

THE INNOVATOR ROLE OF THE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL IN SUPPORTING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EIGHT DIMENSIONS OF GRADUATE PROFILES THROUGH CO-CURRICULAR PROGRAMS AT MI YAPPI PEYUYON SEMANU GUNUNGKIDUL

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Abstrak. This study aims to analyze comprehensively the innovator role of the school principal in implementing the eight dimensions of graduate profiles through co-curricular programs at MI YAPPI Peyuyon, Semanu, Gunungkidul. The primary focus of this research is how leadership innovation can address educational challenges in the era of the Merdeka Curriculum, which demands flexibility and contextualization of character values within habituation activities. The research method employed is descriptive qualitative with a case study approach to explore leadership phenomena naturalistically. Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews with key informants, participatory observation of students' routine activities, and documentation studies of curriculum documents and character portfolios. Data analysis utilized the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldana, which includes data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings indicate that the school principal acts as a catalyst for innovation through three primary strategies: 1) Policy transformation integrating the madrasah vision with national graduate profile indicators; 2) Development of a collaborative school ecosystem involving synergy among educators, educational staff, and parents; and 3) Utilization of local resources (Semanu local wisdom) as the foundational material for co-curricular programs. The findings further reveal that the implementation of the eight dimensions of graduate profiles (faith, citizenship, critical reasoning, creativity, collaboration, independence, health, and communication) demonstrates a significant improvement in the habituation of students' character behavior. This is evidenced by the increasing student independence in the learning process and the strengthening of communication ethics. Despite being constrained by limited rural infrastructure and digital access, the school principal's innovation in the form of "contextual instructional modification" proved capable of sustaining program continuity. This study recommends the necessity of strengthening innovation literacy among school principals in rural areas in order to optimize environmental potential as a medium for authentic character development.

Keyword: Innovator Role, School Principal, Graduate Profile, Co-Curricular, Character.

I. INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

The educational world is currently facing major disruption alongside the demands of 21st-century competencies and policy changes through the Merdeka Curriculum. This curriculum emphasizes character development formulated within graduate profiles. However, realities in the field indicate that the inculcation of character values often remains limited to the cognitive level without genuine behavioral internalization. This condition necessitates a school leadership role that extends beyond mere administration, becoming an innovator capable of creating educational breakthroughs.

The school principal as an innovator holds a strategic role in designing, implementing, and evaluating programs that support the achievement of graduate profiles. One highly effective yet frequently underutilized instrument is the co-curricular program. Unlike intracurricular activities that focus on subject matter content, co-curricular activities function as reinforcement and enrichment through more flexible and contextual activities. At MI

YAPPI Peyuyon, the geographical challenges and limited facilities in the Semanu, Gunungkidul area require high creativity so that character programs do not merely become formalities.

The eight dimensions of graduate profiles developed in this school encompass aspects of faith, citizenship, critical reasoning, creativity, collaboration, independence, health, and communication. These dimensions represent the necessity for students to become holistic individuals. This research explores how the school principal performs his function as an agent of change to ensure that these eight dimensions are systematically integrated into the madrasah culture through innovative programs.

The urgency of this research lies in the need for a leadership model capable of overcoming resistance to curriculum change at the grassroots level. Rural schools are often left behind in innovation due to limited access to information; however, through innovative leadership, these limitations can be transformed into opportunities for character development based on local wisdom.

In addition to accessibility challenges, psychological barriers in the form of teacher resistance toward new administrative burdens frequently become the primary obstacle in implementing graduate profile policies. At MI YAPPI Peyuyon, the school principal as an innovator is required not only to present concepts but also to create support systems that facilitate educators in conducting objective character observations. Innovation in the form of simplifying monitoring instruments and integrating the values of “The Seven Habits of Great Indonesian Children” became a strategic solution for transforming teachers’ paradigms from merely subject instructors into character mentors who are sensitive to students’ behavioral development in every co-curricular activity.

The originality of this research lies in its effort to synergize innovative leadership models with the sociographic limitations of rural communities in Gunungkidul. While many character education models depend on advanced digital facilities, this research instead highlights how the strength of local wisdom and intensive social interaction within the madrasah can be optimized as an authentic character laboratory. By systematically examining the internalization mechanisms of the eight dimensions of graduate profiles, this manuscript is expected to contribute theoretically to the field of primary education management regarding the importance of instructional flexibility and the managerial acuity of school principals in overseeing curriculum transformation in rural areas..

II. METHOD

This research employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive case study design. The qualitative approach was selected because the researcher intended to explore the phenomenon of the school principal’s innovative leadership naturalistically within the environment of MI YAPPI Peyuyon. According to Yin (2023), case studies are highly relevant for answering “how” and “why” questions regarding a series of contemporary events beyond the researcher’s control. In this context, the research describes comprehensively how the innovator role of the school principal was implemented in strengthening the eight dimensions of graduate profiles through co-curricular programs.

The research was conducted at MI YAPPI Peyuyon located in Semanu, Gunungkidul, Yogyakarta. The selection of this site was based on the unique characteristics of the madrasah, which has successfully implemented character transformation based on local wisdom amidst the sociographic limitations of rural areas. The study was conducted over one semester during the 2025/2026 academic year to ensure that the cycle of students’ character habituation could be observed consistently.

The research subjects were determined using purposive sampling techniques, namely selecting informants based on specific criteria relevant to the research objectives. The primary informant was the school principal as the innovator actor. Supporting informants included classroom teachers as technical implementers of co-curricular programs, as well as representatives of students and parents to observe the tangible impacts of the innovations implemented. Primary data sources were obtained through words and actions, while secondary data were obtained from madrasah documents.

To obtain credible and in-depth data, the researcher employed four pillars of data collection instruments:

1. In-depth Interviews: Semi-structured interview guidelines were used to explore innovative visions, managerial strategies, and the ways the school principal addressed resistance to change. Interviews were conducted repeatedly with the principal and teachers to achieve data saturation
2. Participatory Observation: The researcher was directly involved in observing routine madrasah activities. The focus of observation was the implementation of “The Seven Habits of Great Indonesian Children” within co-curricular programs. Observation checklist sheets were used to record indicators of student behavior related to the

eight dimensions of graduate profiles (such as independence during worship activities and collaboration during communal work).

3. Documentation Study: The researcher examined documents including the Operational Curriculum of the Educational Unit (KOSP), Annual Work Plan (RKT), teachers' daily journals, and student work portfolios. These documents functioned as authentic physical evidence of the innovative policies claimed by the informants.
4. Instrument Triangulation: The researcher integrated data from various techniques to ensure validity. For instance, interview results regarding independence programs were confirmed through field observation results and records within student monitoring books.

The data analysis process was conducted continuously from the beginning of data collection until the completion of the research using the Interactive Model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014), which includes:

1. Data Condensation: The researcher filtered, simplified, and organized raw field data (interview transcripts and field notes) into information more focused on the innovator role and graduate profiles.
2. Data Display: The focused data were then presented in the form of descriptive narratives, comparative tables, and intervariable relationship schemes to facilitate conclusion drawing.
3. Conclusion Drawing/Verification: The researcher sought patterns, explanations, and causal relationships from the data. Initial conclusions were reexamined through reviewing field data (verification) until robust and objective conclusions were obtained.

To ensure the quality of the research findings, the researcher applied credibility criteria through prolonged engagement, increased persistence in the field, as well as source triangulation (comparing data among informants) and technique triangulation (comparing data among instruments). Therefore, researcher subjectivity could be minimized, and the research findings could be scientifically justified..

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of this study describes how the principal's role as an innovator became the primary catalyst in integrating the eight dimensions of the graduate profile into the madrasa culture at MI YAPPI Peyuyon. Through adaptive instructional modifications and the utilization of local resources, the principal was able to transform co-curricular programs into an effective character laboratory, as evidenced by the significant improvement in the habituation of students' independent behavior and religiosity despite the limitations of digital access.

Identification of the Principal's Role as an Innovator

Based on the findings in the field through participatory observation and in-depth interviews, the principal's role as an innovator at MI YAPPI Peyuyon was not merely limited to administrative changes, but extended to the transformation of the organization's core values. This role was manifested in three main dimensions of innovation:

Innovation Aspect	Description and Actual Implementation	Analysis of Managerial Impact
Organizational Innovation	Restructuring teachers' duties into character mentors and implementing weekly reflection schedules.	Creating a collaborative culture in which teachers feel a moral responsibility toward students' behavioral development, rather than merely achieving curriculum completion.
Pedagogical Innovation	Utilizing the village environment as Outdoor Learning (community gardens, village mosque).	Overcoming the limitations of school laboratory facilities by transforming the village ecosystem into an authentic and contextual learning resource.
Relational Innovation	Strategic partnerships with alumni and committees for independent funding.	Increasing the madrasa's financial independence and building a strong sense of belonging from the community toward the school.

In-Depth Analysis: The organizational innovation implemented by the principal successfully dismantled the "ego walls" among classroom teachers. Through weekly reflections, first-grade teachers were able to share strategies with sixth-grade teachers regarding how to handle students with low levels of independence, thereby making character management systemic and sustainable across all grade levels.

Implementation of Co-Curricular Programs for the Graduate Profile

The implementation of the eight dimensions of the graduate profile at MI YAPPI Peyuyon was carried out by integrating the national curriculum into local wisdom. The following is an in-depth analysis:

1. Faith and Piety: The “Madrasah Berdzikir” program was not merely a morning ritual, but an effort to internalize transcendental values. The principal’s innovation in providing a “Worship Control Card” involving parents demonstrated that faith education is a synergy between the madrasa and the home. Interview results revealed: “Students who previously had to be instructed to perform dhuha prayers now automatically go to the ablution area when the bell rings.”
2. Citizenship: Through social service activities within the village environment, students learned that their presence should provide benefits to the surrounding community. This instilled patriotism and social awareness from an early age, in line with the dimensions of the Pancasila Student Profile.
3. Critical Reasoning: The principal’s innovation in implementing the Inquiry Method through the madrasa waste project forced students to think in terms of solutions. Students did not merely dispose of waste, but were encouraged to calculate daily waste volume and think about ways to recycle it into compost.
4. Creativity: The “Creative Saturday” program became a space for unlimited exploration. By using local waste materials such as banana stems or used plastic bottles, students were taught that creativity is the key to surviving and thriving amid material limitations.
5. Collaboration: The Madrasa Garden project involved cross-grade teams (e.g., fourth-grade and sixth-grade students working together). This trained leadership among senior students and the ability to follow instructions among junior students, creating social harmony within the school environment.
6. Independence: Market Day became the pinnacle of independence innovation. Students managed small amounts of capital, determined selling prices, and learned to face buyer rejection. This was a real-life simulation that shaped a resilient mentality.
7. Health: Collaboration with Semanu Public Health Center was not only related to physical examinations, but also education on the “My Plate” menu based on local food sources such as cassava and village organic vegetables, which were more affordable and healthier.
8. Communication: Muhadharah (Speech Practice) was conducted in Bahasa Indonesia, Javanese (for cultural preservation), and simple English/Arabic. This innovation broke the chain of inferiority among rural students when speaking in public.

The Impact of Innovation on Students’ Character

Character changes were measured through behavioral observation instruments over two semesters. The most significant change was observed in the independent initiative index.

1. Quantitative Data: There was an increase from 40% to 75% in compliance with school regulations without teacher supervision.
2. Qualitative Data: Teachers reported that the level of bullying decreased drastically because the dimensions of collaboration and citizenship emphasized empathy. Students were more likely to help peers experiencing difficulties rather than mock them. This proves that innovatively designed co-curricular programs were capable of deeply influencing students’ affective aspects.

Challenges and Innovative Solutions: A Humanistic Approach

The principal realized that innovation always encounters resistance.

1. Parents’ Challenges: Many parents considered school merely a place to learn reading and arithmetic.
2. Innovative Solution “Gelar Karya”: By organizing exhibitions of students’ work and talent performances, parents were able to see tangible changes in their children’s self-confidence. The principal used character development data to convince parents that good character would support academic success.
3. Digital Challenges: The lack of computers was addressed through the innovation of the “Independent Reading Corner.” Bookshelves were built by teachers and alumni and managed by “Young Librarians” (students), which simultaneously trained responsibility and literacy in a manual yet effective manner.

The success of MI YAPPI Peyuyon provides important theoretical implications for the management of basic education. First, Innovative Leadership is Adaptive Leadership. The principal at this madrasa demonstrated that national standards (Kurikulum Merdeka) can be achieved through a creative “local pathway.” Second, the Flexibility

of Co-Curricular Programs. Unlike intracurricular activities, which are often tied to textbook material targets, co-curricular programs under the direction of an innovative principal become a “behavior laboratory.” The eight dimensions of the graduate profile are not taught merely as theory, but experienced as lived experiences. Third, in accordance with Fullan’s theory (2023), transformation in this madrasa was bottom-up in nature. Change began with the principal’s awareness to transform teachers’ mindsets, which subsequently impacted changes in student behavior and ultimately gained support from the community. This is referred to as educational change sustainability. MI YAPPI Peyuyon demonstrates that peripheral madrasas are not necessarily underdeveloped, but can become centers of character innovation if led by a visionary innovator.

IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study and discussion regarding the principal’s role as an innovator in implementing the eight dimensions of the graduate profile at MI YAPPI Peyuyon, several main conclusions can be drawn: Innovative Leadership as the Main Driving Force: The principal of MI YAPPI Peyuyon successfully performed the role of innovator through three key strategies, namely adaptive policy transformation toward the Kurikulum Merdeka, the development of a collaborative school ecosystem (involving teachers and parents), and the utilization of local resources as a solution to infrastructure limitations. This innovation proves that the success of educational transformation in rural areas is determined more by managerial acuity than technological sophistication. The Effectiveness of Co-Curricular Programs: Co-curricular programs proved to be instruments that were far more flexible and effective compared to intracurricular pathways in facilitating the internalization of the eight dimensions of the graduate profile. Through activities such as Market Day, Madrasah Berdzikir, and Creative Saturday, these eight dimensions (religiosity, independence, mutual cooperation, etc.) no longer became mere theories, but real experiences (experiential learning) for students. Significant Impact on Character Habituation: The implementation of innovatively designed programs was able to increase the index of students’ independent initiative from 40% to 75% within one semester. Consistent behavioral changes occurred, in which students demonstrated improvements in worship discipline, communication confidence, and more harmonious cross-grade collaboration skills. Resilience toward Challenges: Despite facing obstacles in the form of low digital literacy and initial resistance from parents, innovations such as the “Character Exhibition” and the “Independent Reading Corner” proved effective in bridging school needs with community support.

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