

Implementation of Ki Hadjar Dewantara's Thought to Improve School Principals' Managerial Competence: A Critical Study

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Abstract

Ki Hadjar Dewantara's educational philosophy provides a foundational framework for enhancing school leadership and managerial competence through a balanced approach known as the "Among system," which emphasizes leading by example, motivation, and supportive guidance. This study explores the practical application of Dewantara's philosophy in contemporary school leadership, particularly focusing on its alignment with transformational and servant leadership models. Using a qualitative review of empirical studies and case examples, the research examines how principals integrate Dewantara's emphasis on holistic development, cultural relevance, and humanism into school environments that foster academic achievement alongside moral and social growth. Findings reveal that culturally grounded leadership, characterized by empathy, collaboration, and community engagement, enhances student-centered learning and autonomy. However, the full realization of Dewantara's vision is often challenged by cultural, institutional, and resource limitations, highlighting the need for supportive policies and ongoing professional development. The discussion underscores that embedding Dewantara's principles in leadership training fosters resilient and ethically grounded educational communities. In conclusion, Dewantara's philosophy remains highly relevant in today's educational landscape, promoting leadership that balances guidance, respect, and support to nurture well-rounded students capable of facing future challenges.

Keywords: Ki Hadjar Dewantara; Educational leadership; Holistic Development; Cultural relevance

Introduction

Ki Hadjar Dewantara, often regarded as the father of Indonesian education, developed a philosophy deeply rooted in the values of nationalism, cultural identity, and human dignity. Central to his thought is the principle of "Tut Wuri Handayani," which means "to guide from behind," emphasizing the role of educators as facilitators who empower students to become independent and responsible individuals (Tia Basana Hutagalung & Liesna Andriany, 2024). Dewantara advocated for education that respects the learner's cultural background and natural development, promoting a holistic approach that nurtures not only intellectual abilities but also moral and emotional growth. His educational philosophy is framed around the concept of "Tri Ngesti Tunggal," which aims at achieving a balanced development of the mind, body, and soul, fostering learners who are intellectually competent, ethically grounded, and socially conscious (Waworuntu, 2021). Moreover, Dewantara introduced the "Among System," a leadership model inspired by the traditional Javanese way of guiding people gently and respectfully rather than through authoritarian means. This system underscores the importance of educators leading with care, patience, and wisdom, positioning themselves not as rulers but as

mentors who nurture and inspire (Shabartini et al.,2023). His ideas challenge rigid, colonial-era education models by emphasizing education as a tool for liberation and self- empowerment, promoting national pride and cultural preservation. These foundational thoughts remain influential in Indonesian education today, offering valuable insights for modern school leadership, particularly in fostering inclusive, student-centered environments that encourage principals to act as supportive managers rather than mere administrators (Anggraini & Wiryanto, 2022).Managerial competence in school principals is crucial because it directly influences the effectiveness and quality of school leadership, which in turn impacts student outcomes and overall school performance. Principals with strong managerial skills are able to plan strategically, organize resources efficiently, lead staff with clear vision, and control processes to ensure goals are met (Asyari et al., 2024). These competencies enable principals to create a positive school culture, handle challenges proactively, and foster collaboration among teachers, students, and the community. Without solid managerial competence, schools risk inefficiencies, poor communication, and low morale, which can undermine the educational environment (Rachmawati et al., 2020). Therefore, enhancing principals' managerial abilities is essential for achieving sustainable improvements in school operations and delivering quality education.

Ki Hadjar Dewantara's educational philosophy remains highly relevant in contemporary educational leadership as it emphasizes humanistic values, student-centered approaches, and culturally responsive leadership elements increasingly recognized as vital in today's diverse and dynamic school environments (Hermawan & Tan, 2021). His concept of "Tut Wuri Handayani," which encourages leaders to support and empower rather than control, aligns closely with modern transformational and servant leadership models that prioritize collaboration, empathy, and capacity-building among staff and students. Dewantara's focus on respecting students' cultural backgrounds and fostering holistic development also resonates with current calls for inclusive education that nurtures not only academic success but emotional and ethical growth (Ferary, 2021). By integrating Dewantara's thought, contemporary principals can cultivate supportive, adaptive, and ethically grounded leadership styles that better meet the complex needs of 21st-century schools.

Despite the critical role of school principals in shaping educational outcomes, many face significant challenges in developing effective managerial competence, including difficulties in strategic planning, resource management, communication, and leading diverse school communities. These challenges often result in inefficiencies, low staff morale, and suboptimal learning environments. Additionally, there is a noticeable gap in the practical application of Ki Hadjar Dewantara's educational philosophy within school management, despite its potential to foster more humanistic and culturally responsive leadership. This disconnects limits principals' ability to fully embody the empowering and student- centered principles Dewantara advocated, which could otherwise enhance their managerial skills and positively transform school leadership practices. Addressing this gap is essential to improving both the competence of school principals and the overall quality of education.

The purpose of this study is to critically analyze the ways in which Ki Hadjar Dewantara's educational philosophy can be applied to enhance the managerial competence of school principals. By examining the practical implementation of Dewantara's thought, the study aims to uncover how his principles such as empowering leadership, cultural sensitivity, and student-centeredness can address current challenges faced by principals in managing schools effectively. The study seeks to identify specific strategies and practices derived from Dewantara's philosophy that can improve key managerial skills, including planning, organizing, leading, and controlling, ultimately contributing to more effective and humane school leadership. Through this critical

analysis, the study hopes to provide insights that inform educational policy and leadership training programs, encouraging a more holistic and culturally grounded approach to developing principal competencies

Ki Hadjar Dewantara's Educational Philosophy. Ki Hadjar Dewantara's educational philosophy is deeply rooted in the principle of the "Among system," which emphasizes the role of educators as guides rather than authoritarian figures. This approach advocates for nurturing students' independence and creativity by positioning teachers as facilitators who provide a supportive environment for learning, rather than strict disciplinarians (Taufikin & Ma'shumah, 2021). The "Among system" promotes mutual respect between teachers and students, where education is a collaborative process that respects the learner's individuality and cultural background. Dewantara also drew from local cultural concepts, such as the Balinese philosophy of *tri hita karana*, which highlights the harmonious relationship between humans, nature, and the divine (Sandra & Juniar, 2021). This principle extends the educational experience beyond academics to include moral and spiritual development, fostering a holistic approach to personal growth.

Central to Dewantara's philosophy is humanism in education, which places the dignity and potential of every learner at the heart of teaching. Education should empower students not only intellectually but also morally and socially, helping them become responsible citizens who contribute positively to their communities (Hermawan & Tan, 2021). Dewantara believed education should nurture character, respect for others, and a strong sense of identity rooted in culture and tradition. His vision contrasts with rigid, rote-based education by promoting a more compassionate, learner-centered model that prepares individuals to thrive in both their personal lives and society. Together, these core principles reflect Dewantara's commitment to an education system that respects cultural values, fosters holistic development, and encourages lifelong learning (Taufikin & Ma'shumah, 2021).

Ki Hadjar Dewantara's educational philosophy emerged during the early 20th century, a period when Indonesia was under Dutch colonial rule and educational opportunities for native Indonesians were severely limited. His ideas were revolutionary because they challenged the colonial education system that prioritized European values and often marginalized local culture and knowledge (Iswahyudi, 2023). Dewantara founded the Taman Siswa school in 1922 to offer education that was accessible to Indonesians and rooted in their own cultural identity. His philosophy profoundly influenced Indonesian education by promoting nationalism, cultural pride, and self-reliance, inspiring a shift toward education as a tool for empowerment rather than mere assimilation. After Indonesia's independence, Dewantara's principles became foundational in shaping the national education system, embedding values of humanism, cultural respect, and community harmony that continue to influence educational policies and practices today (Siswadi & Murtiningsih, 2024).

Managerial Competence in Educational Leadership. Managerial competence in educational leadership refers to the ability of school leaders and administrators to effectively manage resources, people, and processes within an educational institution to achieve desired learning outcomes and organizational goals. This competence encompasses a range of skills and behaviors centered around four key components: planning, organizing, leading, and controlling (Susanti et al., 2020). Planning involves setting clear objectives, developing strategies, and anticipating future challenges to create a roadmap for the institution's success. Organizing focuses on structuring resources such as staff, facilities, and finances to support the implementation of plans efficiently. Leading entails motivating and guiding teachers, staff, and students by fostering a positive school culture and encouraging collaboration.

Controlling ensures that progress is monitored, standards are maintained, and necessary adjustments are made to keep the institution aligned with its goals (Diana, 2024).

The description as presented in Table 1 outlines the key components of managerial competence in educational leadership, emphasizing the four critical areas of planning, organizing, leading, and controlling. Each component involves distinct skills and behaviors that contribute to the effective management of a school. Planning focuses on setting goals, developing strategies, and anticipating challenges, which lay the foundation for institutional success (Jongyung, 2024). Organizing ensures that resources such as staff, facilities, and finances are structured efficiently to support the execution of plans. Leading involves motivating and guiding the school community, fostering a collaborative and positive culture, while controlling ensures progress is monitored, standards are maintained, and adjustments are made to stay aligned with goals. Together, these components enable school leaders to create a productive and well-functioning educational environment (Diana, 2024; Susanti et al., 2020).

Tabel 1. Key Components of Managerial Competence in Educational Leadership

Key Component	Description	Skills & Behaviors Involved
Planning	Setting clear objectives, developing strategies, and anticipating future challenges to create a roadmap for success.	• Goal setting • Strategic development • Anticipation of challenges • Visionary thinking
Organizing	Structuring resources such as staff, facilities, and finances to efficiently support the implementation of plans.	• Resource allocation • Staff management • Budgeting • Facility planning
Leading	Motivating and guiding teachers, staff, and students while fostering a positive school culture and encouraging collaboration.	• Motivational leadership • Team building • Communication • Conflict resolution
Controlling	Monitoring progress, maintaining standards, and making necessary adjustments to stay aligned with institutional goals.	• Performance monitoring • Quality control • Adjustments & feedback • Evaluation

Previous Studies on Implementation of Dewantara's Thought.

Previous studies on the implementation of Ki Hadjar Dewantara's educational thought reveal a nuanced picture of its application and impact in Indonesian education. Several qualitative and descriptive studies have shown that while Dewantara's philosophy, particularly his "Among system" and emphasis on holistic, student-centered education, is well understood by educators, its full practical integration in classrooms remains inconsistent (Sholihah, 2021). For example, research on physics lessons in a Yogyakarta high school showed teachers had knowledge of Dewantara's philosophy but had not fully applied it in teaching methods, pointing to a gap between theory and practice (Sandra & Juniar, 2021).

Methodology

The methodology of this research employs a qualitative review approach, focusing on an in-depth analysis of existing empirical studies and illustrative case examples related to the application of Ki Hadjar Dewantara's educational philosophy in school leadership. This approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of how principals operationalize Dewantara's principles within their schools, emphasizing holistic development, cultural relevance, and humanism. By reviewing diverse studies, the research captures various contexts, challenges, and strategies used by school leaders to create environments that support not only academic success but also moral character and social responsibility among students. The qualitative nature of the review facilitates the exploration of nuanced insights and experiences that quantitative methods might overlook, particularly concerning leadership styles and culturally grounded practices.

Additionally, the selection of case examples provides concrete illustrations of Dewantara's philosophy in action, offering practical evidence of its impact on school culture and student outcomes. These cases highlight how principals implement participative and empathetic leadership, integrate local cultural values into curricula, and foster collaborative relationships among teachers, students, and the wider community. The methodological combination of broad empirical review and detailed case analysis strengthens the validity of the findings by triangulating data from multiple sources. This mixed qualitative framework supports a rich, context-sensitive interpretation of how Dewantara's vision can be effectively embedded in contemporary educational leadership, offering valuable lessons for policymakers and practitioners aiming to enhance school management through culturally responsive and humanistic approaches. Cultural values and providing guidance while respecting student autonomy. The graph captures how these principles align with Dewantara's vision of education as a humanistic, culturally grounded process, fostering an environment that values communication, creativity, and trust (Muthoifin et al., 2020).

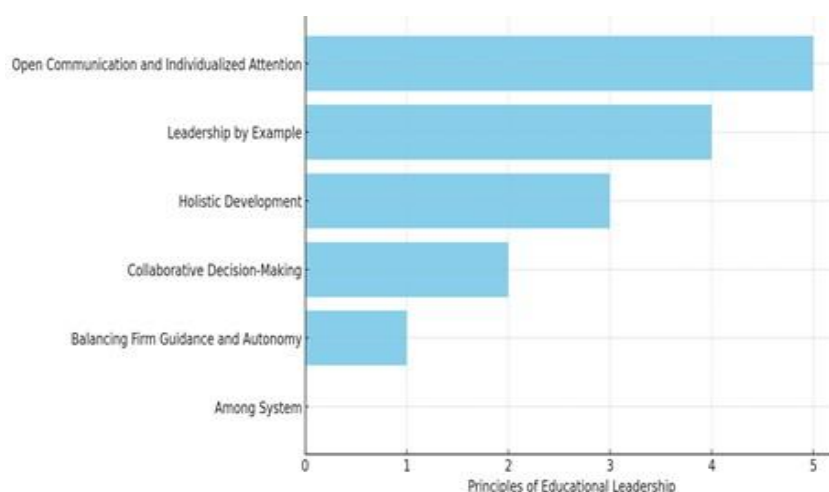


Fig 1. Application of Ki Hadjar Dewantara's Educational Philosophy in Practice

Results And Discussion

Examples of practical application by principals

Principals who apply Ki Hadjar Dewantara's educational philosophy in practice often emphasize creating a nurturing and student-centered school environment. They act as "pamong" or facilitators, embodying Dewantara's leadership trilogy leading by example from the front, building motivation in the middle, and

providing support from behind (Apriliyanti et al.,2020). For instance, principals may foster collaborative decision-making by involving teachers, students, and parents in school governance, encouraging a shared responsibility for educational success. They also prioritize holistic development by integrating cultural values and character education into daily school activities, ensuring that learning extends beyond academics to include moral and social growth. This approach often translates into schools organizing cultural events, community service programs, and student-centered learning projects that reflect local traditions and values (Agus et al.,2021).

The graph as presented in Figure 1 visualizes the key principles of educational leadership based on Ki Hadjar Dewantara's philosophy, highlighting how these principles are applied in practice. The bar chart presents the principles in a sorted order, emphasizing areas such as "Leadership by Example," where principals lead through Dewantara's leadership trilogy, and "Collaborative Decision-Making," which fosters shared responsibility among teachers, students, and parents (Effendi,2023). Other principles such as "Holistic Development" and the "Among System" showcase the importance of integrating Alignment with Dewantara's principles

The practical application of educational leadership by principals often closely aligns with Ki Hadjar Dewantara's core principles, especially the "Among system," which emphasizes guiding students with a balanced combination of leadership, encouragement, and support. Principals who embody Dewantara's philosophy lead by example ("ing ngarsa sung tuladha"), inspire and build motivation among teachers and students ("ing madya mangun karsa"), and provide supportive guidance from behind ("tut wuri handayani") (Khoir et al.,2025). This alignment fosters a respectful, learner-centered environment where students are empowered to develop their potential independently while feeling nurtured and valued. By promoting collaboration, cultural integration, and moral education, principals uphold Dewantara's vision of holistic education that nurtures not only intellect but also character and social responsibility (Susanti et al., 2020).

Furthermore, Dewantara's humanistic approach, which values respect for individual dignity and cultural roots, is reflected in how principals implement inclusive policies and practices that honor student diversity and local traditions. These leaders create a school culture that respects the community's social and cultural context, which Dewantara saw as essential to effective education (Sholihah, 2021). The emphasis on freedom within structure, a hallmark of Dewantara's thought, allows principals to balance discipline with creativity, ensuring students have the liberty to explore their talents in a supportive framework. This congruence between theory and practice helps sustain Dewantara's legacy in contemporary education by fostering environments where students grow academically, morally, and culturally, thus actualizing the holistic ideals central to his philosophy (Harini et al., 2023).

Improvement in planning, decision-making, communication, and leadership

Improvement in planning within educational leadership is crucial for creating a clear vision and roadmap that guides a school toward its goals. Effective planning involves setting specific, measurable objectives that align with the school's mission and the needs of its students and community. By incorporating data-driven insights and feedback from stakeholders, school leaders can anticipate challenges and allocate resources efficiently (Taufikin & Ma'shumah, 2021). Enhanced planning helps principals prioritize initiatives, balance short-term tasks with long-term development, and foster a proactive rather than reactive management style. This structured approach lays the foundation for all other managerial functions and is essential for sustaining

continuous improvement and educational excellence (Anggraini & Wiryanto, 2022). In decision-making, improvement means adopting more inclusive, transparent, and evidence-based processes. Principals who enhance their decision-making skills seek input from teachers, students, and parents to ensure diverse perspectives are considered, which builds trust and buy-in. They analyze relevant data carefully to identify the best course of action and remain adaptable to changing circumstances. Improving decision-making also involves balancing decisiveness with reflection, avoiding impulsive choices while ensuring timely responses to pressing issues (Asyari et al., 2024). This strategic and participative approach leads to more effective solutions that reflect the collective interest of the school community and support a positive organizational culture.

Communication and leadership improvements are deeply interconnected and essential for fostering a supportive, motivated school environment. Effective communication means clearly conveying expectations, goals, and feedback while also actively listening to concerns and ideas from staff and students (Meyer et al., 2022). Principals who develop strong communication skills build stronger relationships, reduce misunderstandings, and promote collaboration. Leadership improvements involve inspiring and empowering teachers and students, modeling ethical behavior, and creating a shared sense of purpose. By demonstrating empathy, transparency, and vision, principals encourage innovation and resilience, making the school a dynamic place for learning and growth (Nasukah et al., 2020; Utami et al., 2024). Together, these improvements in planning, decision-making, communication, and leadership significantly enhance a principal's ability to lead schools toward success.

Challenges in Implementation

Cultural obstacles often arise from deeply ingrained beliefs, traditions, and social norms within the school community that may resist changes introduced by new educational philosophies or leadership styles. For example, in implementing Ki Hadjar Dewantara's student-centered and holistic education principles, some schools face challenges because traditional hierarchical views on teacher authority and student obedience remain dominant (Rachmawati et al., 2020). These cultural expectations can limit open communication, innovation, and the freedom for students to explore learning independently, which Dewantara strongly advocated. Additionally, differences in cultural values between modern educational goals and local community practices may create tensions that principals and educators must carefully navigate to ensure respect and inclusion while promoting progress (Anggraini & Wiryanto, 2022).

Institutional and resource-based obstacles also significantly impact the effective implementation of educational reforms and leadership improvements. Many schools operate within rigid bureaucratic systems that limit principals' autonomy in decision-making, planning, and adapting programs to local needs. Insufficient funding and lack of adequate facilities, teaching materials, or professional development opportunities can hinder efforts to create supportive, innovative learning environments (Tia Basana Hutagalung & Liesna Andriany, 2024). Resource scarcity may force principals to prioritize administrative tasks over instructional leadership, reducing their ability to foster teacher growth or student-centered practices. Overcoming these obstacles requires strategic advocacy, community engagement, and creative resource management to align institutional frameworks and resources with educational values and goals inspired by Dewantara's philosophy (Waworuntu, 2021).

Opportunities and Best Practices

Opportunities for implementing Ki Hadjar Dewantara's educational philosophy and enhancing school leadership abound, especially in the context of growing recognition of holistic, student-centered learning approaches worldwide. Schools have the chance to integrate Dewantara's principles of respect, cultural relevance, and humanism into modern curricula that emphasize not only academic achievement but also character building and social responsibility (Irawati et al.,2022). The rise of digital technologies and innovative pedagogies provides tools for personalized learning, active student engagement, and community involvement, all aligning well with Dewantara's vision of empowering learners to reach their full potential. Additionally, national education reforms in Indonesia, such as the Merdeka Belajar policy, create policy environments that support greater autonomy for schools and principals to experiment with Dewantara-inspired approaches, fostering creativity and responsiveness to local needs (Khoir et al., 2025).

Best practices that have emerged from schools successfully applying Dewantara's ideas often focus on participative leadership, cultural integration, and nurturing relationships. Effective principals serve as role models, promoting collaborative decision-making that involves teachers, students, and parents, thus building a strong sense of community and shared purpose. Schools that embed local cultural traditions and values into their teaching and activities help students connect learning with their identity, making education more meaningful and motivating (Prasetyo et al., 2023). Moreover, continuous

professional development tailored to Dewantara's philosophy equips educators with skills to balance discipline and freedom, fostering student autonomy within a supportive framework. Such practices create positive learning environments where students thrive academically, socially, and morally, exemplifying the enduring relevance and transformative potential of Dewantara's educational vision (Diana, 2024).

The table as presented in Table 2 effectively highlights how Ki Hadjar Dewantara's educational philosophy can be integrated into modern school leadership and teaching practices by linking core values like respect, cultural relevance, and humanism with contemporary opportunities such as digital learning and national policy reforms. It shows a strong alignment between Dewantara's principles and participative leadership styles that foster collaboration among teachers, students, and parents, emphasizing the importance of community and cultural identity in education. The emphasis on continuous professional development underscores the need to equip educators with skills to balance student freedom with discipline, which is essential for nurturing autonomy while maintaining a supportive environment. Overall, the table illustrates a holistic approach where leadership, pedagogy, culture, and policy converge to create meaningful, student-centered learning experiences that build not only academic competence but also character and social responsibility.

Table 2. Implementing Dewantara's Educational Philosophy: Opportunities and Best Practices

Aspect	Opportunities for Implementation	Best Practices
Philosophical Focus	Integrate principles of respect, cultural relevance, and humanism into curriculum emphasizing academics and character.	Principals and teachers act as role models promoting respect and shared purpose among students, staff, and parents.
Student-Centered Learning	Use digital tools and innovative pedagogies for personalized, active, and community-involved learning.	Foster student autonomy balanced with discipline through supportive relationships and continuous professional growth.

Aspect	Opportunities for Implementation	Best Practices
Cultural Integration	Embed local cultural traditions and values in teaching to connect learning with students' identities and motivation.	Schools nurture cultural pride by incorporating local customs into activities, strengthening student engagement.
Leadership Style	National reforms (e.g., <i>Merdeka Belajar</i>) empower school autonomy for experimentation with Dewantara-inspired methods.	Principals practice participative leadership involving collaborative decision-making with teachers, students, and parents.
Community and Social Responsibility	Promote social responsibility alongside academic achievement in school missions and activities.	Build strong school communities with active involvement from all stakeholders to create meaningful learning climates.
Professional Development	Design training aligned with Dewantara's philosophy to develop educators' skills in balancing freedom and discipline.	Provide ongoing, philosophy-driven professional development to sustain transformative teaching and leadership.

How Dewantara's philosophy contributes to managerial competence

Ki Hadjar Dewantara's educational philosophy contributes significantly to managerial competence in educational leadership by emphasizing a balanced and humanistic approach to guiding schools. His concept of the "Among system," which advocates for leaders to act as nurturing facilitators rather than authoritarian figures, directly informs how principals can develop effective planning, organizing, leading, and controlling skills (Meyer et al., 2022). By adopting the role of a guide who leads by example, motivates from within, and supports from behind, school managers can foster a positive organizational culture that values collaboration, respect, and individual growth. This approach encourages principals to be adaptive and empathetic leaders who balance authority with freedom, enhancing their ability to manage resources and people in a way that aligns with the holistic development goals central to Dewantara's philosophy (Nasukah et al., 2020).

Furthermore, Dewantara's emphasis on cultural relevance and moral education enriches managerial competence by encouraging educational leaders to integrate local values and community involvement into school management. This cultural grounding helps principals tailor their decision-making and communication strategies to better meet the needs of their unique school environments (Agus et al., 2021). It also fosters trust and social capital, which are essential for effective organizational functioning and resource mobilization. By prioritizing character development alongside academic achievement, Dewantara's philosophy promotes a comprehensive leadership style that prepares principals to navigate complex social dynamics, motivate diverse stakeholders, and implement educational reforms in a manner that is both respectful and empowering (Muthoifin et al., 2020). Overall, Dewantara's educational thought offers a strong philosophical foundation for principals to develop managerial competence that is both effective and culturally responsive.

Comparison with other leadership theories

Ki Hadjar Dewantara's educational leadership philosophy shares similarities with several modern leadership theories but also presents unique cultural and humanistic elements that distinguish it. For example, Dewantara's "Among system," which highlights leading by example, motivating from within, and providing supportive guidance, aligns closely with transformational leadership (Ferary, 2021). Both emphasize inspiring

and empowering followers to achieve their full potential, foster intrinsic motivation, and build a positive organizational culture. However, Dewantara's approach uniquely integrates deep respect for local culture and community values, making it more contextually grounded than many Western leadership models (Bin Thohir, 2021). His focus on moral and character development also resonates with servant leadership, where the leader's primary role is to serve and uplift others, but Dewantara's emphasis extends this by embedding education within a broader cultural and spiritual framework.

In contrast to transactional leadership, which relies heavily on rules, rewards, and punishments to manage performance, Dewantara's philosophy promotes a more flexible, learner-centered environment that values freedom within structure. While transactional leaders often emphasize external control, Dewantara encourages autonomy and self-directed growth, consistent with humanistic and progressive educational theories (Martinez & Leija, 2023). Compared to instructional leadership, which prioritizes improving teaching and learning through clear goals and accountability, Dewantara's leadership philosophy incorporates these elements but broadens the scope to include holistic personal development and community harmony. Overall, Dewantara's philosophy offers a more integrated, culturally sensitive approach to leadership that balances authority with empathy, autonomy with guidance, and academic achievement with moral growth (Utami et al., 2024).

The table as shown in Table 3 highlights the unique integration of Ki Hadjar Dewantara's educational leadership philosophy with key elements from major modern leadership theories while emphasizing its distinct cultural and humanistic foundation. Unlike transformational and servant leadership, which focus broadly on motivation and service, Dewantara's approach deeply roots leadership in local culture, community values, and spiritual growth, making it contextually relevant. While transactional leadership relies on rules and external control, Dewantara encourages autonomy and learner-centered freedom within a supportive framework, aligning more with humanistic education. Compared to instructional leadership's focus on academic goals and accountability, Dewantara broadens the scope to include holistic personal development and community harmony. Overall, the table illustrates Dewantara's philosophy as a balanced and culturally sensitive model that harmonizes authority with empathy, structure with freedom, and academic achievement with moral and social growth, making it highly applicable for schools seeking integrated and meaningful leadership.

Table 3 Leadership Philosophy Comparison: Dewantara vs. Modern Theories.

Leadership Aspect	Dewantara's Philosophy	Transformational Leadership	Servant Leadership
Core Focus	Leading by example, intrinsic motivation, supportive guidance	Inspiring and empowering followers to full potential	Serving and uplifting others
Cultural Sensitivity	Deep respect for local culture and community values, culturally grounded	Moderate cultural awareness	Moderate cultural and community focus
Moral and Character Development	Strong emphasis on moral values, character, and spiritual growth	Emphasizes personal growth and inspiration	Focuses on ethical leadership and serving others

Learner / Member Autonomy	Encourages autonomy and self-directed growth within supportive guidance	High autonomy encouraged	Supports autonomy through service
Leadership Style	Balanced authority with empathy, guidance, and motivation	Inspirational and transformational	Empathetic and service-oriented
Integration with Education and Community	Holistic development including education, culture, community, and spirituality	Focus on organizational culture and transformation	Focus on individual well-being and community support

Recommendations for integrating Dewantara's thought in leadership training

Integrating Ki Hadjar Dewantara's educational philosophy into leadership training programs offers valuable opportunities to deepen the humanistic and culturally responsive capacities of school leaders. Educational policy should prioritize embedding Dewantara's "Among system" framework leading by example, motivating from the middle, and supporting from behind into principal preparation curricula (Jongyung, 2024). This could involve practical modules on empathetic leadership, cultural sensitivity, and community engagement, helping leaders balance authority with nurturing guidance. Training should also emphasize the importance of holistic education, encouraging principals to foster moral, social, and intellectual growth in their schools. By grounding leadership development in Dewantara's principles, policymakers can cultivate school leaders who are not only efficient managers but also compassionate role models deeply connected to their communities (Hunaepi et al., 2023).

In practice, leadership training programs should include experiential learning opportunities where principals engage directly with local culture, traditions, and community stakeholders to build trust and relevance. Case studies and reflective exercises based on Dewantara's philosophy can help leaders internalize the balance of freedom and structure, autonomy and guidance essential to his vision. Additionally, mentoring and peer collaboration frameworks could support ongoing development in the spirit of "tut wuri handayani," where experienced leaders guide emerging ones from behind. Policy efforts should also allocate resources for continuous professional development that reinforces these values, ensuring that Dewantara's holistic and culturally grounded approach to leadership remains a living, evolving practice in schools. Such integration would advance not only leadership competence but also the broader goal of education as a force for character and community building.

Other studies highlight the role of cultural values and social capital in successfully implementing Dewantara's ideas, particularly kinship and community trust as powerful factors in schools adhering to his educational vision. Moreover, Dewantara's principles remain relevant today in modern education reforms like Indonesia's "Merdeka Belajar" (FreeFreedom to Learn) curriculum, which aligns with his emphasis on student autonomy and holistic development (Harini et al., 2023).

Empirical findings also show that Dewantara's philosophy contributes positively to character education and student well-being. Studies of schools adopting his approach reported improvements in student motivation, academic performance, and cooperative behavior, reflecting the balance Dewantara sought between intellectual growth and moral development (Hunaepi et al., 2023). However, challenges such as materialistic attitudes among educators and partial implementation hinder the full realization of his vision. Overall, the research underscores Dewantara's enduring influence while highlighting the need for deeper

integration of his values in daily teaching and school culture to achieve the holistic educational ideals he championed (Iswahyudi, 2023).

Conclusion

In summary, Ki Hadjar Dewantara's educational philosophy offers a profound foundation for enhancing managerial competence and leadership effectiveness in schools. His "Among system" advocates for a balanced leadership approach that combines leading by example, fostering motivation, and providing supportive guidance principles that align closely with modern transformational and servant leadership theories. Dewantara's emphasis on holistic development, cultural relevance, and humanism encourages school leaders to go beyond administrative tasks and cultivate environments where academic excellence, moral character, and social responsibility thrive together. Empirical studies reveal both the opportunities and challenges of applying his philosophy, highlighting the need for intentional integration in practice and policy.

The practical application of Dewantara's thought by school principals shows how culturally grounded leadership can foster collaborative, student-centered environments that respect local values while promoting autonomy and creativity. His ideas encourage principals to be empathetic facilitators who nurture trust, motivate stakeholders, and align educational goals with community needs. However, cultural, institutional, and resource-based obstacles often complicate the full realization of his vision, underscoring the importance of supportive policy frameworks and continuous professional development that embed Dewantara's principles deeply within leadership training and school culture.

Ultimately, Dewantara's educational philosophy remains critically relevant in today's complex educational landscape, especially in Indonesia but also in broader contexts valuing culturally responsive and humanistic leadership. By integrating his principles into leadership development and school management, educators can build schools that are not only centers of learning but also nurturing communities that empower students to grow as whole individuals. Dewantara's thought challenges us to rethink leadership as a balanced act of guidance, respect, and support qualities essential for fostering resilient, motivated, and ethically grounded generations prepared to meet the challenges of the future.

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