

## The Quality of Leadership: A Model of Merit-Based Culture in East Borneo

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### ABSTRACT

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A successful educational institution depends on effective leadership. To close the achievement gap between high-performing schools and low-performing schools, principals are essential players. The purpose of this study is to identify the principal's leadership position in creating an accomplishment culture at SMA Negeri 1 Anggana. This study's methodology employs a qualitative descriptive paradigm. Data were gathered using observational, documentation, and interview methods. Condensing data, presenting data, and drawing inferences or performing verification are the processes taken during the data analysis stage. The outcomes demonstrated the principal's democratic leadership approach. The outcomes of identifying a leader's style include their personality/example, communication skills, ability to make decisions, and ability to inspire adherents.



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## ABSTRAK

**Kata Kunci:**

*Budaya Berprestasi,  
Budaya Mutu,  
Efektivitas  
Kepemimpinan.*

Kepemimpinan yang efektif akan menjadi penopang dalam keberhasilan suatu lembaga pendidikan. Kepala Sekolah berperan fundamental mengatasi kesenjangan antara sekolah yang berprestasi tinggi dengan sekolah berprestasi rendah. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui peran kepemimpinan kepala sekolah dalam pengembangan budaya berprestasi di SMA Negeri 1 Anggana. Metode dalam penelitian ini menggunakan paradigma kualitatif jenis deskriptif. Data dikumpulkan melalui teknik wawancara, observasi, dan studi dokumentasi. Tahap analisis data dilakukan melalui serangkaian langkah terdiri dari kondensasi data, menyajikan data, dan menarik simpulan atau verifikasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan gaya kepemimpinan kepala sekolah identic dengan kepemimpinan demokratis. Hasil identifikasi terhadap gaya kepemimpinan antara lain kepribadian/keteladanan, kemampuan berkomunikasi, kapasitas pengambilan keputusan, dan kemampuan memotivasi bawahan.

## INTRODUCTION

In educational institutions, the principal's role as a leader is very important because there is a process of influencing thoughts and feelings, directing behavior, and mobilizing all components in the school to work properly ([Benoliel, 2021](#); [Veelen et al., 2017](#)). Therefore, cooperation is created to achieve the desired goals.

A culture that values success, initiative, and competitiveness. This culture encourages a sense of accomplishment and a good attitude on success. A positive school culture influences the accomplishment and motivation of students, the attitudes and motivation of teachers ([Alm et al., 2019](#)), as well as teacher productivity and job satisfaction. Creating a positive school culture requires awareness and motivation from all school members. A culture of accomplishment and competition is one sort of school culture that develops in schools, particularly schools ([Prasetyo & Sukatin, 2020](#)).

A culture of accomplishment and competition is essential because it reflects the quality of education that must be produced by academic units because it will be more readily accepted and implemented in every lesson and will influence the development of students' skills. It is thought that a culture of accomplishment and competition is crucial to increasing the quality of Human Resources (HR) since it also impacts the advancement and quality of education in the schools ([Mutiaraningrum, 2022](#)).

Effective leadership in education management signifies that leadership owned by a person must have a wise nature and responsibility in carrying out their duties to

realize the desired ideals and will support the success of an educational institution ([Prasetyo, 2022](#)). In Islam, leadership has been explained by the Prophet Muhammad in a hadith that reads:

عَنْ ابْنِ عُمَرَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَقُولُ كُلُّكُمْ رَاعٍ وَكُلُّكُمْ مَسْئُولٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهِ

*“From Ibn Umar RA. Indeed, Rasulullah saw. said: “Every one of you is a leader and will be held accountable for what he leads.” (H.R. Bukhari and Muslim)*

Based on the hadith, it is understandable that in any context, every human being is a leader, even for himself, and will be held accountable in the hereafter. The principal, as a leader, must be able to carry out his leadership functions to anyone he leads by being guided by religion, customs, and culture. The leader should have an optimistic attitude and think positively, have a distant look into the future, and mirror the past. It is done so that it can anticipate the results and impacts of its leadership because what is done in the leadership process will inevitably be held accountable, both worldly and *ukhrawi* (related to the afterlife).

Gilbert Austin's research in Danim on all principals in the state of Maryland, United States, shows that there are differences between high-performing and low-performing schools due to the influence of the principal ([Danim, 2012](#); [Gravina et al., 2021](#)). Therefore, the principal has great duties and responsibilities towards the success of the school, which he leads towards achieving the goals he aspires to by directing all components of the school well and effectively ([Ikbal, 2013](#)). The achievement of school goals is inseparable from the school culture being built.

When the school culture is developed effectively, it will form positive behaviors that collectively impact the organization's effectiveness ([Prasetyo et al., 2021](#)). Cultural formation inevitably faces challenges and obstacles, where growing and developing organizational culture requires a long process and is challenging ([Salabi & Prasetyo, 2022](#)). The obstacle to the school culture formation as an organization is the output component of the manager (principal), where the position is as a bridge between superiors (education office) and subordinates (teachers and students).

One form of school culture developed in schools is the achievement culture. Achievement culture is indispensable because it can be a picture of the education quality that must be developed by every educational institution and will significantly influence the development of student's abilities. Students' ability is manifested by increased achievement and mental competence, which impacts community trust in sending their children to school ([Cumming & Mawdesley, 2013](#)).

The culture of achievement and competition is believed to be an important aspect in improving the quality of human resources in schools as one of the components that determine the progress of education and can be successfully assessed

if students show better achievements over time. A competitive culture among students is manifested in a culture of achievement, both academically and non-academically (Fajri & Sukatin, 2021). The achievements achieved need to be accompanied by the cultivation of good values in the form of moral values, spiritual values, honesty, and sportsmanship to produce a harmonious balance in the school.

SMA Negeri 1 Anggana is a high-level school in high demand by the community around the Anggana District of East Kalimantan. The school actively holds and attends various competitions to spur the competitive spirit of its students. Therefore, it obtains various kinds of achievements in both academic and non-academic fields, starting from the regional level to the national level. In this study, the culture of achievement is focused on non-academic achievement only, as presented in the following table data:

**Table 1. Non-Academic Achievement Data**

No.	Non-Academic Achievement	Level	Year	Fields
1	1 <sup>st</sup> Winner of Futsal	Province	2022	Sports
2	1 <sup>st</sup> Winner of Kick Boxing 67 kg	Province	2022	Sports
3	The Winner of <i>Puteri Batik Remaja</i> Indonesia	National	2021	Art
4	3 <sup>rd</sup> Winner of Solo Singer	National	2021	Art
5	Ranked 8 <sup>th</sup> in the Poster Design Competition	National	2021	Art
6	3 <sup>rd</sup> Winner of <i>Tilawah MTQ</i>	Regency	2021	Religion
7	2 <sup>nd</sup> Winner of Futsal	Province	2019	Sports
8	3 <sup>rd</sup> Winner in Takraw Football	Regency	2019	Sports
9	3 <sup>rd</sup> Winner in the <i>Kaltim Open</i> Volleyball Championship	Province	2018	Sports

*Source: Administrative Board of SMA Negeri 1 Anggana*

Table 1 above explains that non-academic achievement data is not only on the art and sports aspects that are external to the talents and interests of students but also religious aspects. It is believed that the achievement and development of students' achievements will never be fully successful without the role of quality principal leadership and support from various parties.

This school attracts the interest of researchers because of the possibility of principal leadership who can develop students' non-academic achievements in the school he leads. Although there are several studies on organizational and achievement culture in educational institutions (Muadin, 2020; Pratiwi & Roesminingsih, 2021), few specifically discuss the relationship between principal leadership and the culture of achievement.

## METHOD

This research includes field research that aims to describe the principal's leadership in developing a culture of achievement using a qualitative approach. Through a qualitative model, researchers can examine words and information derived from the views of key informants and conduct studies on natural situations ([Bungin, 2019](#); [Creswell, 2015](#)). The data collected included transcripts of interviews, field notes, documents, and other matters that still have a relationship with the context and purpose of the research, which was conducted with the principal, the vice principal (*wakasek*) of studentship, and the supervising teacher of the Intra-Secondary Student Organization (OSIS). The data analysis technique is an interactive model analysis technique consisting of data condensation, data presentation, and concluding/verification ([Huberman & Saldana, 2014](#)).

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results of research conducted through interviews, observations, and documentation, it was found that the principal's leadership in developing an achievement culture can be seen through the leadership style applied by the principal of SMA Negeri 1 Anggana, namely a democratic leadership style. The democratic leadership style aims to facilitate achieving a school organization's goals through cooperation with subordinates, openness, responsibility, respect for subordinates in giving opinions, making joint decisions, and accompanying high motivation to increase student achievement ([Astuti et al., 2021](#)).

Sanjani, in his research, said that high task behavior patterns and high resilience behavior patterns characterize the democratic leadership style. Principals who carry out a democratic leadership style are very concerned with efforts to improve the welfare of teachers and employees ([Sanjani, 2018](#)). Democratic leadership style is a leader who values the characteristics and abilities of each member of the organization (subordinate) ([Prasetyo, 2022](#); [Syamsidar & Yustikarini, 2019](#)).

Principals with democratic leadership are willing to accept and listen to subordinates' opinions, criticisms, and suggestions. The criticisms and suggestions of subordinates to the principal encourage them to improve and reduce errors ([Kurniawa, 2018](#)). Therefore, the principal is required to have strong abilities and leadership to be able to foster a culture of achievement in students. The abilities the principal must realize as a democratic leader can be analysed from personality/exemplary, communication ability, decision-making ability, and motivating ability.

## Personality of Exemplary

The principal's personality as a leader can be reflected in his traits: honesty, confidence, discipline, responsibility, daring to take risks and decisions, big spirit, stable emotions, and exemplary. Hence, to realize an effective, productive, independent, and accountable school, principals must have at least ten keys to successful leadership, where one of the keys to success is exemplary ([Andang, 2018](#)).

Regarding the exemplary shown by the principal, the vice principal of the studentship stated:

*"As a vice principal of studentship, I often interacted with the principal. Moreover, in terms of discipline, I admit he is the most suitable person to emulate, especially in timely attendance. He is the one who does what he says to us, teachers".*

The head of SMA Negeri 1 Anggana applies the key to successful leadership by providing role models, namely by giving examples directly so their members can imitate them. It is through discipline in terms of punctuality, uniform, and completing tasks to bring out a sense of responsibility, enthusiasm, and initiative in school residents that can support school resilience and positively affect student achievement.

Exceptional leaders assist in performing the best work and becoming better person. They reconnect you with your beliefs, show you the mirror with compassion and kindness, hold you to high standards, and don't hesitate to pause when outcomes jeopardize the well-being of others. They are guiding aids that act as beacons. Types of exceptional must be kept leaders because they are in short supply. Using this leadership style could be a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

Leaders create in-groups, and out-groups irreparably harm a team's sense of collective belonging, competence, and confidence. Leaders may develop justifiable, albeit biased, explanations for why they only trust a few team members. More effort, time, and focus are devoted to a select few individuals, leaving others behind. Employees may feel excluded, isolated, rejected, and insecure if inclusive leadership is not provided. Inclusion is a deliberate action, not an intention. Exemplary leaders recognize the value of diversity in the workplace and make visible and audible efforts to promote diversity.

Leadership is impossible in the absence of respect. Respect is not commanded; instead, it is encouraged. Exemplary leaders set the tone for others by modeling behavior that reflects their highest values. Respectful leadership is almost always the cause of a respectful team. Respect, like air, is only noticeable when it is lacking. Respect is also essential to the functioning of a team and its members' sense of self. School society may lose itself if leaders, through their words and actions, deprive people of your dignity and humanity.



A harsh reprimand never improved a person's performance, but it did make them more fearful. Exemplary leaders demonstrate respect not because they are obligated to, but because they recognize that it is the only way to earn it.

### **Ability to Communicate**

Principals who have a democratic attitude realize that communication is an important element in carrying out their duties and responsibilities by seeking good cooperation between teachers and principals ([Branson & Gross, 2014](#); [Magala & Liñán, 2015](#)). To realize good cooperation, of course, requires good communication.

The democratic attitude of the principal, as shown by Alfin's research with several behaviors, is not only always conducting discussions first when faced with problems or planning something. However, the principal also always receives all input, criticism, and suggestions subordinates give. The principal facilitates teachers who participate in training and gives assignments to teachers to see the expertise possessed by the teacher so that the work done does not drain time and what is conveyed by the teacher maximally. The principal always encourages and motivates subordinates to dare express ideas and opinions and make decisions ([Alfin, 2021](#); [Prasetyo et al., 2022](#)).

In carrying out its leadership, the principal of SMA Negeri 1 Anggana, with democratic leadership, makes communication a means to manage the school program he leads through coordination and collaboration with his subordinates. It is as stated in the following vice principal of studentship statement:

*"There have been many competition activities that we participated in. Furthermore, as a vice principal of studentship, I am in charge of filing, implementing, and reporting the results of activities. As my supervisor, the principal always monitors the activities' progress by asking questions related to the preparation, whether the funding is adequate, how the students are treated, whom the teachers are involved with, etc. This intensive communication motivated the students and teachers because we felt very cared for."*

The principal of SMA Negeri 1 Anggana has carried out functions as a leader, so the development of student achievement is expected to be carried out optimally and get results that continue to increase. This attitude identifies that the principal has been democratic in carrying out his leadership function through communication with all teachers and students in the school to realize cooperation, as the results of the research state that a democratic principal must foster cooperation to improve the quality of education ([Devi & Subiyantoro, 2021](#); [Harahap, 2018](#)).

Democratic leaders must be able to influence in a positive direction, motivate and inspire others, and respond judiciously and judiciously to ideas and ideas while considering individual abilities. Strong communication skills, such as audience

analysis, devising communication strategies, speaking, writing, employing and demonstrating emotional intelligence, and interacting and talking with people from various backgrounds, are required for these leaders ([Rahmah & Ilham, 2022](#); [Siregar et al., 2021](#)).

### Decision Making

Democratic principal leadership prioritizes discussion in setting school policies by inviting subordinate participation to seek and find appropriate and wise ways to advance the school and improve the quality of students. In making decisions, the principal always involves his vices, teachers, and staff by asking for advice or opinions and allowing them to participate actively in planning and decisions.

The effectiveness of the leadership's policies influences the organization's performance. Leaders must understand management skills to make decisions. Individual performance influences organizational performance; as a result, it requires the partnership of all organizational departments within the school. It becomes a strategy for achieving the school organization's vision in the context of managing the implementation of values by enhancing the achievement culture.

From the documentation study, there are minutes of the conduct of meeting activities, both routine and incidental, indicating that there is communication that is not dominated by one party. The meeting activity is evidence of a decision in the education implementation at SMA Negeri 1 Anggana involving teachers. Even on several occasions, the meeting the school committee representatives were also invited and present. Regarding meeting activities, one of the teachers (data source 3) stated:

*"... all policies in our school are decided through a meeting. Even in drafting and determining the rules for students, we invited students represented by the OSIS committee. That is done to guarantee communication and the role of all parties in determining the policy. Hopefully, this can become a habit that ultimately becomes a school culture, namely a culture of discussion in decisions or policies".*

From the decision results, the program is realized in the context of developing students' non-academic achievements, namely through extracurricular activities and class meeting activity programs. The activities that have been carried out resulted in achievements for SMA Negeri 1 Anggana. In the academic field, for example, winning the Biology Olympics at the East Kalimantan Province level and the English Debate competition.

The non-academic achievements achieved in various fields, namely: in art, winner of *Puteri Batik Remaja* in Best Presentation and Best Video Presentation Category at the National level; in sports, 1<sup>st</sup> Winner of Futsal competition and 1<sup>st</sup> Winner of Kick Boxing 67 kg at the level of East Kalimantan Province; in religion, 3<sup>rd</sup>



Winner of Youth *Tilawah* in *Musabaqah Tilawatil Qur'an* at the Kutai Kartanegara Regency level, and many more.

### **Ability to Motivate**

The principal must pay attention to all his subordinates, one of which is by giving good influence through motivation. In terms of motivating ability, the principal of SMA Negeri 1 Anggana provides support in the form of financial things when students carry out activities related to self-development both inside and outside the school. The principal also rewards the achievements that have been obtained to continue to increase student motivation in achievement. Regarding the award, the Principal of SMAN 1 Anggana stated:

*"We cannot deny that the motives of people, whoever they are, will be moved if there is a stimulus or ordinary that we know by appreciation. It has become prevalent for us. On that basis, I know that teachers who have devoted their minds and energy must be appreciated and rewarded. Likewise, with students, those involved in activities deserve to be rewarded, especially if the student succeeds in getting achievements. The school, in this case, I, as the principal, have budgeted rewards for them".*

The creation of a proportional reward system and support and attention to the needs of the school residents will greatly support the birth of a good achievement culture. The principal's award can motivate all school residents ([Mulyadi, 2010](#); [Rifa'i, 2019](#)).

A highly motivated person will strive to do their best and be confident in their abilities to work independently. People with high achievement motivation are typically more successful than those with low achievement motivation because they are constantly dissatisfied with their accomplishments and take great responsibility for their actions.

The form of rewards given by the principal in the form of developing money given in various amounts is adjusted to the level of districts, regency, provincial, and national champions. The form of the reward has been stipulated in the Decree of the Head of SMA Negeri 1 Anggana No. 422.7/515/SMA1/X/2021 concerning Awarding for Outstanding Students and Supervising Teachers of SMA Negeri 1 Anggana. The form of motivation in the form of rewards was announced when all teachers and other students witnessed the flag ceremony to motivate other students to excel.

The effectiveness of the leadership's policies influences the organization's performance. Leaders must understand management skills to make decisions. Individual performance influences organizational performance; as a result, it requires the partnership of all organizational departments within the school. It becomes a

strategy for achieving the school organization's vision in the context of managing the implementation of values by enhancing the achievement culture.

## CONCLUSION

Principal leadership to develop an achievement culture at SMA Negeri 1 Anggana is carried out with a democratic leadership model with communicative, responsible principal behaviour, prioritizing discussion, innovating subordinates, and being a role model in the discipline. The abilities embodied by the principal as a democratic leader can be analysed through (1) Personality or exemplary by providing examples of good attitudes and high discipline so that it affects the achievement of student achievement; (2) Ability to communicate, namely coordinating with subordinates to realize good cooperation in managing student achievement; (3) In decision making, the discussion is important by involving the participation of subordinates in making program; 4) In the ability to motivate, giving rewards for outstanding students and provide full support. This culture of achievement must be continuously improved to maintain the existence of SMA Negeri 1 Anggana so that it is more popular with its achievements and ability to compete with other schools.

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