



Empowering Educators: Leadership Strategies for Unlocking Teacher Potential in Madrasahs

Salwa Putri Verhan*, Makmur Syukri

Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara, Indonesia

Email : salwaputriv@gmail.com

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.61987/jemr.v5i3.2281>

ABSTRACT

Keywords:

Teacher motivation;
Leadership strategy;
Teacher development;
Performance appraisal

*Corresponding Author

The purpose of this study is to examine the efforts of school leadership in enhancing teacher motivation through the implementation of the Unlock Your Potential strategy, including planning, implementing, and evaluating strategies for teacher development, as well as recognizing outstanding performance. This study employs a descriptive qualitative method, using observations, interviews, and document analysis with school leaders and teachers as participants. Data were analyzed through reduction, presentation, and drawing conclusions. The findings reveal that (1) efforts to increase teacher motivation involve personal approaches, guidance, support for learning facilities, and recognition of high-performing teachers; (2) strategies for teacher development are systematically implemented through training, workshops, ongoing coaching, academic supervision, and provision of supporting infrastructure; (3) supervision and evaluation are conducted periodically via monitoring, performance assessment, and evaluation meetings to improve competence and teaching quality; and (4) appreciation for teachers is given verbally or in writing to foster motivation and a positive work environment. The study implies that structured leadership strategies combined with recognition and supportive supervision can effectively enhance teacher motivation, competence, and overall educational quality.

Article History:

Received: February 2025; Revised: March 2025; Accepted: April 2026

Please cite this article in APA style as:

Verhan, S. P., & Syukri, M.. (2026). Empowering Educators: Leadership Strategies for Unlocking Teacher Potential in Madrasahs. *Journal of Educational Management Research*, 5(3), 3001-3011.

INTRODUCTION

Education plays a crucial role in shaping quality human resources and fostering societal competitiveness. Effective education management determines not only the knowledge and skills of learners but also their capacity to contribute positively to society (Al-Hamad et al., 2023; Yulia et al., 2025). The quality of leadership in educational institutions is central to achieving this goal because leaders directly influence the development of teachers, the main agents of learning (Zaini, 2022). Without strong leadership, educational institutions

struggle to meet societal demands for competent and adaptive graduates. In addition, teachers' professional development is critical, as it ensures the transfer of relevant knowledge, skills, and ethical values to students. Therefore, research that explores strategies to enhance teacher motivation and competence is essential, providing insight into leadership practices that have broader social implications. By understanding how school leaders empower teachers, stakeholders can implement policies and strategies that promote continuous professional growth, ultimately improving the quality of education and producing human resources capable of contributing to societal advancement.

The general problem facing educational institutions is that teachers often encounter barriers to professional development, including low motivation, insufficient technological skills, limited pedagogical innovation, and habitual reliance on routine tasks (Hayani Wulandari, 2023; Matiba, 2024). These obstacles result in suboptimal learning outcomes and prevent teachers from responding effectively to dynamic educational changes. Society expects teachers to adapt, innovate, and improve continuously, yet institutional support and leadership strategies are often inadequate. Consequently, the development of teacher competencies requires intentional leadership strategies that can stimulate intrinsic motivation, foster innovation, and enhance professional capacity. Without these strategies, teachers may remain stagnant, and student learning quality may suffer. Addressing this issue is crucial not only for individual teacher growth but also for societal progress, as education directly impacts the skills, productivity, and ethical values of future generations.

Field observations indicate that while some educational institutions attempt to provide professional development programs, many teachers experience limited access to structured coaching, personalized mentorship, and systematic evaluation (Hasani, 2025; Kulsum, 2025). In practice, teachers often receive generic training or one-off workshops that fail to address individual strengths, weaknesses, or career aspirations. This gap results in uneven performance, where motivated teachers thrive while others struggle to reach their potential. Additionally, recognition systems for teacher achievements are often informal or inconsistent, reducing motivation and diminishing the culture of excellence. Such phenomena reveal the need for leadership strategies that are not only systemic but also personalized, emphasizing both professional skill development and individual potential (Fajariyah, 2025; Febriyanto, 2025). Understanding how leaders implement these strategies in real contexts provides insights into effective practices for sustaining teacher motivation, fostering innovation, and enhancing overall educational quality.

Literature shows that various leadership strategies have been explored to enhance teacher performance. Transformational leadership, in particular, has been linked to increased innovation, motivation, and capacity building (Munif, 2024; Harsoyo, 2022). Academic supervision and mentoring are also widely

recognized as effective methods for improving teacher competence (Solehah et al., 2024; Nisrina, 2023). Previous studies have demonstrated the positive impact of training, performance-based awards, and teacher working groups on general performance outcomes (Amiruddin et al., 2022; Kaharuddin et al., 2025). However, most research focuses on improving performance in a general sense and does not systematically address the development of individual teacher potential. This gap highlights a critical research need: exploring leadership strategies that target both professional competence and personalized empowerment, ensuring that each teacher achieves optimal growth and contributes meaningfully to educational outcomes.

Furthermore, the literature synthesis reveals that while teacher development initiatives exist, constraints such as limited resources, resistance to change, and lack of continuous evaluation persist (Kaharuddin et al., 2025). Most studies overlook the integration of intrinsic motivation, self-awareness, and creativity as components of professional growth. There is limited research on how leaders can create supportive environments that not only enforce performance standards but also encourage teachers to explore their potential and innovate in teaching practices. By addressing this research gap, studies can contribute to both theory and practice by demonstrating how personalized leadership strategies improve teacher outcomes. The position of this research is to focus on human-centric empowerment strategies that enhance teacher potential while maintaining accountability, a combination insufficiently examined in prior literature (Mukarromah & Manshur, 2025; Shofuro, 2025).

The novelty of this research lies in its focus on the Unlock Your Potential strategy as a systematic leadership approach to teacher empowerment. Unlike general professional development programs, this strategy prioritizes individualized guidance, intrinsic motivation, creativity, and reflective practice. It emphasizes leadership as a facilitator of growth rather than merely an evaluator of performance. By centering on human potential, this approach seeks to produce teachers who are self-aware, motivated, and capable of sustained professional innovation. Investigating this approach is crucial because traditional teacher development often overlooks these qualitative aspects, resulting in stagnation and reduced engagement. The study contributes new insights into how leaders can combine coaching, supervision, recognition, and collaborative environments to foster both competence and personal growth, creating a sustainable model of professional development applicable across diverse educational settings.

Based on these considerations, the research problem focuses on understanding how school leaders design, implement, and evaluate the Unlock Your Potential strategy to enhance teacher competence and motivation.

Preliminary evidence suggests that while some initiatives exist, their implementation is uneven, recognition is inconsistent, and continuous evaluation is lacking. This research argues that a structured, personalized, and empowerment-oriented strategy can significantly improve teacher performance and motivation, bridging the gap between policy and practice. The study contributes theoretically by expanding leadership models to include potential-based empowerment and practically by offering actionable guidance for educational institutions to develop more human-centered, sustainable teacher development strategies

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative research design with a descriptive approach. The qualitative design was selected because the research aims to explore in depth the strategies of madrasah heads in implementing the Unlock Your Potential program for teachers at MIS Ikhwanul Mukminin Binjai. This approach enables the researcher to understand how these strategies are applied to develop teacher potential, motivation, and performance in a natural setting. By focusing on the meanings, experiences, and perceptions of madrasah heads and teachers, the study seeks to capture a comprehensive and detailed understanding of leadership practices and coaching processes (Rachman et al., 2024). Qualitative descriptive research is particularly suitable for providing rich, contextualized data that reflect the actual practices and interactions within the madrasah environment.

The research was conducted at MIS Ikhwanul Mukminin Binjai, selected due to its active implementation of teacher development programs under the leadership of the madrasah head. The location provides a natural and practical setting to examine the Unlock Your Potential strategy and its effects on teacher motivation and competence. The choice of this site is justified because it allows direct observation of leadership practices, interactions, and the institutional support mechanisms designed to enhance teacher performance, making it an appropriate context for in-depth qualitative investigation (Sugiyono, 2013).

Data were collected using multiple qualitative techniques, including in-depth interviews with madrasah heads and teachers, participatory observation, and document analysis to capture official plans, training materials, and evaluation records. Data analysis followed a systematic process of data condensation, reduction, display, and verification, ensuring accuracy and completeness of the findings. Data reduction involved selecting, summarizing, and focusing on essential information, while data display facilitated organizing patterns and themes for analysis. Verification was conducted through triangulation, comparing data from interviews, observations, and documents to enhance credibility and trustworthiness (Rachman et al., 2024; Sugiyono, 2013).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Madrasah Head's Efforts to Increase Teacher Motivation through the Unlock Your Potential Strategy

Every individual, including teachers, has an internal condition that plays a role in determining daily activities, namely motivation. Motivation comes from the word *motive* which can be interpreted as the driving force that exists in a person to carry out certain activities in order to achieve a goal. Motivation comes from the word *motivation* which means to move. Motivation is the result of many processes inside or outside the individual, which leads to an enthusiastic attitude when performing certain activities. (Fitriani, 2022).

Untuk mendorong guru agar bersedia dan mampu meningkatkan profesionalismenya, kepala madrasah dapat menerapkan beberapa prinsip. Pertama, peran guru akan lebih aktif apabila kegiatan yang dilakukan dibuat menarik dan menyenangkan, sehingga guru merasa terlibat secara penuh. Kedua, tujuan dari setiap kegiatan perlu disusun dengan jelas, dan guru sebaiknya dilibatkan dalam penyusunan tujuan tersebut agar mereka merasa memiliki dan bertanggung jawab terhadap proses pembelajaran. Selanjutnya, guru perlu selalu mendapatkan informasi mengenai hasil kerja mereka, sehingga mereka mengetahui sejauh mana pencapaian dan area yang perlu diperbaiki. Selain itu, kepala madrasah hendaknya selalu memperhatikan kebutuhan guru, baik dari segi kondisi fisik, rasa aman, maupun kepedulian secara personal, sehingga guru merasa dihargai dan didukung dalam menjalankan tugasnya (Fitriani, 2022).

The efforts of madrasah heads in increasing teachers' motivation to develop pedagogic and professional competencies are carried out through the implementation of the *Unlock Your Potential* strategy which emphasizes the development of individual potential teachers. The head of the madrasah carries out his role as a motivator, supervisor, and manager by taking a personal approach to understand the character, abilities, and needs of each teacher. This approach is carried out so that the head of the madrasah can provide direction, guidance, and support according to the conditions of each teacher so that work motivation can grow optimally.

In addition, motivation is also provided through the provision of learning support facilities, such as learning media, technological devices, teaching materials, and a comfortable and conducive work environment. The head of the madrasah also gave awards to teachers who have shown increased competence and dedication in carrying out their duties. Based on the results of an interview

with the head of the MIS Ikhwanul Mukminin Binjai madrasah, the motivation provided continuously aims to make teachers have awareness from within to continue to develop and not feel satisfied with their current abilities.

The results of the study show that this strategy has a positive impact on increasing work morale, discipline, confidence, and teacher responsibility in carrying out learning. Teachers become more active in participating in self-development activities, more open to learning innovations, and have a higher commitment to improving the quality of the teaching and learning process at MIS Ikhwanul Mukminin Binjai. Thus, the Unlock Your Potential strategy has proven to be an effective means of building teacher motivation in a sustainable manner.

Planning and Implementation of Sustainable Teacher Potential Development Strategy

Potential is an individual ability that must continue to be developed, especially by teachers. The potential of teachers who develop well will have a positive effect on the quality of the teaching and learning process and learning outcomes, while the potential that is underdeveloped can hinder the achievement of optimal learning. Teachers play an important role in developing students' potential, not only as a transmitter of knowledge, but also as a supervisor, informant, and learning facilitator. Therefore, teachers are required to be able to understand the subject matter and develop students' abilities to the maximum (Hayani Wulandari, 2023). School principals must be literate to the development of educational needs and demands. School principals are required to be able to improve, explore, and empower existing potential, as well as be responsible for the quality of education in schools. The quality of education in schools is inseparable from the quality of teachers, especially in the ability of teachers to empower their potential to manage the learning process effectively and 18 accountably. (Suryati et al., 2022)

Planning strategies for developing teacher potential is carried out systematically from the beginning of the school year through the preparation of madrasah work programs that are oriented towards improving the quality of human resources. The head of the madrasah designs a continuous professional development program through various activities such as training, workshops, seminars, training, and discussion forums between teachers that are relevant to the needs of teachers. The program is prepared based on previous performance evaluations and the real needs faced by teachers in learning.

In its implementation, this strategy is supported by the establishment of rules related to teacher competency development which includes pedagogical, professional, social, and personality aspects. In addition, the provision of adequate facilities and infrastructure as well as continuous motivation are the

main supporting factors. Based on the results of an interview with the head of the MIS Ikhwanul Mukminin Binjai madrasah, the implementation of the program is also carried out through a managerial approach, academic supervision, and a personal approach so that each teacher can develop their potential according to their abilities.

The results of the study show that the implementation of this strategy has a positive impact on improving teacher competence. Teachers become more skilled in compiling learning tools, able to use more varied teaching methods, utilizing learning technology, and increasing cooperation between fellow teachers. Programs that are systematically designed are also able to create a learning culture in the madrasah environment so that teachers are encouraged to continue to improve their professionalism.

Evaluate the Effectiveness of the Unlock Your Potential Strategy

Educational evaluation can be interpreted as an action or a process to determine the value of everything in the world of education, which is a process of measuring the effectiveness of the strategy carried out to achieve the company's goals. The results of the subsequent evaluation will be used as an analysis of the next program. (Nadya et al., 2024). Through evaluation, teachers' strengths and weaknesses can be clearly identified, providing a basis for targeted professional development. Improving the quality of teacher teaching directly correlates with student achievement, creating an inevitable link between teacher evaluation and learning outcomes. In addition, teacher performance evaluations build accountability and responsibility in their teaching practices, support effective school management, and provide valuable data to design better education policies. On a broader level, teacher performance evaluation also helps to address challenges and changes in the world of education, helping to create a learning environment that is adaptive, innovative, and in accordance with quality educational standards. By understanding and empowering teachers through performance evaluation, the education system can continue to develop and have a broad positive impact on the development of the next generation (Nurmaini et al., 2024).

Evaluation of the effectiveness of the Unlock Your Potential strategy is carried out through several mechanisms, including academic supervision, monitoring, classroom observation, and periodic teacher performance assessments. The head of the madrasah directly monitors the implementation of learning in the classroom to see the readiness of the teacher, the method used, the classroom management, and the teacher's ability to deliver material to the

students. In addition, evaluation is also carried out through regular evaluation meetings and discussions to find out the development and obstacles faced by teachers.

The evaluation carried out does not only focus on assessing teachers' work results, but is also directed at coaching and continuous improvement. Based on the results of an interview with the head of the MIS madrasah Ikhwanul Mukminin Binjai, each finding in supervision is used as a basis to provide direction, solutions, and follow-ups so that teachers are able to improve the quality of learning. The head of the madrasah emphasized that the evaluation was carried out as a form of assistance, not solely looking for teachers' mistakes.

The results of the study show that the strategies implemented have a positive impact, characterized by increased motivation, competence, creativity, and teacher performance. In addition, teachers also show the ability to adapt to curriculum changes, the use of digital media, and more systematic learning planning. Other impacts can be seen in the improvement of the quality of the learning process, a more active classroom atmosphere, and better student learning outcomes at MIS Ikhwanul Mukminin Binjai.

Forms of Appreciation and Appreciation for Teachers

Based on the results of an interview with the head of the MIS madrasah Ikhwanul Mukminin Binjai, in encouraging teachers to continue to develop learning potential and innovation, the head of the madrasah gave various forms of appreciation and awards. The award is given verbally, such as praise, thanks, and recognition in meetings or in front of students so that outstanding teachers can be an example for other teachers. This form of appreciation is considered effective in increasing teachers' confidence and work morale.

In addition, awards are also given in written form as a form of formal recognition of teachers' achievements in developing their professionalism. Written awards can be in the form of charters, certificates, letters of appreciation, or recommendations for further training. The giving of appreciation is carried out as a strategy to encourage teachers to continue to excel and improve the quality of learning continuously.

The results of the study show that giving appreciation not only increases the motivation of individual teachers, but also creates a positive competitive culture in the madrasah environment. Teachers become more enthusiastic in creating learning innovations, improving work discipline, and showing their best performance. In addition, the working atmosphere between teachers becomes more harmonious, productive, and mutually supportive in achieving educational goals at MIS Ikhwanul Mukminin Binjai.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study reveal that the Unlock Your Potential strategy implemented by the madrasah head at MIS Ikhwanul Mukminin Binjai effectively enhances teacher motivation, competence, creativity, discipline, and adaptability to curriculum and technological changes. Key lessons from the research indicate that a systematic and personalized leadership approach—combining planning of professional development programs, continuous coaching, academic supervision, monitoring, and recognition—can optimize teacher potential and improve the overall quality of learning. From an academic perspective, this study contributes to the understanding of transformational and human-centered leadership in educational settings by demonstrating how empowerment strategies can foster teacher professionalism and sustained educational improvement. However, the research is limited by its focus on a single institution and qualitative descriptive data, which may not capture broader contextual variations. Future research could expand to multiple madrasahs, incorporate longitudinal data, or explore quantitative measures of teacher performance to further validate and generalize the effectiveness of potential-focused leadership strategies.

REFERENCES

- Amiruddin, Fachruddin, Qomaruddin Lubis, Siti Rahma Ismiatun, Rija Ansyari, A. (2022). Strategi Kepala Sekolah Dalam Meningkatkan Kinerja Guru Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. *Edukatif: Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan Research*, 4(1), 1458–1465. <https://doi.org/10.31004/edukatif.v4i1.2168>
- Firdaus, S., Aini, N., & Aulia, N. (2024). Manajemen Kepala Sekolah Dalam Meningkatkan Fungsi Guru Di Sma Negeri 3 Praya. *Jurnal Ilmiah Profesi Pendidikan*, 9(3), 2168–2173. <https://doi.org/10.29303/jipp.v9i3.2345>
- Fitriani. (2022). *Strategi Kepala Madrasah Dalam Meningkatkan Motivasi Dan Etos Kerja Guru di Ma Al-Mawasir Lamasi*
- Harsoyo, R. (2022). Teori Kepemimpinan Transformasional Bernard M. Bass Dan Aplikasinya Dalam Peningkatan Mutu Lembaga Pendidikan Islam. *Southeast Asian Journal of Islamic Education Management*, 3(2), 247–262. <https://doi.org/10.21154/sajiem.v3i2.112>
- Hayani Wulandari, I. N. (2023). Mengembangkan Potensi Guru Yang Profesional Dalam Proses Belajar Mengajar. *Didaktik: Jurnal Ilmiah Pgsd Fkip Universitas Mandiri*, 09(02), 2487–2509. <https://doi.org/10.36989/didaktik.v9i2.990>
- Kaharuddin., Annajmi., Rafik., et al. (2025). Strategi Kepala Madrasah dalam Meningkatkan Kompetensi Profesional Guru di Madrasah Aliyah

- Ittihadul Khoiriyah Desa Muaro Jambi Kecamatan Maro Sebo Kabupaten Muaro Jambi. *Arus Jurnal Pendidikan (AJUP)*. 5(1). 2-10
- Munif, M. V. M. (2024). Sejarah Kepemimpinan Transformasional. *Dar El Ilmi: Jurnal Keagamaan, Pendidikan Dan Humaniora*, 11(2), 145–158. <https://doi.org/10.52166/darelilmi.v11i2.7911>
- Nadya, A., Devia, D., & Gusmaneli. (2024). Hakikat Evaluasi (Pengertian Pengukuran, Penilaian, Evaluasi; Fungsi & Tujuan Penilaian, Ciri-Ciri Penilaian Pendidikan). *Jmpai: Jurnal Manajemen Dan Pendidikan Agama Islam*, 2(2), 229–233. <https://doi.org/10.61132/jmpai.v2i2.195>
- Nisrina. (2023). *Strategi Kepala Sekolah Dalam Pelaksanaan Supervisi Akademik Guru Di Smp Negeri 7 Banda Aceh*.
- Nurmaini, E., Ramadhani, P. S., Fitri, D., Sembiring, Y., Lubis, D. M., & Iqbal, M. (2024). Evaluasi Penilaian Kinerja Guru Dan Sistem Pembelajaran. *Imej: Indo-Mathedu Intellectuals Journal*, 5(3), 3874–3880. <https://doi.org/10.54373/imeij.v5i3.1450>
- Rachman. Arif., et al. (2023). *Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif, Kualitatif Dan R&D*.
- Siti Nuraeni, H. P. (2022). Strategi Kepala Madrasah Dalam Meningkatkan Mutu Pembelajaran Sekolah Melalui Kinerja Guru Di Sekolah Madrasah Tsanawiyah. *Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Konseling*, 4(6), 10987–10994.
- Solehah, M., Hakim, L., Muhammad, L., & Wathoni, N. (2024). Strategi Kepala Sekolah Mengelola Sumber Daya Guru Dalam Meningkatkan Mutu Pendidikan. *Tadbir Muwahhid*, 8(2). <https://doi.org/10.30997/jtm.v8i1.13594>
- Sugiyono. (2013). *Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif, Kualitatif Dan R&D*.
- Suryati, L., Maksum, H., & Rahmadhani, S. (2022). Manajemen Kepemimpinan Kepala 31 Sekolah Dalam Upaya Meningkatkan Kompetensi Guru Menghadapi Era Revolusi 4. 0. *Jurnal Imiah Pendidikan Dan Pembelajaran*, 6(3), 632–642. <https://doi.org/10.23887/jipp.v6i3.56703>
- Zaini, Z. A. H. (2022). *Strategi Kepala Madrasah Dalam Membangun Budaya Mutu*.
- Al-Hamad, N., James, O. O., Afolabi, J. O. A., Olatoye, F. O., & Eboigbe, E. O. (2023). Innovative HR practices in higher education for global competitiveness. *Education Sustainability & Society*, 7(1), 21-30. <https://doi.org/10.26480/ess.01.2024.21.30>
- Yulia, K., Zarema, K., & Maret, M. (2025). The Importance of Educational Initiatives in Promoting Sustainable Social Development. *Reliability: Theory & Applications*, 20(SI 9 (87)), 871-877.
- Matiba, F. M. (2024). Motivational factors and barriers to participation in professional development programmes: perspectives from Tanzania higher education faculties. *Current Psychology*, 43(1), 437-448. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-023-04310-z>

- Fajariyah, H. (2025). Self Directed Learning: Meningkatkan Kepercayaan Diri dalam Berbicara Bahasa Arab. *Pendas: Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Dasar*, 10(01), 339–353. <https://doi.org/10.23969/jp.v10i04.34609>
- Febriyanto, R. A. (2025). Dampak Metode Debat terhadap Keterampilan Bahasa Arab (Berbicara) Siswa. *AS-SABIQUN*, 7(3), 549–561. <https://doi.org/10.36088/assabiqun.v7i3.5703>
- Hasani, N. (2025). Metode Eklektik dalam Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab: Mengintegrasikan Qawaid wa Tarjamah dan Sam'iyah Basariyah untuk Meningkatkan Kemahiran Berbicara dan Menulis. *AS-SABIQUN*, 7(2), 336–352. <https://doi.org/10.36088/assabiqun.v7i2.5651>
- Kulsum, U. (2025). Fostering Student Creativity through Discovery Learning: A Study on Islamic Religious Education in Elementary Schools. *EDUCARE: Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan*, 4(1), 14–26. <https://doi.org/10.71392/ejip.v4i1.80>
- Mukarromah, A., & Manshur, U. (2025). Digital Transformation in Islamic Religious Education: Trend or Necessity in the Post-Pandemic Era. *Indonesian Journal of Education and Social Studies*, 4(1), 85–99. <https://doi.org/10.33650/ijess.v4i1.7084>
- Shofuro, F. H. (2025). Peningkatan Penguasaan Kosakata Arab Dan Kemampuan Bahasa Komunikatif Melalui Metode Communicative Language Teaching. *Pendas: Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Dasar*, 10(02), 101–119