



# OPTIMIZE THE ROLE OF THE STATE ISLAMIC HIGH SCHOOL (MAN) BONDOWOSO PRINCIPAL IN PROMOTING DIGITAL-BASED LEARNING

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## ABSTRACT

The principal of the madrasah is expected to be an agent of change, capable of leading the digital transformation process in the madrasah environment. Therefore, optimizing the role of the madrasah principal in promoting digital learning is very important, not only to meet the needs of the times, but also to improve the overall quality of education in the madrasah. This study adopts a qualitative approach. This study aims to identify and understand how the principal of the madrasah in MAN Bondowoso optimizes her role in promoting digital-based learning. Data was collected through observation, documentation and in-depth interviews. Data analysis was conducted using Miles and Huberman's (1994) interactive model, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The principal of the MAN Bondowoso madrasah has been able to optimize his role in supporting the digital transformation of the madrasah. With the role of educator, manager, administrator, supervisor, leader, innovator, and motivator, the principal of the madrasah effectively improves the competency of digital teachers, manages the technology infrastructure, and formulates policies that support digital-based learning. These efforts create a more innovative and adaptive educational environment. The principal has also been able to motivate teachers and students to actively participate in the digitalization process. The overall effort to optimize this role contributes significantly to improving the quality of education and students' readiness to face the challenges of the digital age.

**Keywords:** Optimization, Role of Madrasah Principal, Digital Based Learning

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## INTRODUCTION

In the era of increasing globalization, digitalization has become a major driver in various sectors, including education. Technological advances have created a new paradigm in the world of education, where the learning process is no longer limited to traditional classrooms ([Patmasari et al., 2023](#); [Thong et al., 2023](#)). The use of digital technology is now an integral part of modern education, providing wider access to learning materials and creating more interactive teaching methods ([Najib & Maunah, 2022](#); [Rosmini et al., 2024](#)).

The Indonesian government has accelerated the implementation of technology in education, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic, which led to drastic changes in teaching methods. Programs such as the Digital Literacy Movement are one of the government's initiatives to ensure that all educational institutions, including the State Islamic High School (MAN), can adopt technology to improve the quality of education ([Patmasari et al., 2023](#)). As Islamic educational institutions, madrasahs have a dual responsibility: not only to maintain the relevance of the Islamic curriculum in a modern context, but also to ensure that their graduates are ready to face the challenges of the digital age ([Marpaung et al., 2021](#)).

In the context of digitization of education, the role of the madrasah principal becomes very important. The madrasah principal is expected to be an agent of change who is able to lead the digital transformation process in the madrasah environment ([Majid, 2022](#); [Marliyani et al., 2023](#)). The success of digitization implementation is highly dependent on the principal's ability to ensure that the entire educational ecosystem, including teachers, students, and administrative staff, can effectively adapt to technological developments ([Najib & Maunah, 2022](#)). They must also have a clear vision and strong management skills to lead this transformation ([Ansar & Marzuki, 2022](#)). However, the implementation of digitization in madrasahs is not without its challenges. These challenges include limited technological infrastructure, unequal access to digital devices among students, and resistance to change from teachers and staff who may be unfamiliar with new technologies ([Thong et al., 2023](#)). This digital divide is even more critical in remote areas such as Bondowoso, where access to technology is often more limited, which can lead to inequalities in student learning outcomes ([Sianturi & Simanjuntak, 2024](#)).

To overcome these challenges, the principal of the Bondowoso madrasa must have strong competencies in understanding and managing technology and be able to develop effective strategies. These strategies include increasing digital literacy among teachers, providing adequate infrastructure, and developing a curriculum that supports digital-based learning ([Aminuddin et al., 2024](#); [Junaedi et al., 2024](#)). In addition, the madrasa principal must be able to motivate all stakeholders in the madrasa to create a learning environment that supports technological innovation ([Demmanggasa et al., 2023](#); [Yasmansyah & Zakir, 2022](#)).

Optimizing the role of the madrasah principal in promoting digital-based learning is very important, not only to meet the needs of the times, but also to improve the overall quality of education in the madrasah. The head of the madrasah must lead the digital transformation with a clear vision, strong management skills, and the ability to use data to make better decisions ([Sinaga et al., 2024](#)). In addition, the head of the madrasah must also be proactive in engaging the community and other stakeholders to support the implementation of technology in the madrasah ([Sianturi & Simanjuntak, 2024](#)).

## METHODS

This study takes a qualitative approach. According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research is an approach to understanding and exploring the meaning that individuals or groups give to social or humanitarian problems. This study aims to identify and understand how madrasah principals in MAN Bondowoso optimize their role in promoting digital-based learning. Data was collected through observation, documentation, and in-depth interviews with madrasah principals, teachers, and administrators. Data analysis was conducted using Miles and Huberman's (1994) interactive model, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The principal of the madrasa is an educational component that plays an important role in improving the quality of education. The principal of the madrasah is responsible for the organization of educational activities, school administration, supervision of teachers and educational personnel, use and maintenance of facilities and infrastructure. Therefore, according to Andang, the successful achievement of educational goals requires the skills and abilities of a principal ([Andang, 2014: 54-55](#)). According to Mulyasa (2007: 98) in his book "Becoming a professional principal" states that the duties and functions of the principal are EMASLIM. EMASLIM is an abbreviation of the role of the principal as an educator, manager, administrator, supervisor, leader, innovator and motivator. As the digital age continues to evolve, the role of the madrasah principal is becoming increasingly important in leading and directing educational transformation in madrasahs. Optimizing the role of the madrasah principal is important not only to ensure that madrasahs are able to adapt to technological developments, but also to improve the quality of education offered to students. The madrasah principal functions not only as an administrative leader, but also as an educator, manager, supervisor, innovator, and motivator who is able to create a conducive learning environment and support the application of technology in learning. The following discussion will explain how the madrasah principal at MAN Bondowoso performs his various roles to support the implementation of digital-based learning, as well as the impact of efforts to optimize these roles.

### The Principal's Role as Educator

The principal of the madrasah in his role as an educator or an educator is tasked with guiding students, staff, and teachers ([Zaini et al., 2023](#)). As an educator, the principal of the madrasah must always strive to improve the quality of teaching provided by teachers ([Hamid, 2022](#)). The principal of the madrasah as an educator should provide freedom for teachers to be able to develop their profession in various areas in order to improve teacher performance ([Fatoni, 2017](#)). The results of this study show that the

principal of the madrasah in MAN Bondowoso performs the role of educator very effectively, especially in the context of digital-based learning. The principal plays an active role in improving the digital literacy of teachers through various training and professional development initiatives. One of the key findings is the implementation of routine training that includes technology workshops and seminars.

The training is designed to strengthen teachers' skills in using digital devices such as computers, tablets, and learning applications so that they can integrate these technologies into more interactive teaching methods. The principal also encourages teachers to take online courses and certification programs to deepen their understanding of educational technology. With this support, teachers are not only comfortable using technology, but also able to use it effectively in the classroom, which has a positive impact on improving the quality of learning. The results of this study indicate that the role of the principal as an educator at MAN Bondowoso is very important in preparing teachers and students to face the challenges of the digital age. The principal has succeeded in creating an environment that supports innovation and digital learning, which ultimately increases the competence and confidence of teachers and the readiness of students to compete in the modern world.

### **The Principal's Role as a Leader**

The head of the madrasah as a manager should have good and futuristic intellectual, emotional and spiritual skills and breadth ([Hasbi et al., 2023](#)). This is because the role of the head of the madrasah as a manager is very important in ensuring the success of the implementation of technology and digital-based learning in the madrasah. As a manager, the head of the madrasah is responsible for managing all resources, including technological infrastructure, to support the educational process ([Selvia et al., 2023](#)).

This study found that the principal of MAN Bondowoso played a very effective managerial role in supporting digital-based learning. The principal demonstrated strong managerial skills in managing the technology infrastructure and resources available in the school. Key findings indicate that the principal has proactively developed and implemented a comprehensive strategic plan for the acquisition of new technology, system upgrades, and efficient budget allocation for educational technology. This plan includes a regular assessment of technology needs to ensure that the school is always on the cutting edge of technology.

The principal also demonstrated expertise in human resource management related to the use of technology. The principal successfully organized and distributed tasks effectively among teachers and staff so that technology could be used efficiently and have maximum impact on learning. This organization includes the formation of a technology team that is responsible for supporting the implementation of technology in madrasa and ensuring that all technology devices and infrastructure are well managed.

Based on the above, it can be concluded that the role of the principal as a manager plays a very important role in supporting the success of the implementation of digital-based learning at MAN Bondowoso. The principal's ability to plan, manage, and optimize resources ensures that the madrasah is not only able to adapt to new technologies, but is also able to maximize their use to improve the quality of education.

### **The Principal's Role as Administrator**

The role of the principal as an educational administrator stems from the nature of educational administration as the use of various resources such as people, facilities and infrastructure and various other learning media optimally, appropriately, effectively and efficiently to support the achievement of educational goals ([Zebua, 2023](#)). Principals who have performed their duties well or very well as administrators will be able to improve the quality of education in the educational institutions they lead ([Noprika et al., 2020](#)).

The role of the madrasa principal as an administrator is very important in creating an educational environment that supports digital-based learning. As an administrator, the madrasa principal is responsible for formulating policies, managing the school management system, and ensuring that all elements of school operations run smoothly, especially in the context of technology integration.

This study shows that the principal of the madrasah in MAN Bondowoso plays the role of administrator very effectively, especially in supporting and implementing digital-based learning. As an administrator, the principal has been successful in formulating and implementing a policy that supports technology integration in the madrasah. This policy includes clear rules regarding the use of digital devices, Internet access, and the use of online learning platforms. The research findings indicate that this policy is designed with the safety, ethics, and effectiveness of technology use in mind so that technology can be used wisely and optimally in the educational environment.

The principal also demonstrated a strong ability to integrate technology into the school management system. By implementing the Management Information System (MIS), the principal was able to increase the operational efficiency of the school. The Management Information System (MIS) is used to manage various important data such as student attendance records, grades, and communication between teachers, students, and parents. The implementation of this system allows for more organized data management and faster access to information for all stakeholders, which ultimately supports a better decision-making process.

Based on the above, it can be understood that the role of the principal as an administrator is very important in creating a school environment that supports digital-based learning. With the right policies and effective use of technology in school management, the principal at MAN Bondowoso has succeeded in creating a more efficient, transparent education system that is ready to face the challenges

of the digital age.

### **The Principal's Role as Supervisor**

Supervision is a coaching that is continuously provided to teachers according to the development of the tasks they face ([Kurnianingsih, 2017](#)). The same thing was also conveyed by ([Al-Fatih et al., 2022](#)) who said that the head of the madrasah as a leader in an educational institution functions as a supervisor who helps and guides teachers in developing better teaching and learning situations. Supervision aims to create or develop more effective and efficient teaching and learning situations. It is hoped that with good and targeted supervision, the performance of teachers can be significantly improved so that the quality of education in the madrasa also increases ([Mafdu & Islam, 2024](#)).

This study found that the principal of MAN Bondowoso played the role of supervisor very effectively in supporting the implementation of digital learning. As a supervisor, the principal is responsible for ensuring that technology is used optimally in the teaching and learning process and that the objectives of digital learning are achieved as expected. The principal actively monitors the use of technology in the classroom through direct observation. The results of the study indicate that the principal routinely visits the classroom to see how teachers are integrating technology into their teaching methods and how students are using technology in the learning process. This observation provides the principal with insight into the effectiveness of technology use and allows for the identification of areas that need improvement or development.

After the observation, the principal provides constructive feedback to teachers based on the observation results. This feedback is designed to encourage teachers to improve their skills in using technology. For example, the principal may recommend additional training for teachers who are less confident in using certain digital devices or provide examples of best practices from other teachers who are more proficient. Research shows that this approach not only helps improve teachers' technology skills, but also builds their confidence in using technology in the classroom.

In addition, the principal also holds guidance sessions and group discussions as part of his/her supervisory function. In these sessions, teachers can share the challenges they face in using technology and work together to find solutions. This collaborative approach not only strengthens teachers' skills but also creates a culture of cooperation that supports innovation and improving the quality of teaching in the madrasah.

Based on the explanation above, it can be understood that the role of the principal as a supervisor is very important in ensuring the success of the implementation of digital-based learning at MAN Bondowoso. Through effective monitoring, constructive feedback, and ongoing guidance, the principal is able to create a

dynamic and responsive learning environment to the needs of modern education, ensuring that technology is used optimally to support students' academic success.

### **The Principal's Role as a Leader**

The role of the madrasah principal as a leader is very important in guiding and leading digital transformation in madrasahs ([Majid, 2022](#)). As a leader, the madrasah principal must be able to set a clear vision, communicate it effectively to the entire school community, and create an environment that supports innovation and change ([Pambudy & Handayati, 2022](#)).

In this study, it was found that the madrasah principal in MAN Bondowoso played the role of leader very effectively in guiding and leading digital transformation in madrasahs. As a leader, the madrasah principal has the primary responsibility to set a strategic long-term vision for the implementation of digital-based learning.

The results of the study indicate that the madrasa director has succeeded in articulating a clear vision for integrating technology into all aspects of learning and school management. This vision aims not only to improve the quality of education, but also to prepare students for the challenges of the digital age. The madrasa principal also demonstrated an exceptional ability to communicate this vision of digitization to the entire madrasa community-including teachers, students, staff, and parents. This effective communication ensures that all parties have the same understanding of the importance of technology in education and are committed to supporting its implementation. The madrasa principal uses various forums such as meetings, seminars, and social gatherings to explain this vision and build support from the entire school community.

The principal has created an environment that supports innovation and fosters a positive attitude toward change. By creating a culture that is open to technology, the principal has successfully overcome resistance that may arise from teachers or students who are uncomfortable with this change. The principal also encourages the active participation of all members of the madrasa community in the digitization process, ensuring that all voices are heard and that everyone feels they have a role to play in the success of this digital transformation. Based on the research findings presented above, it can be concluded that the principal's role as a leader is very important in guiding the madrasa towards success in the digital age. Through a clear vision, inspiring leadership, and full support for innovation, the principal at MAN Bondowoso has laid a strong foundation for a sustainable and successful digital transformation that will ultimately improve the quality of education and the readiness of students to face future challenges.

### **The Principal's Role as Innovator**

Innovations in education, especially those driven by the use of technology, are greatly influenced by the leadership of the madrasah principal. The madrasah principal as an

innovator must be able to seek, find and implement various innovations in schools ([Jamilah et al., 2023](#)). Thus, through innovation, it is hoped to create a quality educational atmosphere that is able to adapt to the development of the times ([Putra, 2014](#)). To perform his role as an innovator, the madrasah principal must have the right strategy to establish harmonious relationships with the environment, seek new ideas, integrate all activities, set an example for all educators and educational personnel in the madrasah, and develop innovative learning models ([Zahroh, 2013](#)). The madrasah principal as an innovator must be proactive in seeking and implementing new technologies that can increase the effectiveness of learning ([Najib & Maunah, 2022](#)).

This study shows that the principal of the madrasah at MAN Bondowoso effectively plays the role of an innovator who focuses on developing and implementing innovations to improve the quality of learning and madrasah management through the use of technology. As an innovator, the principal plays an important role in promoting sustainable innovation in both teaching methods and school management ([Kurniawan, 2021](#)).

This study shows that the principal of the madrasah is very proactive in promoting learning innovation through the use of technology. An important innovation initiated by the principal of the madrasah in MAN Bondowoso is the use of smart TVs in the classroom as a digital learning tool. This innovation is part of the principal's efforts to use modern technology to improve the quality of learning and create a more interactive learning experience for students. The use of smart TVs in the classroom has a significant positive impact on the learning process. Smart TVs allow teachers to display multimedia content such as educational videos, interactive presentations, and visual simulations that make the subject matter more interesting and easier for students to understand. With direct access to various digital resources, teachers can teach complex concepts in a more engaging way, which in turn increases student engagement and motivation in learning.

Based on the above, it can be concluded that the role of the madrasa principal as an innovator has brought about significant changes in the way learning and madrasa management are carried out at MAN Bondowoso. The innovations implemented not only improve the quality of education, but also prepare students to become creative, adaptable individuals who are ready to face the challenges of the digital age.

### **The role of the principal as a motivator**

The role of the principal as a motivator is very important in building enthusiasm, commitment, and involvement of the entire school community in facing digital transformation. The principal must have the right strategy to motivate the educational staff to perform their various tasks and functions ([Jamilah et al., 2023](#)). As a motivator, the principal must be able to inspire and provide emotional support and appropriate rewards to encourage active participation of teachers and students in the application of technology ([Hartawan, 2020](#)). The same thing was also conveyed by ([Fatikah &](#)

[Fildayanti, 2019](#)) who said that the principal can motivate teachers by creating a harmonious situation and scope of cooperation with teachers and trying to provide teachers with the necessary equipment to fulfill their duties, give rewards and control consequences in accordance with school regulations.

This study revealed that the principal of the madrasah at MAN Bondowoso played a key role as a motivator in supporting the implementation and development of digital-based learning. As a motivator, the principal of the madrasah succeeded in building enthusiasm and enthusiasm among teachers and students, so that they felt actively involved in the process of digitalizing education in the madrasah. The results showed that the principal of the madrasah used several approaches to increase motivation among teachers and students. One of the main approaches was strong communication about the vision of madrasah digitalization. The principal of the madrasah consistently conveyed the importance of technology in education and how the use of technology can provide long-term benefits for students' academic development and teacher professionalism. This clear vision helped build mutual understanding and commitment among teachers and students, who felt more motivated to participate in the digital transformation.

In addition, principals demonstrated a high level of sensitivity to the emotional and psychological needs of teachers and students in the face of change. The research found that principals actively provided moral support and confidence-building to teachers and students who may have felt anxious or less confident about using new technologies. For example, principals often held motivational or sharing sessions where teachers and students could share experiences, challenges, and solutions related to the use of technology. These sessions not only provided practical support, but also created a sense of togetherness and mutual support among the entire madrasa community. Principals also used awards and recognition as a motivational tool. By rewarding teachers and students who demonstrated success in integrating technology into learning, the principals encouraged further participation and created positive role models for the entire madrasa community.

The research findings presented above show that the role of the madrasa principal as a motivator is very important in ensuring the success of the implementation of digital-based learning at MAN Bondowoso. Through emotional support, inspiring communication, and appropriate rewards, the madrasah principal is able to build a collective spirit to face the challenges and take advantage of the opportunities offered by technology in education. This role not only increases teacher and student motivation and engagement, but also creates a positive and innovative learning environment in the madrasa.

## CONCLUSION

The principal of MAN Bondowoso has successfully optimized his role in supporting the school's digital transformation. In his role as an educator, manager, administrator, supervisor, leader, innovator, and motivator, the principal effectively improves the competency of digital teachers, manages technology infrastructure, and formulates policies that support digital-based learning. These efforts create a more innovative and adaptive educational environment. The principal has also been able to motivate teachers and students to actively participate in the digitalization process. All these efforts to optimize this role have contributed significantly to improving the quality of education and the readiness of students to face the challenges of the digital age.

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