

Educational Leadership for Parental Involvement in an Islamic Boarding School in Indonesia

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Abstract. Parental involvement yielded positive outcomes for students academically and non-academically. In this case, a school principal holds a significant role in maintaining and increasing parental involvement quality at schools. Nonetheless, research on school principals and parental participation in Indonesia, particularly in boarding schools, is still deemed limited. This paper, therefore, aims to deepen understanding of school leadership in dealing with parental participation in the Islamic Boarding school context. This study used a qualitative approach. It used semi-structured interviews and observations as the main data resources. Using six parental involvement models by Epstein, this study analyzed the school leadership models that are mostly used in a boarding school context. This study found that school leaders have a significant role in promoting the practice of parental involvement at school. There are at least three primary roles of the school principal found in an Islamic Boarding school in this study: instructional leader, administrative leader, and community leader.

Keywords: educational leader, leadership, parental involvement.

1 Introduction

A successful principal knows their leadership abilities. The school's success is determined by the strength and quality of its leadership. Leadership has a crucial role and serves as a catalyst for school progress. As a result, a principal needs to comprehend some leadership qualities/models to improve leadership effectiveness.

Similarly, [1] contended that where there is a good school, there must be a firm school principal. Nevertheless, a school principal could not work alone. This is because the school can succeed if it collaborates and partners with the parents and community. [2] asserted that principals' presence at the parents' house and in the Community helps develop and maintain culturally appropriate school and community leadership practices.

Furthermore, [2] asserted that school principals would be more comfortable building trust among family members by understanding the parents. Trust from home will increase parents' participation in school program activities, which will finally boost students' positive outcomes. School leaders have a significant role in increasing parental involvement by creating programs

that engage in mutual communication and collaboration. However, studies on school leaders engaging parents, especially in the Indonesian context, are still lacking. Therefore, this paper aims to fill the gap by examining the school leaders' role in promoting the involvement of parents and the Community.

2 Literature Review

The study on leadership and parental involvement is deemed necessary because the school-home/community partnerships may increase the social capital the school needs to support students' success [1]. The core of the association between home and school is called parental involvement.

With good school leadership, a school principal can create programs involving parents in school activities. Schools can also create programs where they can visit parents' homes so that the school understands the student's background, which can help provide treatment that suits the student's needs and characteristics. Apart from that, school principals can also create programs for the Community. Activities carried out in the midst of the community, apart from getting to know parents and students, the programs can also be used as community service and empowerment actions. This is because schools are also obliged to provide services to the community and solutions if problems occur.

It is impossible to carry out activities involving parents and the community if the school does not have strong principal leadership. School principals who understand the importance of parental involvement will be able to inspire teachers so that the school environment can be truly effective in formulating plans for parent involvement programs in schools [3]. If the school principal provides full support, all school members can easily and sincerely build home and school collaboration.

Schools (both public and private, conventional or boarding schools) will never be able to work alone in educating students [1]. Likewise, parents will never be able to educate their children alone. So, this mutual cooperation must exist from two directions. Usually, parental involvement does not go well because school leadership support is minimal.

2.1 Parental Involvement

Researchers have no broad agreement on the definition of parental involvement [9]. According to [4], parental participation refers to joint efforts between schools and parents to increase student attainment. Similarly, [5] asserted that parental involvement requires an investment from either "parents" or "caregivers." Parents may considerably assist their children in excelling by devoting time and effort to supporting them at home and school.

[6] argued that parental participation is an interaction between home and school that improves student conduct. [7] defined parental involvement as parents' participation in their children's education both within and outside the house. Meanwhile, [8] described parent involvement as an endeavor in which parents build excellent communication skills with teachers and school principals, regardless of whether they can participate in the school's structure.

Furthermore, [7] argued that parents should start investing in their children as early as possible, even if they are not yet in school. However, parental engagement varies. According to [9],

parents devote more attention to their children's education during kindergarten and primary school years. This will lessen when they go to higher levels. Finally, Hornby (2000) contends that with parental involvement, both schools and home families collaborate to produce a favorable educational environment for students.

[10] contended that when schools view children simply as students, the schools will most likely see the family as separate from the school. Similarly, when parents see schools as a place to fix students' behavior or equip children with knowledge and skills, they intend not to be involved in students' academic activities at school and home. Parental involvement is a partnership between school and home where they collaboratively create better student opportunities.

Parental involvement worldwide has become a priority program because parental involvement effectively and efficiently impacts students' outcomes [3]. In Indonesia, the government and the schools also put some effort into engaging parents in children's education. This is because, so far, the study has found that the level of parental involvement in Indonesia is considered low. They are involved in students' education when they have already paid for the school fees [8]. Parents also believe their role of educating children ends when the students are already at school. When the students are at school, the school is responsible for all students' education [11]. Further, the professional development for school principals in Indonesia also focuses on school management; they have never been trained to involve parents at school.

2.2 Parental Involvement in Islamic Boarding School

Unlike regular schools, Islamic boarding schools require students to stay within the school for 24 hours. They live in the dormitory provided by the school. This results in students living far from their parents. Research has proven that if parents are not involved in their child's education, it will more or less affect academic and non-academic performance [1]. In other words, parents who are active in helping the education process at school and home will be able to improve student performance. However, parents can't provide maximum roles in the Islamic boarding school setting.

Islamic boarding schools usually provide caretakers or mentors who live close to the students to replace the role of parents. Caregivers will usually be equipped with parenting skills and religious skills. Apart from caregivers, teachers also usually live in the school area. So that the educational role of parents can be slightly replaced by teachers and caregivers.

However, studies also show that teachers can play an active role in the education process if they are led by a good school principal [12]. School principals in the context of Islamic boarding schools not only take care of students' academics, but also think about afternoon and evening activities, food needs, and other needs that have been met by parents at home. This is what causes the role of the principal in Islamic boarding schools to be more challenging than in public schools. The success of the principal at an Islamic boarding school is not only reflected in the academic success of students. However, this is also reflected in the students who feel at home 24 hours a day in the cottage environment.

2.3 Parental Involvement Framework

There are six parental involvement frameworks, according to [10]. The first model is parenting. This model suggests that parents hold a significant role in making sure that their students are

ready at school mentally and physically. The second model is communication. Communication means that home and school establish effective communication both in-person and online. This includes school visits, annual reports for parents, and regular bulletins sent to parents. The third model is volunteering. Volunteering, in this case, is defined as active roles given to parents from school, including formal and informal activities. Parents may come to school to help with the extracurricular activities or even help the school in the hallway to observe the students. The fourth model is learning at home. Learning at home is defined as parents' activities at home to ensure their students are doing their schoolwork. This may include helping children do homework/projects and providing students with the resources they need. The fifth model is decision-making. Decision-making is an effort by the school to include parents when it comes to school policymaking. The school needs to make sure that no single parents are left to create new policies or decisions. The last model is collaborating with the Community. The school needs to make sure that parents could engage in community service or community partnership. Parents may also be the school representatives when it comes to building partnerships with the Community.

These six parental involvement frameworks can guide teachers, school principals, parents, and students to collaborate effectively between home and school to improve student outcomes. This framework has also been adopted widely by schools and other institutions in the USA and some countries in Europe.

2.4 School Leadership and Parental Involvement

Parental involvement is part of the community partnership, which practitioners and researchers are being promoted so far. All efforts that are intentionally created to enhance such a strong partnership between school and Community are called school-community partnerships [1].

2.4.1 Instructional Leadership

The primary role of a principal is as an instructional leader. [1] asserted, "The principal is responsible for the improvement of instructional practices, that is, using a research-based methodology to enhance the learning for diverse learners in the classroom." (pp. 44). Further, [13] asserted that instructional leadership significantly improves students' success. [14] conducted a study on 800 teachers and found that there are two emerging themes in instructional leadership: (1) active discussion on topics promoting reflection and teaching; (2) actions that promote professional growth.

2.4.2 Community Leadership

Since principals are expected to be aware of what the community expects from the school, it is impossible to isolate the role of the principal from the community's environment. To foster a supportive learning environment, the principal must be able to cultivate relationships with parents, stakeholders, the state and federal governments, as well as faculty, staff, and students. The school community can be greatly impacted by the principal's excellent community leadership, which in turn can greatly impact students' achievement. Principals are, therefore, urged to become influential community members and participate actively in events there.

One of the key positions in the global era is community leader [1]. According to [2], a community is made up of the connections, institutions, and structures that exist inside the spaces

of its members. "Communities," according to [2] are those that can be found in our daily lives such as markets, churches, schools, parks, malls, and other public places. Furthermore, based on multiple research, [2] claimed that school leadership may enhance neighborhood communities, contribute to community partnerships, and ultimately improve kids' lives.

2.4.3 Bureaucratic Leadership

As a bureaucratic leader, a school principal needs to be accountable and create an effective and efficient system to improve the school's quality. [1] argued that a school principal needs to have a 'clearly defined base of power and responsibility as a bureaucratic leader.' (p. 39). Further, [1] stressed that successful leaders are accountable for dealing with all administration, students, teachers, parents, and staff.

There has been debate on whether bureaucratic leadership plays a significant role in leading an effective school. [15] argued that there are two conceptions of bureaucratic leadership: (1) the concept of bureaucracy recognizes the importance of power in both organizations and leadership. Indeed, its foundation productively is to mold power while keeping it under ethical control. (2) bureaucratic analyses have evolved to include a nuanced knowledge of power flows, and power plays that differ significantly from common concepts of rigorous managerial control and hyper-standardization. Further, [15] concludes that instead of a hard formula that prevents thought, the ideal type of bureaucracy is a heuristic that stimulates reflection.

Eventually, these three leadership roles may be used by schools to increase parental involvement. When dealing with the Community and communication, school leaders may approve of home and Community through the lens of community leaders. When it comes to decision-making, the school principal may use the lens of a bureaucratic leader. Finally, the school principal may use the lens of instructional leadership when dealing with learning at home, parenting, and volunteering.

These three basic leadership roles effectively foster parental involvement in traditional schools. However, whether these three leadership models help engage parents in school events or programs in Islamic boarding school settings is debatable. As a result, this study aims to find out what kind of school leadership models are employed to encourage parental involvement in an Islamic boarding school.

3 Methods

This study is aimed to answer one main research question: using the parental involvement framework by [10], how do school leaders see parental involvement practice at an Islamic Boarding School in Indonesia? Since we took the case at one of the Islamic boarding schools, a qualitative case study [3] was appropriate for the study's design. The choice of this design is that since we would study a specific phenomenon, there is a lot of different evidence or sources of data [16].

3.1 Participants

This study was conducted at an Islamic Boarding School called Nurul Boarding School (NBS, pseudonym). The school uses both national and Islamic-based curriculum. NBS is a high-

performing boarding school in the area. The school serves the community from kindergarten to high school. For the high school level, NBS also provides vocational schools for students. The students who reside at schools are at the middle and high school levels. The kindergarten and elementary school students live with their families.

We used semi-structured interviews to have semi-formal discussions in this study but still kept conversations on track. According to [17], semi-structured interviews use loose structure and open-ended questions to define the area to be explored. We interviewed the school administrative leaders: Mr. Bahar, who is the owner of the school; Mrs. Bahar Mr. Bahar's wife, who is also considered the owner and the founder of the school; Mr. Suyat, the Senior High School's principal; and Mr. Hendra, the vocational high school principal.

3.1.1 Data collection and analysis

Data were collected through observation and face-to-face interviews. Before the data collection, we sought permission from the school principal by sending a permission letter and approaching him personally. The school principal also helped us to identify the participants to be observed and interviewed. To ensure the research ethical, we informed the participants about the purposes of the study, and their participation was voluntary. We started with the interview by using an interview guide based on Epstein's parental involvement model. We spent around an hour interviewing one participant, and it was digitally recorded. We immersed ourselves in the field's school activities for over six months. Field notes were utilized in order to record what I saw, heard, and felt. We observed both formal and informal activities at schools.

The observation was conducted to the parents and teachers in a natural setting to describe natural phenomena [18]. To observe the activities of the teachers and parents, we wrote them down in journals and reflective memos. We spent around one to three hours doing observation.

We analyzed the data from interviews and observations using this research's framework. In this step, the interview and observation were transcribed and coded before being further analyzed using Epstein's parental involvement as it presented the framework of the study [16]. Member checks were also used for the validity and reliability of the data [19].

4 Findings

The notion of involving parents is undoubtedly deemed essential for students' success. However, there are still discussions on whether or not the partnership work will home-school partnership work, leading the parents to engage in school programs and activities [1]. This study uses the parental involvement framework to explore which school principals' role might be used in promoting parental involvement.

4.1 Parenting

From the perspective of school leaders, the form of parenting includes parents' visits to school and parents' contribution in giving additional nutritious meals to their children. Mr. Hendra, the vocational school principal, contended that parents are engaged in helping schools with students' behavior. He praised parents for trusting the school in dealing with students' misconduct. Mr.

Hendra stated, "Also, when we invite parents for students' behavior, parents will come 100 percent. Parents mostly trust the school in dealing with students' behavior."

Further, the school also enforces strict policies. When students have violated severe school rules, the school sends them back to their parents until both parties agree on certain days. Behavioral issues have become one of the school's concerns because one of the characteristics of Islamic boarding schools is that they provide good moral education rooted in Islamic teachings.

Similarly, Mrs. Bahar, one of the school founders and leaders, argued, "We occasionally send students home if they disobey significant rules that are posted in the school. Only during the school's final exams may they return. After the school exams, the students must stay at home the rest of the day."

Further, Mrs. Bahar stressed that the school holds parenting seminars annually. Mrs. Bahar argued that the school always invites parents to have a one-day conference facilitated by one of the school's *ustaz* (male teacher) or *ustazah* (female teacher). The school holds a meeting a day before they may pick up their children for home. Mrs. Bahar said:

... when the students are about to leave school for the holidays, we always debrief them the night before. The male students are with *Abi* (Mr. Bahar, the boarding school owner), and the female students are with me. We encourage them that they can't do anything when they are at home. They need to help their parents. They can't sleep at home all the time. They can't be lazy at home. They need to ask or lead their brothers and sisters to recite the Quran. They need to apply what they have learned from school to their brothers and sisters, even if needed, to their parents at home.

When the school gathers parents in a student's parent meeting, they sometimes invite speakers from outside the school. This is because they want to ensure that when the students return from school holidays, they are ready to start the academic and non-academic activities in the building. The school principal also always ensures that the teachers are connected with the parents through the WhatsApp application to assist with all parenting information if needed.

4.2 Communicating

As one of the administrator leaders, Mrs. Bahar proactively engages parents at schools. She wants every member of the school to reach out in all situations. She stated:

"For me, yes! I even gave my phone number to all the parents. I, therefore, typically act as a mediator if we discover a problem at school. Alternatively, I usually assign it to another instructor to help children with their issues while I am not around."

Similarly, Mr. Bahar, the school owner and founder, mentioned that The community event, which is held in the parents' neighborhood, has demonstrated the school's dedication to communicating with parents even though it does not personally visit each parent's home. He noted,

"Additionally, a community event took place in the students' original district. Thus, rather than "literally" going door to door, we paid them a visit to their communities. Thus, we join the local community to meet parents in a group."

Similarly, Mr. Hendra also delighted in their casual conversations, which he had with the student's parents regularly. Some parents frequently showed up in the community at wedding receptions. Mr. Hendra states, "Parents of our students are occasionally encountered in public settings, and we frequently converse casually. Every parent has to ask how their child is doing. Did they act appropriately in class? We frequently meet parents at the community gatherings."

In addition, the school tried to reach out to the parents by informing them of the student's academic progress. Mrs. Bahar said, "So we want to make sure that we are accountable to our students' parents. We inform their academic progress to them. Mr. Suyat, the high school principal, also mentioned that he regularly contacted the parents to provide up-to-date information regarding the school's success and achievement. He added that the school also utilizes social media such as Facebook to make it easier for parents to communicate or have real-time information about the school's activities and programs."

4.3 Volunteering

Volunteering is also observed in the school effort to engage parents. Mr. Suyat thinks that parents will feel appreciated if they participate in voluntary work:

We communicate well with the parents of our students. In addition to including parents in our activities, we also teach our children how to plan events. In the end, a school event is organized by parents, students, and instructors working together. By doing this, we will be able to instill a sense of responsibility in both parents and children. When we trust students to take responsibility for their actions, they will feel appreciated by the school.

Mr. Hendra highlighted the other form of volunteering that parents can participate in. Mr. Hendra stated that mostly the school never catered or reserved a hotel for a big event held in the school. He stated that the parents and Community actively helped; the male parents aided with setting up the tents for a big gathering and managing the visitor parking, while the female parents helped prepare the refreshments for the invited participants.

4.4 Learning at home

The school has an active effort to make sure that parents also participate in their children's education while at home. Mr.

Bahar stated, "We do not want the school holidays to ruin our students' discipline while on the school break. The parents need to maintain the school rhythm at school. Hence, the students are not far left with their academic and Qur'anic memorization." Similarly, Mrs. Bahar mentioned in the interview, "At schools, we are the teachers. Still, when the students are at home, their parents are their teachers."

Likewise, academic resources need to be also available when the students are at home. "When it is possible, the parents need to provide internet access to the students so they can use it for learning. Otherwise, some books are also good options for the parents to provide, so their children are learning, rather than playing online gaming," said Mr. Suyat in the interview.

Likewise, Mr. Hendra suggested to parents, "if possible, parents can help with the homework or project. Or if they are not capable, at least they can just be the listener when their students recite the Quran."

4.5 Decision Making

We could not find any evidence of parents' participation in decision-making. The distance of the parents seems to be one factor that hinders parents from participating in school decision-making. Mr. Bahar said, "We do not want our parents to come from far away to attend our meeting. But we always survey parents before I make a school policy or decision." In addition, Mr. Hendra stated, "It is difficult to invite parents who do not reside near the school environment. So far, our parents never complained about any decisions we made."

The school did not invite parents to the school decision-making process, the school also has not established the school committee (the parents' organization). Mr. Suyat said, "No, we do not have the school committee yet." Like other public or private schools, Mr. Suyat did not mention why the school committee is yet to be founded.

4.6 Collaborating with Community

Collaborating with the Community is one program that creates a magnet for society. Mr. Suyat said he proposed an activity to the school owner and approved it. So, initially, the program was designed to give extra-religious education to the people who live in rural areas. The program, however, has now expanded to all community development programs and activities. Similarly, the community development program is now similar to the program run by the universities or colleges in Indonesia.

The Community welcomes the program positively. Mr. Bahar stated, "Many villagers complained about the short duration the school gave to the community. I said, "They are high school students, they have limited time at school; otherwise, they could not graduate" But we are happy, and it means that the society accepts our students, and they love our programs." Finally, Mr. Suyat stated that he could not be any prouder of the program as a school leader has now become one of the school's identities.

5 Discussion

School principals have a significant role in achieving their school's goals. Spillane et al. (2004) wrote that it is generally acknowledged that there are good leaders when there are good schools. Competent principals can create a strong vision, mission, and goals for a school. However, if a principal does not have the competency, then the school's vision, mission, and goals will be challenging to achieve.

In K-12 settings, the school principal has at least three prominent roles: instructional, administrative, and community. Using these three roles in combination with the parental involvement models developed by [10], the school principal could engage parents in a better way. The myriad studies on parental involvement and school leadership were so far conducted at conventional schools where the students reside with parents. It would be a different context, where schools teach students while they live at school at the same time. This means that the role of parents in assisting schools was minimal. However, based on the interview and observations we conducted, the school was able to engage parents differently in order to maximize parental involvement,

The first role is that of a school principal as an instructional leader. Parenting and learning at home are two models that correspond to the function of the headmaster in engaging parents from the lens of instructional leaders. The role of instructional leader is not necessarily associated with the school principal only. Teachers, in collaboration with school principals, can also play a role in including parents. In this case, teachers should be on the front lines in having parents as instructional leaders.

This is what our observations and interviews at this Islamic boarding school revealed. In terms of student preparation at school, the principal guides what teachers may do to involve parents at school. When there are learning issues, such as infractions of school rules, the school will consult with parents to ensure pupils do not repeat their mistakes. If it is not resolved within a particular time frame, the student will be temporarily returned to his parents.

In addition to behavioral concerns, schools ensure pupils arrive prepared at school. The school principal accomplishes this by assembling parents before their child's holiday pick-up. The school's principal will talk about what parents can do and offer advice on how to help them prepare everything they need for school when they return. When their children are at home, parents are expected to take a proactive role in ensuring their students are mentally and psychologically ready for school. It is also recommended that parents keep their kids healthy throughout the holidays by feeding them well. For children to be physically and mentally prepared for their return to school.

Lastly, the school also provides parenting counseling to parents when taking advantage of moments to pick up children during school holidays and during workshops that are regularly held at school. With parenting workshops, schools can ensure that parents can work together to raise children. This is also intended so that children do not violate any school rules, as well as so that children can be more successful in their achievements.

The bureaucratic leader role is the second function a school principal might use to enhance parent involvement in education. This study challenges the prevailing narrative on the school principal's role in Indonesia, focusing solely on bureaucratic functions, which is one of the study's highlights. According to previous surveys, most parents' roles in Indonesian schools are confined to paying the school tuition or fundraising for the school [10]. While the NBS involved parents in generating school finances, the current study discovered that the school also extends beyond this administrative role through its school leaders. Another aspect of the NBS that other schools should emulate is the schools' positive communication with parents. Every two weeks, the school welcomes parents to visit, gives guidance books for kids and parents, provides a phone number for students and parents to speak to, and even welcomes parents to call or text the school owners and teachers in person. Furthermore, due to the communal tradition of the Community surrounding the schools, teachers and parents frequently meet informally at wedding parties. At wedding celebrations, parents and teachers typically discuss their students' success, according to Mr. Han.

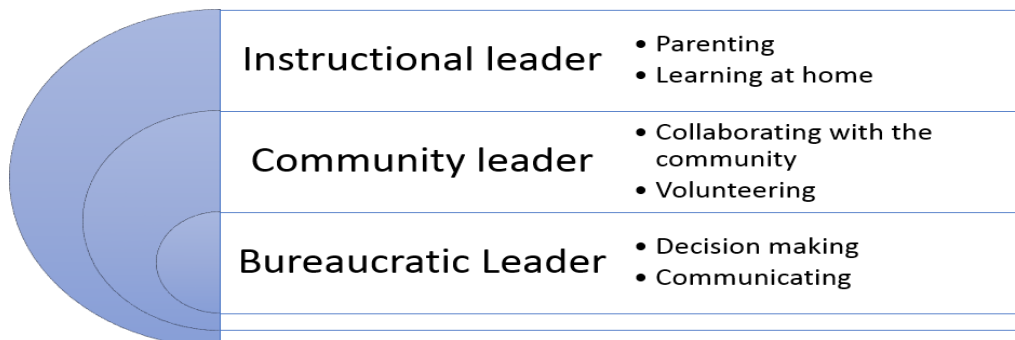


Fig. 1. School Leadership and Parental Involvement.

The third school principal's role is that of community leader. The NBS applied a motto that attracted a sense of belonging to the parents. The school always informs parents that the school does not belong to a person or a group of persons. Instead, the school belongs to the Community. This is a powerful phrase with significant consequences for parents and the Community. The school leaders at NBS place a high value on parents and the Community, as evidenced by our observations and interviews, and parents place a high value on the school.

The principal of this Islamic boarding school initiated a community service program similar to community service programs, which are commonly held in universities in Indonesia. Even though the highest level of this school is high school, this school tries to adopt a real work college program. If campus programs often target activities and work programs that support local government programs, this Islamic boarding school's work program adds a religious work program. For example, they educate the public and youth on holding funeral prayers. They also provide training to young people about leading *Yasin* and *Tahlil* for Friday sermons, for the call to prayer, and other training related to daily religious activities. The program was very successful, and many Communities asked students to stay after the program had finished.

Furthermore, the community around the school has inherited the spirit of cooperation known as *gotong royong*, which enhances the school-community partnership. The programs that engage parents initiated by the school inspired a community to work collaboratively. As a result, the nature of collaboration also motivated the community to volunteer for schools' activities and programs. Parents voluntarily help the schools prepare the meeting spot, parking area, and catering.

Conclusion

School principals need to have expertise in at least three areas: instructional leadership, community leadership, and administrator/bureaucratic leadership. They need to make sure that all individuals in the building are learners, including the administrators, the teachers, and the students. As an instructional leader, the school principal must focus on improving teaching and learning [20]. The shift from teaching to learning in today's context has changed the role of the principal from an "instructional leader" to a "learner leader" [20]. In addition to being a learner leader, the school principal needs to play a role in the Community. They should develop

relationships internally with faculty, staff, and students and externally with parents, superintendents, stakeholders, and local governments to create a positive school climate/culture. Lastly, School principals also need to lead the office to a high standard of transparency and accountability. This is what we call a bureaucratic leader. Epstein has applied these three forms of leadership to promote five out of six parental involvement models in NBS boarding schools.

The Islamic boarding schools in this study have proven that even though parents live far away from their children, they can still engage parents in school activities/programs. The involvement of parents in school activities resulted in an active leadership role. Almost all programs that engage parents are launched by school principals, who empower teachers and all school members to actively promote parental involvement. These practices were successfully held in an Islamic boarding school context. Further studies are needed to examine parental involvement and school leadership in other boarding school settings.

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