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The Role of the Principal in Implementing Learning Innovation: A Qualitative Study at SMP Muhammadiyah 5 Surakarta

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A B S T R A C T

Educational institutions are required to continuously innovate to respond to rapid technological development and increasing competition, while maintaining humanistic and cultural values. School leadership plays a crucial role in ensuring that learning innovation is implemented effectively and sustainably. This study aims to analyze the role of the principal in implementing learning innovations and to identify the challenges faced in the innovation process at SMP Muhammadiyah 5 Surakarta. This research employed a qualitative descriptive approach using field research. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with the principal, direct observation of school activities, and document analysis related to learning innovation programs. The findings indicate that the principal plays a central role in driving learning innovation through a servant leadership approach that emphasizes collaboration, teacher empowerment, and student-centered learning. Learning innovations were implemented through the integration of technology-based learning systems, project-based learning, and curriculum enrichment while maintaining Islamic educational values. Internal challenges mainly involved aligning stakeholders' commitment, while external challenges included parental support and economic limitations. The study concludes that servant leadership contributes significantly to the successful implementation of learning innovations by fostering a supportive school climate, encouraging stakeholder participation, and balancing technological advancement with Islamic cultural values.

1. Introduction

Amid the rapid advancement of technology and globalization, educational institutions are required to continuously adapt through learning innovation to meet the evolving demands of society. Education in the twenty-first century is no longer

confined to the transmission of knowledge alone but plays a strategic role in shaping students' character, competencies, and readiness to face future challenges. Schools are expected to produce learners who are not only academically competent but also adaptive, creative, and ethically grounded. Consequently, learning innovation has become a key indicator of school quality and competitiveness, particularly in the digital era where information, technology, and social change develop rapidly (Zubaidah, 2019; Haeriyah, 2021).

Learning innovation refers to the process of designing, implementing, and evaluating new approaches, methods, and strategies that enhance student engagement and learning outcomes. In practice, innovation may involve the integration of digital technology, student-centered learning models, collaborative activities, and contextualized teaching strategies. However, the success of learning innovation does not solely depend on technological availability or curriculum design. It is closely linked to leadership practices within the school, especially the role of the principal in creating a supportive culture, motivating teachers, and managing resources effectively.

Previous studies have highlighted that school leadership significantly influences the implementation of learning innovation. Principals play a central role in setting the school vision, fostering collaboration among teachers, and encouraging professional development (Ritonga, 2019; Sari et al., 2021). Leadership styles that emphasize participation, empowerment, and open communication are often associated with higher levels of teacher motivation and willingness to adopt innovative teaching practices. In this context, leadership is not merely administrative but transformational, guiding schools through continuous improvement and change.

One leadership model that has gained increasing attention in educational research is servant leadership. Servant leadership emphasizes service to others, empathy, ethical behavior, and the development of human potential within an organization. Leaders who adopt this approach prioritize the needs of teachers and students, facilitate professional growth, and create an inclusive environment that supports innovation (Panggabean, 2024). In educational settings, servant leadership is considered particularly relevant because it aligns leadership authority with moral responsibility and collaborative values.

Despite the growing interest in servant leadership, most existing studies in the field of education remain theoretical or focus on its general influence on teacher performance, job satisfaction, or organizational climate. Empirical research that explores how servant leadership is practically implemented by school principals in fostering learning innovation remains limited, especially in Islamic-based schools. These schools face unique challenges, as they are required to balance technological advancement and pedagogical innovation with the preservation of religious and cultural values. Moreover, there is a lack of in-depth qualitative studies that examine not only the leadership roles of principals but also the internal and external challenges they encounter during the implementation of learning innovation in real school contexts.

Learning innovation is inherently a collaborative process involving various stakeholders, including principals, teachers, students, and parents. Without shared commitment, effective communication, and alignment of educational goals, innovation initiatives may face resistance or fail to achieve sustainability. Therefore, understanding the principal's role as a leader, facilitator, and change agent becomes crucial. Principals are expected to mediate between policy demands, teacher readiness, and the school's cultural and religious identity.

Based on these considerations, this study aims (1) to analyze the role of the principal in implementing learning innovations at SMP Muhammadiyah 5 Surakarta and (2) to identify the internal and external challenges encountered during the implementation process. By focusing on leadership practices within an Islamic junior high school context, this study seeks to contribute to the literature on educational leadership by providing empirical insights into the application of servant leadership in promoting learning innovation while maintaining Islamic educational values. The findings of this study are expected to offer practical implications for school leaders, educators, and policymakers in developing sustainable and value-based learning innovation strategies.

2. Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach using field research design. Field research was selected because the data were collected directly from natural settings to capture real phenomena related to school leadership and learning innovation practices. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate to obtain an in-depth understanding of the principal's role, leadership practices, and challenges in implementing learning innovation within the school context.
The research was conducted at SMP Muhammadiyah 5 Surakarta, an Islamic junior high school that integrates general education with Islamic values. The focus of the study was on leadership practices in fostering learning innovation within the school environment.

Research Informants

The primary informant in this study was the principal of SMP Muhammadiyah 5 Surakarta, who played a central role in planning, implementing, and supervising learning innovation programs. The principal was selected as the key informant because of direct involvement in leadership decision-making and school management. To support and strengthen the data, information was also obtained from teachers through observations of learning activities and school programs.

Research Instruments

The research instruments consisted of semi-structured interview guidelines, observation sheets, and documentation checklists.

- The interview guidelines were designed to explore the principal's leadership practices, strategies for implementing learning innovation, and challenges encountered during the process.
- Observation sheets were used to record learning activities, teacher practices, and school programs related to learning innovation.
- Documentation included school policies, program plans, meeting reports, and other institutional documents relevant to leadership and innovation practices.

Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected using three main techniques: interviews, observations, and documentation. In-depth interviews were conducted with the school principal to obtain detailed information regarding leadership roles and innovation strategies. Observations were carried out directly in the school environment to examine the implementation of learning innovation in classroom activities and school programs. Documentation was collected to support interview and observation data, including school records and written reports related to learning innovation.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis. The process involved several stages:

1. Data reduction, by selecting and focusing on data relevant to the research objectives;
2. Coding, by categorizing interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents into meaningful units;
3. Theme identification, by grouping codes into broader themes related to leadership roles, innovation strategies, and implementation challenges;
4. Interpretation, by drawing conclusions based on recurring patterns and relationships among themes.

This systematic analysis allowed the researcher to identify key findings related to the principal's role in implementing learning innovation.

Data Validity

To ensure the validity and trustworthiness of the data, triangulation was applied. Triangulation was conducted by comparing data obtained from interviews, observations, and documentation. Method triangulation and source triangulation were used to confirm consistency across different data sources and techniques. This approach enhanced the credibility and reliability of the research findings.

3. Results and Discussion

After conducting observations in the school environment, researchers found that SMP Muhammadiyah 5 Surakarta is an Islamic-based school that focuses on improving student character to support the implementation of learning innovations

in schools. This can be seen from the good relationship between teachers and students, which creates a warm and pleasant school atmosphere. All elements of the school, such as educators, teachers, students, and school security guards, are very communicative and informative. The teaching and learning atmosphere is also conducive and Islamic in nature, with the implementation of a habit-forming education system of congregational Duha prayers in the morning before starting lessons and congregational Asr prayers before leaving the school building. The separation of male and female students during physical education classes is also evidence of the improvement of Islamic character as a support for the implementation of learning innovations in the classroom.

To provide a clearer overview of the empirical findings, this study summarizes the main results in a table 1. The table presents key aspects of learning innovation at SMP Muhammadiyah 5 Surakarta, including the forms of innovation implemented, the role of the principal, supporting resources, and the challenges encountered during implementation. This summary aims to help readers understand the core findings systematically before further discussion and interpretation.

Table 1. Summary of Research Findings on Learning Innovation at SMP Muhammadiyah 5 Surakarta

No	Aspect	Empirical Findings
1	Forms of Learning Innovation	Technology-based learning systems (LMS, computerized exams, online Qur'an memorization), project-based learning, deep learning curriculum, digital teacher management systems (SIMPKB, GTK Room)
2	Role of the Principal	Motivating teachers, initiating innovation programs, facilitating collaboration, providing emotional and financial support, monitoring and evaluating innovation implementation
3	Leadership Approach	Open communication, participatory decision-making, field-based supervision, service-oriented leadership practices
4	Supporting Resources	Teacher training workshops, upgrading facilities and infrastructure, digital learning platforms, collaboration with education institutions
5	Internal Challenges	Alignment of vision among teachers and staff, varied teacher performance, maintaining consistency in innovation implementation
6	External Challenges	Parental cooperation, competition with public schools, economic constraints affecting facilities and teacher welfare

Table 1 presents a summary of the empirical findings obtained from interviews, observations, and document analysis. The table shows that learning innovation at SMP Muhammadiyah 5 Surakarta is manifested in various forms, particularly through technology-based learning systems, project-based learning, and the implementation of a deep learning curriculum. These innovations are supported by digital platforms and professional development systems designed to enhance both student learning experiences and teacher performance. The table also highlights the central role of the principal in driving learning innovation. The principal acts as an initiator who introduces innovation programs, a facilitator who encourages collaboration among teachers, and a supervisor who monitors and evaluates program implementation. This role is carried out through open communication, participatory decision-making, and direct involvement in school activities, which contribute to a supportive school climate for innovation.

In addition, Table 1 identifies key supporting resources, including teacher training workshops, upgraded learning facilities, and the use of digital management systems. These resources enable teachers to adapt to innovative learning approaches more effectively. However, the table also indicates that the implementation of learning innovation is not without challenges. Internal challenges include aligning the vision and performance of teachers and staff, while external challenges involve parental cooperation, competition with public schools, and economic constraints affecting school resources. Overall, the table illustrates that learning innovation at SMP Muhammadiyah 5 Surakarta is a complex process influenced by leadership practices, resource availability, and contextual challenges. This summary provides a foundation for the subsequent discussion, which explains how and why these factors shape the implementation and sustainability of learning innovation in an Islamic school context.

Other information was obtained through in-depth interviews with Mr. Parwanto, principal of SMP Muhammadiyah 5 Surakarta. The principal is the formal leader of the educational unit who is responsible for managing and developing all aspects of the school. According to Mulyasa, H.E. (2022), the principal is a professional educator who is tasked with leading a school at a certain level. He is responsible for organizing educational activities, school administration, human resource management, and community relations. It is emphasized that the principal has an important role in decision-making, coaching educational staff, and improving the quality of the learning process at school (Nupusiah, 2024). During the afternoon discussion, many things were conveyed from various aspects, including the role of the principal in implementing learning innovations, the process of implementing learning innovations, support and resources, successes and challenges, hopes and plans for the future. In this section, the results of the researcher's interview with the principal of SMP Muhammadiyah 5 Surakarta will be presented, starting from the very beginning.

1) The Role of Principals in Learning Innovation

In implementing learning innovations, Mr. Parwanto admits that as a school principal, he sees the role of leadership as very important. The findings show that principals play three crucial roles as educators, motivators, and innovators by integrating programs into daily learning activities, fostering a supportive school climate, and initiating creative innovations to strengthen school culture (Hardiman et al., 2025). Effective principal leadership can enhance teacher performance by providing a clear vision, setting mutually agreed goals, monitoring achievements, and offering continuous guidance and feedback (Kamalia et al., 2022). The driving factor for the school's progress begins with the process of motivating teachers at the school to improve the quality of learning in line with the needs of the times. How to create a comfortable learning and teaching atmosphere and make the school a second home and something that teachers and especially students look forward to. In implementing learning innovations, as the principal, he prepares strategies to ensure that these innovations are well received by teachers and students. This begins with a presentation at a meeting, conceptualized together with other teachers,

through a decree, and/or a letter of assignment. Meanwhile, students are provided with information through parent meetings.

The principal is open and communicative, giving all members of the school community the opportunity to voice their opinions and make choices. Everything is discussed through a collaborative approach between teachers, guardians, and administrators. Servant leadership is a leadership approach introduced by Robert K. Greenleaf in 1970. In his view, a true leader is someone who has a sincere desire to serve first, then lead. This means that leaders do not prioritize power or position, but rather focus on how they can meet the needs and support the growth of those they lead. The hallmarks of servant leadership are empathy, active listening, self-awareness, and a commitment to helping others grow. Servant leaders create a comfortable, open environment that encourages each individual to be the best version of themselves. In the context of education, this leadership style is highly relevant because it can build a positive school climate, where teachers and students feel valued, heard, and well-supported. Greenleaf emphasizes that the measure of a leader's success is not only the achievement of goals, but also the impact on the growth of others. This statement shows that servant leaders not only build organizational structures, but also shape the character and values of the people they lead. (Greenleaf, 2008).

2) The Process of Implementing Learning Innovations

Learning innovation is an effort to renew the system, methods, media, or approaches to learning so that they are more relevant and effective. (Putri & Ardi, 2021) states that learning innovation aims to improve the quality of the learning process and outcomes for students. According to (Ritonga, 2019) , learning innovation can be realized through the application of new learning models, the use of educational technology, and the development of creative and interesting learning media. Innovative learning certainly requires support from implementers, especially school principals as leaders of each institution, as the ideal role of school principals is a major factor in the implementation of innovative learning. In implementing learning innovation, school principals have a specific approach to introducing their programs to teachers and students. The principle emphasized is that innovation must stem from the main interests of students, namely the development of a learning system that involves three areas of student ability in absorbing knowledge, namely auditory, visual, and kinesthetic.

The next thing to consider is to start implementing this through projects organized by the school. In addition to the points mentioned above, Mr. Parwanto is also open-minded and provides ample opportunities for teachers and students to try new things at school. The principal plays an important role in creating a school climate that is conducive to innovation. (Sari et al., 2021) states that school leaders must be able to encourage teachers to try new approaches that are appropriate to the needs of students. (also states that the success of learning innovation is greatly influenced by visionary, participatory, and collaborative leadership. The principal needs to be the main driver of change by inviting the entire school community to be actively involved in the innovation process.

By prioritizing comfort and happiness for the school community in conducting learning, the approach taken by the principal in the process of implementing learning innovations is to go directly to the field. The forms of efforts to implement learning innovations at SMP Muhammadiyah 5 Surakarta refer to what has been agreed upon in work meetings, such as through learning media workshop programs, upgrading teaching and learning facilities and infrastructure, reviewing teachers' teaching methods in the classroom, and tips for improving learning quality. The implementation of learning innovations at SMP Muhammadiyah 5 Surakarta is based on the 3P (Service, Achievement, Passion) school principle and prioritizes the welfare of the school community. The following are the learning innovations taking place at SMP Muhammadiyah 5 Surakarta:

- Upgrading technology-based learning systems, where students are given the opportunity to learn by utilizing existing information technology, such as online synchronous routine Quran memorization, the use of LMS via smartphones, and computerized exams.

- Implementation of SIMPKB (Continuing Professional Development Management Information System) accounts for teachers to support a more efficient learning innovation process. Provision of special applications for teachers, such as GTK rooms for performance management during teaching and learning activities at school.

- The implementation of a meaningful learning curriculum (deep learning) in each subject is supported by a teaching approach that focuses on project-based learning, such as field trips, so that material is not only delivered through lectures in the classroom.

3) Support and Resources

The implementation of learning innovations cannot be separated from the role of the principal, who provides various forms of physical and emotional support to teachers and students. Amidst their busy schedules, they provide resource support by actively participating in the implementation of work programs. It is stated that the role of the principal is very much needed to accompany the program until its completion. Not only that, financial support is also taken into account to help improve school facilities and provide educational and welfare allowances for teachers (Santika & Azani, 2025). Other forms of support provided include socialization from school leaders to teachers and employees, training in the creation of learning media such as PPT and video editing, and sending teachers as school resources to attend workshops held by the education office or the Muhammadiyah Basic Education Council, as well as many other partner workshops. Additionally, teachers at SMP Muhammadiyah 5 Surakarta are equipped with technological literacy through the provision of specialized teacher applications such as the GTK Room for performance management. Principals can support teacher professionalism by creating a conducive work environment, providing resources, building a collaborative culture, utilizing technology, and conducting periodic evaluations (Darmawati et al., 2025).

Managing existing resources to support successful learning innovation involves adjusting teacher qualifications, such as encouraging teachers to improve their professionalism through existing programs, as well as building teamwork and fostering good relationships among teachers. Additional tahfidz hours outside the curriculum in the form of synchronous online Quran memorization, dauroh programs for students with special program qualifications are also provided, so that it is not only the needs of teachers that are taken into consideration. In the process of implementing existing learning innovations, the principal also monitors how each program is running as a form of support. The principal has prepared a strategy to evaluate the effectiveness of the innovations implemented. An assessment committee/team was formed at the beginning of the year, which was then announced during the preparation of the work program. Thus, a decree was drafted to assign the team before it was finally executed. After the special team was formed, the monitoring of the programs implemented could be more concrete, and the results could then be presented at meetings held for joint review.

4) Successes and Challenges

Implementing a program is inevitably linked to success targets and challenges in its implementation. Each program can be considered successful if is carried out in accordance with its achievement targets. This can be assessed through evaluations between teachers, students, and reports from parents at home. Evaluation can be seen in the habits of students when they return home or are outside the school area, focusing on increasing children's enthusiasm for learning and shaping their Islamic character. In assessing the suitability of these achievements, percentages are used to determine the next stage of evaluation. In facing the process of implementing innovative learning programs in schools, challenges are also encountered from two sides, internal and external. Principals' innovation in improving school quality can be reflected through strengthening teacher competence, optimizing facilities and infrastructure, and increasing community involvement, although challenges such as limited funding and resistance to change may still occur (Natasya & Maksum, 2025).

It was found that the most difficult challenges actually came from within the school because, as the principal, he had to ensure that the relationships between the school stakeholders (teachers, staff, and students) were aligned with a single vision, given that they were all interconnected. With his heart-to-heart approach, he encouraged everyone to discuss any issues that were not quite right and to give each other feedback. Mr. Parwanto also provides advice and firm reprimands for any matters that are not in accordance with the main duties and functions at school, whether by teachers or students. As the principal, he also always motivates the establishment of familial relationships and closeness between teachers. Teacher performance is assessed by emphasizing that teachers have different characters and they will work according to their respective qualities. External challenges to the school come from competition between private and public schools in terms of facilities and teacher salaries. In addition, Mr. Parwanto also faces challenges from parents, such as those who are not very cooperative in supporting consistent learning habits and morals for their children at home.

The reality we need to know is that SMP Muhammadiyah 5 Surakarta is a school under a private foundation, so the economic situation of parents sometimes poses a challenge in maintaining the school's facilities and the welfare of teachers and students without neglecting the implementation of learning innovations at the school.

5) Hopes and Plans for the Future

The principal, as the main component of the school in implementing learning innovations, has high hopes for the school's future. Mr. Parwanto stated in an interview at that time that he hoped SMP Muhammadiyah 5 Surakarta could continue to improve its quality and services while still considering the welfare of teachers. As a result, SMP Muhammadiyah 5 Surakarta will certainly be selective and remain attractive to the wider community (Zukhruf, W.M.; Azani, 2023). The plan for the school's future is to keep up with developments in education while paying attention to the policies of the education office and Muhammadiyah. Continue to innovate but do not abandon the Islamic educational culture that has long been established and do not change it.

After presenting the results of the above research, the author sees that today there are many reforms that need to be made in order to adapt to the environment, including in the field of education, where knowledge is a primary need of society, as stated in Article 31 paragraph 1 of the 1945 Constitution, which states that every citizen has the right to education. The principal's awareness of the community's need for education has given rise to the idea of developing innovations in learning. There are many potential aspects possessed by the youth in Surakarta. It is the demands of the community that fuel the spirit of implementing learning innovations at SMP Muhammadiyah 5 Surakarta (Utami & Mustofa, 2024).

As the principal of the school, the headmaster plays an important role in responding to the implementation of learning innovations at the school. The ideal role of the headmaster certainly has a significant impact on the success of innovation implementation. SMP Muhammadiyah 5 Surakarta is open to the wider community, with students coming from diverse backgrounds. Seeing the reality, Mr. Parwanto, with his leadership style, prioritizes a sense of comfort, convenience, and happiness for students as well as all teachers and school staff (Ritonga, 2019). Under the Muhammadiyah private foundation, the concept of Islamic educational culture along with efforts to develop learning innovations continues to be implemented in schools. The learning system begins with congregational Duha prayers before entering the classroom for teaching and learning activities. After completing the teaching and learning activities, all teachers and students are encouraged to go to the mosque again to perform congregational Asr prayers before finally returning to their respective homes. This habit will create a disciplined character and Islamic environment that is expected to continue outside of school (Khofi, 2024). The principal plays a crucial role in integrating character education into the school curriculum, daily routines, and extracurricular activities through collaborative planning, consistent monitoring, and continuous evaluation (Dewi et al., 2025). A leadership style that is close to the theory of servant leadership shows the

importance of a leader who is a facilitator at heart. Referring to the 3P principle (Service, Achievement, Passion) according to Mr. Parwanto, in carrying out its operations, service is paramount in optimizing learning facilities at school, including in the application of learning innovations (Gandasacita & Asy, 2024).

The forms of innovation that have been carried out during Mr. Parwanto's leadership are certainly in line with Robert K. Greenleaf's statement that a leader is not someone who prioritizes power or position, but rather someone who focuses on how to meet the needs and support the growth of those he leads. In line with what has been implemented, in supporting the application of learning innovation in schools, in addition to actively providing an approach by going directly into the field, Mr. Parwanto also did not remain silent in formulating the innovation strategies to be implemented. Emotional and financial support are two important elements that need to be considered in addition to physical presence in the process of implementing learning innovations. There are also various types of training and workshops for teachers to support teaching competencies held by the education office, the Muhammadiyah basic education council, as well as collaborations from student textbooks and IHT workshops. Not only that, the principal also urges teachers to join the school community with the aim of becoming a means to realize the competencies of teachers who are open-minded and socially-minded (Greenleaf, 2008).

School stakeholders are not only teachers and employees, but also students. Learning innovation is not only carried out because of school competition in the era of globalization. Learning innovation has a more important purpose than just competition between schools, namely to improve the quality of the learning process and outcomes of students (Putri & Ardi, 2021). Many new programs are offered ranging from the latest IT-based learning systems, electronic accounts for learning and exam access, and online Quran memorization programs with parents. Despite these innovations, Mr. Parwanto has not abandoned the existing Islamic school culture and continues to focus on the potential of students by adding a self-development program based on civic values (P5).

The principal, with his important role in implementing each learning innovation program, did not always have a smooth ride, and various challenges arose. When implementing these programs, Mr. Parwanto faced two types of challenges. He admitted that the most difficult challenge was internal to the school, as it was not easy to ensure synchronization between teachers, staff, and students. For him, all elements of the school are interconnected to create a comfortable and enjoyable learning environment. The solution to these challenges is to be open and prioritize heart-to-heart conversations in the hope that each individual with problems can express their point of view and discuss and provide input to each other to find a solution. Furthermore, he does not worry too much about responding to the diverse performance of teachers. His principle is that each teacher will work according to their own quality and follow up on the evaluation. External challenges arise from the attitude of parents who are not collaborative in supporting the consistency of their children's Islamic character at home. The reality we need to recognize is that in this technological era, there are still parents who pay little attention to their

children's education, resulting in uncontrolled smartphone use at home, which becomes a habit that is difficult to control at school. Considering that SMP Muhammadiyah 5 Surakarta is a school under a private foundation, the fluctuating economic conditions of parents also pose a challenge. To maintain the school's facilities and the welfare of teachers and students, who are competing with public educational institutions, the school must remain open to embracing students who are hindered by administrative problems but are determined to learn. The school's continued existence and selectivity are not because it discards what is burdensome, but rather because it maintains its principles and must continue to keep up with developments. SMP Muhammadiyah 5 Surakarta considers it important to empower the surrounding community by providing learning opportunities for anyone who is serious (1945 Constitution, Article 28C, paragraph 1).

4. Conclusion

This study aimed (1) to analyze the role of the principal in implementing learning innovations and (2) to identify the challenges encountered during the implementation process at SMP Muhammadiyah 5 Surakarta. The findings demonstrate that the principal plays a central role as a leader, facilitator, and change agent in fostering learning innovation through a servant leadership approach. By prioritizing service, collaboration, and human-centered values, the principal supports teachers, staff, and students both emotionally and institutionally, creating a positive school climate that encourages innovation. Learning innovations at the school were implemented through technology integration, project-based learning, curriculum enrichment, and professional development programs, while consistently maintaining Islamic educational values. These strategies contributed to a more engaging and student-centered learning environment. However, the implementation process was not without challenges. Internal challenges included aligning stakeholders' commitment and varying teacher capacities, while external challenges involved parental support and economic constraints. Despite these obstacles, the principal's servant leadership enabled adaptive problem-solving and sustained innovation.

Implications for practice suggest that school principals should adopt leadership approaches that emphasize service, participation, and empathy to effectively support learning innovation. Principals are encouraged to foster collaborative cultures, empower teachers through continuous professional development, and balance technological advancement with the school's cultural and religious values. Implications for future research include the need for comparative studies across different school contexts to examine the effectiveness of servant leadership in learning innovation. Further research may also explore quantitative measurements of leadership impact on student learning outcomes or investigate parental involvement as a supporting factor in sustaining innovation. Overall, this study highlights that servant leadership plays a significant role in implementing sustainable learning innovations while preserving institutional values in Islamic-based schools.

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