

Principal's Strategy in Improving Students' Academic Potential at SMP Negeri 1 Hamparan Perak through Extracurricular Programs

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Abstract

This research explores the principal's strategy in enhancing students' academic potential through extracurricular programs at SMP Negeri 1 Hamparan Perak. Employing a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through interviews, observation, and documentation. The findings reveal that the principal implements a structured strategy comprising planning, implementation, and evaluation stages. In the planning stage, students' interests and talents are mapped through surveys and consultations. Extracurricular activities are integrated with academic objectives and supervised by competent instructors during implementation. The evaluation stage assesses the impact of extracurricular participation on students' academic performance. The study shows a positive correlation between active involvement in extracurricular activities and improved educational outcomes, particularly in language and the arts. Supporting programs, such as literacy movements and English speech sessions, further foster an academic environment conducive to learning. The findings underscore the importance of strategic leadership in maximizing student potential through formal instruction and well-managed extracurricular activities that holistically develop learners.

Keywords: Principal strategy, academic potential, extracurricular activities.

Introduction

21st-century education requires students to excel academically and develop their potential holistically through 21st-century skills such as collaboration, communication, critical thinking, and creativity. In Indonesia, although access to education has improved, the quality of education and the development of students' academic potential still face significant challenges. An OECD (PISA) analysis presented by Umut Ozkan found that the number of extracurricular activities offered at school positively correlated with the academic resilience of students from underprivileged groups in around 12 countries.¹

Some education experts claim that interest- and talent-based learning approaches, particularly through extracurricular activities, have been shown to boost students' academic performance. Eccles,² States that active involvement in extracurricular activities is significantly related to students' cognitive development and learning motivation. In addition, Fredricks and Eccles found that students who actively participate in non-formal activities tend to have higher academic scores and a lower risk of dropping out of school.³ In Indonesia, regulations such as Permendikbud No. 62/2014 also emphasize that extracurricular activities are essential in developing students' academic potential and character.⁴

In practice, the success of extracurricular activities is strongly influenced by the role of the school principal as a strategic leader in the education unit. Not all schools can integrate extracurricular activities effectively into the learning system, due to weak planning, a lack of synergy between academic goals and non-formal activities, and a lack of data-based evaluation. The research examines the principal's strategy in designing, implementing, and evaluating extracurricular programs geared towards improving students' academic potential measurably and sustainably.

¹ Umut Özkan, "The Effect of Students' Participation in Extracurricular Activities on Academic Achievement According to PISA-2015 / PISA-2015 Verilerine Göre Öğrencilerin Ders Dışı Etkinliklere Katılımlarının Akademik Başarılarına Etkisi," İnönü Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi, April 30, 2020, 254-69, <https://doi.org/10.17679/inuefd.504780>.

² Jacquelynne S Eccles and Bonnie L Barber, "Student Council, Volunteering, Basketball, or Marching Band: What Kind of Extracurricular Involvement Matters?", *Journal of Adolescent Research* 14, no. 1 (1999): 10-43.

³ Jennifer A. Fredricks and Jacquelynne S. Eccles, "Is Extracurricular Participation Associated with Beneficial Outcomes? Concurrent and Longitudinal Relations," *Developmental Psychology* 42, no. 4 (July 2006): 698-713, <https://doi.org/10.1037/0012-1649.42.4.698>.

⁴ Peraturan Menteri Pendidikan, "Kebudayaan, Permendikbud RI Nomor 62 Tahun 2014 Tentang Ekstrakurikuler Pada Pendidikan Dasar Dan Pendidikan Menengah" (Jakarta: Jakarta: Permendikbud, 2014).

Previous research has explored the relationship between principal leadership, extracurricular activities, and student academic achievement. Febriyani and Hasanah emphasized the importance of the principal's role in facilitating extracurricular activities to build character and academic achievement.⁵ In a comparative study, Jannah found that students who were active in organizations showed greater academic potential than those who were not.⁶ Juhairin's study, however, focused more on the school's image through extracurricular activities than on their impact on students' academic achievement.⁷ Damayanti and Dwikurnaningsih assessed the implementation of extracurricular activities in primary schools but did not link it to the principal's strategy.⁸ Finally, Bekti et al.'s study focused on academic potential testing training without a leadership context.⁹ A common weakness of these studies is the lack of integration of aspects of principal management, extracurricular strategies, and the impact of student academic achievement in one framework.

This study offers a new approach by developing an integrative perspective between principals' strategic leadership and extracurricular program design as an instrument for improving students' academic achievement. The primary focus is not only on extracurricular activities but also on how principals systematically plan, implement, and evaluate these activities to support students' academic achievement. Furthermore, this study emphasizes strengthening principals' managerial competencies based on the local context, which is rarely the subject of research, especially in public secondary schools in semi-urban areas such as Hamparan Perak.

This study aims to identify and analyze the principal's strategies in enhancing students' academic potential through extracurricular programs at SMP Negeri 1 Hamparan Perak. The theoretical contribution of this research is to enrich the treasures of

⁵ Herlina Febriyani and Enung Hasanah, "Pentingnya Peran Kepala Sekolah Dalam Meningkatkan Kegiatan Ekstarkurikuler Di Sekolah Dasar," *EDUKATIF : JURNAL ILMU PENDIDIKAN* 5, no. 5 (October 22, 2023): 2031–38, <https://doi.org/10.31004/edukatif.v5i5.5352>.

⁶ Annisa Miftahul Jannah, "Studi Komparatif Potensi Akademik Mahasiswa Yang Aktif Dan Tidak Aktif Berorganisasi Jurusan PAI IAIN Metro" (IAIN Metro, 2021).

⁷ Heri Khairiansyah Juhairin, "Strategi Membangun Citra Sekolah Melalui Program Ekstrakurikuler (Studi Kasus SMA Ar-Rohmah Malang)," *Tawazun: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 12, no. 2 (December 31, 2019), <https://doi.org/10.32832/tawazun.v1i2.2056>.

⁸ Winny Rosa Damayanti and Yari Dwikurnaningsih, "Evaluasi Program Ekstrakurikuler Di SDN Candirejo Kabupaten Semarang," *Refleksi Edukatika : Jurnal Ilmiah Kependidikan* 11, no. 1 (December 9, 2020): 59–69, <https://doi.org/10.24176/re.v1i1.4772>.

⁹ Rokhana Bekti et al., "Peningkatan Potensi Siswa Melalui Pelatihan Test Potensi Akademik (TPA)," *Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat Progresif Humanis Brainstorming* 1, no. 2 (July 4, 2018): 98–104, <https://doi.org/10.30591/japhb.v1i2.954>.

educational leadership studies based on contextual practices. Practically, the findings of this research are expected to serve as a reference for other school principals in designing extracurricular programs that support academic achievement. This research also contributes to policymakers in formulating school principal strengthening programs based on student academic performance and non-formal innovation.

Research Methods

This research used a qualitative approach with a case study design. This approach was chosen because the researcher wanted to profoundly and contextually understand the principal's strategy in improving students' academic potential through extracurricular activities. Case studies allow researchers to observe and analyze a phenomenon in detail in a natural setting to explore the meaning and dynamics hidden behind the events in the field.¹⁰

The research location was set at SMP Negeri 1 Hampanan Perak, a public junior high school in Deli Serdang Regency that actively develops extracurricular programs as part of a strategy to improve academic quality. The main subject of this research was the school principal, with supporting informants consisting of the vice principal for student affairs, extracurricular coaches, and students who actively participated in extracurricular activities.

The data in this study were collected through three main techniques: in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation. Interviews were conducted with the principal and several teachers to explore information related to the planning, implementation, and evaluation strategies of extracurricular programs. Observations were made during extracurricular activities at the school to see firsthand how the management process and student participation in these activities. Documentation collected included extracurricular schedules, student evaluation reports, and school program planning documents.

The data collected is analyzed using the model from Miles and Huberman, which consists of three main stages.¹¹ The first stage is data reduction, which is sorting and

¹⁰ John W Creswell, *Qualitative Research and Research Design*, 2018, https://smartcampus.seskoal.ac.id/elibrary/index.php?p=show_detail&id=1343.

¹¹ Matthew B. Miles, A. Michael Huberman, and Johnny Saldana, *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook* (Washington: SAGE Publications, 2014).

simplifying raw data to focus on information relevant to the research objectives. The second stage is data presentation, where the reduced data is organized as thematic narratives, tables, and direct quotes from informants. The final stage is conclusion drawing and verification, where researchers identify patterns, interrelationships, and important themes that emerge from the field data.

To maintain data validity, researchers applied several techniques. One of them is triangulation, which is carried out by comparing information from various sources (principals, teachers, students), various techniques (interviews, observations, documentation), and is carried out at different times (before, during, and after extracurricular activities take place). In addition, the researcher also conducted a member check, which involved asking for confirmation from informants on the findings and interpretation of the data that had been compiled. The entire documentation process, from interview transcripts to field notes, was stored systematically as part of an audit trail to ensure transparency and traceability of the data analysis process.

Academic Potential of Students at SMP Negeri 1 Hamparan Perak

In the Big Indonesian Dictionary, academic means academic, questions, scientific in nature, scientific in nature, and theoretical without direct practice. Meanwhile, potential means the ability that can be developed, strength, ability, or power. So, it can be stated that academic potential is a person's ability to know their identity, both in terms of science, talent, and skills he has.¹²

At SMP Negeri 1 Hamparan Perak, the academic potential possessed by its students is high, as evidenced by the achievement of significant academic scores based on the results of learning evaluations and semester grades obtained by students. This is what the principal said:

"So the academic potential of students in this school is high. If we talk about potential, it can still be explored and improved. So many indicators show that the potential of these children is quite high in terms of academic achievement, which can be seen from the scores that appear when a learning or semester evaluation is held."

In this context, the success of students at SMPN 1 Hamparan Perak is not merely the result of initial ability, but also of the school's coaching process in a structured manner.

¹² (Abdul Azis, Fathul Jannah, and Umy Fitriani Nasution, "Melawan Tradisi Strategi Konvensional: Analisis Peningkatan Hasil Belajar Fikih Dengan Strategi True or False," *Fitrah: Journal of Islamic Education* 4, no. 2 (2023): 370–81., 2021)

Systematically designed extracurricular activities, literacy programs, learning assistance, and motivational training also play a role as a supporting tool in developing students' overall academic potential. This aligns with the research results,¹³ which show that training and mentoring through the right approach can significantly increase students' academic potential. The principal of SMP Negeri 1 Hamparan Perak also emphasized that academic potential is a capacity that can still be further developed through various educational strategies.

Extracurricular Program at SMP Negeri 1 Hamparan Perak

Extracurricular activities are outside class hours to fill students' spare time with positive things. They aim to enable students to broaden their horizons and develop their abilities and skills through various extracurricular activities related to their interests and talents.¹⁴

Eight active extracurricular activities are run at SMP Negeri 1 Hamparan Perak: Scouts (male and female), futsal, badminton, dance, pencak silat, poetry, and swimming. The diversity of these programs makes SMPN 1 Hamparan Perak one of the schools with the highest extracurricular activities in Deli Serdang Regency for the public junior high school level.

Table 1:
Types of Extracurricular Programs at SMP Negeri 1 Hamparan Perak

No	Extracurricular	Contribution to Academic Potential
1	Scouts (male and female)	Improve discipline and responsibility
2	Futsal	Improve teamwork
3	Badminton	Train concentration and strategy
4	Dance	Improve creativity and art
5	Pencak Silat	Train physical and mental endurance
6	Poetry	Improve language and literature skills
7	Swimming	Improves concentration and brain function

Extracurricular programs are considered to contribute directly to improving students' academic performance. The school conducts internal surveys to map students' interests and talents, which are then used as the basis for developing the types of

¹³ Bekti Ariyani and Firosalia Kristin, "Model Pembelajaran Problem Based Learning Untuk Meningkatkan Hasil Belajar IPS Siswa SD," *Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Dan Pembelajaran* 5, no. 3 (2021): 353–61. et al., (2018)

¹⁴ Juhairin, "Strategi Membangun Citra Sekolah Melalui Program Ekstrakurikuler (Studi Kasus SMA Ar-Rohmah Malang)."

extracurricular activities that interest students. Students' involvement in extracurricular activities is considered to increase their motivation to learn and discipline, positively impacting their academic performance.

"Yes, of course, other teachers and I agree that the extracurricular program at this school greatly improves students' academic performance. We also routinely conduct internal surveys to categorize students' interests and talents. Then, from the survey results, we can develop the types of relevant extracurricular programs that interest students, making them more motivated to participate actively. In addition, I see that students' involvement in extracurricular activities can increase their motivation to learn in class. They become more disciplined, responsible, and enthusiastic about following the lessons. Of course, there must be an impact on their academic achievement. So in my opinion, extracurricular activities are not just an additional activity, but also an important part in shaping character and improving the overall academic quality of students." (Principal)

Principal's Strategy in Improving Students' Academic Potential at SMP Negeri 1 Hamparan Perak through Extracurricular Programs

According to Fattah and Ali, strategy is the art of using an organization's skills and resources to achieve its goals through effective relationships with the environment in the most favorable conditions. So, strategy is the basic framework within which an organization continues to exist through environmental adjustments.¹⁵ While the principal is the school leader. Siddiq and Khoirussalim explained that a leader is a person who has skills and advantages in a particular field, to influence others to achieve goals jointly. The presence of a good leader is significant in an organization, including in schools. Without a leader, an organization will lose its direction and purpose. Therefore, a good leader must have strong moral values, decision-making skills, and a leadership style that suits the organization's needs.¹⁶

The strategy applied by school principals in integrating extracurricular activities with academic outcomes includes three stages: planning, implementation, and evaluation.

1. *Planning* stage

Planning is the initial action in managerial activities in every organization. Therefore, planning will determine the difference in *performance* between one organization and another in implementing plans to achieve goals. In planning, there are specific goals. These goals are specifically written down and can be obtained by

¹⁵ Yusuf Hadijaya, *Menyusun Strategi Berbuah Kinerja Pendidik Efektif* (Perdana Publishing, 2013).

¹⁶ Muhammad Rifa'i and Rusydi Ananda, *Kepemimpinan Pendidikan Bahan Ajar Berbasis Riset Pengembangan* (Medan: CV Pusdikra Mitra Jaya, 2022).

all organization members. Planning covers a specific period of years. There are particular program actions to achieve these goals, as management clearly understands what they want to be a part of.¹⁷

In the planning stage, the school identifies and inventories students' interests and talents through initial observations, questionnaires, and consultations with homerooms and counseling guidance teachers. The aim is to obtain comprehensive data on the tendency of students' participation in extracurricular activities. Based on the results of this identification, the school prioritized and determined eight types of extracurricular activities that were considered most relevant and had the potential to support the development of students' academic potential. This determination also considered the availability of resources, both from the trainers and supporting facilities owned by the school.

2. Implementation Stage

According to Higgins in Salusu,¹⁸ implementation summarizes the various activities in which Human Resources uses other resources to achieve the strategy's goals. In his book, Salusu also states that implementation is a directed and organized process that involves many resources.

After planning, the principal of SMP Negeri 1 Hampanan Perak proceeded to the implementation stage. The implementation stage focuses on managing extracurricular activities in a structured manner and is integrated with academic learning objectives. Extracurricular trainers or coaches actively develop activity plans that support strengthening learning materials. In addition, students' attendance, active participation, and performance in extracurricular activities become indicators of attitudes and competencies. Thus, extracurricular activities are part of a comprehensive and sustainable learning process.

3. *Evaluation stage*

Wollman N Dunn, asserts that evaluation uses social research methods to investigate program effectiveness systematically.¹⁹ Evaluation aims to obtain accurate and objective information about a program. This information can be in the

¹⁷ Muhammad Rifa'i, *Dasar Dasar Manajemen*, Perdana (CV Widya Puspita, 2019).

¹⁸ J Salusu and Pengambilan Keputusan Stratejik, "Untuk Organisasi Publik Dan Organisasi Nonprofit, Jakarta, Pt," *Gramedia Widiasarana Indonesia*, 1998.

¹⁹ Wollman N Dunn, "Pengantar Analisis Kebijakan Publik (Terjemahan), Yogyakarta" (Gajahmada University press, 2003).

program implementation process, the impact or results achieved, and the efficiency and utilization of the evaluation results, focused on the program itself, to decide whether to continue, improve, or stop. In addition, it is also used to prepare the following program and formulate policies related to the program.

The principal of SMP Negeri 1 Hamparan Perak explained that they conduct evaluations periodically, at least once a school year, to measure the effectiveness of extracurricular programs on increasing students' academic potential. This evaluation covers two main aspects: the implementation process and the outcomes. The assessment is done through analyzing data on attendance, student engagement, and the relationship between participation in extracurricular activities and improvements in academic grades, especially in relevant subjects. If it is found that an extracurricular activity does not make a significant contribution to students' academic achievement, the school will conduct a review. Remedial measures can include strengthening the material, retraining the coaches, or replacing the type of activity with a program that is more in line with the needs and conditions of the students.

In terms of implementation, extracurricular activities are carried out every Saturday simultaneously and are under the direct supervision of the vice principal for student affairs, and sometimes the principal himself. Extracurricular teaching staff or coaches are also selected based on specific qualifications, which require them to have a certificate of competence in their respective fields, so that the coaching process runs professionally. This statement was obtained from an interview with the principal and confirmed by the vice principal for student affairs.

"The implementation of extracurricular activities at this school is indeed carried out simultaneously on Saturday, and I participate in supervising the implementation of extracurricular activities at school, but sometimes the headmaster is also present to supervise with me. And for the selection of extracurricular teachers, as far as I know, the principal is quite careful to make teachers and extracurricular coaches at this school, for example, this extracurricular teacher candidate must have a certificate according to the extracurricular he teaches, so not just anyone" (Waka Kesiswaan).

Furthermore, the principal said a positive correlation exists between participation in extracurricular activities and academic achievement. For example, students active in scout extracurricular activities show high discipline and good academic performance. The

same applies to poetry and dance extracurriculars, which contribute directly to mastery of Indonesian language and cultural arts subjects.

However, implementing extracurricular programs is not free from obstacles, especially regarding students' consistency in choosing and participating in extracurricular activities. Students often change extracurricular activities in the middle of the learning period, which can disrupt the continuity of the program and the results to be achieved. To overcome this, the school provides a maximum limit of two extracurricular activities per student and allows transfers with evaluative notes.

As a form of quality control, the school implements a policy that students who participate in extracurricular activities are expected to show academic improvement. If students are found to be experiencing academic decline, their involvement in extracurricular activities will be evaluated thoroughly.

In addition to extracurricular activities, the principal also mentioned other factors that support improving students' academic potential: the school literacy movement, the provision of a reading garden and a representative library, and a regular English-language speech program. These programs create a conducive academic atmosphere, train communication skills, and promote a love of literacy activities.

Thus, it can be concluded that the successful development of academic potential at SMPN 1 Hamparan Perak results from a synergy between the principal's managerial strategy, various relevant extracurricular activities, and systematic support through literacy and communication activities. Students' active involvement in extracurricular activities positively impacts non-academic aspects and significantly strengthens their academic performance.

Academic Potential as a Dynamic Concept

The results of this study show that students at SMP Negeri 1 Hamparan Perak have a high academic potential. This finding is demonstrated through the achievement of academic grades on learning evaluations and semester grades, and active participation in various coaching activities at school. This reinforces the view that academic potential is a capacity that can be developed, not just a static ability.²⁰

²⁰ Rena F Subotnik, Paula Olszewski-Kubilius, and Frank C Worrell, "Rethinking Giftedness and Gifted Education: A Proposed Direction Forward Based on Psychological Science," *Psychological Science in the Public Interest* 12, no. 1 (2011): 3-54.

In Gagné's theory of the Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent (DMGT), potential or giftedness can only be meaningful if managed and developed into real achievement (talent) through environmental catalysts and intrapersonal factors.²¹ The role of the school, especially the principal and the leadership strategies implemented, acts as an environmental catalyst that encourages the development of this potential. This means that program-based interventions designed by schools become a key point in transforming potential into achievement.

Extracurricular Activities as a Means of Increasing Academic Potential

Various extracurricular activities at SMP Negeri 1 Hamparan Perak, such as scouting, poetry, dance, and sports, function as additional activities and a strategic component in developing students' academic abilities and character. Several studies, such as Mahoney, Cairns, & Farmer's research,²² Prove that student involvement in extracurricular activities positively contributes to motivation, responsibility, and academic achievement.

The school's model, which aligns the types of extracurricular activities with students' interests and talents through an internal survey, aligns with the principle of student-centered learning. Ryan and Deci mention that a learning environment responsive to learners' interests will encourage intrinsic motivation and increase academic engagement.²³ Therefore, this school's extracurricular development strategy enhances students' non-academic potential and transfers to academic performance in the classroom.

Principal's Strategy: Three Managerial Stages

An essential contribution of this research is finding the principal's strategy in three main stages: planning, implementation, and evaluation. These strategies demonstrate

²¹ F Gagné, "From Gifts to Talents: The DMGT as a Developmental Model. U: RJ Sternberg & JE Davidson (Eds.), *Conceptions of Giftedness* (Str. 98-120)" (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

²² Joseph L Mahoney, Beverley D Cairns, and Thomas W Farmer, "Promoting Interpersonal Competence and Educational Success through Extracurricular Activity Participation," *Journal of Educational Psychology* 95, no. 2 (2003): 409.

²³ Edward L Deci and Richard M Ryan, *Intrinsic Motivation and Self-Determination in Human Behavior* (Springer Science & Business Media, 2013).

structured and data-driven leadership, which aligns with Fullan's educational change theory.²⁴ And Hallinger and Wang's instructional leadership model.²⁵

In the planning stage, students' interests and talents are identified through observation, questionnaires, and teacher discussions. This shows the application of evidence-based planning. In the implementation stage, integrating extracurricular activities with academic outcomes is explicit, and extracurricular coaches are empowered to develop programs that support the core curriculum. The placement of certified instructors is also an indicator of professionalism and commitment to quality.

Conclusion

This study confirms that the development of students' academic potential is not only influenced by individual cognitive abilities, but also determined by the quality of institutional interventions through principal leadership and strategically integrated supporting programs. At SMP Negeri 1 Hamparan Perak, implementing extracurricular programs that are planned, structured, and based on students' interests and talents has proven to significantly strengthen students' discipline, motivation, and academic achievement.

The principal plays a central role in designing data-driven policies through three main managerial stages- planning, implementation, and evaluation- aligned with instructional leadership approaches and strategic management theory. The involvement of competent extracurricular coaches and learning outcome-based monitoring policies provides a real boost to learning quality. In addition, integrating literacy and communication activities, such as the English speech program and strengthening the reading garden, helped create a conducive academic environment.

The findings make theoretical and practical contributions to the secondary education discourse by emphasizing the synergy between formal academic approaches and school-based non-formal self-development strategies. The implications of this study suggest that a school leadership approach oriented towards holistic coaching and management of extracurricular programs based on student potential can be replicated in various school contexts to improve the quality of education sustainably.

²⁴ M Fullan, "The Principal: Three Keys to Maximizing" (Impact, 2014).

²⁵ Philip Hallinger et al., "Reliability of the PIMRS," in *Assessing Instructional Leadership with the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale* (Springer, 2015), 63-84.

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