


The Leadership of Among Principals in Strengthening Education Management to Improve Quality at SMA Negeri 1 Pengasih

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the application of Among Leadership in strengthening education management to improve the quality of learning at SMA Negeri 1 Pengasih. Among leadership, which is rooted in the thought of Ki Hajar Dewantara, emphasizes the principles of Ing Ngarsa Sung Tuladha, Ing Madya Mangun Karsa, and Tut Wuri Handayani. This research uses a qualitative approach with a phenomenological method that focuses on the experience of principals and teachers. The results of the study show that Among Leadership is implemented through strengthening human resource management, curriculum development, and school-to-community relations. The results of the study show that the among leadership applied by the principal of SMA Negeri 1 Pengasih is realized through three main principles, namely in the role of the principal which is reflected in the example of the principal in discipline, responsibility, and concern for the teaching and learning process, in the middle of Mangun Karsa which is seen in the efforts of the principal to empower teachers and education personnel through a participatory approach in managerial decision-making, As well as Tut Wuri Handayani which is implemented by providing freedom of responsibility to school residents to innovate in education management. The principal acts as a role model, facilitator, and supporter who encourages teacher participation and creates a collaborative culture. In conclusion, Among Leadership is effective in increasing teacher motivation and professionalism which has an impact on improving the quality of learning. This research makes a theoretical and practical contribution to the development of local values-based educational leadership.

Keywords: *Leadership Among, Education Management, Quality of Learning*

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INTRODUCTION

Education is a foundation in social development which plays a role in improving the quality of human resources. In the high school education level (Senior High School) is a crucial point because this level has a strategic role because it is a crucial phase in terms of academic formation, critical thinking skills, and character formation. This is because after completing the high school level, it will continue to the higher education level and the world of work so that preparation in this level of education requires special attention. However, based on the PISA (*Programme for International Student Assessment*) report, it is explained that the level of literacy, digitization, and science in Indonesia is still at levels below the global average, so this indicates that the quality of learning in Indonesia is somewhat less than optimal and uneven.

The problem of unequal education is not just a problem of unequal access, but it is more overhanging the effectiveness and quality of the learning process. From the perspective of education management, quality can be interpreted as the conformity between the standards that have been set and the results achieved further in the quality of education will include an integrated process, namely inputs, processes, and outputs that have been determined (Zupančič, 2022). In this case, learning effectiveness can be said to be the level of learning achievement so that it is expected that the value of effectiveness will be more optimal, this is influenced by various factors such as the quality of teachers, facilities and infrastructure,

management management, and leadership (Alvira et al., 2023). One of the keys that can affect the quality of learning is the leadership of a school principal. Leadership can be interpreted as the process of influencing, directing, and moving individuals and groups to achieve certain goals (George R. Terry, 2018:57). In this case, the principal will not only play the role of an administrative manager but a principal will play the role of a participatory and transformational leader so as to be able to create a positive school culture, empower teachers, and encourage innovation in learning (Hallinger, 2020). The principal also plays a role in carrying out his leadership, including as a manager, administrator, leader, innovator, and motivator. In carrying out this role, school principals are required to develop a vision, mission, build a conducive work environment and encourage the improvement of teacher professionalism.

Although a lot of research has been done on the leadership of school principals, studies that specifically integrate the values of among among the philosophical based of Ki Hajar Dewantara with the strengthening of education management to improve quality at the high school level are still very rare. Previous studies have tended to focus more on transformational, instructional, or situational leadership derived from Western theory, so not many have explored empirically how the principles of *ing ngarsa sung tuladha*, *ing madya mangun karsa*, and *tut wuri handayani* are translated into structured managerial practices. Furthermore, previous studies on among leadership are generally still conceptual or limited to the basic education level, while the context of SMA Negeri 1 Pengasih which has local cultural characteristics and specific quality challenges has not been studied in depth. Thus, there has been no research that specifically reveals the causal mechanism between the implementation of among leadership, strengthening education management (planning, organizing, implementing, evaluating), and simultaneously improving quality in these locations. Therefore, this research is needed to fill the literature gap regarding the leadership model based on local wisdom in the framework of modern quality-oriented education management at SMA Negeri 1 Pengasih.

In order for the quality of learning to improve, the leadership style applied must be able to adapt to the cultural context and characteristics of the school organization. One of the leadership models that is felt to be suitable for local Indonesian values is among leadership which is rooted in the thought of Ki Hajar Dewantara. This model is considered suitable because it has several elements that emphasize the principles of exemplary (*ing ngarso sung tuladha*), empowerment (*ing madya mangun karsa*), and support (*tut wuri handayani*). The approach with the model is in line with the concept of participatory and transformational leadership so that among leadership is expected to improve the quality of learning because it is able to strengthen education management in various aspects such as human resource development which means that it can encourage active teacher involvement. Then the active involvement of teachers will encourage the development of learning innovations so that the learning process and quality also improve. Furthermore, among leadership can also improve good relations between schools and the community. Based on this approach, teachers do not play the role of implementers alone but as active partners who play a role in improving the development of learning (Barrios Bulling, 2025; Mulyasa & Aryani, 2022).

However, the implementation of among leadership in schools still faces challenges. Based on research,(Argadinata et al., 2024) it is explained that among leadership tends not to have an optimal impact. He further (Argadinata et al., 2024) explained that among leadership tends to be not optimal both in terms of consistency, understanding, and practice. In addition, there are still obstacles in teacher involvement, communication in the organization, and an evaluation system that has not been structured. This condition shows that there is a conceptual gap that should be ideal for the leadership model among with the practices that occur in the field. Based on the urian that has been explained, a further study is needed to understand how the implementation of among leadership does occur in the field and what its role is in improving the quality of learning. This research also focuses on SMAN 1 Pengasih, this is felt to have a strong attachment in terms of leadership of Among. Therefore, this study has the following objectives: (1) To describe the interpretation and practice of Among Leadership by

the Principal of SMA Negeri 1 Pengasih; (2) Analyzing strategies to strengthen Education Management through Amo Leadership; (3) Analyze the impact of Among Leadership on improving the quality of learning.

METHOD

Research Design

This study uses a qualitative approach with an embedded single case study design. This design was chosen because it allows researchers to explore in depth and holistically the phenomenon of leadership among principals in a real context at SMA Negeri 1 Pengasih. The case study approach is considered appropriate because it focuses on understanding meanings, processes, and mechanisms that are unique and contextual, rather than on statistical generalizations. The unit of analysis in this study is the leadership practice among school principals, while the sub-unit of analysis includes strengthening education management and improving school quality. Participants

Participants in this study were selected by purposive sampling taking into account their direct involvement in the implementation of leadership among as well as their understanding of education management and school quality. The number of participants was 10 people consisting of the principal of SMA Negeri 1 Pengasih as key informants, two deputy principals (curriculum and infrastructure), four teachers who have a minimum working period of five years, two education staff, and one school committee member. Participant criteria include having experience working with the principal for at least three years, being involved in the managerial decision-making process, and being willing to share experiences openly related to the application of among values in the school environment.

Data Collection

The data collection technique is carried out through three complementary ways. First, a semi-structured in-depth interview lasting 60 to 90 minutes per participant to explore their experiences, perceptions, and interpretations of leadership leadership, management strengthening, and quality improvement. Second, participatory observation was carried out for two weeks to directly observe the leadership behavior of the principal in his daily life, interaction with teachers and staff, as well as managerial processes such as coordination meetings and class supervision. Third, a documentation study that includes tracing school profiles, annual work plans, school self-evaluation reports, meeting records, and documents related to academic and non-academic quality achievements.

Data Analysis

The data analysis in this study follows the Miles and Huberman interactive model which consists of three simultaneous flow of activities. Data reduction is done by selecting, focusing, simplifying, and abstracting raw data from interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents into initial themes. The data presentation was arranged in the form of a descriptive narrative and a thematic matrix that described the relationship between among leadership principles (ing ngarsa sung tuladha, ing madya mangun karsa, tut wuri handayani) with the components of education management (planning, organizing, implementing, evaluation) and quality indicators. Conclusions are drawn continuously by verification through repetitive patterns, causal explanations, and propositions that emerge from the data. The entire analysis process is assisted by NVivo software to make it easy to code and search for themes.

Trustworthiness

The data validity criteria in this study refer to the concept of trustworthiness for qualitative research which includes four things. Credibility is achieved through triangulation of sources (comparing information from principals, teachers, staff, and documents), triangulation of techniques (cross-referencing the results of interviews, observations, and documentation), and member checking by reconfirming the findings and interpretation of the researcher to the participants to ensure that there are no errors in meaning. Transferability is sought by presenting a rich and detailed description of the context of SMA Negeri 1 Pengasih, the characteristics of the participants, and the research setting so that readers can assess the

extent to which the results of this research can be transferred to other similar contexts. Dependability is built by conducting a systematically documented trail audit starting from raw data, analysis process, to final report. Confirmability is ensured through the researcher's critical reflection on subjectivity bias and by involving the supervisor as a peer debriefer to examine the objectivity of the findings.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The leadership practices of among applied by SMA Negeri 1 Pengasih have been internalized in the school's work culture and managerial practices. The principal has interpreted the values of *Ing Ngarsa Sung Tuladha*, *Ing Madya Mangun Karsa*, and *Tut Wuri Handayani* as a transformative, humanist, and participatory leadership approach. This is reflected in how the principal sets an example through discipline, commitment to learning, and an open communication attitude. From the perspective of education management, this practice emphasizes the role of leadership as an example that can build a good culture in a school. This is in line with the idea that grass-based leadership can shape the values, norms, and work ethic of school residents which will later have a direct impact on the quality of learning. The implementation of *Among* leadership at SMA Negeri 1 Pengasih has been deeply realized in the school's organizational culture and managerial practices. The principal represents the values of *Ing Ngarsa Sung Tuladha*, *Ing Madya Mangun Karsa*, and *Tut Wuri Handayani* through a leadership approach that is transformative, humanist, and participatory. This manifestation can be seen from the consistency of leaders in demonstrating discipline, dedication to the curriculum, and transparent communication patterns.

Ing Ngarsa Sung Tuladha

From the perspective of education management, *Ing Ngarsa Sung Tuladha* emphasized the significance of exemplary-based leadership as the main instrument for developing a positive school culture (Hallinger, 2020; Leithwood et al., 2020). This is in line with the premise that *Among leadership* is able to construct a system of values, norms, and a collective work ethic that has direct implications for the quality and values that want to be built in the school environment.

An exploration of leadership-based leadership practices at SMA Negeri 1 Pengasih revealed that *the Among* philosophy has been systemically internalized in the organizational culture and managerial practices of institutions. This is proven by the results of interviews in the field, it was found that the principal showed concrete exemplary practices in the school environment. This example is exemplified through simple behaviors such as arriving early, always being on time, and always monitoring the school in person. This simple behavior makes the practice of exemplary growth deeply in the school organization so that it becomes the foundation and culture in the school environment. In line with that, he explained that leadership based on the exemplary factor has a positive influence on improving teacher performance and student learning outcomes. Furthermore, the principal represents the values of (Bush, 2025) *Ing Ngarsa Sung Tuladha* through a leadership approach that is transformative, humanist, and participatory. This manifestation is reflected in the consistency of leaders in demonstrating professional discipline, dedication to curriculum development, and transparent communication patterns. From the perspective of education management, this strategy emphasizes the significance of exemplary-based leadership as the main instrument for building a productive school culture. Studies reveal that transformative, humanist, and participatory leadership will increase teachers' sense of ownership and performance motivation, then this will have an impact on improving the quality of learning (Suparno et al., 2019). This is in line with the premise that *Among* leadership is able to construct a system of values, norms, and a collective work ethic that has direct implications for the continuous escalation of instructional quality. The internalization of exemplary values practiced consistently by leaders serves as a *top-down* mechanism that is persuasive, not coercive. In the context of human resource management, this phenomenon creates a *ripple effect* where the moral standards and professionalism shown by leaders automatically become behavioral references for all educators and education staff (Eva et al., 2019; Hoch et al., 2018). The presence

of disciplined and transparent leadership figures has proven effective in reducing the potential for low employee involvement (*disengaged employees*), because staff have concrete role models in carrying out their pedagogical duties. This example is not only aimed at the administrative aspect, but also at the formation of collective emotional intelligence that breaks down rigid bureaucratic barriers, thereby creating a more efficient and honest flow of information within the school organization. Theoretically, the significance of exemplary in this institution is in line with the concept (Kim & Beehr, 2020) of *Authentic Leadership*, where leadership integrity is the main capital in building organizational *trust*. (Alilyyani et al., 2018; Avolio et al., 2018) This trust then becomes the foundation for the stability of the school culture. With a strong foundation of trust, any implementation of new policies or curriculum transformations can be carried out with minimal resistance, because all school residents believe that the strategic steps taken by the leadership are based on a sincere commitment to improving the quality of education. Therefore, the example of leadership at SMA Negeri 1 Pengasih is not just an individual managerial style, but has been transformed into a strategic asset of the institution in maintaining quality sustainability in the midst of increasingly complex global education challenges.

Ing Madya Mangun Karsa

In the dimension of *Ing Madya Mangun Karsa*, the results of the study show that school principals can use a democratic decision-making approach to create an inclusive participatory environment. The active involvement of teachers, vice principals, and administrative staff shows that the leadership carried out is collaborative rather than hierarchical. This condition will later increase a sense of psychological security at school. This situation is discussed as one of the important factors in encouraging innovation and creativity in learning and educational administration. Therefore, this among leadership serves as a catalyst to drive collateral potential in schools. In the dimension of *Ing Madya Mangun Karsa*, the findings of the study indicate that school principals adopt democratic decision-making mechanisms to build a participatory and inclusive work environment. The proactive involvement of the teacher council, vice principals, and administrative staff represents a shift in the leadership model from a hierarchical structure to an egalitarian collaborative pattern. Based on the perspective of education management, leadership that puts itself in the middle of the organization has a strategic role in building a positive work atmosphere for members of the organization. Then this also indicates that the principal is not only the sole decision-maker but also plays a more moderate role in dialogue involving the school ranks and stakeholders. This transformation contributes significantly to strengthening *psychological safety* in the school environment, which is a crucial determinant in stimulating innovation and creativity in both the instructional and educational governance realms. Thus, (Edmondson & Bransby, 2023; Newman et al., 2017) *Among leadership* plays an important role as a catalyst for strategies in optimizing collective potential to increase the adaptability of school organizations. An analysis of the dimension of *Ingmadias Mangun Karsa* at SMA Negeri 1 Pengasih revealed that the principal strategically implements a democratic decision-making model to construct a participatory and inclusive work atmosphere. The active involvement of teachers, vice principals, and administrative staff represents a paradigm shift, from a rigid hierarchical management structure to a more egalitarian collaborative leadership pattern. This transformation contributes significantly to strengthening *psychological safety* in the school environment. This condition is a crucial determinant in stimulating innovative initiatives and creativity, both in the instructional and managerial domains. In this context, *Among leadership* does not only play a central role, but also as a strategic catalyst that optimizes the collective potential to increase organizational adaptability to educational dynamics. The effectiveness of this democratic approach is reflected in the quality of the professional interaction created, where the principal positions himself as a moderator who is able to harmonize various stakeholder perspectives. This indicates that "middle" leadership serves as an effective social glue to reduce resistance to institutional policies. When school residents feel that their aspirations are accommodated in the discourse process, a strong sense of *collective ownership* of each school program emerges. Managerially, this phenomenon is very fundamental considering that *bottom-up* educational

innovations tend to have a higher level of sustainability than *top-down instruction*. The systemic impact of this collaborative pattern also manifests itself in the efficiency of internal bureaucracy. By minimizing hierarchical barriers, the flow of information from the operational to managerial level becomes faster and more accurate, so that schools are able to transform into a more responsive organization (*agile*). This practice ultimately establishes the institution as a *learning organization*, where leaders play an active role in driving *collective intelligence* (Fullan, 2020; Harris & Jones, 2019). The synergy between work units in this harmonious management orchestration proves that *TAmong leadership* is able to convert communicative barriers into innovative opportunities, which is a key factor in maintaining the sustainability of the quality of education at SMA Negeri 1 Pengasih.

Tut Wuri Handayani

The results of the study show that in the aspect of *Tut Wuri Handayani*, the principal gives broad trust and autonomy to teachers and staff, and accompanies them with a humanist coaching approach. The principal no longer acts as the primary controller but rather acts as a facilitator and mentor that has been proven to increase the sense of responsibility, independence, and intrinsic desire of teachers and employees. This autonomy allows teachers to create creative and conceptual learning approaches, in addition to administrative employees are also able to increase productivity and the quality of administrative services that support the learning process. The implementation of autonomy within the framework of *Tut Wuri Handayani* at SMA Negeri 1 Pengasih is not a form of managerial *laissez-faire*, but a manifestation of the delegation of authority that is integrated in a measurable manner. Principals implement clinical supervision through a dialogical approach oriented towards identifying substantive constraints rather than finding fault with staff (Glickman et al., 2021). This leadership pattern is psychologically able to construct *a strong sense of ownership* among educators towards the success of institutional programs. The resulting systemic impact is the formation of a proactive organizational climate, where educational service innovation is initiated independently by staff without relying entirely on structural instruction, so that the workload is transformed into a professional commitment that increases the effectiveness of the school holistically. An analysis of *the dimension of Tut Wuri Handayani* at SMA Negeri 1 Pengasih revealed that the principal implemented a strategy of delegating authority through the granting of broad professional autonomy to educators and education staff. This approach is integrated with a humanist coaching method, where leaders reposition their roles from authoritarian supervisors to facilitators and mentors.

This role transformation has been empirically proven to be able to exploit professional responsibility, independence, and intrinsic motivation of staff. It is important to underline that the granting of autonomy is not a form of managerial *laissez-faire*, but a manifestation of a measurably integrated delegation of authority through dialogical clinical supervision. The focus of the evaluation is directed at the identification of substantive constraints collaboratively, not on the search for excesses of staff errors, thereby creating a safe psychological space for the optimal development of individual potential. Empowerment structured through the spirit of driving from behind is a form of strategic social capital investment to build long-term human resource capacity. In the perspective of strategic management, the professional autonomy provided serves as a stimulant for the improvement of teachers' *self-efficacy*. When educators are given space to construct innovative and conceptual learning methodologies, they tend to do independent reflection on their pedagogical effectiveness without being haunted by the fear of administrative failure.

This phenomenon shows that the role of leaders as (Barrios Bulling, 2025) *back-end support* is actually the main driving force for the creation of an authentic quality culture and not just the fulfillment of formalistic standards. The systemic impact of this staff independence significantly reduces the organization's dependence on centralized *leadership*. At SMA Negeri 1 Pengasih, the work system has evolved to be more organic where each work unit is able to operate independently based on professional integrity that has been internalized. This condition is crucial in ensuring the sustainability of school quality, where innovation continues to run as part of the collective work ethic. The increase in productivity in

administrative units also indicates that this facilitation principle is able to create synchronization between academic aspects and support *systems*, thereby creating a harmonious and responsive management orchestration to the dynamics of global education challenges. Theoretically, this manifestation of leadership is in line with the concept of *Distributed Leadership*, where authority is distributed to empower all elements of the organization. The principal succeeded in changing the perception of workload that was previously transactional into a professional commitment full of meaning. The success of integrating the value of local wisdom into modern management proves that *the Among philosophy* has strong relevance in answering the complexity of 21st-century educational needs. The effectiveness of schools holistically is no longer just a managerial target, but a natural result of an educational ecosystem that humanizes humans and respects the potential of each individual in it, which ultimately leads to the optimization of students' academic achievement and the strengthening of institutional legitimacy in the eyes of the public.

Improving the Quality of Education

In improving the quality of education, the integration of the tri-concept of *Among leadership* systemically contributes significantly to the sustainability of the quality of education management. Synchronization between a positive organizational culture and humanistic human resource governance has been proven to be able to substantially escalate the quality of the learning process. Within this framework, the parameters of education quality are no longer limited to the fulfillment of quantitative administrative indicators, but rather to the formation of an adaptive and innovative instructional ecosystem (Full, 2020). *Among leadership* acts as a catalyst in transforming school governance to be more efficient, which simultaneously has implications for increasing the competitiveness of graduates and strengthening *stakeholder satisfaction* with education services. In the context of education quality escalation, the systemic integration of the *Among leadership* tri-concept makes a fundamental contribution to the sustainability of holistic education management.

Harmonious synchronization between a constructive organizational culture and humanism-based human resource governance has been proven to be able to substantially improve the quality of the instructional process (Hallinger, 2020; Leithwood et al., 2020). In this framework, the parameters of educational quality success are no longer reduced to the achievement of quantitative administrative indicators alone, but to the creation of a responsive, adaptive, and innovative school ecosystem. *Among leadership* serves as a strategic catalyst in reforming institutional governance to be more functional, which simultaneously has implications for strengthening the competitiveness of graduates and optimizing *stakeholder satisfaction* with the educational services provided. The existence of this leadership as a determinant variable indicates that institutional quality is the result of a continuous dialectic between the leadership pattern of the leader and the established organizational culture. The synergy between leadership exemplary (*Ing Ngarsa Sung Tuladha*), inclusive collaboration (*Ing Madya Mangun Karsa*), and professional autonomy of staff (*Tut Wuri Handayani*) creates an organic internal quality control mechanism. This phenomenon effectively reduces the organization's dependence on rigid external supervision, as school citizens already have an intrinsic motivation to maintain standards of excellence independently. Managerially, this condition triggers the birth of a competitive *advantage* of institutions that exceed national education standards through various innovations rooted in local wisdom.

The integration of these values makes a significant contribution to organizational resilience in the face of educational disruption in the global era. When the school ecosystem has been consolidated with the values of independence and collaboration, every curriculum challenge and technological transformation can be addressed as a strategic opportunity for quality development. Managerially, this success reflects the transformation from a bureaucratic-mechanistic management model to a transformative-organic management. As a result, the effectiveness of schools can be maintained consistently, which ultimately has a long-term impact on the formation of students' character and the increase of public trust in the legitimacy of educational institutions in a sustainable manner. Thus, *EAmong leadership* is

proven to be not just a moral philosophy, but a pragmatic and solutive managerial instrument in responding to the complexity of educational quality demands in the 21st century.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussion, this study concludes that the internalization of the Among philosophy at SMA Negeri 1 Pengasih has successfully transformed school management into a more humanistic, participatory, and quality-oriented system. The principles of Ing Ngarsa Sung Tuladha, Ing Madya Mangun Karsa, and Tut Wuri Handayani function not only as cultural values but also as practical managerial approaches that strengthen leadership effectiveness, collaboration, and professional autonomy among educators. Leadership through exemplary behavior, democratic communication, and supportive delegation has contributed to a positive work climate, increased motivation, and continuous educational innovation. These findings indicate that Among leadership can support sustainable educational quality improvement while fostering teachers' creativity and institutional adaptability. Practically, the study suggests that schools and educational authorities should integrate Among-based leadership training into principal development programs and encourage documentation of effective leadership practices. Future research is recommended to examine the relationship between Among leadership, educational management, and school quality improvement in broader educational contexts.

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