

Qudwatuna-Based Leadership: A Strategic Model for Enhancing Educational Quality in Islamic Schools

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ABSTRACT. *This article explores the potential of Qudwatuna-based leadership (Prophetic Leadership by Example) as a transformative model for educational quality development in Islamic schools. Drawing upon classical Islamic teachings, leadership theories, and modern educational quality frameworks, this article offers a conceptual synthesis of how Qudwah (exemplary leadership) can drive institutional improvement. Using qualitative analysis and literature review methodology, this study identifies core values such as integrity, trustworthiness, vision, compassion, and accountability as pillars of Qudwatuna leadership. The findings highlight the relevance of Qudwatuna in promoting a holistic quality culture, improving stakeholder trust, and nurturing a student-centered learning environment rooted in Islamic values.*

Keywords: *Qudwatuna, Prophetic Leadership, Educational Quality, Islamic Schools, Strategic Leadership*

Artikel ini mengeksplorasi potensi kepemimpinan berbasis Qudwatuna (Kepemimpinan Nabi sebagai Teladan) sebagai model transformatif untuk pengembangan kualitas pendidikan di sekolah-sekolah Islam. Dengan mengacu pada ajaran Islam klasik, teori kepemimpinan, dan kerangka kerja kualitas pendidikan modern, artikel ini menawarkan sintesis konseptual tentang bagaimana Qudwah (kepemimpinan teladan) dapat mendorong perbaikan institusional. Menggunakan analisis kualitatif dan metodologi tinjauan literatur, studi ini mengidentifikasi nilai-nilai inti seperti integritas, kejujuran, visi, kasih sayang, dan pertanggungjawaban sebagai pilar kepemimpinan Qudwatuna. Temuan-temuan ini menyoroti relevansi Qudwatuna dalam mempromosikan budaya kualitas yang holistik, meningkatkan kepercayaan pemangku kepentingan, dan menumbuhkan lingkungan belajar yang berpusat pada siswa yang berakar pada nilai-nilai Islam.

Kata kunci : Qudwatuna, Kepemimpinan Nabi, Kualitas Pendidikan, Sekolah Islam, Kepemimpinan Strategis

INTRODUCTION

The quality of education in many Islamic schools across the Muslim world faces critical challenges. These include outdated pedagogical approaches, insufficient teacher training, weak institutional governance, and limited alignment with global educational standards. Despite significant investment and reform efforts, the outcomes in terms of student achievement, moral development, and institutional excellence remain below

expectations in many contexts. This crisis calls for a reassessment of the leadership paradigms that guide these institutions.

In particular, there is a growing awareness of the need for leadership models that are not only effective in achieving quality outcomes but also resonate with the cultural and religious values of the Islamic community. Western-based leadership theories, while widely adopted, often lack the spiritual and ethical depth required for Islamic education. Therefore, a leadership model rooted in Islamic values and traditions is essential to ensure that educational development is both contextually relevant and spiritually enriching (Galloway et al., 2013).

One such model is "Qudwatuna," derived from the Arabic word "qudwah" meaning exemplar or role model. The term "Qudwatuna" (Our Role Model) specifically refers to the Prophet Muhammad SAW, whose life exemplifies the highest standards of integrity, compassion, wisdom, and accountability. As a leader, the Prophet SAW demonstrated a unique ability to inspire, guide, and transform individuals and communities through his exemplary character. His leadership offers timeless principles that can be adapted into a strategic framework for modern Islamic educational institutions (Romlah et al., 2025).

This study seeks to explore how Qudwatuna-based leadership can serve as a strategic model for improving educational quality in Islamic schools. The core research questions are:

- What are the foundational values and practices of Qudwatuna-based leadership?
- How can these values be operationalized in the management and development of Islamic schools?
- In what ways can Qudwatuna leadership contribute to the enhancement of educational quality?

The objective of this article is to develop a conceptual framework of Qudwatuna leadership and demonstrate its relevance and applicability in the context of contemporary Islamic education. Through this exploration, the study aims to contribute to the discourse on faith-based educational leadership and provide actionable insights for school leaders, policymakers, and researchers.

METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative research approach, employing conceptual analysis and literature review as its primary methods. The aim is to construct a theoretical framework that integrates Qudwatuna-based leadership with contemporary principles of educational quality improvement, particularly in the context of Islamic schools.

The conceptual analysis method is used to examine the foundational principles of prophetic leadership, especially as manifested in the personality

and practices of the Prophet Muhammad SAW. The literature review encompasses classical Islamic sources—including the Qur'an, Hadith, and works of classical scholars on leadership ethics—as well as contemporary academic literature on educational leadership, strategic management, and school quality.

The sources reviewed include peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly books, institutional reports, and case studies relevant to both Islamic education and leadership studies. Key search terms include “Islamic leadership,” “Qudwah Hasanah,” “Prophetic leadership,” “strategic school leadership,” and “educational quality.” Databases such as JSTOR, Scopus, Google Scholar, and Islamic online repositories were utilized.

The study also utilizes thematic coding to identify recurring values, leadership traits, and strategic practices that align with both Qudwatuna principles and recognized quality standards in education. These themes are then synthesized into a conceptual framework presented in the next section of the article.

This methodology is appropriate given the exploratory and integrative nature of the study. Rather than measuring variables quantitatively, the goal is to offer a well-grounded conceptual contribution that can inform future empirical research, policy development, and leadership training in Islamic educational settings.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Leadership and Educational Quality: Global and Islamic Perspectives.

Leadership plays a critical role in shaping the direction, ethos, and outcomes of educational institutions. Globally, numerous studies have demonstrated the strong correlation between leadership effectiveness and school performance (Umam & Nadir, 2025). Effective leadership is often characterized by a clear vision, collaborative culture, data-driven decision-making, and commitment to continuous improvement. Models such as transformational leadership and instructional leadership have been widely promoted to enhance school quality.

In the context of Islamic education, leadership assumes an even more holistic dimension. Beyond academic excellence, Islamic educational institutions are entrusted with the moral and spiritual formation of students. Thus, educational leadership in this context must integrate both administrative competence and spiritual integrity. According to (Of et al., 2025), the purpose of Islamic education is to produce balanced individuals who embody *adab*—proper behavior rooted in knowledge, wisdom, and faith.

Unfortunately, many Islamic schools struggle to internalize such holistic leadership models. Institutional goals are often fragmented, leadership training inadequate, and administrative practices heavily bureaucratized. Moreover, the reliance on Western educational models often leads to cultural dissonance and loss of spiritual authenticity. This situation highlights the

need for leadership paradigms that are deeply rooted in Islamic principles while still responsive to contemporary educational challenges (Khidayat Muslim et al., 2024).

The integration of Islamic leadership ethics with quality assurance frameworks represents a promising solution. As argued by (Aldhaheeri & Ahmad, 2024), Islamic leadership is value-driven, with emphasis on *shura* (consultation), justice, accountability, and service. These values resonate with key principles of effective educational leadership and offer a compelling foundation for school improvement strategies.

2. Qudwah Hasanah: The Prophetic Leadership Model in Islamic Thought

The concept of *Qudwah Hasanah* (the beautiful example) is deeply embedded in Islamic leadership discourse, with its roots in the Qur'anic description of the Prophet Muhammad SAW as the ultimate role model: "Indeed in the Messenger of Allah you have a good example to follow for him who hopes in (the Meeting with) Allah and the Last Day, and remembers Allah much" (Qur'an, 33:21). This verse positions the Prophet not merely as a religious figure but as a comprehensive leader whose conduct is worthy of emulation in all spheres of life, including education.

Prophetic leadership, as exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad SAW, encompasses a balance between spiritual devotion, moral integrity, administrative capability, and visionary direction. His leadership was characterized by attributes such as *sidq* (truthfulness), *amanah* (trustworthiness), *tabligh* (effective communication), and *fathanah* (wisdom). These characteristics form the core ethical and strategic dimensions of Qudwatuna-based leadership (Juhji et al., 2025).

From an educational standpoint, the Prophet SAW functioned as a teacher, mentor, guide, and reformer. He cultivated a learning environment based on respect, inquiry, compassion, and justice. He empowered his companions through personal example and interactive dialogue rather than authoritarian imposition. His emphasis on learning as a lifelong obligation (*talab al-'ilm faridhatun 'ala kulli Muslim*) laid the foundation for a knowledge-based civilization.

Qudwah Hasanah, therefore, offers a paradigm of leadership that is intrinsically tied to the mission of education: the transformation of individuals and communities through character development, intellectual growth, and spiritual enlightenment. Contemporary Islamic schools can draw on this model to inspire leadership practices that prioritize ethical consistency, student-centeredness, and communal responsibility.

Despite its profound relevance, the Qudwah Hasanah model has often been underutilized or superficially applied in modern Islamic education. This underscores the need for a structured and strategic framework that translates prophetic values into actionable leadership practices suitable for today's institutional contexts.

3. Strategic Educational Leadership in Faith-Based Institutions

Strategic educational leadership refers to the deliberate and future-oriented efforts by school leaders to shape institutional direction, implement improvement plans, and create sustainable change in educational environments. In the context of faith-based institutions—particularly Islamic schools—this leadership must integrate both managerial effectiveness and faith-driven values to ensure holistic development.

Effective strategic leadership in Islamic schools requires balancing between academic excellence, moral development, and institutional sustainability. Unlike secular models that prioritize output and performance metrics, faith-based schools emphasize not only measurable achievement but also the cultivation of values, spiritual awareness, and community cohesion. Thus, the strategic vision of leadership must be aligned with the broader mission of Islamic education: to produce individuals of character, knowledge, and service to humanity (*khalifah fil ardh*).

Research by (Salim et al., 2024) highlights several core practices of strategic leaders: setting directions, developing people, redesigning the organization, and managing the instructional program. These principles are compatible with Islamic educational leadership, especially when contextualized within prophetic traditions. For instance, the Prophet SAW set clear directions for his followers through consultation (*shura*) and wisdom, developed his companions through mentoring and modeling, and established a community based on justice, inclusion, and ethical standards.

Moreover, strategic leadership in faith-based institutions must address contemporary challenges such as globalization, technological disruption, identity preservation, and quality assurance. Islamic school leaders are expected to navigate these complexities while preserving their religious ethos and mission integrity. They must also build trust among stakeholders, foster teacher professionalism, and ensure that the learning environment reflects Islamic values in both content and character.

Qudwatuna leadership offers a compelling framework for this endeavor. It combines strategic foresight with spiritual grounding, encouraging leaders to act not merely as administrators, but as moral guides and institutional reformers. By emulating the Prophet's leadership style, educational leaders can design strategies that are contextually relevant, ethically consistent, and educationally transformative (Romlah et al., 2025).

4. The Gap: Lack of Integration Between Islamic Leadership Models and Modern Quality Frameworks

Despite the richness of Islamic leadership traditions and the comprehensive guidance offered by the prophetic model, there remains a significant disconnect between these values and the practical frameworks employed in modern educational quality development. Many Islamic schools continue to rely heavily on Western-derived quality assurance systems—such as Total Quality Management (TQM), ISO standards, or performance-based accountability—without critically contextualizing them within Islamic epistemology or leadership ethics (Butarbutar & Nasution, 2024).

This disconnect creates a gap in implementation and identity. While the technical aspects of quality—such as efficiency, standardization, and benchmarking—are emphasized, the spiritual and moral foundations of

leadership are often neglected. As a result, school leaders may fulfill compliance requirements without cultivating a genuine culture of excellence rooted in Islamic values.

The absence of integration also stems from a lack of robust models that translate Islamic leadership principles into measurable and strategic actions within schools. Few empirical studies and frameworks exist that demonstrate how prophetic values can be operationalized to meet contemporary educational quality benchmarks. This has led to a fragmented approach, where religious values are limited to rituals and symbolic activities, while the leadership practices remain managerial and procedural.

Moreover, the training and professional development of Islamic school leaders rarely includes modules on prophetic leadership or Islamic organizational ethics. Leadership preparation programs tend to prioritize administrative competencies over spiritual leadership, leaving principals and administrators without the necessary tools to internalize and apply Qudwatuna principles in their day-to-day decision-making (Warisno & Hidayah, 2022).

Bridging this gap requires an intentional effort to synthesize the spiritual depth of Islamic leadership with the rigor of modern quality frameworks. By developing models that reflect both the prophetic ethos and contemporary quality standards, Islamic schools can foster leadership that is not only efficient and effective but also ethical, visionary, and transformative.

Conceptual Framework of Qudwatuna Leadership

This section outlines the conceptual framework of Qudwatuna-based leadership by identifying its core values, strategic dimensions, and operational application in Islamic school settings. It aims to translate the moral and ethical excellence of prophetic leadership into actionable principles that support educational quality improvement.

Core Values of Qudwatuna Leadership:

At the heart of Qudwatuna leadership are four principal values demonstrated consistently by the Prophet Muhammad SAW:

Siddiq (Truthfulness): Honesty and integrity are fundamental to trustworthy leadership. In the educational context, this value promotes transparency in governance, sincerity in relationships, and ethical communication with stakeholders.

Amanah (Trust): The responsibility entrusted to school leaders is both professional and moral. Amanah calls for stewardship that safeguards student welfare, faculty professionalism, and institutional vision.

Tabligh (Communication): Effective and compassionate communication is central to building trust and unity. Leaders must be articulate, motivational, and empathetic in their engagement with the school community.

Fathanah (Wisdom): Strategic thinking and wise judgment are essential for navigating complex educational challenges. This value supports data-informed decision-making and innovative problem-solving.

These four values form the ethical foundation of Qudwatuna leadership and guide leaders in aligning their intentions, actions, and policies with prophetic teachings.

Strategic Dimensions:

Beyond personal character, Qudwatuna leadership emphasizes institutional strategy. Three strategic dimensions emerge from the prophetic model:

Visionary Thinking: The Prophet SAW demonstrated a forward-looking perspective, building sustainable systems and nurturing long-term transformation. Islamic school leaders must craft a clear vision that integrates academic excellence, spiritual development, and social responsibility.

Collaborative Governance: The practice of *shura* (consultation) reflects a participatory leadership style. In schools, this translates to inclusive decision-making, distributed leadership, and staff empowerment.

Moral Authority: Unlike hierarchical or coercive leadership, Qudwatuna leadership derives legitimacy from personal integrity and ethical consistency. This authority inspires respect, loyalty, and intrinsic motivation among school members.

Operationalization in School Contexts:

The final layer of the framework concerns practical implementation:

Curriculum Integration: Embedding prophetic values into curricular content, pedagogy, and assessment to foster character-based education.

Teacher Behavior: Encouraging teachers to serve as role models (*uswah hasanah*) who embody the principles of Qudwatuna in daily interactions.

Stakeholder Engagement: Cultivating trustful relationships with parents, community members, and educational authorities by demonstrating ethical leadership and shared purpose.

By integrating these dimensions, Qudwatuna-based leadership becomes a comprehensive model that supports institutional quality while preserving the Islamic educational identity.

Qudwatuna Leadership and Educational Quality Development

Qudwatuna leadership, when effectively practiced, serves as a strategic driver for enhancing educational quality in Islamic schools. Its integration into institutional life offers transformative benefits across several critical dimensions of school effectiveness.

Enhancing Institutional Integrity and Accountability

One of the hallmarks of Qudwatuna leadership is its emphasis on trust (*amanah*) and truthfulness (*siddiq*). These values promote a culture of institutional integrity where leaders uphold transparency in financial management, fairness in student evaluation, and ethical conduct in staff relationships. Schools led by Qudwatuna-oriented leaders are more likely to establish systems of internal accountability, moral auditing, and consistent adherence to Islamic ethical codes.

Promoting Holistic Student Development

Educational quality extends beyond academic performance to include moral, emotional, and spiritual growth. Qudwatuna leadership supports a vision of holistic education by fostering environments where students are nurtured to become not only knowledgeable individuals but also righteous, responsible members of society. By embedding prophetic values into

curriculum, pedagogy, and school culture, leaders help develop students' character, sense of purpose, and resilience.

Building Stakeholder Trust and Motivation

Leadership rooted in Qudwah Hasanah strengthens relationships among stakeholders—teachers, parents, students, and the wider community. Ethical leadership behavior builds credibility and trust, which are vital for cooperation and support. Through consistent communication (tabligh) and inclusive decision-making (shura), Qudwatuna leaders foster a shared sense of mission, motivating teachers and engaging parents as active partners in the educational process.

Creating a Quality Culture Rooted in Spiritual and Moral Values

True quality in education is sustained through a shared culture of excellence. Qudwatuna leadership establishes this by modeling high moral standards, promoting collective reflection, and inspiring continuous improvement anchored in Islamic values. Such a culture encourages innovation balanced with tradition, discipline enriched with compassion, and achievement guided by divine accountability.

In sum, Qudwatuna leadership provides a coherent and contextually grounded model for elevating educational quality in Islamic schools. It aligns leadership behavior with prophetic ethics, operational strategy with institutional vision, and quality assurance with moral purpose.

Discussion

The findings of this conceptual study demonstrate that Qudwatuna-based leadership aligns closely with both Islamic ethical traditions and contemporary educational leadership theories. While models such as transformational leadership emphasize charisma, inspiration, and vision (Bush & Glover, 2014), Qudwatuna leadership enriches these dimensions by embedding them within a moral and spiritual framework derived from the life of the Prophet Muhammad SAW. This moral grounding provides not only a source of personal integrity but also a compass for institutional decision-making (Anas, 2024).

Compared to servant leadership, which focuses on humility, service to others, and community empowerment (Morrison, 2000), Qudwatuna leadership incorporates these values but enhances them with prophetic intentionality and religious accountability. The Prophet's role as a servant-leader (*Sayyid al-qawm khadimuhum* – "The leader of the people is their servant") exemplifies this integration, making Qudwatuna a powerful alternative that resonates deeply with the ethos of Islamic education.

The cultural and contextual relevance of Qudwatuna leadership is particularly significant in Muslim-majority societies or Islamic schools, where educational models must reflect the values and expectations of the community. Implementing Qudwatuna leadership fosters not only academic excellence but also moral cohesion, trust, and long-term institutional sustainability. It responds to the growing demand for leadership that is spiritually conscious, ethically consistent, and educationally effective.

Nonetheless, operationalizing Qudwatuna leadership presents several challenges. There is a need for more structured professional development programs that translate prophetic values into practical leadership

competencies. Existing administrative training often lacks emphasis on ethical and prophetic dimensions. Additionally, empirical research is limited, and further studies are required to measure the actual impact of Qudwatuna leadership on school performance, teacher motivation, and student outcomes.

Despite these limitations, this conceptual framework serves as a foundational step toward a more integrated leadership paradigm in Islamic education. It invites further scholarly dialogue, contextual adaptation, and empirical validation.

CONCLUSION

This study has proposed a conceptual framework for Qudwatuna-based leadership as a culturally grounded and spiritually anchored model for enhancing educational quality in Islamic schools. Drawing upon the prophetic values of siddiq, amanah, tabligh, and fathanah, as well as strategic leadership dimensions such as visionary thinking and collaborative governance, Qudwatuna leadership offers a holistic alternative to conventional models.

The analysis shows that Qudwatuna leadership is not only compatible with contemporary educational leadership theories but also enriches them with ethical depth and contextual relevance. It supports institutional integrity, promotes holistic student development, and fosters a values-based culture of quality and trust.

Recommendations

1. **Leadership Training and Professional Development.** Islamic educational institutions and teacher training colleges should integrate Qudwatuna leadership principles into their curricula to develop morally grounded and strategically competent leaders.
2. **Policy Integration.** Educational policymakers in Muslim contexts should consider adopting Qudwatuna leadership frameworks as part of national quality assurance and school improvement initiatives.
3. **Curriculum and School Culture Reform.** Schools should embed prophetic values across curricular content, teacher conduct, and school ethos to ensure alignment between institutional vision and everyday practice.
4. **Empirical Research Agenda.** Scholars are encouraged to conduct field-based research that tests the practical applicability of Qudwatuna leadership and its impact on student learning, teacher performance, and community engagement.
5. By embracing Qudwatuna as both a moral compass and a strategic framework, Islamic schools can chart a path toward educational excellence that is not only effective but also faithful to their spiritual and cultural heritage.

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