Research/Review

Collaborative Leadership as A Foundation for Developing Adaptive and Innovative MI Human Resources in the Era of Education Transformation

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Abstract: The era of educational transformation demands that primary education institutions, such as madrasah ibtidaiyah, possess human resources (HR) that are adaptive, innovative, and capable of navigating the dynamics of global change. Collaborative leadership has emerged as a strategic approach to fostering an organizational culture that is open, participatory, and oriented toward improving the quality of learning. This article aims to examine the role of collaborative leadership in the development of human resources in madrasah ibtidaiyah during the era of educational transformation. The research method employed is a Systematic Literature Review (SLR), analyzing various studies and literature related to collaborative leadership, HR development, and educational transformation. The findings indicate that collaborative leadership can strengthen internal collaboration, promote learning innovation, enhance teacher competencies, and create a learning environment that is responsive to change. The implications of this study highlight the importance of strengthening a collaborative culture in madrasah governance to realize excellent human resources.

Keywords: Collaborative Leadership; Educational Transformation; Human Resource Development; Learning Innovation; Primary Madrasah.

1. Introduction

Basic education is a crucial foundation for shaping the character, competence, and competitiveness of the younger generation. In this context, elementary madrasas (Islamic elementary schools) play a strategic role not only as institutions for transmitting knowledge but also as centers for the formation of moral and spiritual values (Yufarika et al., 2025). With the acceleration of technological development, globalization, and social change, elementary educational institutions face the significant challenge of adapting quickly. This situation demands that each madrasah (Islamic elementary school) have competent, flexible, and responsive human resources. Therefore, leadership approaches within educational institutions are crucial to ensuring the sustainability and quality of education.

The era of educational transformation is marked by the integration of digital technology, shifting learning paradigms, and increasing demands for 21st-century competencies. Teachers and education personnel are required not only to master teaching materials but also to possess critical, creative, communicative, and collaborative thinking skills (Rosyid & Muhin, 2024). These changes cannot be addressed individually, but rather through collaboration and leadership that can unite the diverse potential within the school organization. In this context, collaborative leadership emerges as a strategic approach to building a participatory and collective culture in decision-making and school program implementation.

Collaborative leadership emphasizes the importance of horizontal relationships between leaders and organizational members. The principal is no longer positioned as the sole decision-maker, but rather as a facilitator who encourages the active participation of teachers, staff, and students (Daulay, 2025). This approach enables two-way communication, the exchange of ideas, and the creation of joint solutions to various educational issues. In practice, collaborative leadership can build trust, strengthen team cohesion, and increase employee

motivation. This serves as a crucial foundation for developing an adaptive and innovative madrasah organization.

Human resource development in the context of elementary madrasas includes enhancing professional, pedagogical, social, and personal competencies. This process requires the support of visionary and collaborative leadership so that each team member feels responsible for the school's progress. Collaborative leaders will encourage continuous learning, teacher capacity development, and the implementation of best practices in teaching. Thus, collaborative leadership is not simply a leadership style, but a transformational strategy that fosters the development of superior human resources.

The Indonesian context, particularly for elementary madrasas (Islamic schools), demonstrates that many educational institutions face resource constraints, both in terms of technology, funding, and human resource competency. In this context, collaboration is key to optimizing existing potential. Collaborative leadership can bridge these limitations through cross-functional collaboration between madrasah principals, teachers, education staff, committees, and the community. With strong synergy, madrasas can be more adaptive to curriculum changes, technological developments, and student needs.

Based on these challenges and opportunities, this study focuses on the role of collaborative leadership as a foundation for developing adaptive and innovative human resources in elementary madrasas in the era of educational transformation (Anwar et al., 2025). This study is expected to contribute to the development of educational leadership theory and practice in Indonesia, particularly at the elementary education level. A Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach was chosen to obtain a comprehensive overview of trends, strategies, and the impact of collaborative leadership on human resource development. The results are expected to serve as a practical reference for madrasah leaders in managing change.

2. Research Method

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach, which aimed to collect, analyze, and synthesize various research findings related to collaborative leadership and human resource development in the context of primary education. The SLR process involved several stages: topic and keyword identification, literature search from indexed national journals, selection of relevant literature based on inclusion and exclusion criteria, content analysis of selected articles, and preparation of a thematic synthesis. The literature sources included publications from 2023–2025 to obtain a current overview of collaborative leadership practices in madrasahs/elementary schools. The analysis results were then mapped to identify patterns, challenges, and strategies for implementing collaborative leadership in human resource development.

3. Results and Discussion

Collaborative Leadership as a Driving Strategy

Collaborative leadership is essentially a leadership approach that emphasizes participation, openness, and cooperation in decision-making and the implementation of organizational programs. In the context of elementary madrasas, this approach is crucial due to the characteristics of elementary schools, which require the involvement of many parties to support the teaching and learning process (Azizah & Mustari, 2024). The madrasah principal is no longer the sole decision-maker but rather acts as a facilitator, encouraging collaboration between teachers, staff, students, parents, and the community. This strategy fosters a work culture of mutual trust, respect for differing opinions, and fosters a sense of ownership within the school. Thus, collaborative leadership serves as a key driver in directing and accelerating positive change within the madrasah environment.

In practice, collaborative leadership extends beyond formal coordination and encompasses the process of building shared commitment to achieving the school's vision and mission. The madrasah principal acts as a catalyst, connecting the school's internal and external potential. For example, teachers are involved in developing work programs, school committees participate in strategic planning, and the community supports learning activities. By involving multiple stakeholders, decisions are made more representative, transparent, and accountable. This leadership model has been proven to strengthen organizational cohesion and increase the work motivation of all school components.

Collaborative leadership also plays a crucial role in encouraging innovation and adaptation to educational change. In an era of educational transformation filled with technological developments and curriculum changes, schools require leadership that is proactive, not merely

reactive (Ratnawati & Lestari, 2025). Collaborative leaders encourage teachers to boldly try new learning approaches, develop creative learning media, and utilize technology effectively. This collaborative process creates space for the exchange of ideas, capacity building, and collective learning. Thus, collaborative leadership not only drives the system but also fosters a culture of innovation within the school environment.

Furthermore, collaborative leadership can strengthen the resilience of school organizations in facing various challenges, both internal and external. In situations of limited resources, collaboration becomes invaluable social capital for optimizing existing potential. Collaborative madrasah principals are able to build collaborative networks with various parties, such as training institutions, education offices, universities, and community groups. These networks help schools obtain support in the form of training, learning resources, and human resource empowerment programs. In this way, collaborative leadership serves as a driving strategy that strengthens the organization's foundation and accelerates the achievement of educational goals (Fitriyan et al., 2025).

Adaptive and Innovative Human Resource Development in Islamic Elementary Schools (MI)

Human resource development (HRD) in Islamic elementary schools (MI) is a key factor in creating quality educational institutions that are relevant to current demands. This HRD encompasses not only teachers and educational staff, but also madrasah principals and all parties involved in the educational process (Budi et al., 2025). In the era of educational transformation, HRD is required to possess a high level of adaptability to changes in policy, technology, and learning approaches. This adaptability reflects the readiness of individuals and organizations to respond to the dynamics of the educational environment. Therefore, HRD development must be carried out in a planned, systematic, and sustainable manner so that madrasahs can provide superior and innovative educational services.

One important aspect in developing adaptive HRD is improving professional competency through training, mentoring, and fostering a culture of lifelong learning. Teachers and educational staff need to be encouraged to continuously update their knowledge and skills, both in pedagogical, technological, and managerial aspects. Madrasah principals can facilitate various professional development programs such as in-house training, peer learning, or collaboration with external institutions. These efforts help school human resources not only understand change but also implement new practices in the learning process. In this way, adaptability becomes not just an individual skill but also an integral part of the madrasah's organizational culture (Shopian, 2025).

In addition to being adaptive, human resources at MI must also possess an innovative spirit to create relevant and meaningful learning for students. Innovation doesn't always have to be large-scale; it can start with small changes in teaching strategies, media use, or more contextual evaluation approaches. Teachers, as the spearhead of learning, need to be given the freedom and support to experiment with new ideas. Madrasah principals play a crucial role as instructional leaders, providing encouragement, facilitation, and appreciation for innovative initiatives. With a supportive work environment, innovation will grow into a collective culture that strengthens the quality of education at madrasahs.

In the long term, developing adaptive and innovative human resources will strengthen MI's competitiveness in facing the challenges of 21st-century education. Human resources with superior competencies and creativity will be better prepared to face curriculum changes, digital technology developments, and increasingly complex student needs. To achieve this, human resource development should not be incidental but must be an integral part of the madrasah's strategic planning. Madrasah principals need to develop sustainable, measurable, and needs-based human resource development programs (Hikmawati & Santoso, 2025). In this way, madrasahs can become resilient, innovative, and relevant educational institutions to the dynamics of the times.

Collaborative Leadership Implementation and Strengthening Strategy in Islamic Elementary Schools (MI)

The strategy for implementing collaborative leadership in Islamic elementary schools (MI) must begin with a paradigm shift in leadership itself. The principal no longer acts as a sole controller, but rather as a facilitator and motivator of collective participation. The first step is to develop a shared vision that is understood and agreed upon by the entire school community (Fitriani et al., 2025). This vision will serve as the foundation for every school policy and program, ensuring that all parties share the same direction and commitment. With this approach, collaborative leadership can grow organically and not simply become a formality.

The next step is to establish a school organizational structure that supports collaboration. The principal can form a cross-disciplinary working team involving teachers, administrative staff, the school committee, and even parent representatives (Anwar et al., 2023). Each team is given clear responsibilities, space to take initiative, and the opportunity to provide input on school policies. Furthermore, open and transparent communication needs to be fostered through regular forums such as coordination meetings, sharing sessions, or workshops. Through a participatory structure, the decision-making process becomes more inclusive and reflects the aspirations of the entire school community.

To strengthen the implementation of collaborative leadership, the leadership capacity of madrasah principals and teachers must also be continuously developed. Collaboration-based leadership training programs, strengthening managerial competencies, and fostering organizational culture are strategic steps. Madrasah principals need to be role models in prioritizing cooperation, listening to aspirations, and respecting differences. Teachers and staff are encouraged to actively convey ideas, innovate, and be involved in the school's planning and evaluation processes. These efforts will create a healthy, dynamic, and adaptive leadership ecosystem that adapts to educational change.

The collaborative leadership implementation strategy must also be accompanied by a mechanism for ongoing evaluation and reflection. This evaluation is crucial to ensure each program is effective and aligned with the school's needs. Madrasah principals and their teams need to regularly review program results, identify obstacles, and formulate solutions for improvement (Nufus et al., 2023). Furthermore, strengthening external partnership networks, such as with the government, training institutions, and universities, can enrich the collaborative strategy at MI. Thus, collaborative leadership becomes not just an ideal concept but a practical practice that drives educational transformation in madrasahs.

Challenges and Implications for Practice

Although collaborative leadership and adaptive-innovative human resource development have significant potential to support educational transformation in Islamic elementary schools (MI), their implementation is not without challenges. One major challenge is the persistence of a conventional work culture that tends to be hierarchical and authoritarian, limiting participation for teachers and education staff. In this situation, innovation is often viewed as an additional burden, rather than an opportunity for professional development (Musaddad, 2024). Furthermore, not all madrasah principals possess strong collaborative leadership competencies, often hindering the change process. This suggests that a shift in leadership paradigms is a key prerequisite for building an effective collaborative culture.

Another challenge relates to limited resources, including funding, infrastructure, and human resource competencies. Many MIs, particularly those in remote areas, face limited technological facilities and access to adequate training. This situation hinders the process of adapting to curriculum changes and the digitalization of learning. Madrasah teachers and staff often struggle to adapt with limited resources. Therefore, human resource development and collaborative leadership strategies need to consider the real-world context of schools to ensure they are not merely normative but also realistic and applicable.

In addition to internal factors, external challenges also significantly influence the effectiveness of collaborative leadership implementation. Rapid and frequent changes in education policy, such as curriculum changes and adjustments to quality standards, often make it difficult for madrasas to build a stable human resource development system (Sudirman & Fatimah, 2025). High administrative pressure can also shift the focus of teachers and madrasa principals from professional development to meeting administrative demands. In such circumstances, resilient and adaptive leadership is needed to maintain a balance between policy compliance and efforts to improve educational quality. Synergy with external stakeholders, such as local governments and the education community, is crucial.

The practical implication of these challenges is the need for comprehensive and sustainable strategic planning for the implementation of collaborative leadership and human resource development. Madrasa principals need to establish a structured change management system that involves all parties and focuses on achieving long-term goals (Sunarto & Fauroni, 2024). Collaborative leadership training programs, strengthening teacher competencies, and providing learning resources are concrete steps that can be implemented. Furthermore, it is crucial to develop a culture of reflection and regular evaluation to continuously improve the educational transformation process. With this approach, Islamic elementary schools can become adaptive, innovative, and resilient learning organizations that face the challenges of the times.

4. Conclusions

Collaborative leadership plays a strategic role as the foundation for human resource development in Islamic elementary schools (MI) in facing the era of educational transformation. Through open, participatory, and collaboration-oriented leadership, madrasas can create adaptive and innovative learning ecosystems. Implementation strategies involving a shared vision, a participatory organizational structure, strengthening leadership capacity, and ongoing evaluation are key to strengthening collaborative leadership practices. However, various challenges such as a conventional work culture, limited resources, and dynamic external policies need to be carefully anticipated. Therefore, the success of leadership transformation in MI depends heavily on the synergy of all parties, a commitment to lifelong learning, and a willingness to continuously adapt to changing times.

Based on the results of the study and discussion, several recommendations can be used as material for further practice and research development, both for readers and future researchers. For readers, the results of this study are expected to serve as a reference for understanding and implementing collaborative leadership in human resource development in madrasas. Readers can use them as a basis for strengthening an adaptive and innovative work culture. For future researchers, this study can serve as a basis for more in-depth field research. It is recommended that future research examine collaborative leadership practices directly so that the results are more applicable.

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