



The Dynamics of Educational Leadership Acculturation: A Fiel Study with Peter L. Berger Social Construction Approach

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Abstract

This study investigates the dynamics of educational leadership acculturation at MA Al-Fatah Palembang through the lens of Peter L. Berger's social construction theory. Using a qualitative field study design, the research explores how school leaders internalize, construct, and institutionalize leadership values within the cultural, religious, and organizational contexts of the madrasah. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation, involving principals, vice principals, teachers, and student organization leaders. The findings reveal that leadership practices at MA Al-Fatah are shaped by a continuous dialectic process: externalization of Islamic-based leadership values, objectivation through institutional rituals and organizational norms, and internalization by individuals within the school community. These processes foster a hybrid form of leadership that integrates traditional Islamic values with contemporary educational management practices. The study also highlights factors that support and hinder acculturation, including organizational culture, leadership communication, teacher participation, and stakeholder engagement. Overall, the research provides theoretical and practical insights into how leadership identities are socially constructed and negotiated within Islamic educational settings.

Introduction

Educational leadership in Islamic institutions such as madrasahs and pesantren has increasingly attracted scholarly attention due to its complex interplay between religious values, local cultural traditions, and the demands of modern education. Recent studies emphasize the diversity of leadership models adopted within Islamic educational settings, including the growing visibility of female leadership, which has been shown to strengthen interpersonal communication and student character formation (Iskandar & Widyastri, 2020; Putra et al., 2021). Similarly, transformational, democratic, and prophetic leadership approaches have been found effective in enhancing academic performance, fostering integrity, and cultivating moderate religious values among students (Arif, 2021; Luqman & Karim, 2025; Mardiani, 2022; Effendi, 2025; Hakim & Zahra, 2024; Suryani & Muslim, 2024). This diversity indicates the importance of understanding leadership not merely as an administrative skill, but as a dynamic social process embedded within cultural, institutional, and religious contexts.

Amid this diversity, Islamic educational institutions face substantial challenges in navigating the acculturation between traditional pesantren values, modern organizational cultures, and the rapidly evolving expectations of 21st-century education. Global developments in educational

technology, character-based pedagogy, and digital learning environments require leaders to balance continuity of tradition with openness to innovation (Fahmiyudin et al., 2025; Kurniadi et al., 2025). These pressures demand leadership that is visionary, collaborative, and adaptive capable of preserving Islamic moral foundations while also preparing students for contemporary societal demands (Amaliyah, 2025; Raharjo et al., 2024; Prasetyowati et al., 2025; Ibrahim et al., 2025; Azman et al., 2024). The complexity of this acculturation process underscores the need for analytical frameworks that can reveal how leadership values are produced, negotiated, and sustained within specific sociocultural environments.

Peter L. Berger's theory of social construction offers a compelling lens through which to understand these dynamics. Berger argues that social reality is produced through a dialectical process of externalization, objectivation, and internalization, in which individuals and social structures continuously shape and reshape each other (Berger, 1967; Berger & Luckmann, 2023; Friedman, 2016; Dreher, 2023; Hyde, 2022). Religion, in Berger's view, is not an autonomous or naturally existing phenomenon; rather, it is constructed through historical, cultural, and social interactions (Arifin, 2009). This perspective positions leadership as an intersubjective reality emerging from human experiences across cognitive, emotional, and moral dimensions. Thus, leadership practices, values, and norms within Islamic educational institutions should be seen as socially constructed realities rather than merely administrative functions or individual traits (Samier, 2022; Said et al., 2023; Arar et al., 2022; Supriyono et al., 2025).

Within this theoretical framework, the leadership dynamics at MA Al-Fatah Palembang can be understood as the outcome of continuous interaction among educators, students, and the broader school community. Daily activities such as collaborative teaching practices, religious routines, and informal conversations in the teachers' lounge constitute moments of externalization in which leadership values such as discipline, religious exemplarity, cooperation, and responsibility are expressed and modelled (Mashoedi et al., 2025; Mansur, 2023). These practices become objectivated as they are institutionalized into the school culture through shared norms, collective ceremonies, and organizational routines. Over time, they are internalized by teachers and students, shaping personal dispositions and collective identity (Sverdlik & Oreg, 2023; Asrin & Musa, 2025; Wolthuis et al., 2022).

Field observations indicate that MA Al-Fatah Palembang embodies a work culture that is open, egalitarian, and supportive, reflecting how micro-level interactions shape broader leadership realities. The principal's spontaneous expressions of appreciation toward teachers, for example, illustrate how symbolic gestures contribute to the construction of a humanistic and participatory leadership climate. These practices reveal that social reality in the madrasah is constructed through intersubjective processes, in which individuals negotiate meanings related to educational values, religious norms, freedom, and responsibility. Divergent interpretations among teachers or students highlight the inherent plurality of meanings within any social group, consistent with Berger's emphasis on the socially situated nature of knowledge (Goudeau et al., 2024; Keller, 2024; Weyand, 2026; Alves & Vidal, 2023).

The acculturation of knowledge at MA Al-Fatah Palembang is further evident in the fusion of Islamic values, local Palembang culture, and educational modernity. Social interactions whether through religious activities, extracurricular communities, or collegial discussions serve as arenas where individuals collectively construct what counts as valid educational knowledge and appropriate leadership behavior. This aligns with Berger's argument that knowledge is a product of social processes and that different social groups generate different forms of understanding, such as those between laypersons and experts or between members of

distinct cultural communities (Wuthnow, 1984). In the context of the madrasah, these processes shape how religious values, leadership norms, and pedagogical expectations are collectively interpreted and reproduced.

Consequently, educational leadership at MA Al-Fatah Palembang cannot be understood solely as the personal authority or managerial skill of the principal. Rather, it emerges from a continuous dialectic between Islamic tradition, local cultural practices, and the demands of modern education each mediated through ongoing social interactions and shared experiences. Berger's social construction theory provides a robust analytical framework for examining how leadership values are externalized, institutionalized, and internalized within the madrasah context. This study therefore positions leadership at MA Al-Fatah Palembang as a living social reality: one that reflects the acculturation of knowledge and values through which the madrasah community collectively constructs and sustains its educational identity.

Methods

The research is composed as a qualitative field study which utilizes a case study research design to research the educational leadership acculturation dynamics in the case of MA Al Fatah Palembang using the theoretical framework of Peter L Berger, social construction. The qualitative methodology could not have been selected just procedurally, but epistemologically. The study aims at learning how leadership values are experienced, construed, bargained, and reproduced in a given Islamic learning context. This type of focus needs to be sensitive to meaning, context, and interaction, which cannot be sufficiently measured quantitatively. Rather, it requires one to be immersed in the natural environment in which leadership is exercised and lived.

The research was held in MA Al Fatah Palembang as a socially bounded institutional environment defined by the clash of Islamic tradition, local Palembang culture and modern educational demands. This madrasah has been chosen due to the fact that it is a vibrant place of leadership change where the old tradition of religion and the new organization are working together. The proposed research methodology, which is a case study, will create a rich and contextualized knowledge of how leadership is socially constructed in this local institutional milieu. The case study design allows paying close attention to daily practices, symbolic acts, and shared answers which develop the identity of leadership at the school.

The information was collected using in depth interviews, observation of participants, and documents. These techniques have been specifically merged in attempt to enhance the multilayered character of social construction. They were interviewed with the principal, the vice principals, the seniors teachers and the students leaders in the student organization. The semi structured and dialogical interviews were conducted in a dialogical format whereby the participants expressed themselves and explained their experiences and interpretation of leadership practices in their own words. Instead of having answers being limited to a set of predefined categories, the discussions were naturally developed with the themes revolving around externalization, objectivation, and internalization. By doing so, this methodology allowed the researcher to get the subjective sense of the participants and place them in the larger institutional discourses.

The fieldwork involved an important aspect of observation. The researcher entered the school world and followed the teaching sessions, religious practices, staff meetings, as well as casual communication in social areas. In this interaction, leadership was not only discussed as a discourse, but as practice. Appreciation gestures, communication patterns, discipline, and collaboration forms were also found to be ways of constructing socially constructed meaning.

These observations helped the researcher to follow the way in which values shifted towards abstract ideals to visible routines and common habits.

The empirical data was further supported by document analysis. The documents of the school vision and mission statements, policy guidelines, meeting records, and program descriptions contained in the institutional documents were reviewed to know how the leadership ideas were institutionalized and formalized. These were documents that gave an insight of the objectification of externalized values into organizational structures and normative frameworks. Reading these texts and taking interviews and field notes, the study was able to find convergences and contradictions between formal representations and lived practice.

The analysis of the data was done in an iterative and interpretative process. The researcher started with the organizing of the interview transcripts and field notes then the close reading to determine common recurring patterns of meaning. Thematic coding followed the dialectical triad of externalization, objectivation, and internalization as suggested by Berger, but the field emerged with its own themes, to the extent that they were relevant in the analysis. The analytical process entailed an unending back and forth movement between empirical content and thought as opposed to applying theory to the data. Constant comparison was used to explain relationships between leadership action, institutional norms and affective dispositions gradually.

Methodological triangulation made the findings credible. The information gained on the interview was triangulated with observational information and documentary evidence to provide coherence and depth of insight. The long-term involvement in the field helped the researcher to gain some contextual familiarity and minimize the superficial readings of events. Moreover, the selective confirmation of the members was carried out with reference to returns to the participants to talk about the important interpretations with the view that the analysis would be true to experiences of the participants as well as having some critical distance.

Results and Discussion

Externalization: Psychomotor Dimensions of Educational Practice

The externalization process at MA Al-Fatah Palembang is reflected in the behavioral changes of teachers and students, particularly in the development of psychomotor skills within the learning environment. Educators and school leaders demonstrate increasing competence in translating early childhood education values into concrete pedagogical actions, such as creating enjoyable learning environments, integrating educational games, and fostering student independence. These psychomotor developments embody not only technical teaching skills, but also the adaptive capacity to respond to cultural and social changes in both the school and the broader community.

The principal of MA Al-Fatah highlighted significant shifts in teacher and student behavior, stating that educators who previously relied heavily on conventional lecturing methods now employ more interactive strategies such as discussion, practice, and collaboration. Students have become more active, while teachers are more patient, reflective, and innovative. From Berger's perspective, these transformations represent externalization, whereby individual values, knowledge, and intentions are translated into tangible social actions. At MA Al-Fatah, this occurs when teachers and leaders articulate their educational vision, Islamic values, and learning ethos into daily classroom practices and religious-social activities.

Externalization in this context also reveals the institution's capacity to filter and adapt educational values to the Islamic and local cultural setting of Palembang. Rather than adopting external pedagogical models uncritically, educators contextualize concepts to align with

students' character, family norms, and community values. This indicates a leadership model that is culturally responsive, reflective, and committed to curriculum acculturation.

A senior teacher emphasized that learning at MA Al-Fatah seeks to balance cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. Students are not only taught theories but also practical skills and attitudes through religious practices and social projects, helping them develop cooperation, discipline, and responsibility. Thus, leadership at MA Al-Fatah functions as reflective leadership, rooted in externalization processes that integrate psychomotor skills with ethical and religious values. This leadership style is not merely managerial; it is adaptive, spiritual, and creative, shaping a vibrant learning culture grounded in the institution's social and religious realities.

Psychomotor development at MA Al-Fatah can be conceptualized in two stages: (1) Imitation, where students and teachers replicate observed behaviors, such as ablution movements, Qur'an recitation, or respectful conduct toward teachers. Imperfect imitation becomes a basis for improvement, while successful imitation reflects positive social-spiritual adaptation; (2) Manipulation, where individuals modify learned behaviors to suit their experiences and context. Teachers, for example, design active learning strategies incorporating Islamic values and Palembang cultural elements. At this stage, educators selectively adopt or reject external innovations based on alignment with Islamic educational principles.

Ultimately, psychomotor externalization at MA Al-Fatah encompasses not only mechanistic actions but also humanistic expression—merging thought, feeling, and will in educational activity. Interviews reveal that students who previously lacked confidence now demonstrate improved skills, independence, and spiritual maturity. This signifies that psychomotor development is gradual and systematic, facilitated by leadership that encourages exploration, practice, and habituation of religious values. Within Berger's framework, this represents a dynamic interplay between individual agency and the institutional environment.

Objectivation: Cognitive Development and Institutionalized Knowledge

Efforts to enhance educational quality at MA Al-Fatah Palembang are driven by leadership practices that focus not only on academic outcomes but also on the holistic development of students' knowledge, character, and religious awareness. Within Berger's theory, this corresponds to objectivation, the stage where externalized knowledge and values become institutionalized and collectively recognized as objective realities within the madrasah.

At MA Al-Fatah, objectivation occurs when individual pedagogical ideas—such as “character-based Islamic education” or “active and collaborative learning”—become embedded in the institutional culture. These values evolve into shared norms that guide teacher behavior, curriculum design, and classroom practice. Leadership thereby functions as the catalyst that transforms individual understanding into intersubjective institutional meaning.

Cognitively, objectivation is evident in the increased critical, reflective, and analytical thinking skills among educators. Regular teacher deliberations, professional trainings, and reflective discussions cultivate a deeper awareness of not only how teaching strategies are applied, but why they are necessary. Knowledge becomes an institutional asset, encompassing abilities such as remembering, explaining, analyzing, and solving problems creatively within the Islamic educational framework.

Parents also observe the cognitive impact of this objectivation process. One parent noted that their child has become more curious and critical, frequently asking questions related to religious and scientific concepts. This indicates that institutionalized values have successfully

shaped students' ways of thinking, promoting an inquisitive and reflective learning culture rooted in religious ethics.

Conceptually, the objectivation process at MA Al-Fatah consists of three cognitive stages: (1) Knowledge, involving the mastery of concepts, procedures, structures, and processes; (2) Understanding, where learners interpret, compare, classify, and contextualize concepts; (3) Rationality, where individuals connect events, draw conclusions, and apply analytical reasoning until the action becomes habitual and integrated into daily practice.

Through these stages, MA Al-Fatah effectively institutionalizes cognitive intelligence as a shared cultural and educational foundation. The principal's leadership serves to sustain this cognitive structure, ensuring that educational quality transcends mere academic scores and instead reflects a robust culture of meaningful learning grounded in Islamic values.

Internalization: Affective Dimensions and Value Formation

The affective dimension plays a central role in shaping the moral, spiritual, and emotional character of the MA Al-Fatah Palembang community. In Berger's framework, internalization occurs when the values embedded in the madrasah environment are absorbed and become part of individuals' inner consciousness.

At MA Al-Fatah, this internalization is evident in the way teachers and students embody values such as sincerity, respect, empathy, responsibility, and mutual care in their everyday interactions. These values are not taught solely through instruction but through modeling, habituation, and emotionally meaningful experiences. The principal consistently demonstrates discipline, honesty, empathy, and responsibility, serving as a primary model for affective leadership. Teachers further reinforce these values by showing patience, compassion, and respect toward diverse student abilities.

Berger's concept of primary and secondary socialization helps explain this process: 1) Primary socialization occurs through warm emotional relationships built during learning and religious activities, shaping students' empathy, trust, and moral awareness; 2) Secondary socialization occurs through professional interactions among teachers, training programs, meetings, and community engagement, reinforcing shared moral and spiritual commitments.

Affective development at MA Al-Fatah can be seen through three core processes: (1) Receptivity, the willingness to receive and value stimuli, forming the basis for attitudes and emotional awareness; (2) Valuing, as students and teachers express commitment to values through consistent participation and responsible action; and (3) Respect, the ability to appreciate differences, resolve conflicts constructively, and harmonize personal attitudes with communal norms.

Through these processes, moral and spiritual values evolve from abstract concepts into lived experiences that shape the collective identity of the institution. Leadership at MA Al-Fatah thus emerges as affective leadership, rooted in sincerity, emotional awareness, ethical commitment, and spiritual grounding. It demonstrates that authentic educational leadership arises from the integration of knowledge, action, and feeling, producing a civilized and meaningful learning community.

Discussion

The empirical evidence from MA Al-Fatah Palembang demonstrates that the process of externalization manifests strongly in the psychomotor domain: teachers and leaders translate values into visible classroom practices, from playful, student-centered pedagogy to ritualized religious actions. Such behavioral shifts moving away from rote lecture towards interactive

discussion, collaborative tasks, and culturally adapted educational games signal that pedagogy at the madrasah is no longer solely a matter of technique but a mode of social expression that communicates institutional ideals. This finding aligns with Berger's (1967) notion that values become socially real when they are enacted; it also resonates with studies showing that adaptive, context-sensitive pedagogies enable madrasah leaders to mediate between tradition and innovation (Fahmiyudin et al., 2025; Hajar, 2024; Kurniadi et al., 2025; Lathifah et al., 2025; Madkur et al., 2024).

At the level of objectivation, the research shows that individual pedagogical initiatives at MA Al-Fatah have been institutionalized into shared norms and organizational routines. Concepts such as “character-based Islamic education” and “active and collaborative learning” now function as taken-for-granted components of the school’s culture, shaping curriculum design, teacher professional development, and parental expectations. This institutionalization strengthens cognitive outcomes teachers report increased reflective practice and students exhibit greater curiosity and critical questioning thereby converting individual practices into collective cognitive capital. The role of leadership here is catalytic: by formalizing deliberation fora, training, and reflective inquiry, school leaders transform personal insight into intersubjective knowledge (Baker, 2015; Komrudin & Sukardjo, 2010; Luqman & Karim, 2025).

The process of internalization at MA Al-Fatah is expressed in affective and moral formation: values such as empathy, sincerity, and responsibility are not only taught but embodied through habituation, exemplary leadership, and relational pedagogies. Primary socialization through classroom relationships and religious practice, together with secondary socialization via professional meetings and community engagement, consolidates these values into the emotional dispositions of teachers and students. This affective embedding supports the view that authentic leadership in Islamic schools is as much ethical and spiritual as it is managerial—an insight echoed in the literature on prophetic, democratic, and transformational leadership models that emphasize moral formation and communal integrity (Al Naqbi, 2024; Arif, 2021; Mardiani, 2022; Ruhullah & Ushama, 2025; Setiawan, 2024).

Linking these three Bergerian stages to broader debates on leadership in Islamic education reveals both opportunities and tensions. On one hand, MA Al-Fatah’s integrated approach combining psychomotor enactment, cognitive institutionalization, and affective internalization illustrates how madrasahs can produce resilient, contextually grounded leadership capable of responding to 21st-century demands. On the other hand, the acculturation challenge remains: leaders must negotiate between preserving Islamic and local Palembang traditions and adopting innovations such as digital pedagogy and 21st-century skills. The literature suggests that transformational and collective leadership styles, including increased female leadership participation and democratic decision-making, can facilitate this negotiation by fostering inclusivity and stakeholder engagement (Iskandar & Widaystri, 2020; Luqman & Karim, 2025).

Finally, the MA Al-Fatah case has practical and theoretical implications. Practically, it recommends that madrasah leaders intentionally design opportunities for imitation and manipulation structured modelling followed by contextually adaptive practice to accelerate psychomotor learning and value formation. Theoretically, the case exemplifies Berger’s social construction framework as a productive heuristic for studying leadership acculturation in religious schooling: it clarifies how enacted practices become institutional facts and then innerized dispositions. Future research should examine how different leadership models (transformational, democratic, profetic) affect the pace and direction of acculturation across

diverse madrasah settings, particularly in relation to digitalization and curriculum innovation (Fahmiyudin et al., 2025; Raharjo et al., 2024).

Conclusion

This study highlights that the acculturation of educational leadership at MA Al-Fatah Palembang is a dynamic and continuous process shaped by the interaction of external, objective, and internal realities, as conceptualized in Peter L. Berger's social construction theory. The school's leadership practices are not merely administrative routines but are socially constructed through negotiation, interpretation, and adaptation within the institutional and cultural environment. The findings emphasize that leadership acculturation is influenced by shared values, collective meanings, and the reciprocal relationship between leaders, teachers, and the broader school community. As a result, the educational leadership model at MA Al-Fatah Palembang reflects a unique synthesis of local cultural identity and contemporary educational demands.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that future leadership development programs at MA Al-Fatah Palembang emphasize reflective practice, collaborative meaning-making, and continuous engagement with the institutional culture. Leaders should strengthen dialogic spaces where teachers and stakeholders can co-construct shared understandings of educational goals, thereby reinforcing organizational identity and coherence. Further research is suggested to explore empirical field data using qualitative case study methods to enrich theoretical insights with lived experiences. Such efforts will enable schools to develop culturally grounded leadership models that are adaptive, inclusive, and responsive to evolving educational challenges.

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