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Innovative Principal Leadership for Character-Based Curriculum Reform: Developing an Integrated P5 Leadership Innovation Framework in Indonesian Secondary Education

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Abstract

Educational reforms increasingly emphasize the integration of character development and competency-based learning as essential components of educational quality. In Indonesia, the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5) serves as a key component of the Merdeka Curriculum, aiming to develop students who embody the values of faith, global diversity, mutual cooperation, independence, critical reasoning, and creativity. The successful implementation of P5 requires effective school leadership capable of supporting organizational transformation, teacher development, and stakeholder collaboration. This study investigates the innovative leadership strategies employed by the principal of SMP Negeri 4 Bengalon in implementing P5. A qualitative case study approach was adopted, involving data collection through semi-structured interviews, observations, and document analysis. Participants included the principal, teachers, students, and community stakeholders directly involved in P5 implementation. Data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña. The findings reveal five interconnected leadership dimensions that contributed to successful implementation: collaborative governance, teacher professional empowerment, community-based resource mobilization, reflective supervision, and culture-driven transformation. These leadership practices strengthened teacher capacity, enhanced stakeholder engagement, fostered organizational learning, and promoted the internalization of Pancasila values throughout the school environment. The study proposes an Integrated P5 Leadership Innovation Framework that explains how multiple leadership practices interact to support character-based curriculum reform. The findings contribute to the educational leadership literature by providing evidence from a culturally grounded educational context and offer practical implications for school leaders seeking to strengthen the implementation of character-oriented educational reforms.

Introduction

Educational systems worldwide are increasingly shifting from a narrow focus on academic achievement toward a broader vision that emphasizes holistic student development, character formation, creativity, collaboration, and global citizenship. International organizations have highlighted the need for educational systems to prepare learners who are capable of responding to complex social, economic, technological, and environmental challenges in the twenty-first century (Shek et al., 2025; UNESCO, 2021). As a consequence, curriculum reforms in many countries have integrated character education and social-emotional competencies as essential components of educational quality. Character education is no longer viewed as a supplementary aspect of schooling but rather as a fundamental dimension of preparing responsible and ethical citizens (Berkowitz & Bier, 2004a; Watts & Kristjánsson, 2022).

Within this context, school leadership has emerged as one of the most influential factors affecting educational quality and school effectiveness (Javornik & Klemenčič Mirazchiyski, 2023; Tran et al., 2020). Research consistently demonstrates that leadership contributes significantly to organizational improvement, teacher performance, instructional quality, and student achievement. (Leithwood et al.,

2020) argue that successful school leaders influence student learning primarily through their impact on school conditions, teacher capacity, and organizational culture. Similarly, (V. M. J. Robinson et al., 2008) found that leadership practices focused on teaching and learning have a substantially stronger influence on student outcomes than leadership activities centered solely on administration and management. More recently, Bush (2024) reaffirmed that leadership remains one of the most critical determinants of educational effectiveness and school improvement in contemporary educational systems.

Among various leadership models, instructional leadership continues to occupy a central position in educational leadership research. Instructional leadership emphasizes the principal's responsibility for establishing clear educational goals, coordinating curriculum implementation, monitoring instructional practices, and fostering professional learning among teachers. (Hallinger et al., 2025) notes that instructional leadership remains highly relevant in educational systems undergoing curriculum reform because it directly supports improvements in teaching and learning processes. Earlier reviews also demonstrate that instructional leadership is consistently associated with improved school effectiveness, teacher commitment, and student achievement (Hallinger et al., 2020). Furthermore, recent evidence suggests that instructional leadership positively influences teachers' participation in professional learning communities and strengthens collective responsibility for student learning (Liu & Hallinger, 2024).

The growing complexity of educational reform has also increased attention toward transformational leadership. Transformational leaders inspire organizational members through shared vision, professional empowerment, and commitment to continuous improvement. According to (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005), transformational leadership strengthens organizational capacity by encouraging innovation, collaboration, and collective efficacy. Subsequent studies have demonstrated that transformational leadership contributes significantly to teacher motivation, instructional improvement, and sustainable school development (Day et al., 2016; Sun & Leithwood, 2015). In rapidly changing educational environments, transformational leadership enables schools to adapt effectively while maintaining focus on educational quality and student development.

Educational reform is also closely associated with broader processes of organizational change and school improvement. (McEachen et al., 2018) argues that successful reform requires leaders to develop collective capacity, strengthen relationships, and foster a culture of continuous learning. Similarly, (Fullan, 2007) emphasize that sustainable educational improvement depends on the development of professional capital, which combines human, social, and decisional capital within schools. (Hopkins, 2003) further notes that school improvement efforts are most successful when leadership practices support collaboration, organizational learning, and evidence-based decision-making. These perspectives suggest that educational transformation is not achieved through policy implementation alone but through the development of institutional conditions that support meaningful change.

Professional learning communities have become an increasingly important mechanism for supporting educational improvement and curriculum implementation. Research indicates that collaborative

professional cultures enable teachers to share knowledge, reflect on practice, and collectively address instructional challenges (DuFour & DuFour, 2013; Hord, 2009). (Stoll et al., 2006) argue that professional learning communities contribute to sustainable improvement by fostering shared responsibility for student learning and organizational development. Consequently, principals play a crucial role in establishing structures that encourage collaboration, professional dialogue, and continuous learning among teachers.

Another factor closely associated with educational effectiveness is school culture. Educational researchers have long emphasized that culture influences organizational behavior, professional relationships, and educational outcomes. (Deal & Peterson, 2016) argue that strong school cultures provide shared values, beliefs, and norms that guide behavior throughout the organization. (Xenikou & Furnham, 2022) highlights that organizational culture shapes how members interpret challenges, make decisions, and respond to change. In educational settings, positive school cultures contribute to teacher commitment, student engagement, and the successful implementation of educational innovations.

Character education represents a particularly important dimension of contemporary educational reform. (Berkowitz & Bier, 2004b) argue that effective character education contributes to students' moral development, social responsibility, and civic engagement. Similarly, (Watts & Kristjánsson, 2022) emphasizes that character education should be integrated throughout school experiences rather than taught as a separate subject. Such integration requires coherent leadership, supportive organizational culture, and instructional practices that consistently reinforce desired values and behaviors.

Within Indonesia, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum reflects a national effort to strengthen both competency development and character education. One of its most distinctive components is the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5), which seeks to cultivate learners who embody the values of faith, noble character, global diversity, mutual cooperation, independence, critical reasoning, and creativity. Through project-based learning activities, P5 aims to transform character education into meaningful learning experiences that connect academic knowledge with real-life contexts.

Despite its promising objectives, the implementation of P5 presents significant challenges. Schools must develop new instructional approaches, strengthen teacher competencies, establish collaborative organizational structures, and create learning environments that support character development. Although previous studies have examined teacher readiness, curriculum implementation, and student outcomes, relatively limited attention has been devoted to understanding how principals strategically lead the implementation of P5. Furthermore, existing studies often focus on managerial functions without adequately explaining how leadership contributes to organizational transformation and character-based curriculum reform.

A further gap exists within the educational leadership literature itself. While instructional leadership, transformational leadership, and student-centered leadership have been widely examined as independent constructs, limited empirical evidence explains how these leadership approaches interact within character-based curriculum reforms rooted in indigenous philosophical values such as Pancasila.

Most influential leadership studies have been conducted in Western educational contexts and primarily focus on academic achievement, instructional effectiveness, and organizational performance. Consequently, there remains insufficient understanding of how school leaders mobilize organizational capacity, professional learning, stakeholder collaboration, and cultural transformation to support character-oriented educational reforms in developing countries.

Addressing these gaps, this study contributes both empirically and theoretically to the educational leadership literature. Empirically, it provides evidence from the implementation of the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5) in an Indonesian public junior secondary school. Theoretically, the novelty of this study lies in the development of an Integrated P5 Leadership Innovation Framework consisting of five interconnected dimensions: collaborative governance, teacher professional empowerment, community-based resource mobilization, reflective supervision, and culture-driven transformation. Unlike previous studies that examine leadership dimensions separately, the proposed framework explains how multiple leadership practices operate simultaneously to facilitate organizational learning, character education, and sustainable curriculum reform implementation.

This study seeks to examine the innovative leadership strategies employed by the principal of SMP Negeri 4 Bengalon in implementing the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project. The study contributes to the literature by proposing an Integrated P5 Leadership Innovation Framework that explains how collaborative governance, teacher professional empowerment, community-based resource mobilization, reflective supervision, and culture-driven transformation interact to support successful character-based curriculum implementation within a culturally grounded educational context.

Method

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative case study design to explore the innovative leadership strategies implemented by the principal in supporting the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5) at SMP Negeri 4 Bengalon, East Kutai Regency, Indonesia. A qualitative case study approach was selected because it enables researchers to investigate a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context and to gain a comprehensive understanding of complex social processes that cannot be separated from their institutional environment. The implementation of P5 involves interactions among leadership practices, teacher professional development, organizational culture, community participation, and educational policy, making a qualitative case study particularly suitable for capturing the complexity of these interconnected dimensions.

The study was guided by the assumption that educational leadership is context-dependent and socially constructed. Therefore, understanding how innovative leadership practices contribute to successful P5 implementation requires an in-depth examination of participants' experiences, perceptions, and interactions within the school setting. Through this approach, the study sought not only to describe

leadership activities but also to explain how these activities facilitated organizational transformation and character-based educational reform.

Research Site and Participants

The research was conducted at SMP Negeri 4 Bengalon, a public junior secondary school located in East Kutai Regency, East Kalimantan Province, Indonesia. The school was selected purposively because it has actively implemented the Merdeka Curriculum and the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5), while simultaneously demonstrating several innovative leadership practices that support character education and project-based learning.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure that information-rich individuals directly involved in the implementation of P5 were included. The participants consisted of the principal, vice principal, P5 coordinator, facilitator teachers, homeroom teachers, and students participating in P5 activities. Additional information was obtained from school committee representatives and community partners involved in project implementation. The selection of participants was based on their experience, responsibilities, and level of engagement in planning, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating P5 activities.

Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected over a period of several months using multiple qualitative techniques to obtain comprehensive and credible findings. The use of multiple data sources enabled methodological triangulation and facilitated a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with all key participants. The interview protocol focused on leadership strategies, decision-making processes, teacher empowerment initiatives, collaboration mechanisms, supervision practices, and challenges encountered during P5 implementation. Interviews provided opportunities for participants to share detailed experiences and reflections regarding the role of school leadership in facilitating curriculum reform.

In addition to interviews, non-participant observations were carried out during P5 activities, teacher coordination meetings, school assemblies, project exhibitions, and leadership supervision sessions. Observation enabled the researcher to examine actual practices, interactions, and organizational dynamics within the school environment. Field notes were systematically recorded to document behaviors, events, and contextual factors relevant to the research objectives.

Document analysis was also employed to complement interview and observation data. Documents examined included school strategic plans, P5 implementation guidelines, project modules, meeting minutes, supervision reports, teacher professional development records, evaluation documents, photographs, and other institutional records related to the implementation of P5. These documents

provided valuable evidence regarding the planning, execution, and monitoring processes associated with leadership practices.

Data Analysis

Data analysis followed the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, which consists of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. The analytical process was conducted simultaneously with data collection, allowing emerging insights to inform subsequent data gathering activities.

The first stage involved data condensation, during which interview transcripts, observation notes, and documentary evidence were carefully reviewed, coded, and organized into meaningful categories. Open coding was initially conducted to identify significant statements related to leadership practices and P5 implementation. Similar codes were subsequently grouped into broader thematic categories.

The second stage involved data display. The categorized data were organized into thematic matrices and narrative summaries to facilitate interpretation and comparison across different participant groups and data sources. This process enabled the identification of recurring patterns, relationships, and emerging themes associated with innovative leadership practices.

The final stage involved conclusion drawing and verification. Emerging interpretations were continuously compared across interviews, observations, and documentary evidence to ensure consistency and analytical rigor. Through an iterative process of reflection and verification, five major themes were identified: collaborative governance, teacher professional empowerment, community-based resource mobilization, reflective supervision, and culture-driven transformation. These themes formed the basis for the development of the proposed leadership innovation framework.

Trustworthiness of the Study

To enhance the trustworthiness of the findings, several strategies were employed based on established qualitative research criteria. Credibility was strengthened through prolonged engagement in the research setting, triangulation of data sources, and member checking. Participants were invited to review interview summaries and preliminary interpretations to ensure the accuracy of the findings.

Dependability was supported through the maintenance of detailed records documenting data collection procedures, coding decisions, and analytical processes. Confirmability was achieved by maintaining an audit trail and continuously comparing interpretations with empirical evidence obtained from multiple sources. Transferability was enhanced through rich descriptions of the research context, participants, and implementation processes, enabling readers to assess the applicability of the findings to similar educational settings.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to established ethical principles for educational research. Prior to data collection, permission was obtained from the school administration and all participants were informed about the purpose of the study, data collection procedures, and their rights as research participants. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all participants. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained by removing identifying information from interview transcripts, field notes, and research reports. All collected data were used exclusively for academic purposes and stored securely throughout the research process.

o obtain comprehensive and credible insights into the implementation of the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5), this study involved participants who possessed direct experience and responsibilities related to the planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of P5 activities. Participants were purposively selected based on their active involvement in school leadership, instructional processes, project facilitation, and stakeholder collaboration. The inclusion of multiple participant groups enabled the researcher to capture diverse perspectives regarding the principal's leadership strategies and their influence on the implementation of character-based educational reform.

The participant composition was designed to ensure data richness and triangulation across different organizational levels. School leaders provided information regarding strategic planning and policy implementation, teachers contributed insights into instructional practices and project execution, students shared their learning experiences, while community representatives offered perspectives on external collaboration and community engagement. The demographic characteristics and roles of the research participants are presented in Table 1.

Table 1
Demographic Characteristics of Research Participants

Participant Code	Position	Gender	Years of Experience	Role in P5 Implementation
P1	Principal	Female	15	Strategic planning, supervision, policy implementation
P2	Vice Principal	Male	12	Program coordination and monitoring
P3	P5 Coordinator	Female	10	Project management and facilitation
T1	Teacher	Female	8	P5 facilitator
T2	Teacher	Male	11	P5 facilitator
T3	Teacher	Female	7	Project implementation
S1	Student	Female	-	P5 participant
S2	Student	Male	-	P5 participant
SC1	School Committee Representative	Male	9	Community support and collaboration
CP1	Community Partner	Female	6	Local resource support

Source: Research Data (2025)

The research process was conducted systematically to ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings. The study began with the identification of issues related to principal leadership and P5 implementation, followed by participant selection, data collection, triangulation, and thematic analysis. Multiple sources of evidence, including interviews, observations, and document analysis, were integrated throughout the research process to develop a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. The overall research procedure is illustrated in Fig. 1.

The research process began with the identification of issues related to the implementation of the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5) and the strategic role of school leadership in supporting curriculum reform. Following a comprehensive review of educational leadership and character education literature, SMP Negeri 4 Bengalon was purposively selected as the research site due to its active implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum and P5 initiatives. Data were subsequently collected through semi-structured interviews, non-participant observations, and document analysis involving key stakeholders directly engaged in the implementation process.

The collected data were subjected to source and methodological triangulation to enhance the credibility of the findings. Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, involving data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. Through iterative coding and thematic

analysis, several recurring leadership practices were identified and synthesized into an integrated leadership innovation framework that explains how principal leadership contributes to the successful implementation of P5 within a character-based educational reform context.

Results

Collaborative Governance in P5 Planning

The findings revealed that collaborative governance served as the primary foundation for the successful implementation of the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5) at SMP Negeri 4 Bengalon. The principal adopted a participatory approach that actively involved teachers, curriculum coordinators, school committees, and community representatives in planning project activities. Rather than relying solely on administrative directives, the principal facilitated collective discussions to identify priority themes, determine learning objectives, and align project activities with local community needs and students' characteristics.

Interview findings indicate that stakeholder participation significantly increased commitment toward project implementation. One teacher stated:

The principal always involves us in discussions before determining project themes. As teachers, we feel that our ideas are valued, making us more responsible for the success of the project.

Similarly, the P5 coordinator explained:

Planning is conducted collaboratively. Every teacher contributes ideas regarding project activities, assessment methods, and learning outcomes.

Observational data confirmed that planning meetings were conducted regularly and transparently. Teachers actively exchanged ideas and discussed implementation challenges. The principal acted as a facilitator who encouraged participation and ensured that all stakeholders shared responsibility for achieving project objectives.

Document analysis further revealed that project planning documents reflected strong alignment between P5 themes, school priorities, and local contextual issues. This collaborative planning process contributed to stronger organizational commitment and improved implementation readiness.

Teacher Professional Empowerment

The second major theme emerging from the analysis concerns teacher professional empowerment. The findings indicate that the principal viewed teacher capacity building as a critical prerequisite for successful P5 implementation. Since project-based learning represented a relatively new instructional approach for many teachers, continuous professional development became an institutional priority.

Interview data revealed that teachers initially faced challenges in understanding interdisciplinary learning, authentic assessment, and project facilitation strategies. To address these issues, the principal organized internal workshops, mentoring activities, peer-learning sessions, and participation in external professional development programs.

One teacher explained:

At the beginning, many teachers were confused about how to develop P5 modules. Through workshops and mentoring, we gradually became more confident in implementing project-based learning.

Another participant noted:

The principal consistently encourages us to learn together and share experiences. This creates a positive atmosphere for professional growth.

Observational findings showed that collaborative professional learning had become part of the school's routine activities. Teachers regularly discussed project implementation experiences and exchanged instructional strategies. This environment promoted continuous learning and strengthened teacher competence in facilitating student-centered learning activities.

Documentary evidence, including workshop reports and training records, further confirmed the school's commitment to teacher professional development. The findings suggest that sustained capacity-building initiatives significantly enhanced teachers' readiness to implement P5 effectively.

Community-Based Resource Mobilization

Another important finding concerns the principal's efforts to mobilize community resources to support P5 implementation. The principal recognized that meaningful project-based learning requires authentic experiences that connect students with real-world contexts. Consequently, partnerships were established with community leaders, parents, local entrepreneurs, and village institutions.

Interview participants emphasized that community involvement enriched students' learning experiences. A community partner stated:

Students learn directly from local practices and community activities. This makes learning more meaningful because they can see how values are applied in everyday life.

Teachers also reported that external collaborations increased student engagement and improved the relevance of project activities.

Observations revealed that students actively participated in field activities, community service programs, entrepreneurship projects, and environmental initiatives involving local stakeholders. These activities enabled students to apply classroom knowledge in authentic situations while strengthening values such as cooperation, responsibility, and respect for diversity.

Document analysis demonstrated that community partnerships were formally integrated into project planning and implementation processes. Various cooperation agreements and activity reports highlighted the sustained involvement of external stakeholders throughout project implementation.

The findings indicate that community-based resource mobilization contributed substantially to the contextual relevance and sustainability of P5 activities.

Reflective Supervision and Continuous Improvement

The findings further reveal that the principal implemented reflective supervision as a mechanism for continuous improvement. Unlike traditional supervision models that emphasize compliance and administrative control, the supervision process focused on professional support, reflection, and collaborative problem-solving.

Teachers consistently described supervision as constructive and developmental. One participant stated:

Supervision is not about finding mistakes. Instead, the principal helps us identify challenges and improve our practices.

Another teacher explained:

After project activities, we always have reflection sessions where we discuss what worked well and what should be improved.

Observational data confirmed that the principal regularly monitored project implementation, interacted with teachers and students, and provided immediate feedback when necessary. Reflection meetings served as important opportunities for evaluating project outcomes and identifying areas requiring improvement.

Documentary evidence showed that supervision reports included observations, recommendations, follow-up actions, and evaluation summaries. These reports were subsequently used to improve future project cycles and strengthen overall implementation quality.

The findings suggest that reflective supervision promoted organizational learning and contributed to the continuous improvement of P5 implementation.

Culture-Driven Transformation for Pancasila Values

The final theme identified in this study concerns culture-driven transformation. The findings indicate that the principal successfully integrated Pancasila values into various dimensions of school life, ensuring that P5 became more than a curriculum requirement.

Teachers and students consistently reported that values such as mutual cooperation, responsibility, inclusivity, tolerance, and integrity were embedded in daily school activities. One student explained:

Through P5 activities, we learn how to work together, respect differences, and take responsibility for our tasks.

Similarly, a teacher stated:

The principal encourages us to model Pancasila values every day, not only during project activities but also in classroom interactions and school events.

Observational findings demonstrated a positive and inclusive school environment characterized by strong collaboration among students and teachers. School activities consistently reinforced values associated with the Pancasila Student Profile.

Document analysis further revealed that school policies, strategic plans, and evaluation instruments explicitly reflected Pancasila values. This alignment strengthened the consistency between curriculum objectives and institutional practices.

The findings suggest that culture-driven transformation functioned as the overarching mechanism through which leadership innovations influenced student character development and educational quality improvement.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that innovative principal leadership plays a central role in facilitating the successful implementation of the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5) within the Merdeka Curriculum framework. The evidence indicates that the effectiveness of P5 implementation is not solely determined by curriculum design or policy directives but is strongly influenced by the principal's capacity to mobilize organizational resources, strengthen teacher competence, foster collaboration, and cultivate a school culture aligned with character education goals. This finding is consistent with the broader educational leadership literature, which recognizes school leadership as one of the most influential school-level factors affecting educational quality, school improvement, and student development. (Leithwood et al., 2020) argue that successful school leadership significantly contributes to improving school conditions that support teaching and learning, while (Bush, 2024) emphasizes that leadership effectiveness remains a critical determinant of educational reform success.

One of the most significant findings concerns the role of collaborative governance in supporting P5 implementation. The principal actively engaged teachers, school committees, parents, and community stakeholders in planning and implementing project activities. Such practices reflect the core principles of instructional leadership, which emphasize curriculum coordination, stakeholder participation, and the development of shared educational goals. According to (Hallinger et al., 2025), instructional leadership remains one of the most influential leadership models for improving teaching quality and strengthening curriculum implementation. Through collaborative planning mechanisms, the principal ensured that

project activities were aligned with students' needs, local contexts, and institutional priorities. The findings suggest that stakeholder participation contributed to stronger organizational commitment and greater ownership of educational innovation. Similar conclusions have been reported in international studies demonstrating that collaborative leadership structures enhance institutional capacity and increase the sustainability of educational reforms.

The findings further reveal that teacher professional empowerment functioned as a critical mechanism for translating policy objectives into classroom practice. The implementation of P5 requires teachers to adopt interdisciplinary approaches, facilitate project-based learning, and employ authentic assessment strategies. Consequently, the principal prioritized teacher capacity building through workshops, mentoring programs, professional learning activities, and collaborative reflection sessions. This finding supports transformational leadership theory, which emphasizes the importance of developing organizational members' capacity and commitment to achieve shared goals. (Leithwood et al., 2020) argue that transformational leaders influence educational outcomes primarily by strengthening teacher motivation, professional competence, and collective efficacy. In the present study, teachers reported increased confidence and readiness to implement project-based learning following participation in professional development activities. These findings suggest that leadership contributes to educational innovation by creating conditions that encourage continuous professional growth and instructional improvement.

Another important finding concerns the mobilization of community resources to support character-based learning. The principal actively established partnerships with parents, community leaders, local entrepreneurs, and village institutions to provide students with authentic learning experiences. Such collaborations enabled students to connect classroom learning with real-life contexts while strengthening the relevance of P5 activities. This finding aligns with educational change perspectives emphasizing that sustainable school improvement requires strong relationships between schools and their communities. Educational reforms are more likely to succeed when schools are able to leverage external resources, social capital, and stakeholder participation to support learning and organizational development. Through community engagement, students gained opportunities to explore local wisdom, environmental issues, entrepreneurship, and social responsibility, thereby strengthening both academic and character-related outcomes. The findings therefore highlight the importance of leadership practices that extend beyond school boundaries and actively engage external stakeholders in educational processes.

The study also demonstrates the significance of reflective supervision as a strategy for continuous improvement. Unlike traditional supervision models that focus primarily on monitoring compliance, the principal adopted a developmental approach characterized by feedback, coaching, reflection, and collaborative problem-solving. Teachers perceived supervision as a supportive process that encouraged professional learning rather than administrative control. This finding is closely aligned with Robinson's concept of student-centered leadership, which emphasizes leadership practices that directly support teaching quality and student learning outcomes (V. Robinson, 2011) found that leadership practices

focused on teacher learning and instructional improvement have stronger effects on student outcomes than purely administrative leadership activities. In the present study, regular reflection meetings enabled teachers to evaluate project implementation, identify challenges, and develop improvement strategies. Such practices contributed to organizational learning and strengthened the school's capacity to adapt and improve over time.

The findings further indicate that culture-driven transformation served as the overarching mechanism connecting leadership practices with character development outcomes. Rather than positioning P5 as a stand-alone program, the principal embedded Pancasila values into daily school routines, organizational practices, extracurricular activities, and interpersonal interactions. This approach reflects the growing recognition that successful character education requires the integration of values into the broader school culture. Students and teachers consistently reported that values such as cooperation, responsibility, tolerance, integrity, and respect for diversity were reinforced through both formal and informal school activities. The findings suggest that the internalization of character values becomes more effective when educational practices are supported by a coherent and value-oriented organizational culture. Consequently, leadership influences character development not only through instructional processes but also through the creation of environments that enable students to experience and practice desired values in authentic contexts.

The present study also contributes to the growing literature on leadership and educational reform by demonstrating how multiple leadership dimensions operate simultaneously within a character-based curriculum framework. Existing research often examines instructional leadership, transformational leadership, and student-centered leadership as separate constructs. However, the findings indicate that successful implementation of P5 required the integration of various leadership approaches. The principal functioned simultaneously as an instructional leader coordinating curriculum implementation, a transformational leader empowering teachers, a change agent mobilizing community resources, and a student-centered leader supporting instructional improvement. This observation suggests that educational reform in contemporary schools requires leadership practices that are adaptive, multidimensional, and contextually responsive.

A major contribution of this study lies in the development of the Integrated P5 Leadership Innovation Framework. The framework proposes that successful implementation of character-based curriculum reform is supported by five interconnected dimensions: collaborative governance, teacher professional empowerment, community-based resource mobilization, reflective supervision, and culture-driven transformation. Unlike traditional managerial approaches that emphasize planning, organizing, directing, and controlling, the proposed framework conceptualizes leadership as an integrated process of organizational transformation. The findings suggest that leadership effectiveness emerges from the interaction of these dimensions rather than from any single leadership practice in isolation.

The study further contributes to international educational leadership scholarship by providing evidence from the Indonesian educational context. Much of the existing leadership literature has been developed

within Western educational systems, while evidence from developing countries remains comparatively limited. The implementation of P5 offers a unique context for examining how leadership practices support curriculum reform grounded in national values and cultural identity. The findings demonstrate that internationally recognized leadership principles remain relevant but require contextual adaptation to address local educational realities. This insight supports calls for greater attention to culturally responsive leadership models capable of addressing diverse educational contexts while maintaining alignment with global educational standards.

Overall, the findings confirm that innovative principal leadership serves as a strategic driver of successful P5 implementation. Through collaborative governance, teacher empowerment, community engagement, reflective supervision, and culture-based transformation, the principal was able to create a supportive educational ecosystem that strengthened both character development and educational quality. The study therefore underscores the importance of leadership innovation in sustaining curriculum reform and provides valuable implications for policymakers, educational practitioners, and future researchers seeking to enhance the implementation of character-based education within contemporary schooling environments.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that innovative principal leadership plays a decisive role in the successful implementation of the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5) within the Merdeka Curriculum framework. The findings indicate that effective implementation extends beyond administrative compliance with curriculum policy and depends largely on the principal's ability to build organizational capacity, empower teachers, foster collaboration, mobilize community resources, and cultivate a school culture aligned with Pancasila values. Through these leadership practices, the school was able to create a supportive educational ecosystem that strengthened both character development and educational quality.

The study identified five interrelated dimensions that contributed to successful P5 implementation: collaborative governance, teacher professional empowerment, community-based resource mobilization, reflective supervision, and culture-driven transformation. These dimensions functioned collectively rather than independently, demonstrating that leadership effectiveness emerges through the integration of multiple leadership practices. Collaborative governance strengthened stakeholder commitment, teacher empowerment enhanced instructional capacity, community engagement increased contextual relevance, reflective supervision supported continuous improvement, and culture-driven transformation facilitated the internalization of Pancasila values throughout the school environment.

A major contribution of this research is the development of the Integrated P5 Leadership Innovation Framework, which provides a contextual explanation of how school leadership supports character-based curriculum reform. The framework extends existing educational leadership literature by illustrating how instructional, transformational, and student-centered leadership practices can be integrated within a

culturally grounded educational setting. The findings suggest that successful implementation of character-oriented educational reforms requires leadership approaches that are adaptive, collaborative, and responsive to local contexts.

Despite its contributions, this study is limited to a single-school case study and therefore may not fully represent the diversity of educational contexts across Indonesia. Future research may employ comparative multi-site studies, mixed-method approaches, or quantitative validation of the proposed framework to examine its applicability in different educational settings. Further investigations may also explore the relationship between leadership innovation, student character outcomes, and long-term school improvement.

The findings reaffirm that leadership innovation serves as a strategic foundation for sustainable curriculum reform. School leaders who are able to integrate collaboration, professional learning, community engagement, reflective practice, and value-based culture building are more likely to achieve meaningful and lasting educational transformation.

Declarations

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

Ethical Approval

This study was conducted in accordance with institutional ethical standards.

Informed Consent

Informed consent was obtained from all participants involved in this study.

Data Availability

The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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Figures

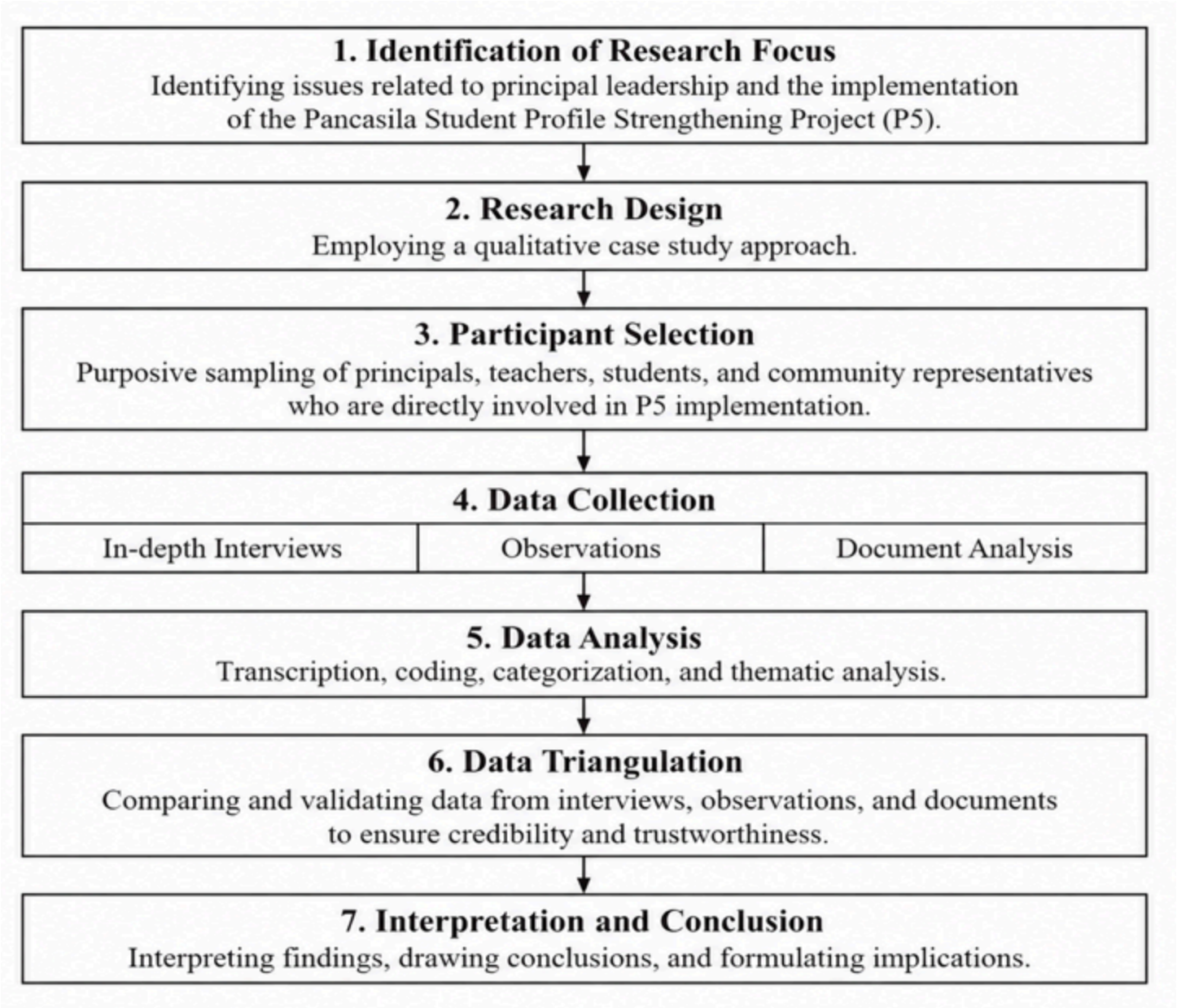


Figure 1

Research Procedure