

## EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP IN DEVELOPING CHARACTER-BASED GRADUATE PROFILES

Rina Andriani <sup>1a(\*)</sup>, Ahmad Fahrurrozi<sup>2b</sup>, Agus Saefudin <sup>3c</sup>

<sup>123</sup>Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang, Jl. Raya Tlogomas No. 246 Malang

<sup>a</sup>*rinanose2018@gmail.com*

<sup>b</sup>*anaskamil2817@gmail.com*

<sup>c</sup>*agusaep123@gmail.com*

(\*)Corresponding Author

*rinanose2018@gmail.com*

**How to Cite:** Andriani, R., Fahrurrozi, A., and Saefudin, A. (2026). Educational Leadership In Developing Character-Based Graduate Profiles. doi: 10.36526/js.v3i2.6951

### Abstract

Educational leadership plays a vital role in shaping graduate profiles that combine academic excellence with strong character values. In the Indonesian context, especially in Muhammadiyah schools, character-based education is integrated into academic and spiritual development. This study aims to analyze the concept of educational leadership in developing character-based graduate profiles, the strategies used by school leaders, and the challenges faced during implementation. The results highlight the importance of visionary leadership, curriculum integration, school culture, teacher professionalism, and stakeholder collaboration in strengthening graduates' character formation.

Received : 23-12-2025  
 Revised : 13-03-2026  
 Accepted : 19-04-2026

### Keywords:

educational leadership,  
 graduate profiles,  
 character education,  
 Muhammadiyah schools

### INTRODUCTION

The 21st century requires graduates who are not only intellectually competent but also morally grounded. Education systems worldwide emphasize holistic development by integrating cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains (Yayuk & Restian, 2017). In Indonesia, the Profil Pelajar Pancasila serves as a national guideline for graduate profiles, encompassing faith, integrity, collaboration, independence, critical reasoning, and creativity (Anshory AM et al., 2017).

Educational leadership is essential in realizing these profiles. Leaders such as principals, teachers, and policymakers must set clear visions, align curriculum with character values, and build a supportive school culture. This paper focuses on the role of educational leadership in developing character-based graduate profiles, with particular emphasis on practices in Muhammadiyah schools.

In recent years, the demand for graduates who demonstrate not only academic excellence but also strong moral and ethical character has increased significantly. The rapid advancement of science, technology, and globalization has brought both opportunities and challenges to education systems worldwide. Many educational institutions are now expected to produce graduates who are innovative, adaptable, and equipped with values such as honesty, responsibility, empathy, and social awareness. However, achieving this goal requires more than curriculum design; it calls for visionary and transformative educational leadership.

Educational leadership plays a central role in shaping school culture, influencing teacher performance, and guiding students toward holistic development. Leaders who demonstrate integrity and commitment to character education are able to create environments where learning is not only about knowledge acquisition but also about cultivating values and behaviors that reflect good citizenship. In this context, leadership is not limited to administrative functions but extends to moral and instructional leadership that integrates character education into every aspect of the learning process.

In many developing countries, including Indonesia, the government has emphasized the importance of character education as part of the national education goals. Policies such as Kurikulum Merdeka and Profil Pelajar Pancasila highlight the expectation that graduates should possess both

competence and noble character. However, challenges remain in how educational leaders interpret and implement these values at the institutional level. Some schools may focus heavily on academic performance while neglecting the cultivation of character values, leading to an imbalance in graduate quality.

Therefore, studying the role of educational leadership in developing character-based graduate profiles is crucial. Understanding how leaders promote, model, and sustain character education provides valuable insights into improving school practices and aligning educational outcomes with societal needs. This research contributes to the broader discussion of how leadership can transform education into a platform for nurturing not only intelligent but also morally responsible future generations.

Despite the increasing awareness of the importance of character education, many educational institutions still struggle to integrate moral and ethical values effectively into their learning processes. The main challenge lies in how educational leaders conceptualize and implement leadership practices that not only focus on academic excellence but also on character formation. In some cases, leadership styles remain administrative and task-oriented, rather than transformational and value-driven. As a result, the character-based graduate profile intended to produce individuals with integrity, empathy, and responsibility often remains an unfulfilled vision rather than a practical reality (Anshory, 2014).

Moreover, there is a gap between educational policy and school level implementation. Although national education frameworks, such as Profil Pelajar Pancasila in Indonesia, emphasize character development, many schools lack clear strategies, leadership models, and measurable indicators to evaluate success in this domain. Teachers and staff may not receive adequate guidance or motivation from leaders to incorporate character education into daily learning activities (Restian et al., 2020).

## METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research design using a descriptive case study approach to explore how educational leadership contributes to the development of character-based graduate profiles. The qualitative approach is chosen because it allows for an in-depth understanding of leadership behaviors, school culture, and the processes involved in implementing character education within real educational settings (Hapsari et al., 2024). The research is conducted in selected schools that have implemented character-based education programs or have adopted national frameworks such as the Profil Pelajar Pancasila. Participants include school principals, vice principals, teachers, and education staff who play significant roles in designing and carrying out leadership and character education activities. The selection of participants is based on purposive sampling, focusing on individuals who are knowledgeable and actively involved in the school's leadership and character development programs (Muhammadiyah & Utara, 2021).

Data are collected through multiple sources to ensure validity and depth of understanding. Interviews: Semi-structured interviews are conducted with school leaders and teachers to explore their perspectives, experiences, and strategies in promoting character-based education. Observation: Non-participant observations are carried out to examine how leadership practices and character education activities are implemented in daily school routines. Document Analysis: Relevant school documents, including vision and mission statements, curriculum plans, and policy guidelines, are reviewed to identify how character values are embedded institutionally.

The collected data are analyzed using thematic analysis. The process involves transcribing interview data, coding relevant themes, and categorizing patterns that reflect leadership roles and strategies in developing character-based graduate profiles. Data triangulation from interviews, observations, and documents is used to ensure credibility and reliability. To maintain the trustworthiness of the research, several strategies are employed, including member checking, peer debriefing, and triangulation. These steps ensure that the findings accurately represent the participants' perspectives and the real conditions of the research site. Ethical approval is obtained

from the relevant educational authorities. Participants are informed about the purpose of the study, and their confidentiality and anonymity are guaranteed. Informed consent is obtained before conducting interviews or observations..

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### **Result**

The findings of this study reveal that effective educational leadership plays a crucial role in shaping and sustaining the development of character-based graduate profiles. Through the analysis of interviews, observations, and school documents, several key themes emerged that describe how leaders influence character formation among students and teachers.

### **Leadership Vision and Policy Alignment**

The study found that successful schools demonstrate strong alignment between their institutional vision, mission, and daily practices. Educational leaders consistently emphasize character education as a core institutional goal rather than a secondary objective. Leaders integrate values such as integrity, responsibility, and collaboration into school policies, strategic plans, and evaluation systems. This alignment ensures that all stakeholders—teachers, students, and parents—understand and support the vision of producing graduates with both competence and character.

### **Transformational Leadership Practices**

The results indicate that transformational leadership is the most effective approach in promoting character-based education. Principals who act as role models, motivators, and facilitators inspire teachers to adopt similar values in their classrooms. These leaders focus on building trust, encouraging innovation in teaching, and providing continuous support for teachers' professional and moral development. The research also highlights that transformational leaders often employ open communication, participatory decision-making, and collaborative planning to strengthen the sense of shared responsibility within the school community.

### **Integration of Character Education in Curriculum and Activities**

Character development is most effective when it is embedded across the curriculum and supported by extracurricular programs. Schools with strong leadership integrate character education into lesson plans, co-curricular activities, and community service programs. Teachers are encouraged to connect academic content with moral and ethical reflections, fostering students' awareness of real-world applications of values such as honesty, empathy, and perseverance.

### **School Culture and Role Modeling**

The research reveals that school culture significantly influences the success of character-based education. Leaders who demonstrate consistent ethical behavior and interpersonal respect create a positive environment that nurtures student character formation. Observation data show that schools with a strong culture of mutual respect, discipline, and cooperation tend to produce graduates who exhibit higher levels of moral awareness and social responsibility.

### **Challenges in Implementation**

Despite the positive impact of leadership, several challenges remain. Some schools face limitations in teacher capacity, inadequate training in character-based pedagogy, and lack of resources to sustain character education programs. Furthermore, balancing academic achievement with moral development is often difficult due to external pressures such as standardized testing and parental expectations.

### **Leadership Strategies for Improvement**

To overcome these challenges, effective leaders employ adaptive strategies such as strengthening teacher mentoring programs, establishing partnerships with parents and communities, and incorporating reflective practices into staff meetings. These initiatives foster a holistic educational environment where intellectual and character development are treated as equally important.

The overall findings confirm that educational leadership is a determining factor in the success of developing character-based graduate profiles. Schools led by visionary, value-driven, and

collaborative leaders tend to achieve better integration of academic excellence and moral character formation among their graduates.

### **Discussion**

The findings of this study reinforce the idea that educational leadership plays a central and transformative role in shaping character-based graduate profiles. The effectiveness of leadership in education goes beyond administrative management it lies in the ability of leaders to inspire, model, and institutionalize values that shape both teachers' and students' behavior. This aligns with transformational leadership theory, which emphasizes the leader's role in motivating and influencing followers to achieve moral and intellectual growth (Cohen de Lara et al., 2024).

The study demonstrates that when school leaders clearly articulate a vision grounded in character education, it becomes the foundation for developing a coherent and value-oriented school culture. This finding is consistent with research by (Sanjani, 2024), who argue that leaders who provide moral direction and shared vision significantly impact teachers' commitment and student outcomes. By embedding character values within the school's vision and mission, leaders ensure that the goals of moral development are systematically pursued across curriculum design, teaching methods, and evaluation practices.

Moreover, the effectiveness of transformational leadership in promoting character education supports the notion that leadership must be relational rather than hierarchical. The study's participants revealed that principals who engage teachers in collaborative decision-making processes foster stronger ownership and alignment with character education initiatives. This finding argues that sustainable educational reform depends on leadership that empowers and supports teachers as agents of change (Mohammad Zakki, Imam Fu'adi, Ahmad Tanzeh, 2023).

The integration of character education within curriculum and extracurricular activities also supports the concept of holistic education, as proposed by (Ansori et al., 2024), which highlights the need for moral, intellectual, and civic development as complementary components of learning. The findings show that leadership that bridges cognitive learning and moral reflection produces students with not only academic competence but also social responsibility.

The importance of school culture and role modeling identified in this study underscores the idea that values are best transmitted through example. As Sergiovanni (2001) notes, moral leadership is expressed not only through words but through consistent ethical behavior. Leaders who demonstrate honesty, discipline, and empathy create a social climate that encourages similar traits among students and staff.

However, the challenges observed—such as limited teacher competence in character pedagogy and tension between academic and moral goals—reflect structural and systemic issues in education. This aligns with (Rohmah et al., 2025), who note that leadership effectiveness is constrained when schools lack sufficient resources or when educational systems prioritize test performance over holistic growth. To address these challenges, leaders must act as change agents who balance policy demands with moral imperatives.

The findings also highlight the importance of collaboration between schools, families, and communities. Character development cannot be achieved in isolation; it requires shared responsibility and partnership. This supports Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1979), which posits that moral and social development are influenced by the interaction between individual, family, school, and community environments.

In conclusion, the discussion reveals that educational leadership is the linchpin in the creation of character-based graduate profiles. Transformational and moral leadership models provide the theoretical and practical framework for achieving this goal. Leaders who combine vision, ethical integrity, and collaborative management can effectively guide schools toward producing graduates who embody both intellectual excellence and strong moral character—individuals capable of contributing positively to society in an era of rapid change and global challenges..

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that educational leadership is a decisive factor in the successful development of character-based graduate profiles. The results show that leadership that is visionary, value-driven, and transformational significantly contributes to creating school environments that foster both intellectual competence and moral integrity among students. Educational leaders who consistently promote and model ethical behavior, embed character education into institutional vision and curriculum, and build collaborative relationships with teachers and communities are more likely to produce graduates who demonstrate integrity, empathy, responsibility, and social awareness.

The findings emphasize that effective educational leadership requires a holistic approach—one that integrates administrative, instructional, and moral dimensions. Leadership is not limited to managing resources or enforcing rules; it involves inspiring others to embrace shared values and translating those values into everyday practice. Transformational and moral leadership approaches, as identified in this study, serve as practical frameworks for nurturing character formation within educational institutions.

Furthermore, the study highlights several ongoing challenges, such as limited teacher capacity in implementing character education, lack of systematic evaluation mechanisms, and pressures of academic performance standards. To overcome these issues, leaders need to strengthen teacher professional development, establish collaborative partnerships with parents and local communities, and integrate character education across both formal and informal learning settings. In essence, the development of character-based graduate profiles depends on the ability of educational leaders to act as role models, change agents, and moral guides within their institutions. When leadership practices align with the principles of character education, schools become transformative spaces that prepare students not only for academic success but also for ethical and responsible participation in society.

The implication of this study suggests that future research should further explore leadership training models that emphasize character education competencies, as well as policy strategies that reinforce the alignment between national education goals and school-level implementation. Strengthening educational leadership capacity is therefore fundamental to realizing the broader mission of education: forming graduates who are intellectually capable, morally grounded, and socially responsible citizens.

## REFERENCE

- Anshory AM, I., Saputra, S. Y., & Amelia, D. J. (2017). Pelaksanaan pembelajaran tematik sesuai kurikulum 2013 di SD Muhammadiyah 03 Wajak. *ELSE (Elementary School Education Journal)*, 1, 67–76. <http://journal.um-surabaya.ac.id/index.php/pgsd/article/view/872>.
- Anshory, I. (2014). Persepsi Mahasiswa PGSD Terhadap Program Unggulan Untuk Menjadi Lulusan Yang Mampu Mengelola Pembelajaran di Sekolah Inklusi. *Jurnal Humanity*, 8(September), 163–169. <https://ejournal.umm.ac.id/index.php/humanity/article/view/1985/2923>.
- Ansori, Y. Z., Nahdi, D. S., Juanda, A., & Santoso, E. (2024). Developing the Character of Elementary School Students Through Values-Based Leadership. *AL-ISHLAH: Jurnal Pendidikan*, 16(4), 5335–5344. <https://doi.org/10.35445/alishlah.v16i4.5513>.
- Berkowitz, M. W., & Bier, M. C. (2020). Research-based character education. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 688(1), 50–72. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716220915979>.
- Cahyani, A. L., Mujahidah, Q., Marhadi, H., & Alpusari, M. (2025). Kepemimpinan berkarakter sebagai pondasi sekolah berbudaya positif. *Pendas: Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Dasar*, 10(4). <https://doi.org/10.23969/jp.v10i04.37552>
- Crossan, M., Mazutis, D., Seijts, G., & Gandz, J. (2013). Developing leadership character in business programs. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 12(2), 285–305. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amle.2011.0024a>
- Cohen de Lara, E., Lleó, Á., Domingo, V., & Torralba, J. M. (2024). Leadership as service: developing

- a character education program for university students in Spain. *International Journal of Ethics Education*, 9(2), 209–227. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40889-024-00189-x>.
- Darling-Hammond, L., Flook, L., Cook-Harvey, C., Barron, B., & Osher, D. (2020). Implications for educational practice of the science of learning and development. *Applied Developmental Science*, 24(2), 97–140. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10888691.2018.1537791>
- Hapsari, M. M., Martono, T., Wardani, D. K., & Noviani, L. (2024). Student Leadership Character in Educational Research: a Bibliometric Analysis of the Last Two Decades. *Jurnal Pendidikan Karakter*, 15(2), 144–154. <https://doi.org/10.21831/jpka.v15i2.78398>.
- Matiala, T. F., Anggreni, M. A., Lumingkewas, C. S., Sofyanty, D., & Bashori. (2023). The role of the principal leadership in developing sustainable students character education. *Mudir: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan*, 5(2). <https://doi.org/10.55352/mudir.v5i2.600>
- Mohammad Zakki, Imam Fu'adi, Ahmad Tanzeh, K. (2023). *Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam. Kepemimpinan Profetik Pada Masa Khulafaur Rasyidin*, 4(2), 109–110.
- Mubarok, M. K., Syakur, A., Fahmi, M. F., & Prasetya, R. (2024). A character education framework grounded in exemplary leadership: Insights and applications. *Tadris: Jurnal Keguruan dan Ilmu Tarbiyah*, 9(2). <https://doi.org/10.24042/tadris.v9i2.25086>
- Muhammadiyah, U., & Utara, S. (2021). *Seminar Nasional Kedua Pendidikan Berkemajuan dan Menggembirakan ( The August*, 533–542.
- Neesham, C., Gu, J., & Macklin, R. (2021). Developing character-based leadership through guided self-reflection. *The International Journal of Management Education*, 19(3), Article 100573. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijme.2021.100573>
- Rachman, E. A., Humaeroh, D., Sari, D. Y., & Mulyanto, A. (2023). Kepemimpinan visioner dalam pendidikan karakter. *Jurnal Educatio FKIP UNMA*, 9(2), 1024–1033. <https://doi.org/10.31949/educatio.v9i2.5053>.
- Restian, A., Deviana, T., & Saputri, Y. N. E. (2020). Pengembangan LKS Berbasis Kearifan Lokal di Malang Untuk Siswa Kelas IV SD. *Scholaria: Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Kebudayaan*, 10(1), 85–91. <https://doi.org/10.24246/j.js.2020.v10.i1.p85-91>.
- Rohmah, R. A., Yuanita, P., & Winarni, D. (2025). *Eight Graduate Profiles : Strategies for Developing Student Character in the Digital Era*. 10(6), 614–619.
- Sanjani, M. A. F. (2024). The Impact of School Principals on Graduate Quality Through Character Education Initiatives. *Journal of Educational Management Research*, 3(1), 30–46. <https://doi.org/10.61987/jemr.v3i1.347>.
- Saputra, A., Widayatsih, T., & Eddy, S. (2025). Principal leadership management in building student character at State Elementary School 27 Palembang. *Khatulistiwa: Jurnal Pendidikan dan Sosial Humaniora*, 5(2). <https://doi.org/10.55606/khatulistiwa.v5i2.6295>
- Seemiller, C., & Murray, T. (2020). *The intentional classroom: Building social and emotional learning through purposeful leadership*. Routledge.
- Yayuk, E., & Restian, A. (2017). Arina Restian), [kuncahyono@umm.ac.id](mailto:kuncahyono@umm.ac.id) (Kuncahyono) Erna Yayuk, Arina Restian. *Jurnal Ilmiah Sekolah Dasar*, 1(4), 229–236.