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Islamic elementary school quality improvement in capital theory perspective

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Article Info

ABSTRACT

Improving the quality of Islamic schools in the midst of advances in industrial technology 4.0 is an obligation in education world. This research aimed to explore comprehensive information in order to describe the trends and Islamic elementary schools' strategies in making changes through capital theory approach for quality improvement in a new perspective in the globalization era. The capital theories aspects are: intellectual, social, spiritual, and financial as an analytical framework to find out how schools are transformed. Three Islamic elementary schools with type of A, B and C criteria have been involved. A qualitative approach has been used and the findings are described according to Milles and Haberman's clausal network model. Data was collected through interviews, observation and documentation. The research found that the strategy used by each Islamic elementary school in improving quality were different and strongly influenced by the leader in developing and utilizing the capital existence according to the situation. It can be seen that there is a dominance of one capital aspect that is used to facilitate the other. This presentation is based on the perspective of capital theory in the Indonesian context. In the future, it can be used as a basis for conducting further research in carrying out school transformation more broadly.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The globalization era is characterized by rapid and open advances in science and technology in all scopes including the world of education and even becomes an interesting case to study. Globalization is recognized as having a major impact on people's daily social lives, including education [1]–[4]. The competitions in various sectors emerged as a hallmark of this era [5], [6]. The economic market is becoming more open due to reduced barriers in the trade sector [7]. Market competition is getting tougher with the innovation principles, efficiency, and skilled workers [8]. This development has an impact on educational institutions are slowly using management policies based on the performance of teachers, staff, and leaders to achieve education effectively and efficiently.

Globalization affects the implementation of educational policies and learning processes, especially in Islamic schools. For example, the authority delegation from the central government to the school level [9], internal school responsibilities [10], [11], improving achievement and passing grades [12], funding needs

[13], disciplinary problems [14], educator competence, and institutional quality are some examples of the problems of current educational institutions [15]. Islamic schools in Indonesia must be more advanced and have social strength because they are supported by the largest Muslim population in the world. However, this condition indicates otherwise that Islamic educational institutions are not superior to other public schools, therefore the ability to adapt in the global era is needed through transformation.

Making transformations with a global approach encourages solving educational problems [16]. Transformation can increase school equity [17], build teacher professionalism [18], [19], encourage collaborative practices [20], promote trust-based responsibility [21], and strengthen the community-based education system [22]. In a previous study, Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins [23] revealed that one of the main tasks of leaders is to create a comfortable work environment in which teachers are motivated to achieve school goals.

Improving the quality of graduates or achievements has been the focus of policy makers recently [24]. In addition, many schools are carrying out major reforms related to school leadership [25], [26]. Several researchers have identified the influence of leader personality in enhancing and maintaining school competitiveness [27]–[30]. There were five dimensions of leadership in increasing competitiveness, include: providing educational direction; ensure strategic alignment; create a successful community, engage in various problem solving; and use the right approach [31]. Leaders practice three principles, namely: having influence; having personality; and developing and implementing a vision of change [32]. Based on this description, a new approach to school transformation is needed. In this paper, we use Harris, Zhao, and Caldwell [33] capital theory approach. This theoretical approach is categorized as a new approach to school change where there are four elements that trigger transformation, namely intellectual, social, spiritual, and financial capital.

Capital theory has been widely used in various research approaches. Rappleye and Komatsu [34] examined the theory by testing the effectiveness and improvement of schools in a review of social capital theory. Their findings illustrate that the meaning of social capital can be seen in two components, namely cultural and structural. Culture aspects and social capital refers to the elements of trust, norms and reciprocal relationships. While the structural aspect concerns the network in which people have strong ties and relationships. Jha [35] supported by Hooge et al. [36] study is related to how to see the schools mechanism engaging with the community. He defines the social capital of the collective school of the community environment. Hoffmann and Dufur [37] which focuses on the relationship between social capital and parental behavior chooses the character of the school. He found general social capital and social capital related to education. General social capital is categorized: religious groups, peer groups, sports communities, youth organizations, friends' clubs, political organizations, cultural organizations, and so on. Social capital related to education consists of: i) Attending parent and teacher meetings; ii) Being a school volunteer; ii) Attending school committee meetings; iv) Actively participating in schools; v) Providing material assistance to schools. Social capital will be effective when developing and maintaining its elements, namely building and developing trust, norms, and social networks, cooperation, social networks, cooperation, and participation.

Calnin et al. [38] in their research found that there are three principles of a leader's capital: having influence, have a personality and develop and execute a vision of transformation. Previous researchers [23], [39], [40] have consistently studied school transformation with a leadership approach. They found that the dimensions of the leadership role as a form of capital can be used as the basis for school transformation. The findings showed that there are three approaches to school transformation, namely school culture, commitment, and job satisfaction. Furthermore, previous research [41] completely discovered how capital can influence through leadership. Figure 1 shows the leadership framework framed in capital theory.
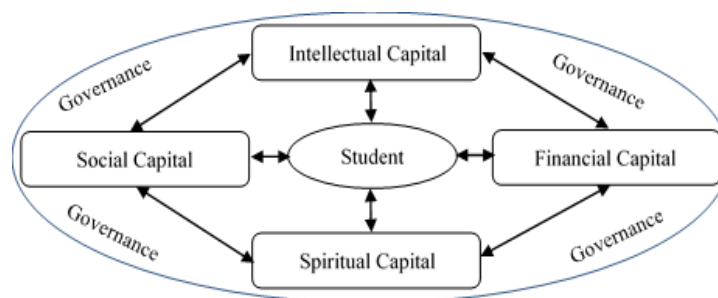

Figure 1. Leadership framework in capital theory

The framework formulation as shown in Figure 1 highlights the interaction relationship of the four modalities in carrying out school transformation. Intellectual capital is understood as the level of knowledge and skills of everyone in the school. Social capital is defined as a cooperative relationship with internal (students, teachers, and staff) and external sources (parents, community, committees, religious leaders, youth, and industry). Spiritual capital is defined as moral strength that contains values elements, attitudes and beliefs that are used as guidelines for schools and communities globally. Financial capital is a financial resource available to support schools. Meanwhile, the government harmonizes the form of governance in which schools transform by aligning the four capitals to achieve goals.

Based on Figure 1, this strategy can be used by schools to carry out transformation through the formulation of eight indicators that are believed to be able to increase the achievement of success and school quality [42]. More details can be seen in Table 1. Based on the theoretical framework, we choose a more comprehensive study of school transformation in capital theory perspective. The findings description refers to four types of school capital including: intellectual, social, spiritual and financial capital owned by schools, as an analytical tool to see the transformation in each school.

Table 1. School capital dimensions

Capital theory dimensions	Indicators
Intellectual	Have reliable Human Resources (HR)
	Focus on developing sustainable HR professionalism such as knowledge and skills
Social	Have a cooperative relationship between school institutions
	Cooperating with institutions outside the school
Spiritual	There are clear spiritual values
	Priority for developing students' spiritual skills
Financial	There is financial support from the government
	There is financial support from donors

The school system in Indonesia is under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and Culture, as well as one under the Religion Ministry known as *madrasa* (Islamic schools). Historically, Islamic schools have existed in Indonesia since the 20th century. Sociologically, the majority of *madrasa* were initiated by the community. Meanwhile, politically, it is through the policy of the law that everyone has the same position. *Madrasa* were chosen especially for Islamic basic education as research sites, because Islamic educational institutions have undergone a wider transformation and leap. Islamic education is no longer known as a "peripheral" institution that only produces *ustadz*, *kiyai*, or more popularly the *sarong* (teacher). However, *madrasa* have contributed to the development of superior human resources and character. Various stakeholders such as parents, community teachers are given the opportunity to participate in various activities in the *madrasa* including in decision making. Especially the head of *madrasa*, as the capital who has the initiative to carry out the transformation. Therefore, this study presented how the process of aligning the capitals is to determine the tendencies and strategies of *madrasa* in carrying out transformation.

2. RESEARCH METHOD
2.1. Research design
This study employed a qualitative method with a multi-case design approach [43]. In qualitative research, the determination or selection of samples is adjusted to the research objectives and characteristics. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the object of research. This study was conducted in the city of Lampung Province, Indonesia which has the best school education institutions in 12 districts of Lampung Province. This research is focused on *madrasa* (Islamic elementary schools) with the reason that this educational institution has its own uniqueness, namely that most of its students are middle and lower economic class. This study determined three types of *madrasa*s, namely A, B and C with their own characteristics and uniqueness. Type A is the favorite *madrasa*, Type B is the oldest *madrasa* in Bandar Lampung City, and Type C is the *madrasa* with less interest. The types of *madrasa*s were chosen to find out strategies for adapting in the global era.

2.2. Participants
This study involved 30 informants to obtain reliable and comprehensive information with characteristics as shown in Table 2. The table shows that the number of informants is divided into several characteristics consisting of principals, teachers, parents, school committees, and community leaders. Also shown are differences in mean age, gender, and work experience.

Table 2. Characteristic of informant

Occupation of informant	Number of informants	Average of age (years)	Gender		Work experience (years)
			Male	Female	
Headmaster	3	40-55	1	2	7-10
Teachers	9	30-40	5	4	7-20
Parents	9	35-50	4	5	-
School committee	3	40-55	2	1	3-5
Public figure	6	45-60	3	3	-
Total	30		15	15	

2.3. Data collection

Data were collected through interviews, observations and documentation from 30 informants, namely the head of *madrasa*, parents, school committees, and teachers from three types of *madrasa*s, namely A, B, and C. The informants were invited to participate in a structured interview which lasted 25-40 minutes. The stages of data collection were carried out in four stages, namely: data collection, data reduction, data presentation, drawing conclusions and verification [44]. The stages can be seen in Figure 2.
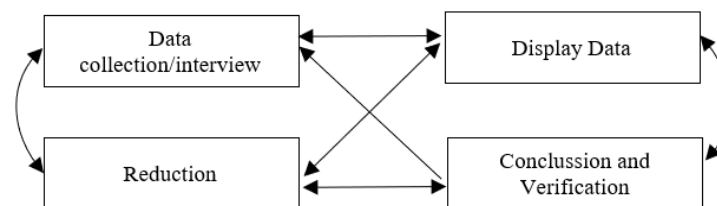
Figure 2. Data collection Miles and Huberman models [44]

2.4. Data analysis

Data analysis related to documents in the case of each *madrasa*, such as school profiles, demographics, teacher qualifications, student's economic status, school achievement, and school quality improvement strategies were collected to strengthen the interview data. All interviews were transcribed, coded, compared, and then analyzed to describe the findings. To maintain a high level of validity and trust, triangulation of sources is carried out. Finally, researchers regularly discuss research findings in order to purify and classify various possibilities that occur during research.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research findings in this case describe the different strategies of *madrasa* types A, B, and C in carrying out transformations referring to Caldwell and Harris' capital theory. The main purpose of this study was to find out how the pattern of utilization and alignment of intellectual, social, spiritual and financial capital is carried out by school principals for school transformation. This study found that the form of capital in the three types owned by *madrasa* was different. The approach used by each *madrasa* in developing capital varies according to school conditions. More details can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3. Islamic elementary school profile

Profile	Islamic elementary school type		
	A	B	C
School status	Superior	Growing	Need coaching
Demographics	Reachable	Reachable	Relatively out of reach
Teacher qualification	Average master graduates and according to competence	Bachelor fresh graduate and according to competence	Teacher graduate competencies majority are not in accordance with competence
Students' economic status	High social status	Maximum in middle economy	Low economy
Achievement	National	Local area	Low
Strategy for improving school quality	Social capital as the basis for realizing intellectual, spiritual and financial capital	Social and intellectual capital to grow spiritual and financial capital	Social and spiritual capital to grow intellectual and financial capital

Islamic elementary schools which are classified as type A are favorite schools in terms of demographics and easy access to reach. Most of the academic qualifications of teachers are further educated (on average they have a master's degree in education). Various achievements have been achieved by schools and students, both academic and non-academic at the national level. In addition, this school has the support of high public trust.

The strategy developed by type A schools in carrying out transformation begins with empowering social capital as the basis for realizing intellectual, spiritual and financial capital. The majority of social capital in the school environment comes from the internal and external potential of the school. Internally, social mode grows because of the ingenuity of school actors to build network-based interactions. Meanwhile, the school's external social capital comes from the school's willingness to explore external social capital that is adopted for the school. External social capital is shown based on the ability to build network-based interactions with parents, community, government, and higher education institutions.

The second school is type B, which is a school that is starting to develop demographically, has easy access, and is located in the southern part of the city, precisely in a residential area. Most of the academic qualifications of the education staff are undergraduates and are still classified as fresh graduates. The majority of students come from the surrounding environment with lower middle socioeconomic status. This school has had tremendous public attention since the last five years. The parent's participation in sending their children to this school is very high compared to other equal schools.

Social and intellectual capital in type B schools is a strategy in growing other capitals including religious and financial capital. This description shows that this school tends to carry out a transformation that begins with the strengthening of religious capital as the basis for building intellectual capital and social capital and then followed by financial capital. In this school, religious capital is the main strategy to facilitate intellectual, social and financial capital to be more developed and can be used to make school changes.

The last school description is type C. Geographically; this school is in a strategic area. It takes approximately 10 minutes to reach the city center. Type C schools are the only educational institutions that have their own dormitories for students. This school has the motto "strong in the faith of charity with knowledge and excelling in achievement." However, this school has low vitality. This is shown where in the previous year there were only 17 students, school management was not well controlled, school accreditation was ranked B at this time. The majority of the teachers are not in accordance with the competency standards that have been set by the government. The cooperative relationship between teachers and staff does not work as it should. Finally, public confidence in the quality of education in this school is reduced.

In type C schools, the transformation baton begins by using social and spiritual capital as a means to increase intellectual capital. Sources of social capital consist of internal and external potential owned by the school. Internal social capital comes from relationship-based interactions carried out by school actors in supporting transformation. Relationships are shown by the school's ability to build networks and gain trust. Efforts are being made to improve the intellectual capacity of teachers by ensuring that schools need transformation. In addition, academic development is carried out in utilizing social and religious capital through curriculum development, syllabus, IT-based learning, and developing student interests and talents through intra and extra-curricular activities. Meanwhile, external social capital comes from the ability of *madrasa* to establish relationship-based interactions to build trust, cooperation and be bound by moral values developed by the school.

Table 3 describes the capital utilization pattern in these three *madrasa* cases which have similarities in carrying out transformations in which the principal emphasizes academic development (intellectual capital). In *madrasa* types A and C, social capital is used for intellectual capital development. Meanwhile, type B *madrasa* use spiritual capital as a means of developing intellectual capital. The pattern of intellectual capital development of these three *madrasa*s begins with academic development through teacher quality development, curriculum innovation, syllabus, library development, and providing IT-laboratory advice. Meanwhile, for students it is applied through intra-curricular and extra-curricular activities. The elements involved in developing intellectual capital in the three types of *madrasas* are through school principal working meeting (MKKS), subject teacher meeting (MGMP), and collaborating with universities, supervisors, education offices and school actors. Meanwhile, the strategy used by the principal in transforming the three types of *madrasa*s is the network-based interaction pattern.

The network pattern of these three cases is based on bridging and bonding. However, each has its own peculiarities in building a network as in the case of type A schools, namely internally and externally. Likewise, with *madrasa* types B and C, using the network as an important element in carrying out the transformation. Meanwhile, the values that are believed to be in the development of intellectual capital apart from the main values are developed into certain values such as in type A *madrasa*, namely the value of achievement, creativity, innovation and morals. The values developed by *madrasa* type B are spiritual values. Finally, type C *madrasa* remain consistent in utilizing social capital.

Regarding the financial capital of all *madrasa* in Indonesia, it comes from government support, parental donations, and school canteen rentals. This means that parents and government include aspects of school social capital that offer financial capital and even intellectual capital [45]. Finally, these three schools build partnerships with parents, communities, and stakeholders for the success of *madrasa* [46]–[48]. This strategy is based on social capital which can directly motivate teachers to increase intellectual capital [44].

Based on research findings from the three *madrasas*, it can be described that in theory and practice *madrasa* have found success in making changes based on capital alignment. Each *madrasa* has different challenges in utilizing the capital owned by the school. In the future, these results are expected to serve as a reference for *madrasa* to find new strategies for transformation in each era.

4. CONCLUSION

The strategy of Islamic schools in improving their quality has differences between schools in the superior, developing, and low categories. Superior schools prioritize social capital as the basis for realizing intellectual, spiritual and financial capital. Developing schools use social and intellectual capital to stimulate spiritual and financial capital. Meanwhile, low category schools use social and spiritual capital to grow intellectual and financial capital.

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