



School Management and Character Formation for High-Achieving Students at MI Darul Hikmah Menganti

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Abstract

This study examines the school management strategies implemented at MI Darul Hikmah Menganti in shaping the character of high-achieving students. Supported by management theory, character education, and the Indonesian Pancasila Student Profile framework, this study aims to analyze how the functions of planning, organizing, executing, and evaluating (POAC) are used to strengthen students' academic and non-academic achievements. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews, documentation, and achievement records from teachers, administrators, students, and parents. Findings show that the school instills a culture of achievement through its motto "A Thousand Students, A Thousand Champions," integrates a Quran memorization program, establishes a structured extracurricular system, encourages collaborative involvement of teachers and parents, and conducts continuous evaluation through character reports and performance competitions. This study concludes that effective management strategies significantly improve students' spiritual, moral, academic, and achievement-oriented character. Recommendations include strengthening digital-based evaluation tools, expanding parent partnership programs, and extending the talent development model to other schools.

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INTRODUCTION

School management plays a central role in shaping student character and academic excellence, especially in educational institutions that aim to develop holistic development in the era of Indonesia's Independent Curriculum. This curriculum emphasizes flexibility, student-centered learning, and character building rooted in the Pancasila Student Profile, a national framework that defines six essential attributes for Indonesian students: faith and morals,

independence, global competence, cooperation, creativity, and critical thinking. In this context, well-managed schools are expected to not only optimize the learning process but also build an environment that fosters high-achieving behavior in various academic and non-academic fields.

MI Darul Hikmah Menganti, located in Jepara, Central Java, is one of the recognized Islamic elementary schools due to its solid management system and consistent student achievements at the district, regional, and provincial levels. Over the past few years, the

school has strengthened its identity through a powerful institutional slogan: “A Thousand Students, A Thousand Champions.” This slogan reflects the school's commitment to ensuring that every student has the opportunity to excel according to their talents whether in academics, religion, sports, arts, or other fields. The school's success in producing outstanding students is closely related to the strategic implementation of the four basic management functions: planning, organizing, executing, and controlling (POAC).

The implementation of structured character education programs, ongoing Quran memorization routines (tahfidzul Qur'an), religious practices, talent-based guidance, and expanded extracurricular activities demonstrate how MI Darul Hikmah Menganti integrates school management theory into daily practice. These initiatives are in line with the concept that effective school management must simultaneously address intellectual, moral, emotional, and social aspects to produce high-achieving students with strong character (Sagala, 2013; Zubaedi, 2015).

The school's approach is also supported by collaboration between administrators, teachers, and parents. At the beginning of each academic year, the school holds a program evaluation meeting to determine priorities, revise strategies, and allocate tasks. This collaborative planning process is essential to maintaining program effectiveness and ensuring alignment with the school's vision as an Islamic, high-quality, community-oriented institution. In addition, parental involvement through parent associations reflects a model of shared responsibility in character education, in line with theories that emphasize family-school partnerships as determinants of student success.

Despite its many achievements, the mechanisms behind the success of MI Darul Hikmah Menganti have not been widely documented in academic literature. Many studies explore school management or character education separately, but few provide an in-depth analysis of how these two aspects interact to produce high-achieving student behavior, especially in the context of Islamic elementary

schools in Indonesia. Therefore, this study contributes to filling this gap by systematically analyzing the management strategies used and their implications for student development.

This study focuses on answering the main question: “How do the four management functions (planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating) contribute to character building and high student achievement at MI Darul Hikmah Menganti?”

In this case, the introduction of a culture of achievement in the school environment deserves attention. The principal emphasizes motivational strategies during Monday assemblies by announcing weekly student achievements, which strengthens students' self-confidence and intrinsic motivation. Teachers also integrate achievement-based encouragement into daily learning activities, promoting the values of discipline, responsibility, and perseverance. These practices are in line with behaviorist theories of reinforcement, which suggest that recognition and feedback play a critical role in shaping desired behavior.

In addition, extracurricular activities play an important role in character building. Programs such as Quran recitation, robotics, scouting, pencak silat, religious competitions (MTQ), and art performances provide opportunities for students to discover and develop their talents. These activities are organized through a system that assigns coordinators, coaches, and student leaders to ensure smooth implementation. The success of these programs is reflected in the school's record of achievements, with more than 200 achievements in various academic and non-academic competitions in two years.

In summary, this introduction provides a foundation for understanding the interaction between school management and student character development. Through structured management practices, a strong culture of achievement, and a collaborative ecosystem, MI Darul Hikmah Menganti offers an attractive model for nurturing high-achieving students. The next section of this article will further explain the methodology, results, and implications of these strategies.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative case study design to investigate the management strategies implemented by MI Darul Hikmah Menganti in shaping the character of high-achieving students. The case study approach was chosen because it allows for in-depth investigation of real-world school practices in their natural context. This design is in line with Creswell's (2018) emphasis that qualitative case studies are suitable for analyzing processes, meanings, and organizational dynamics in educational environments.

Research Setting

The research was conducted at MI Darul Hikmah Menganti, an Islamic primary school located in Jepara, Central Java, Indonesia. The school is well known for its strong achievement culture, expressed through the institutional motto "*Seribu Siswa, Seribu Juara*" (A Thousand Students, A Thousand Champions), and its consistent academic and non-academic accomplishments at district, provincial, and national levels.

Participants

Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure the inclusion of individuals who possessed rich information relevant to the study. The selected participants included the principal, vice principal, teachers (including extracurricular coordinators), administrative staff (TU), students with achievement records, and parents involved in school programs. This diverse participant set provided comprehensive insights regarding planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating programs related to character and achievement development.

1. Data Collection Techniques:

Three primary techniques were used:

a) In-depth Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore participants' perspectives on school management, character-building programs, and achievement development. Interview guides were prepared based on

management theory (POAC) and character education frameworks.

b) Observation

Non-participant observations were carried out in classrooms, extracurricular spaces, religious routines, and school ceremonies. These observations focused on how character habits, discipline, achievement reinforcement, and routines were enacted within daily practices.

c) Documentation Analysis

Documents such as school programs, annual plans, achievement records, photos of activities, character report sheets, and competition certificates were analyzed to triangulate findings from interviews and observations.

2. Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña's (2014) interactive model, which includes three main components. The analysis began with Data Condensation, where information from transcripts, field notes, and documents was reviewed, selected, and categorized. This was followed by Data Display, which involved organizing the condensed data into matrices, tables, and narratives to identify patterns. Finally, Conclusion Drawing and Verification was performed by formulating findings related to managerial strategies and confirming them through triangulation. To enhance credibility, triangulation was applied across multiple sources (teachers, students, staff), techniques (interview, observation, documentation), and time.

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3. Trustworthiness

To ensure research trustworthiness, the study applied four main criteria. Credibility was achieved through triangulation and member checking. Transferability was sought through a thick description of the context. Dependability was ensured by maintaining an audit trail of procedures. Finally, Confirmability was upheld through reflective notes to avoid researcher bias.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

RESULT

Overview Of School Achievement Landscape

MI Darul Hikmah Menganti demonstrates a strong achievement culture aligned with its institutional motto “A Thousand Students, A Thousand Champions.” Achievement records from the last two academic years show consistent performance across academic, artistic, religious, technological, and sports domains.

Table 1 Student Achievement Summary
(2024/2025–2025/2026)

Category	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
Total achievements	161	52	213
District level	70%	68%	69%
Subdistrict level	15%	16%	15%
Provincial level	7%	8%	7.5%
National level	8%	8%	8%

Over the past two years, student achievements have shown consistent and significant progress. Approximately 42 students won first place, 38 students won second place, and 46 students won third place in various competitions. In addition, approximately 30 students were recognized as finalists or received honorary awards. These achievements were reinforced by a total of 28 medals, consisting of gold, silver, and bronze medals, which were won in academic and non-academic competitions. This overall performance reflects the effectiveness of the school's program in developing students' excellence and competitive character.

These achievements reflect the school's emphasis on holistic character development that integrates academics, religious values, discipline, and leadership.

Managerial Strategy In Planning

Planning activities are carried out annually through evaluation meetings and program review sessions. Teachers, staff, and management collaboratively design academic and non-academic work plans that focus on character building and achievement.

One teacher explained, “Our annual planning always begins with the results of the previous year's evaluation, so that our programs are focused and realistic.” (Teacher)

The principal further emphasizes alignment with character-based goals: “We realize our vision through daily religious routines and achievement-based activities such as Tahfidz and Monday Achievement Ceremonies.” (Principal)

This demonstrates the strategic relationship between planning, character building, and achievement motivation.

Managerial Strategy In Organizing

The organization involves role delegation, extracurricular program development, and communication network strengthening.

The vice principal stated: “We appoint coordinators for each program, ensuring that responsibilities are clear and measurable.” (Vice Principal)

Administrative staff also play an important role in data management: “All evaluation documents, competition certificates, and reports are stored to support decision-making.” (Administrative Staff).

This organizational clarity ensures smooth program implementation and minimizes misunderstandings.

Managerial Strategy In Implementation

Implementation includes religious routines, extracurricular activities, learning processes, and achievement reinforcement. Activities include Tahfidz, Duha prayers, literacy programs, robotics, sports, Scouts, and weekly achievement appreciation events.

A student shared, “Joining robotics has helped me become more courageous and confident to participate in competitions.” (Student)

A Scout coach adds, “Our activities include practical rock climbing, survival skills, and disaster simulations to build resilience and teamwork.” (Scout Coach)

These findings show that character building does not only take place in the classroom, but through experiential learning.

Managerial Strategy In Evaluation

Evaluations are conducted at monthly meetings, mid-semester reviews, and year-end analyses. Evaluation objectives include spiritual character, academic achievement, extracurricular commitment, and student behavior.

The principal explained, "Meeting with parents four times a year allows us to strengthen communication and evaluate character development." (Principal)

Another key indicator is success in competitions: "If students succeed in 80% of the competitions they participate in, we consider it a success." (Principal)

The school also monitors PPDB (new student enrollment) figures as a measure of public trust.

DISCUSSIONS

The findings indicate that MI Darul Hikmah Menganti successfully integrated the four managerial functions (POAC) into a coherent system that shapes the character of high-achieving students. Planning was carried out by ensuring coherence between vision, character development, and achievement goals. Furthermore, organization provided a clear distribution of tasks, which supported program sustainability. During the implementation phase, activities aligned with the principles of the Pancasila Student Profile by integrating religious, academic, and socio-cultural activities.

Evaluation focused on continuous improvement, consistent with the concept of Assessment as Learning in the Independent Curriculum. Overall, managerial practices create a strong learning ecosystem that nurtures moral integrity, independence, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity, leading to excellent academic and non-academic performance.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the management strategies implemented at MI Darul Hikmah Menganti, including planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating, have contributed significantly to shaping the character of high-

achieving students. The school has successfully integrated its vision of "Islamic, Quality, and Populist" and its motto of "A Thousand Students, A Thousand Champions" into its daily routines, learning processes, and extracurricular programs.

Strategic planning ensures alignment between institutional goals, character development initiatives, and achievement-oriented programs. Clear division of tasks and organizational structure support efficiency and sustainability. Implementation across religious routines, intracurricular, cocurricular, and extracurricular activities encourages the internalization of spiritual, moral, social, and academic values. Meanwhile, continuous evaluation strengthens communication between teachers and parents, improves monitoring mechanisms, and ensures that program outcomes are in line with the Pancasila Student Profile and the Merdeka Curriculum.

Overall, the synergy between the four managerial functions creates an ecosystem conducive to developing students who are virtuous, independent, collaborative, critical thinkers, and consistently high achievers academically and non-academically.

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