

## THE PRINCIPAL'S LEADERSHIP AS THE EFFORT TO BUILD STUDENTS' CHARACTER

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**Abstract.** Education is an effort to change behavior as well as building the character of the students. The decisive character of students is the foundation for the realization of national dignity in the future. In the education institution, the principal has the responsibility for making an effort to build the students' character. This research focused on investigating the principal's leadership in building students' character. The research method used is descriptive and verification methods—a quantitative method conducted in this research. The data collection, the direct observation within five junior high schools, interviews with five principals of junior high school, and questionnaire (closed and structured) distributed to 85 teachers. The samples determined by using Slovin formulas with a simple random sampling technique. The regression analysis technique used in the process of data analysis. The significant test was done by doing F-test. The result shows that principal leadership is one of the alternative ways to build students' character. Based on the result, the author suggests that (1) the principal improves information disclosure through communication by maximizing digital communication facilities and holding flag ceremony to convey information optimally. (2) The principal builds solid teamwork and participates in social activities through cooperation with local communities in protecting the environment.

**Keywords:** Principal's Leadership; Students' Character.

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**INTRODUCTION** In Educational success has seen from output competence. The success can be in the form of academic ability or positive character that can support the optimization of the potential academic development in pursuing a career. Character development is the process of education in an educational institution both at the level of elementary education, secondary education, and higher education is very dependent on the curriculum, educators, facilities, and infrastructure as well as leaders. At the level of elementary education, educational institutions led by the school principal.

All supporting factors are essential, especially the principal's leadership factor. Because the school principal directs, encourages, and fosters the human resources involved in the education process at the school, he leads so that the operational education can achieve its goals. Based on this understanding, the question in this study is how the principal's leadership builds the

character of students.

Regarding the character of students, their condition has experienced degradation. It has been seeing from the emergence of the phenomenon of student behavior. Among the declining politeness, saying the words that are not in place, there was bullying, brawls between schools, against the teacher. Based on these conditions, the focus of this research is on how the principal's leadership builds the character of students.

### PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP

"Leadership is an activity to influence people in achieving their goals" (Tunggara, 2001: 121). Leadership is "every effort of someone who tries to influence the behavior of a person or group" (Sudjana, 2012: 215). Leadership is an exercise of authority and marking of decisions "(Dubrin, 2005: 26). From that understanding, the author can conclude

that the notion of leadership is: 1) the art of influencing others so that they want to work voluntarily and enthusiastically towards achieving group goals. It requires the quality of leaders characterized by strong personality traits, authority, and able to use leadership behaviors and styles appropriately in influencing others 2) leadership is an interactive relationship between two or more people that involves a leader with people who led; therefore a leader should have the soul and leadership ability so that he can explain the functions and duties to move, convince, and motivate the subordinates in achieving the goals, and 3) leadership is an organizing process in the overall sense of achieving goals. "The leadership process is influenced by three factors, namely: leaders, followers, and situation factors" (Gitosudarmo and Sudita, 2002: 128).

The process is the interaction between leaders who are influenced by the quality, behavior and The leadership style that followers who accompanied by motivation, expectations, interests, and maturity of followers in accepting every leader's order or guidance in achieving organizational goals. This interaction influenced by situation factors such as task structure, work atmosphere, and organizational values or culture. A good leadership process will produce and increase productivity, satisfaction, and high morale of followers. Newstrom and Davis, (2002: 200): "Leadership is the process of influencing and supporting others to work enthusiastically toward achieving objectives.

Principal's leadership is the principal's way or effort in influencing, encouraging, guiding, directing, and moving teachers, staff, students, parents of students, and

other related parties, to work to achieve the goals set. In other words, it is about how the principal makes other people work to achieve the school's goals, Ditjend. Dikmenum (1999: 11). Principal's leadership is also an ability and readiness of the principal to influence, guide, direct and move school staff to work effectively to achieve the educational and teaching goals set by the Directorate General of Education and Culture (2002: 16). From the explanation above, it summarized that the principal's leadership is the ability of the principal to carry out his functions and duties as a leader supported by leadership qualities. The function of the principal as a leader consists of three functions, namely functions related to the objectives to achieve, functions related to the direction of the implementation of each activity, and functions related to the creation of a work climate.

As leaders, the Principals must be able to provide guidance and supervision, increase the willingness of the teaching staff, open two-way communication, and delegate tasks. Wahjosumidjo (2002: 10) argues that the principal must have a unique character that includes personality, necessary skills, experience, and professional knowledge, as well as administrative and supervisory knowledge.

The realization of superior ability analyzed from the personality, knowledge of the education, vision, and mission of the school, the ability to make decisions, and the ability to communicate. The principal's personality would be reflecting in the qualities of (1) honesty, (2) self-confidence, (3) responsibility, (4) risk-taking and decisions, (5) big-hearted, (6) stable emotions, (7) role model. The decisive character of the principal will be

a role model for students.

Measure the leadership of school principals, this study refers to the Minister of National Education Regulation No. 13 of 2007 that the dimensions of leadership of principals include: (1) Personality with indicators: (a) having high morals, developing cultures and traditions of noble morals, and being an example of noble morals for communities in schools/madrasahs;

(b) Has the integrity of personality as a leader; (c) Having a strong desire in self-development as a school/madrasah principal; (d) Be open in carrying out basic tasks and functions; (e) Controlling in dealing with problems at work as a principal/madrasah; (f) Has the talent and interest in the position of educational leader. (2) Managerial with indicators: (a) Arranging school/madrasah planning for various levels of planning; (b) Developing school/madrasah organizations as needed; (c) Leading schools/madrasahs in the context of optimizing the use of school/madrasah resources; (d) Managing change and developing schools/madrasahs towards effective learning organizations; (e) Creating a school/madrasah culture and climate that is

conducive and innovative for student learning; (f) Managing teachers and staff in the context of utilizing human resources optimally; (g) Manage school/madrasah facilities and infrastructure in the context of optimum utilization; (h) Managing school/madrasah and community relations in the context of seeking support for ideas, learning resources, and school/madrasah financing;

(i) Managing students in the context of acceptance of new students, and the placement and capacity building of

students (j) Manage curriculum development and learning activities by the direction and objectives of national education (k) Managing school/madrasah finance by the

principles of accountable, transparent and efficient management (l) Managing the administration of schools/madrasahs in supporting the achievement of school/madrasah goals (m) Manage select service units of schools/ madrasahs in supporting learning activities and activities of students in schools/madrasahs (n) Manage school/madrasah information systems in support of program preparation and decision making (o) Utilizing information technology advancements to improve school/madrasah learning and management (p) Monitor, evaluate and report on the implementation of school/madrasah program activities with appropriate procedures, and plan for follow-up. (3) Entrepreneurship with indicators: (a) Creating innovations that are useful for the development of schools/madrasah (b) Work hard to achieve school/madrasah success as an effective learning organization (c) Has a strong motivation to succeed in carrying out their primary duties and functions as school/madrasah leaders; (d) Never give up and always look for the best solution in facing obstacles faced by schools /madrasahs (e) Having an entrepreneurial instinct in managing school/madrasah production/ service activities as a source of student learning. (4) Supervision with indicators: (a) Planning an academic supervision program to improve teacher professionalism; (b) Carry out academic supervision of teachers using appropriate approaches and supervision techniques; (c) Following up on the results of the academic supervision of teachers in the

context of increasing teacher professionalism. (5) Social with indicators: (a) Cooperating with other parties for the benefit of the school/madrasah. (b) Participating in community social activities. (c) Having social sensitivity towards other people or groups.

Principals, as leaders in schools, are required to have personalities in the form of noble character and integrity. Therefore, the principal can help build student character through role models. Exemplary school principals can be directly followed by students or through strengthening and collaboration with teachers. As a manager, the principal can make school rules conducive to the realization of the character of students, especially regulations relating to discipline in the school. With the consistent implementation of the discipline, it tends to become a habit and form a good student character.

### THE STUDENTS' CHARACTER

Recently, the term character has surfaced again. Such conditions are made possible by the erosion of the nation's character. The term character itself implies psychiatric, moral, or moral characteristics that distinguish one person from another: character, the character" (Indonesian Dictionary, 1995: 445). In the Poerwadarminta Dictionary, characters interpreted as mental characteristics, morals, or character that distinguishes one person from another "(Ministry of National Education, 2010: 44). Character is a personality in terms of the ethical or moral starting point. The character has the same meaning as moral. The moral is a condition of thoughts, feelings, speech, and human behavior related

to good and bad values (Asmani, 2011). According to Simon Philips, that character is a collection of values that lead to a system, which underlies the thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors displayed (Muslich, 2011). According to Cronbach (1977: 57), "Character is not the accumulation of separate habits and ideas. Character is an aspect of personality. Beliefs, feelings, and actions are interrelated. Changing characters is a rearranging personality. A small lesson about the principles of good behavior will not be useful if it is not integrated with people's belief systems about themselves, about others, and the good of the community".

Character education is "an effort to educate students to be able to make wise decisions and practice them in everyday life so they can make a positive contribution to their environment" (Ratna Megawangi, 2004: 95). "The character will be formed if the activity carried out repeatedly and routinely until it becomes a habit, which eventually does not only become a habit but has become a character. Character education can apply to all subjects. Every subject related to norms needs to be developed and linked to everyday life "(Dini Palupi Putri, 2018). Character is "a process of transforming the values of life to be developed in a person's personality so that it becomes one in the behavior of that person's life" (Fakry Gaffar, 2010: 1). Building character requires a long time and must be done continuously (Marzuki and Lysa Hapsari, 2015: 143). Because building character requires a long time and must be sustainable, it is appropriate when building the character of students

starting from the leader, namely the principal.

Referring to the Minister of Education and Culture Regulation No. 23 Year 2015 concerning the Development of Character Building, the basic concept of character education in the growth of character aims: (1) Making the school a pleasant learning park for students, teachers, and education personnel; (2) Developing good habits as a form of character education in the family, school and community; (3) making education a movement that involves the government, regional government, community, and family, and (4) Fostering a harmonious learning environment and culture between families, schools and communities.

According to Law No. 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, "national education functions to develop capabilities and shape the character and civilization of a dignified nation to educate the life of the nation, aiming at developing the potential of students to become human beings who believe in and devote to God Who Almighty, noble, healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent and become citizens of a democratic and responsible." Forming character and virtuous is a character. The meaning, based on the law, character education in developing Indonesian character is a necessity. Formation of character starts from an early age will foster a distinctive national character culture so that it becomes the primary key in building a nation. Character education aims to make students as the nation's successors have good character and morals, to create a just, safe, and prosperous national life. It

said that character education is everything that teachers do in influencing the character of students. To develop character, the teacher conducts direction, habituation, example, reinforcement, and punishment. In turn, students form positive character; namely, students become more religious, honest, hard work, discipline, sense of responsibility, love the motherland, care for the environment, strong social spirit. A good character is a character that is by the values adopted by a nation.

The principles used in the development of the nation's value or character education are:

(1) Values can be taught or strengthen the noble values of the nation's culture through thought, taste, exercise, heartfelt, and sports; associated with the object studied that was integrating with the subject matter. (2) The process of developing national values/characters is carried out through each subject and in each learning activity; (3) The process of developing the nation's character values is ongoing since students enter the education unit (4) Discussion of various parable objects that learned to do thought though, if they feel, *qolbu*, and sports to meet the demands and emergence self-awareness as servants of God, members of the community and nation and citizens, and as part of the environment in which they live; (5) Self-development program through routine activities of school culture, modeling, spontaneous activities at the time of the event, conditioning and integrating character value education with subject matter, and referring to the development of the necessary competencies of each subject (Saiful

Bahri, 2015).

According to D.D. Suryatri (2013: 68), the role of implementing character education includes: (1) Fostering character, (honest, intelligent, caring, tough) is the main task of education; (2) Changing bad habits step by step, which eventually becomes good. Can change happy but ugly habits that eventually become hateful but become good; (3) Character is a trait that implanted in the soul and with that trait, one can spontaneously radiate attitudes, actions and actions; (4) Sincerity; (f) Confidence; (g) Anti-harassment and violence; (h) Not force the will; (i) Love the environment; (j) Cooperation between followers of religion and beliefs; (k) Respect for differences in religion and belief; (l) Protect the small and excluded (2) Nationalists who place the interests of the nation and state above self and group interests with indicators: (a) Obey the law; (b) Discipline; (c) Love the motherland; (d) Respect for cultural, ethnic and religious diversity; (e) Appreciation of the nation's own culture; (f) Safeguarding the nation's cultural wealth; (g) Willing to sacrifice; (h) Excellent and achievers; (i) Protect the environment. (3) Independent, which is not dependent on others and uses energy, thoughts, time to realize hopes, dreams, and ideals with indicators: (a) Work ethic (hard work); (b) Resilient resilience; (c) Fighting power; (d) Professional; (e) Creative; (f) Courage; (g) Become a lifelong learner. (4) Integrity, namely efforts to make oneself a person who can always trust in words, actions and work with indicators: (a) Honesty; (b) Justice; (c) Modeling; (d) Loyalty; (e) Respecting

Character is a trait manifested in the ability of the impulse from within to finish showing good behavior and containing virtue.

To measure student learners (students) refer to the central values of the priority character of education strengthening the character of the Inspectorate General of the Ministry of Education and Culture (2019), namely: (1) Religious that reflects the faith in God Almighty with indicators: (a) Tolerance; (b) Peace-loving; (c) Friendship; (d) Firm Establishment; (e)

the dignity of individuals (especially persons with disabilities); (f) Anti-corruption; (g) Moral commitment; (h) Responsibility; (i) Love for truth. (5) Cooperation which is to carry out activities together hand in hand to realize the needs/desires together with indicators: (a) Having a culture of *silaturakhim*; (b) Having a spirit of togetherness; (c) Having a spirit please help; (d) Have a group work spirit.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This research conducted at a junior high school in Indramayu Regency. The research method used is descriptive and verification methods. The research approach is a quantitative method. Data collection techniques: observation to five junior high schools to determine the conditions of student interaction and to get an overview of the student's character in outline. Interviews with five principals of related schools. Interviews were conduct to complete data that had not revealed through a questionnaire. Distribution of questionnaires (closed and structured), were distributed to 85 teachers. Determination of the number of samples using the Slovin formula with a

simple random sampling technique. The regression analysis techniques used in processing the data analysis process. The significance test used the F-test.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The questionnaire distributed to junior high school teachers in a simple random manner. Then, the questionnaire was selected to see its completeness and validity. All collected questionnaires were

analyzed to continue in the next step, namely tabulation and statistical calculations assisted by SPSS Version 22. Before statistical calculations, the following shows the condition of the principal's leadership based on respondents' ratings. The leadership dimensions of the principal are assessed based on personality, managerial, entrepreneurship, supervision, and social.

**Table 1:** Principal Leadership

Dimension	Achievement Score	Maximum Score	Achievement Percentage	Criteria
Personality	3,02	5	60,40	Good
Managerial	2,94	5	58,80	Enough
Entrepreneurship	3,12	5	62,40	Good
Supervision	3,18	5	63,60	Good
Social	2,66	5	53,20	Enough

The dimensions of personality, entrepreneurship, and supervision are already quite right. Even though the score only slightly exceeds the proper criteria. The meaning is that these dimensions still need attention to be further improved. There are still two dimensions of the principal's leadership variable, which is considered not good; the managerial, and social dimensions. On the managerial side, it relates to managing school and community in the context of seeking support for ideas

and learning resources. Other elements that need attention are the management of school information systems in supporting program preparation and decision making, lack of utilizing information technology advancements to improve school learning and management. Also, it is weak in monitoring reporting on program implementation activities. The social dimension involves cooperation with other parties for the benefit of the school and lacks social sensitivity.

**Table 2:** The Condition of Students' Character

Dimension	Achievement Score	Maximum Score	Achievement Score	Criteria
Religious	3,01	5	60,20	Good
Nasionalist	3,25	5	65,00	Good
Independent	2,85	5	57,00	Enough
Integrity	3,08	5	61,60	Good
Mutual Cooperation	2,93	5	58,60	Enough

The religious, nationalist, and integrity dimensions categorized as useful. Independent and cooperation dimensions should be improved. Student independence considered lacking in terms of learning enthusiasm, fighting spirit, and resilience in facing challenges. Furthermore, the dimensions of cooperation, the guidance is needed in terms of the spirit of togetherness and teamwork.

## DISCUSSION

As stated above, the statistical calculation in this study assisted with SPSS Version 22. The tables of statistical calculation results are not displayed here, but the numerical data needed to support the analysis written referring to the statistical calculation table. The magnitude of the influence of the principal's leadership on the character of students, it is taken from the t-value in the calculation of coefficients with testing criteria if the level of significance is less than 0.05, then the principal's leadership influences the character of students. Based on the t-test results table, it obtained that the t-count value of the principal's leadership variable has a value of p-value 0,000 <0.05, which means that it has a significant distribution. It means that the principal's leadership influences the character of students. Regression equation  $y = a + bx$  from the calculation results obtained  $y = 33.436 + 0.508x$ . A constant of 33,436 states that if there is an increase in the value of the principal's leadership variables, the character of the students is 533,436. The regression coefficient of 0.508 states that every change of one score or the principal's leadership value will give a score of 0.508. "A leader is

someone who can influence the behavior of others in his work by using power. Power is the ability to direct and influence subordinates regarding the tasks that must carry out "(Herawati Syamsul, 2017). "In shaping the character of students, principals should adopt exemplary, discipline, instructional leadership and quality strategies, and empower all school members" (Ahmad Suriansyah and Aslamiah, 2015).

Furthermore, to determine the magnitude of the influence of school leadership on the character of students taken from the calculation of the coefficient of determination, that the R Square of 0.284, this means that the leadership of the principal influences the coefficient of determination (KD) =  $R^2 \times 100\%$  or  $0.284 \times 100\% = 28.4\%$  characters students. In comparison, the remaining 71.6% is influenced by other factors not examined. "Character education must be

implemented in the education center. Children will grow into a person of character if they can grow in an environment of character so that the nature of every child develop optimally. Considering that the child's environment is not only a micro-family environment, all parties (family, school, mass media, the business community, etcetera).

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

After discussing the data, it concluded that the principal's leadership has a positive and significant effect on the character of students. Therefore, efforts to build the character of students by improving the principal's leadership

Start from the results of the study; the authors suggest the principal: (1) to

increases information disclosure through communication by maximizing digital communication facilities and holding flag ceremonies is an opportunity to convey information optimally. (2) to build a reliable work team and participate in community social activities, through cooperation with local communities in protecting the environment.

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