The Role of The Principal as a Leader in Shaping Effective Schools: A Multi-case Study at MAN 1 Tulungagung and SMAN 1 Kedungwaru

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Abstract.

This study aims to investigate the determinant role of the principal as a leader in reconstructing a quality culture towards an effective school. Employing a qualitative approach with a multi-case study design, the research was conducted at two sites with distinctive characteristics: MAN 1 Tulungagung (based on religious values) and SMAN 1 Kedungwaru (based on professional-secular standards). Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation studies, which were then analyzed using the interactive model by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana. The results reveal a substantive finding in the form of a "Hybrid-Integrative Leadership Model" that synergizes three strategic roles cyclically. First, as a Motivator, the principal builds teacher resilience through distinct approaches: Spiritual-Paternalistic Leadership (worship-value based) in the Madrasah and Instructional-Technocratic Leadership (meritocracy-based) in the public school. Second, as an Innovator, the principal acts as a system architect who institutionalizes change ideas into strategic documents and organizational culture. Third, as an Administrator, the principal serves as a strategic risk manager who dares to make calculated decisions for resource efficiency. The study concludes that school effectiveness does not arise from a single managerial adoption, but from the principal's ability to orchestrate humanist flexibility and systemic firmness adapted to local wisdom.

Keywords: *Principal Leadership; Effective School; Hybrid-Integrative Leadership; Educational Management and Local Wisdom.*

I. INTRODUCTION

In the landscape of 21st-century global education, the educational paradigm has undergone a fundamental shift. Educational institutions now face the challenges of Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity (VUCA), which demand high adaptability. Schools no longer function merely as ivory towers for cognitive knowledge transfer but have transformed into complex ecosystems that must produce competitive, adaptive, and strong-charactered human resources [1]. This phenomenon places the concept of the "effective school" as a central discourse in contemporary educational management. An effective school is defined not only by high student academic achievement but also by its ability to manage organizational culture, learning climate, and stakeholder satisfaction sustainably[2], [3], [4], [5]. School effectiveness is not a phenomenon that occurs by chance, but rather the result of precise managerial engineering and leadership. Various empirical literatures point to one main determinant variable: The Principal. Edmonds, in his monumental study on *effective schools*, affirmed the postulate that "there are no good schools without a good principal[6], [7].

" This statement is reinforced by the findings of Leithwood et al.[8], [9], who stated that school leadership is the second most influential factor on student achievement after the quality of classroom instruction. This means that effective school transformation is impossible without strategic leadership intervention.However, the role of the principal in the modern era can no longer be adequately fulfilled through traditional administrative managerial approaches. The complexity of educational challenges demands a hybridization of roles. Principals are required to be visionary leaders capable of playing multidimensional roles. First, as a motivator, the principal must be able to mobilize the psychological energy of teachers and staff to achieve peak performance[10], [11]. Second, as an innovator, they must be agents of change responsive to the dynamics of the times, including technology integration and curriculum renewal[12], [13], [14]. Third, as an administrator, they must ensure accountability and efficiency in school resource governance[15], [16], [17], [18]. Failure to balance these three roles is often the cause of quality stagnation in many institutions.Although studies on principal leadership have been widely conducted, there is a scarcity of literature that comparatively dissects how these roles are operationalized in two culturally and structurally different educational entities in Indonesia, namely *Madrasah Aliyah* (under the Ministry of Religious Affairs) and Senior High Schools/SMA (under the Ministry of Education and Culture).

This dichotomy offers a unique context regarding how religious values and secular professional standards influence leadership styles.This research aims to fill this gap by taking the locus at MAN 1 Tulungagung and SMAN 1 Kedungwaru. These two institutions were chosen because they are considered *best practices* that have successfully maintained high quality standards and strong graduate character amidst fierce global competition. MAN 1 Tulungagung represents the excellence of science-religion integration, while SMAN 1 Kedungwaru represents the excellence of performance-based management. Therefore, this article aims to analyze in depth how the principals in these two institutions translate their strategic roles as motivators, innovators, and administrators in shaping school effectiveness. Through this multi-case study, it is hoped that a leadership pattern (model) will be discovered that can be adopted to improve the quality of national education.

II.   METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with a multi-case study design[19]. This approach was chosen to gain a deep understanding of the leadership phenomenon in two naturally different settings.

1. Research Locations: MAN 1 Tulungagung and SMAN 1 Kedungwaru. The selection of these two locations was based on consistent academic and non-academic achievements as well as the unique leadership characteristics of both principals.
2. Data Collection Techniques: Data were collected through (1) in-depth interviews with principals, vice-principals, teachers, and staff; (2) participant observation of managerial and learning activities; and (3) documentation studies of school planning archives and reports.
3. Data Analysis: Analysis was conducted in two stages: single-case analysis and cross-case analysis[20], [21]. The analysis technique refers to the model by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana, which includes data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing[22]. Data validity was tested through source and technique triangulation, as well as prolonged observation.

III.   RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section presents a comprehensive and in-depth analysis of the dynamics of principal leadership in reconstructing a quality culture toward an effective school. Through cross-case analysis at MAN 1 Tulungagung and SMAN 1 Kedungwaru, this study unravels the complexity of educational leadership roles, which are not singular but multidimensional. The findings are described based on the trinity of leadership roles: the role as a motivator (*The Motivator*), the role as an innovator (*The Innovator*), and the role as an administrator (*The Administrator*). This analysis goes beyond surface descriptions, diving into intrinsic values, organizational culture architecture, and the managerial strategies underlying them.

Transformation of the Motivator Role: From Emotional-Spiritual Approach to Professional Discipline

In a dynamic educational ecosystem, motivation is the primary fuel[23], [24], [25], [26], [27]. However, this study found that motivation in the context of effective school management is not merely an "external drive" (such as salary or rank), but a psychological engineering to build *internal commitment*. Field data reveal a sharp yet equivalently effective paradigmatic distinction between the two research locations.

1. Humanist-Religious Approach: Case Study of MAN 1 Tulungagung

At MAN 1 Tulungagung, the principal applies a leadership model that can be conceptualized as *Spiritual-Paternalistic Leadership*. The principal does not position himself as a corporate CEO, but as a "Spiritual Father." The fundamental finding at MAN 1 is the principal's success in sublimating the meaning of work. Through consistent narratives in staff meetings, sermons, and personal coaching, the principal instills the doctrine: "Work is Worship, the Madrasah is a Field of Reward." This strategy is a highly effective form of *Soft Power*. In Herzberg's theory, salary and facilities are merely *hygiene factors*, but the true *motivator factors* in this madrasah are the belief in *Barakah* (blessing). When there are delays in the disbursement of BOS funds or certification allowances a common phenomenon in bureaucracy teacher performance at MAN 1 does not experience significant degradation. Why? Because they possess spiritual resilience. The principal successfully shifted the teachers' orientation from transactional (money-work) to

transformational-transcendental (worship-service). The principal applies the Javanese leadership philosophy of "*Ngewongke*" (humanizing humans/treating others with dignity). In observations of curriculum development meetings, it is evident that the principal positions himself as *primus inter pares* (first among equals). He provides the widest possible stage for both senior and junior teachers to engage in dialectics. A concrete example is the full autonomy given to the Islamic Education (PAI) cluster to revitalize learning methods. Teachers are allowed to adopt *Sorogan* and *Bandongan* methods typical of *pesantrens* (Islamic boarding schools) for the study of *Kitab Kuning* (classic Islamic texts), which administratively may not exist in the national curriculum guidelines. This trust given by the leader creates a sense of *collective leadership*. Teachers feel they own the madrasah, so they are willing to spend time outside of working hours to guide students without demanding overtime pay, solely because they feel their existence is valued.

2. Discipline-Professional Approach: Case Study of SMAN 1 Kedungwaru

Shifting to SMAN 1 Kedungwaru, the atmosphere built is vastly different. Here, the principal applies *Instructional-Technocratic Leadership*. School effectiveness is built on a foundation of regulations, competency standards, and strict performance accountability.

The principal realizes that in the bureaucratic culture of public schools, verbal appeals are often ignored. Therefore, he uses his own body and time as a standard of discipline. He arrives before the bell rings and leaves last, standing at the gate to welcome students and teachers. This is a form of *Silent Leadership* that forces teachers to feel a sense of social hesitation or reluctance (*sungkan*). Furthermore, the principal applies a strategy referred to by informants as "Shock Therapy." For undisciplined teachers, reprimands are not always conducted in closed rooms. in cases of collective or repeated violations, the principal dares to raise the issue in weekly evaluation forums. Although risking social tension, this step has proven effective in dismantling the *laissez-faire* culture that often plagues government agencies.Teachers become disciplined not only out of fear of administrative sanctions (cuts in performance allowance/TPP) but due to *social pressure* to maintain professional dignity before their peers.Motivation at SMAN 1 Kedungwaru is driven through a competitive climate. The principal does not hesitate to give privileges to high-achieving teachers, such as training opportunities out of town or priority for classroom facilities. Conversely, stagnant teachers will be left behind.

Academic supervision is conducted not merely as a formality, but as a deep "performance dissection." This approach creates a culture of meritocracy: those who perform are those who are appreciated. This is evident from the surge in teacher participation in learning innovation competitions (INOBEL) and teacher olympiads. The principal successfully changed the teacher mindset from a "Civil Servant comfort zone" to a "professional growth zone."A deep comparison between MAN 1 and SMAN 1 yields a theoretical synthesis regarding the relativity of motivation strategies. There is no "one cure for all diseases." Cultural Context: In a *High-Context Culture* and religious environment (MAN), the emotional-spiritual approach is key. The principal must be a father figure/*Kyai*. Professional Context: In a competitive and secular environment (SMAN), the rational-structural approach is more dominant. The principal must be a manager/CEO figure.However, the meeting point of both is the principal's ability to conduct Emotional Management. Both leaders successfully reduce teacher burnout in different ways: MAN 1 by providing inner comfort (tranquility), SMAN 1 by providing system certainty (order). This strengthens Bass & Avolio's (1994) Transformational Leadership theory, specifically on the dimensions of *Idealized Influence* and *Inspirational Motivation*.

Reconstruction of the Innovator Role: From Ideas to System Institutionalization

In the disruption era, stagnation is the beginning of institutional death. The principal's role as an innovator in this study is not interpreted as an "inventor" like a scientist, but as a Catalyst and Change Architect. Findings show that innovation in both schools has shifted from mere momentary "lighthouse projects" to a "systemic culture."

1. Curriculum Innovation and Academic Culture Hybridization

At MAN 1 Tulungagung, the main challenge was the stigma of being a "second-class religious school." The principal answered this with Integrative Curriculum Differentiation innovation. He did not remove the religious curriculum but hybridized it with modern science. The Research and *Tahfidz* program

was born. This innovation is unique because it marries the tradition of Quranic memorization with scientific thinking methods. The principal used a bottom-up strategy. Aware that he was not a research expert, he formed a "Madrasah Development Team" consisting of young teachers with postgraduate degrees. The principal acted as a facilitator protecting this team from inhibiting bureaucracy. Transformation of the madrasah's image from a "moral workshop" to a "student research center." Achievements in MYRES and KSM competitions serve as empirical evidence of this innovation's success.At SMAN 1 Kedungwaru, innovation focused on Personalization of Learning Services. Implementation of a pure Semester Credit System (SKS), not just a label. This is a radical innovation as it overhauls the conventional schedule structure. Gifted students can graduate in 2 years, while regular students remain at 3 years. The principal encouraged the use of a Learning Management System (LMS) long before the Covid-19 pandemic. He mandated the digitalization of teaching materials. This demanded teachers to be tech-savvy. This innovation changed the teacher's role from "the sole source of knowledge" to a "learning facilitator."

2.   Institutionalization of Innovation in Strategic Documents

A common weakness of schools in Indonesia is that innovation vanishes when the principal changes. However, both research subjects took anticipatory steps through Innovation Codification. Every new idea must be poured into the Medium-Term Work Plan (RKJM) and Annual Work Plan (RKT). At MAN 1, this is crystallized in the "Madrasah Management Manual" agreed upon by the committee and foundation (if applicable). At SMAN 1, innovation is institutionalized through SOPs (Standard Operating Procedures). An interesting example is the "Effective Picket Teacher" SOP. In this school, the picket teacher is not just a receptionist but possesses academic authority to enter empty classes and provide materials (using a Question Bank that has been prepared). This is a simple managerial innovation with a huge impact on student *Time on Task*.Data analysis highlights how principals manage *resistance to change*, especially from senior teachers in their comfort zones. Accommodative Strategy (MAN 1): The principal uses a cultural approach. Resistant senior teachers are not antagonized but are "honored" (*diwongke*) as advisors, while technical execution of innovation is handed to young teachers. This minimizes open conflict. Regulative-Coercive Strategy (SMAN 1): The principal uses structural power. Standard rules are created that force adaptation. "Able because accustomed, accustomed because forced." Intensive training support is provided so teachers can meet these new standards. These findings validate Rogers' (2003) Diffusion of Innovations Theory, where the principal successfully acts as an *Opinion Leader* capable of translating innovation into language understood and accepted by the school community.

Table 1. Comparative Analysis of Principal Leadership Dynamics at
MAN 1 Tulungagung and SMAN 1 Kedungwaru

Role Dimension	Distinguishing Aspect	MAN 1 Tulungagung (Religious-Humanist)	SMAN 1 Kedungwaru (Secular-Professional)
Leadership Style 1. The Motivator	*Core Philosophy Primary Approach Psychological Strategy*	Spiritual-Paternalistic (Spiritual Father/*Kyai*) Soft Power: Internalization of transcendental values ("Work is Worship"). "*Ngewongke*": Humanizing subordinates; leader acts as *primus inter pares*.	Instructional-Technocratic (CEO/Manager) Regulations & Standards: Strict discipline and performance accountability. Shock Therapy & Meritocracy: Open competition, rewards for high achievers, social sanctions for violators.
2. The Innovator	*Innovation Focus*	Curriculum Hybridization: Integrating modern science with *Pesantren* traditions (Research & *Tahfidz*).	Service Personalization: Pure Semester Credit System (SKS) and digitalization (LMS).
	Resistance Management	Accommodative-Cultural: Involving senior teachers as advisors, execution led by junior teachers.	Regulative-Coercive: Standard enforcement via SOPs ("Competent through habituation, habituated through enforcement").
3.The Administrator	*Risk Management*	Bureaucracy: Streamlining service workflows (*One Day Service*) & outsourcing expert coaches.	Financial & Infrastructure: Major investment in bandwidth/servers & attendance integrated with remuneration.
	Control System	Qualitative-Persuasive: Verbal reprimands, familial approach, spiritual appreciation.	Quantitative-Automated: Digital violation/achievement points directly impacting performance allowances (TPP).

Revitalization of the Administrator Role: Risk Management and Strategic Resource Management

Often, the administrator role is considered second-class[28], [29], merely clerical matters (administration). However, this research revises that view. In effective schools, the administrator is the Quality Goalkeeper and Risk Manager[30], [31], [32]. Without reliable administration, the innovator's grand vision will only be a dream, and the motivator's spirit will be momentary euphoria.An effective principal is not one who plays it safe, but one who dares to take risks for quality improvement. SMAN 1 Kedungwaru Case (Infrastructure & Discipline): The principal dared to make major financial decisions by allocating committee funds for dedicated internet bandwidth investment and independent exam servers. When other schools were still hesitant, he dared to bet that the future is digital. Audit risks and parent protests were managed with radical budget transparency. Additionally, the courage to implement fingerprint attendance integrated with remuneration was an internal political risk taken to uphold discipline. MAN 1 Tulungagung Case (Bureaucracy & HR): The risks taken were more administrative-regulative. The principal dared to outsource Olympiad coaches from professionals/lecturers, even though the cost was high and demanded a special budget post. He also cut student service bureaucracy (legalization, active letters) into *One Day Service*. This was a breakthrough in the typically slow madrasah bureaucratic culture.The implementation of personnel administration functions across both research sites has transcended conventional bureaucratic practices, evolving into strategic human resource management grounded in the principle of "The Right Man in the Right Place.

" Principals do not assign staff based on personal affinity or merely to populate the organizational structure; rather, they employ a meticulous talent scouting process to map potential. Field data reveals a competence-based role differentiation: teachers exhibiting strong managerial and leadership skills are integrated into the management circle as vice-principal assistants to support school governance. Conversely, teachers possessing specialized non-academic talents, such as in arts or athletics, are granted full authority and autonomy to spearhead extracurricular programs. This strategy has proven effective in fostering distributed leadership, where every school element contributes in their area of excellence, thereby ensuring the organizational machinery operates at maximum efficiency.Beyond staff placement, this study identified a significant paradigm shift in personnel service functions, where administration is positioned as a "support system" rather than an administrative burden. At both MAN 1 Tulungagung and SMAN 1 Kedungwaru, complex bureaucratic procedures such as certification filing, rank promotion, and other personnel documentation are fully facilitated by the administrative staff. The principals firmly implement a management doctrine asserting that "a teacher's primary duty is to teach and educate, while administrative intricacies are the responsibility of the system." This policy carries profound psychological implications; the teachers' cognitive load regarding clerical tasks is significantly alleviated, which linearly enhances job satisfaction and enables them to devote their full energy toward improving the quality of classroom instruction.

The administrative systems in both schools function not merely as passive data recorders but are actively empowered as instruments of quality control. At SMAN 1 Kedungwaru, control mechanisms are executed through a strict quantitative-technocratic approach. The school has integrated a digital-based performance recording system that allows every teacher behavior whether an achievement or a disciplinary violation to be converted into numerical points in real-time. In this ecosystem, data objectivity is paramount; *rewards* are translated into additional financial incentives for teachers with high accumulated achievement points, while *punishment*, in the form of performance allowance (TPP) deductions, is automatically applied *by the system* for those who violate standards. This digital mechanism successfully eliminates leadership subjectivity bias and creates a data-driven climate of professionalism, where every teacher is aware that their performance is monitored by an impartial system.Diametrically opposed to this, MAN 1 Tulungagung applies a qualitative-persuasive approach that prioritizes psychological aspects and familial values. Quality control instruments are not operated through rigid numerical calculations, but rather through a humanistic touch aimed at maintaining the social harmony of the madrasah community.

Reward mechanisms are manifested in the form of symbolic and spiritual appreciation, such as public recognition during ceremonies or opportunities for worship (Umrah/Hajj) facilitated through strategic school partnerships. Meanwhile, the implementation of *punishment* is educative and restorative in nature; violations are responded to with heart-to-heart verbal reprimands and personal coaching processes, rather than career-threatening administrative sanctions. This strategy is deliberately chosen to preserve social cohesion and the inner comfort of teachers, based on the belief that performance improvement is more sustainable when it stems from internal awareness rather than fear of financial penalties.These findings refute the myth that administration is a burden. Instead, "Good Administration is Good Education." Without tidy administration (Lesson Plans, Syllabus, Assessment), learning innovation cannot be measured for success. Without transparent financial administration, community participation (Committee) will vanish. The principals in both locations successfully transformed the administrator role from a "history recorder" to a "future planner." This is the complete manifestation of the POAC management function (Planning, Organizing, Actuating, Controlling).

Synthesis of Findings: Hybrid-Integrative Leadership Model

Based on the profound synthesis of the empirical data and theoretical dialectics previously outlined, this study formulates a novel conceptual proposition termed the Hybrid-Integrative Leadership Model. This finding asserts that school effectiveness at MAN 1 Tulungagung and SMAN 1 Kedungwaru does not stem from the singular dominance of one leadership style, but rather from the orchestration of three fundamental roles working cyclically and simultaneously.The first role is the Motivator as the Soul. In this leadership architecture, the motivator functions to supply the psychological energy that animates the organization. Although grounded in distinct values theological at MAN 1 and secular professionalism at SMAN 1 both converge on a singular objective: fostering a profound Sense of Urgency and Sense of Belonging among the faculty. Without the presence of this "soul," the school is reduced to a collection of inanimate buildings and arid bureaucratic routines, devoid of its primary essence as a vessel for human character formation.The second, equally crucial dimension is the Innovator as the Engine. This role serves to provide strategic direction and accelerate the organization's momentum amidst the era of disruption. Principals position curriculum innovation and digital transformation not merely as fleeting trends, but as operational vehicles to achieve the institution's vision.

As the "engine," the innovator's mandate is to dismantle comfort zones and prevent institutional stagnation. It demands high adaptability and a rapid response to contemporary challenges, ensuring that the school does not merely tread water but advances beyond conventional standards toward competitive excellence relevant to 21st-century demands.However, the high energy of the motivator and the high velocity of the innovator risk creating organizational entropy if not counterbalanced by the third role: the Administrator as the Anchor. Often underestimated, this role is, in fact, the critical determinant of quality sustainability. The administrator ensures that the entire system operates on the correct trajectory through accountable resource governance, measured risk management, and the rigorous enforcement of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). As the "anchor," this role guarantees that wild innovative ideas and motivational spirits do not evaporate as momentary euphoria but are institutionalized into a robust organizational culture. Thus, school effectiveness is the resultant of a dynamic equilibrium between humanistic flexibility (the soul), progressive vision (the engine), and systemic firmness (the anchor).

Table 2. Architecture of the Hybrid-Integrative Leadership Model in Fostering School Effectiveness

Trinity Element	Role Metaphor	Primary Function	Operational Mechanism	Resulting Output
The Motivator	The Soul	Cultivating Psychological Energy	Instilling values (theological or professional) to build internal commitment.	*Sense of Belonging* & *Sense of Urgency*
The Innovator	The Engine	Acceleration & Strategic Direction	Responding to disruption through adaptive curriculum and technology integration.	Adaptability& *Competitive Advantage*
The Administrator	The Anchor	Ensuring Sustainability	Institutionalizing change via SOPs, risk management, and resource governance.	System Stability & Quality Accountability

This research formulates the proposition that: *"The degree of school effectiveness is directly proportional to the principal's ability to perform 'switching' of roles fluidly between humanist flexibility (Motivator), progressive vision (Innovator), and systemic firmness (Administrator), wrapped in a deep understanding of local wisdom."* The major implication is the need for a redefinition of the profile of future principals. They are not enough to be merely administratively competent (certified), but must possess *Cultural Intelligence* to concoct strategies that fit the "soil" on which they stand. MAN 1 succeeded because it blended modern management with *santri* culture, while SMAN 1 succeeded because it blended corporate discipline with school bureaucracy. This is the essence of authentic educational leadership.

IV.   CONCLUSION

This research concludes that school effectiveness at MAN 1 Tulungagung and SMAN 1 Kedungwaru is the result of the adaptive orchestration of the "Hybrid-Integrative Leadership Model," which synergizes three vital roles cyclically: the motivator as the "soul," the innovator as the "driving engine," and the administrator as the "anchor of stability." The findings show a duality of strategies that are equally effective but based on different cultures; MAN 1 succeeds with a *Spiritual-Paternalistic* approach that builds resilience based on worship values, while SMAN 1 is effective with an *Instructional-Technocratic* model that prioritizes professionalism and strict rules.

This success depends heavily on the principal's ability to institutionalize innovation into a sustainable system and the courage to take *calculated risks* in resource management, rather than merely performing clerical functions. Implicatively, this study asserts that the application of Western educational management theories absolutely requires a filter of *local wisdom* and *Cultural Intelligence* from school leaders. Therefore, it is recommended for policymakers (Ministry of Religious Affairs and Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology) to reform principal recruitment and training patterns so they are no longer fixated on administrative competence alone, but focus on adaptive leadership capacity and strategic innovation. This step is crucial to transform principals from mere educational bureaucrats into visionary, humanist "Education CEOs" capable of blending global strategies with authentic local values.

V.   ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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