.
Graduate quality	Academic curriculum plus parenting; Tahfidz achievement; constraints in facilities and teacher linearity.	Managerial academic cycle plus staff coaching and parenting; Tahfidz/halaqah; limited teacher numbers.	Competitive academic system and rewards; parenting; Tahfidz/local content and extracurriculars; facility constraints.

Source: Cross-site synthesis of field findings from the three research locations (2024).

Graduate Quality: Academic and Non-Academic Outcomes

Hidayatul Mubtadiien pursued academic quality through the 2013 Curriculum and Merdeka Curriculum, pesantren support, parenting meetings, and recognition of achievement. Constraints included limited facilities and some mismatch between teacher background and assigned subjects. Non-academic quality centered on Tahfidzul Qur'an and rewards for memorization achievement.

Al-Qurro used a managerial academic cycle supported by regular staff coaching and parent-school communication. Its non-academic strength came from Tahfidzul Qur'an and halaqah, but limited teacher numbers constrained implementation. Nurul Mutaqin used a more competitive academic approach with recognition for student achievement, while non-academic development combined Tahfidz as local content with extracurricular activities. Facilities remained a limitation.

Parenting communication was a shared support mechanism. The one-roof school-pesantren setting allowed families to communicate with classroom teachers, homeroom teachers, Qur'an mentors, and pesantren managers. The schools also adapted differently to contemporary communication: Hidayatul Mubtadiien used Pesantren Digital, Nurul Mutaqin used social media and its website, and Al-Qurro developed broader institutional cooperation.

Cross-Site Novelty and Institutional Adaptation

The cross-site novelty lies in four connected practices: Tahfidzul Qur'an as curricular identity and institutional differentiation; one-roof school-pesantren governance that extends supervision and religious formation; regular parenting communication that connects families with school and pesantren actors; and adaptive modernization through digital information, online communication, or external networks. These practices become strategically valuable only when they are integrated with academic curriculum, competent staff, facilities, and measurable graduate outcomes (Mashuri et al. 2024).

Discussion

The findings support a cyclical view of strategic management: formulation, implementation, and evaluation are mutually dependent. Tahfidz identity becomes operational only when it is connected to environmental analysis, staffing, policy, work culture, and monitoring. This is consistent with recent studies showing that graduate competitiveness and school quality improve when strategy is formulated with stakeholders, implemented through coherent programs, and reviewed through performance measurement (Mashuri et al. 2024; Ratussalimah, Rahman, & Lestari 2025; Nurasiah et al. 2025).

Leadership influenced graduate quality mainly through organizational mechanisms rather than direct intervention in every student outcome. The three principals shaped teacher expectations, resource priorities, collaboration, supervision, and the school-pesantren relationship. This indirect interpretation accords with leadership evidence showing that quality depends on the interaction of principal behavior, teacher competence, motivation, and organizational conditions (Supriati, Haryati, & Sumarno 2025; Amelia & Siahaan 2025; Wijaya, El Khuluqo, & Istaryatiningtias 2025).

Human resources were a critical constraint and strategic lever. Each school attempted competence-based recruitment and placement, yet shortages or non-linearity remained in some contexts. Tahfidz schools therefore need professional-development plans that cover both academic teaching and Qur'an-program expertise. A relational or family culture can strengthen commitment, but it cannot permanently substitute for sufficient qualified staff, clear responsibilities, and measurable performance. Collaborative-governance research similarly emphasizes that strategic leadership works through coordinated stakeholders and professional capacity (Norman et al. 2025).

Evaluation should move toward explicit graduate-quality indicators. Besides curriculum achievement, schools can monitor academic and non-academic competition, memorization quantity and quality, understanding of Qur'anic meaning, discipline, character, continuation to further education, parent feedback, and teacher-development outcomes. This would strengthen the connection between strategic supervision and corrective action. It is also consistent with quality-management research that treats continuous improvement and evidence-based review as central to sustainable educational quality.

The school-pesantren model offers strategic advantages—extended learning time, religious routines, character supervision, and stronger institutional identity—but also creates coordination demands. Regular deliberation and parenting meetings can align school, pesantren, foundation, and family expectations. The finding is compatible with value-based and adaptive strategic-management research that combines institutional identity with stakeholder participation and innovation (Nento & Abdullah 2025). Digital communication at the three sites similarly shows that a Tahfidz institution can preserve religious identity while modernizing administration and stakeholder engagement.

Overall, Tahfidzul Qur'an should be treated as one component of an integrated graduate-quality system rather than as a stand-alone indicator of excellence. The program gains educational value when memorization is connected with understanding, character, academic learning, teacher quality, extracurricular opportunities, facilities, and family communication. Future research should develop a validated graduate-quality index for Tahfidz schools and examine longitudinal outcomes across boarding and non-boarding models.

CONCLUSION

Principal strategic management in the three Tahfidzul Qur'an junior high schools follows a common cycle but is adapted to institutional context. Formulation combines stakeholder-based vision and mission, internal-external analysis, time-phased planning, and Tahfidz as the main distinctive strategy. Implementation uses deliberated policies, staff motivation, competence-based human-resource allocation, and different work-culture emphases: family habituation at Hidayatul Mubtadiien, egalitarian relations at Al-Qurro, and discipline at Nurul Mutaqin. Evaluation combines monitoring, performance references, and corrective action through resource improvement, coaching, or private consultation.

Graduate quality improves when Tahfidz is integrated with academic curriculum, teacher capacity, facilities, school-pesantren coordination, parenting communication, student recognition, extracurricular development, and digital

information practices. Schools should balance memorization quantity with quality and understanding of Qur'anic meaning, strengthen staffing and facilities, diversify academic and non-academic achievement programs, and use measurable graduate indicators. School-level Qur'an competitions and support from local Qur'anic development institutions can further motivate and recognize student achievement.

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