

## Principal's Role at SDI Ma'arif Blitar in Preserving Javanese Culture amid Social Change

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**Abstract:** Education plays a crucial role in shaping individual competencies, particularly in mastering English and Javanese idioms. Amidst social change, there are challenges in preserving and maintaining local cultural values such as Javanese culture, which are eroded by the influence of social media that often presents Western traditions inconsistent with Javanese religious and cultural norms. This study aims to analyze the role of school principals in internalizing Javanese culture through Javanese Day. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, this study collected data through observation, interviews, and documentation studies at SDI Ma'arif Blitar. The findings indicate that the principal carries out four key roles relevant to Talcott Parsons' structural-functional perspective: Bearers of Normative Expectations who establish and enforce school rules; Formal Socialization Agents who internalize values through policies; Sanction and Reward Providers to manage student compliance; and Systemic Balance Keepers who maintain school stability. These roles are crucial in shaping a generation that is globally competitive yet remains firmly rooted in local culture.

## INTRODUCTION

School Principal plays a very important role in the development of the school in the area of competencies, one of which is English language competency and *unggah-ungguh* (Javanese etiquette/manners). *Unggah-ungguh* is Javanese etiquette based on Javanese values and norms. One effort to develop English language competency and internalize *unggah-ungguh* and Javanese etiquette is Education. Good education will also influence good skills and quality in the current young generation.

The state guarantees basic education for its citizens as stated in Article 31 Paragraph 2 which reads: "Every citizen shall have the right to basic education, and the government shall be obliged to finance it." This means the government is obliged to manage and organize one national education system aimed at

improving faith and piety, as well as noble character, to intellectually enrich the nation's life. Furthermore, the state's obligation to citizens in the field of education has a more essential foundation because it is also a goal of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI). This is stated in the fourth paragraph of the Preamble to the 1945 Constitution, which reads, "... to establish a Government of the State of Indonesia which shall protect all the Indonesian people and all of the Indonesian homeland and to promote public welfare, to intellectually enrich the nation's life."

In this era of globalization and digitalization, English language skills are highly needed, considering that many young people today apparently cannot speak English, even though the times are advancing rapidly. Languages do not have to be understood in Indonesian, but must use English. Even talking to foreigners requires speaking English to be understood.

International globalization has been blowing fast and strong, effectively eliminating the distance between different parts of the world. Technology has developed rapidly and sophisticatedly, providing humans with increasing ease and comfort in meeting their needs. This is especially true with the arrival of the free trade era, namely the Asian Free Trade Area in 2010 and the Global Free Trade in 2020. This means all countries will find it easy, fast, and inexpensive to move in and out of other nations globally to conduct economic, educational, social, and other activities. This necessitates a global competitive capability to face this global competition. That capability can only be achieved through improving the quality of learning in an educational institution.

The limitation in English proficiency is a major challenge and competitive hurdle in Indonesia's Global and Digital era. If the younger generation lacks skills in English, they will find it difficult to communicate their opinions through global forums or media. Furthermore, they risk being left behind by contemporary developments and other generations.

In the current era of globalization, English competency is no longer just an added value; it has become a necessity. English has become the international language used in various fields, including business, education, and technology.

Therefore, English competency is a crucial determining factor for individuals in the professional world.

The development of information and communication technology, especially social media, has brought significant changes in how teenagers interact and communicate. However, this progress also poses new challenges regarding the ethics and politeness of teenagers in communication in the digital society era. These challenges include the loss of empathy and respect for others in online communication, the ease of spreading information without filtering, and the influence of the "short and fast" culture. Reduced face-to-face interaction and the influence of social media also trigger behavioral changes, including the use of impolite language and following trends that are not always ethical.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive research type. This approach was chosen because it aims to deeply understand the Role of the School Principal in Enhancing English Language Competency and *Unggah-Ungguh* (Javanese Etiquette/Manners) through the implementation of English Day and Javanese Day at SDI Ma'arif Blitar City, an International Standard School (ICAS). Qualitative research allows the researcher to explore phenomena—such as the behavior, perceptions, motivations, and actions experienced by the research subjects—holistically and through descriptions in the form of words and language, within a specific natural context and by utilizing various natural methods.

The research location was determined purposively at SDI Ma'arif Blitar City, located at JL. Veteran Gg. VI (Suren) No.10 Plosokerep, Blitar City. The selection of this location was based on the consideration that SDI Ma'arif Blitar City is a suitable area for research corresponding to the title and can represent this study on the role of the School Principal in enhancing English language competency and the habituation of *Unggah-Ungguh* Javanese etiquette.

The data sources in this research consist of primary data and secondary data. Primary data was obtained through in-depth interviews with key informants,

namely the School Principal, Curriculum Coordinator, and Teachers. Meanwhile, secondary data was obtained through document review, such as the Profile of SDI Ma'arif, and relevant scientific literature.

Data collection techniques were carried out through two main methods (1) Interviews: Conducted in a semi-structured manner so that the researcher could explore the informants' answers freely while still referring to a previously prepared interview guide, (2) Documentation: Involving the collection and analysis of official documents related to the Role of the School Principal.

The data analysis technique used is the interactive analysis model of Miles and Huberman, which includes three main stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Data reduction is done by selecting relevant information from the results of interviews, observations, and documentation. Data display is presented in the form of a descriptive narrative that connects empirical data with the theories used. The final stage is drawing a temporary conclusion that will be continuously verified throughout the data collection process.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on interview results and Talcott Parsons' analysis, the urgency and benefits of English language competency and *Unggah-Ungguh* (Javanese Etiquette/Manners) at SDI Ma'arif Blitar City are understood as an integral part of the school's effort to maintain its social system's equilibrium.

English competency is considered urgent because it is the fundamental requirement for pursuing higher education and adapting to the global era. Its benefits are concretely proven, with the school's graduates showing higher competitiveness and successfully entering top-tier schools.

Conversely, Javanese *Unggah-Ungguh* is deemed equally important. This is the school's effort to instill good character and manners (*adab*), which Parsons considered the foundation of a harmonious social order. This urgency stems from concerns about the erosion of *Unggah-Ungguh* values amidst the influence of modernization. Thus, the school functions not only as a socialization agent for

global competence but also as a guardian of local values, ensuring students achieve a balance between international proficiency and cultural identity.

Based on interviews and Talcott Parsons' theory, the role of the School Principal and the Curriculum Coordinator at SDI Ma'arif Blitar City is central to ensuring the stability and smooth operation of the school's social system. They act as norm expectation bearers by setting both international academic standards (e.g., through the curriculum and ICAS exams) and local cultural values (*Unggah-Ungguh Jawa*).

For English, they focus on teacher professional development by sending them for training to SD Lab UM, ensuring that the teachers' role performance aligns with school expectations. For Javanese *Unggah-Ungguh*, they emphasize the teacher's role as a model and socialization agent, where the polite behavior of the teacher is expected to be imitated by students. This indicates that the Principal and Curriculum Coordinator do not merely set rules but proactively ensure mechanisms and facilities are in place to support all school components (teachers and students) in performing their roles as expected.

The programs implemented at SDI Ma'arif Blitar City reflect a systematic effort to enhance English competency and internalize Javanese *Unggah-Ungguh*.

For English, the school uses a comprehensive approach, from utilizing international workbooks and competent instructors to organizing English Camp programs and inviting foreign tourists for direct interaction. These are supported by routine daily programs like English speaking and English Day.

For the internalization of *Unggah-Ungguh*, the school focuses on routine habituation through Javanese Day every Friday, where all school members are required to use Javanese and wear traditional attire. This is reinforced by the teachers' role in training students to communicate using correct and consistent Javanese. Overall, these programs demonstrate an integrated strategy balancing academic strengthening and cultural value internalization, ensuring the school's vision of achieving international standards without abandoning its local identity.

Analysis from Talcott Parsons' role theory perspective shows that SDI Ma'arif Blitar City faces various social system dysfunctions:

1. English Competency: The primary constraint was a problem of adaptation and socialization, where lower-grade students and parents were unfamiliar with school expectations. The solution—continuous habituation—successfully internalized the norm over time.
2. Javanese *Unggah-Ungguh* Constraint: This is a more complex example of inter-institutional dysfunction. The influence of gadgets and the misalignment between norms at school and at home created role conflict for students. To address this, the school reintegrated the system by involving parents in socialization through daily assignments and reinforcing norms via institutional symbolism.
3. Cost Constraint: The high cost of international programs is a structural-functional impediment, where the economic system and external network do not adequately support the school's expectations. Solutions like internal exams and local cooperation are adaptive efforts to maintain system function despite limitations. Overall, the school seeks to restore equilibrium by ensuring all social system components, from students to parents, perform their roles according to the synchronized expectations.

The steps taken by SDI Ma'arif Blitar City to overcome obstacles in improving English competency and Javanese *Unggah-Ungguh* demonstrate a strategic, adaptive, and collaborative approach.

For structural constraints, such as high international program costs and teacher shortages, the school made realistic adjustments. This includes opting for a single, more affordable ICAS exam, cooperating with local international-standard schools, and involving parents in funding paid programs for gifted students.

To address socio-cultural constraints, like the influence of modernization and misalignment between school and home, the school implemented a strong cultural internalization strategy. Examples include the required use of Javanese and traditional attire every Friday. Additionally, the school actively fosters synergy with parents through a communication book and the Parents' Association (*Paguyuban Orang Tua* - POT) to ensure that moral and cultural education

continues in the family environment, thereby creating consistency in character development.

Based on Talcott Parsons' role theory, Mother Sholik fully realizes her role expectation as a parent: to encourage academic success (English) and instill moral values (*Unggah-Ungguh Jawa*). She has made significant efforts to demonstrate appropriate role behavior, such as telling her child to study and recite the Quran.

However, she experiences significant role strain. Obstacles like her child being difficult to advise, gadget addiction, and negative behavior indicate resistance from the child. This creates a mismatch between Mother Sholik's expectations and the reality of her child's behavior, affirming that successful role performance does not depend solely on the individual's intent and effort, but is also heavily influenced by the response of the individual who is the object of that role.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Role of the School Principal in enhancing English Language Competency and the Habituation of *Unggah-Ungguh* Javanese Etiquette through English Day and Javanese Day at SDI Ma'arif Blitar City International Standard School (SBI) is characterized by several key functions:

1. Bearer of Norm Expectations: The School Principal is the primary representation of the norms and values established in the school. The Principal is expected to set, promote, and enforce these norms.
2. Formal Socialization Agent: As the leader of the educational institution, the Principal acts as a formal socialization agent. Through policies, they internalize norms into students in the form of moral and ethical messages.
3. Sanction and Reward Giver: To ensure students' role behavior aligns with norm expectations, the Principal has the authority to issue sanctions (e.g., warnings, punishments) for those who violate norms and rewards (e.g., praise, certificates) for those who comply. This action strengthens existing norms and provides incentives for individuals to behave as expected.

4. System Equilibrium Maintainer: The Principal serves as a balancer in the school's social system. When a norm violation occurs, they must take action to restore order.

In enhancing English Language Competency and the Habituation of *Unggah-Ungguh* Javanese Etiquette through English Day and Javanese Day, SDI Ma'arif Blitar City International Standard School (SBI) faces two main types of constraints:

1. Structural Constraints (high costs and lack of teaching staff).
2. Socio-Cultural Constraints (the influence of gadgets and the lack of synchronization between school and home).

The solutions adopted by the school reflect an adaptive and collaborative approach. They do not surrender to the constraints but instead seek more practical alternatives (internal exams, local cooperation), strive to involve parents as strategic partners, and strengthen internal cultural internalization programs through routine habituation. These steps demonstrate a systematic effort to ensure the school can still achieve its vision of an "international standard school" without sacrificing local cultural roots, while simultaneously finding efficient solutions amid limitations.

Based on the conclusions presented by the researcher regarding the school principal's role in enhancing English language competency and the habituation of *Unggah-Ungguh* Javanese etiquette through English Day and Javanese Day, the researcher offers the following suggestions:

1. Continue to select competent educators in their respective fields.
2. Continue to reflect good behavior to students so that it may be emulated by them.

With these suggestions, it is hoped that SDI Ma'arif Blitar City can continue to improve the quality of language and character education in accordance with international standards while maintaining local cultural values.



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