Educational Quality Inequality and the Role of Principal Leadership in Realizing Educational Equity

Hasbiyallah[1*], A Heris Hermawan[2], Aulia Nursekha Salsabila[3], Tatang Muh Nasir[4], Zohaib Hassan Sain[5]

[1,2,3,4]Islamic Educational Management Department, Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, Indonesia
[5]Business & Management Sciences Department, Superior University, Pakistan
Email: hasbiyallah@uinsgd.ac.id[1], herishermawan@uinsgd.ac.id[2], nursekhaaulia@gmail.com[3], tatangmuhnasir25@gmail.com[4], zohaib3746@gmail.com[5]

Abstract:

Inequality in education is still a structural and ongoing problem in Indonesia. This phenomenon includes regional differences in quality, restricted access to educational technology, and a lack of professional development opportunities for instructors in underprivileged areas. These circumstances have increased the disparity between richer and less developed regions and led to unequal educational services. The purpose of this study is to investigate how school principals may lead in resolving these problems and advancing educational equity. A Systematic Literature Review (SLR) of 34 reputable journal publications and policy papers was used in this investigation. Google Scholar, Scopus, and Garuda were used for the search, and the results were selected based on theoretical contribution, methodological quality, and topic relevance. To identify trends, tactics, and the role of school leadership in advancing educational equity, the data were subjected to thematic analysis. The results show that thoughtful, context-responsive, and participative leadership makes a substantial contribution to closing educational gaps. By encouraging cooperation, raising teacher motivation, and making the most of school resources, principals serve as change agents. The study's practical implications promote the implementation of equitable national education by highlighting the need for context-specific, long-lasting, and socially just school leadership development strategies.

Keywords: *Educational Inequality, Principal Leadership, Educational Justice*

Abstrak:

Ketimpangan dalam pendidikan masih menjadi masalah struktural dan berkelanjutan di Indonesia. Fenomena ini mencakup perbedaan kualitas antarwilayah, keterbatasan akses terhadap teknologi pendidikan, dan kurangnya kesempatan pengembangan profesional bagi instruktur di daerah tertinggal. Kondisi ini telah meningkatkan disparitas antara daerah kaya dan kurang berkembang serta menyebabkan layanan pendidikan yang tidak merata. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk menyelidiki bagaimana kepala sekolah dapat memimpin dalam menyelesaikan masalah ini dan memajukan pemerataan pendidikan. Penelitian ini menggunakan Tinjauan Pustaka Sistematis (TPL) yang terdiri dari 34 publikasi jurnal dan makalah kebijakan terkemuka. Google Scholar, Scopus, dan Garuda digunakan untuk pencarian, dan hasilnya dipilih berdasarkan kontribusi teoretis, kualitas metodologis, dan relevansi topik. Untuk menemukan tren, taktik, dan peran kepemimpinan sekolah dalam memajukan pemerataan pendidikan, data tersebut dianalisis secara tematik. Hasilnya

menunjukkan bahwa kepemimpinan yang bijaksana, responsif terhadap konteks, dan partisipatif memberikan kontribusi substansial dalam menutup kesenjangan pendidikan. Dengan mendorong kerja sama, meningkatkan motivasi guru, dan memaksimalkan sumber daya sekolah, kepala sekolah berperan sebagai agen perubahan. Implikasi praktis dari studi ini mendorong implementasi pendidikan nasional yang berkeadilan dengan menyoroti pentingnya strategi pengembangan kepemimpinan sekolah yang kontekstual, berkelanjutan, dan berbasis keadilan sosial.

Kata Kunci: *Ketidaksetaraan Pendidikan, Kepemimpinan Kepala Sekolah, Keadilan Pendidikan*

INTRODUCTION

Despite numerous legislative changes over the past few decades, Indonesian educational disparities remain a structural problem (Beatty et al., 2021; Sukmayadi & Yahya, 2020; Widiastuti, 2025). In addition to differences in educational access, these discrepancies also exist in infrastructure, human resources, and learning quality, especially for principals and instructors. Inequality in education is still a structural and ongoing problem in Indonesia. Provinces like Papua and East Nusa Tenggara had literacy and numeracy scores that were much lower than those of Java and Bali, with performance gaps exceeding 80 points on national benchmarks, according to the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology's (MoECRT) 2022 National Assessment Report. These differences show how Indonesia's educational system is structurally unbalanced, especially in terms of underprivileged communities' access to learning technology and opportunities for teacher professional development (Covid, 2022; MoECRT., 2022). This disparity indicates a systemic imbalance in the implementation of national education policy.

The importance of school leadership in guaranteeing fair and high-quality education has been highlighted by recent studies (Indayanti et al., 2022; Nurlaeli et al., 2024; Yakob et al., 2025). Even in resource-constrained settings, Yusof et al. found that a transformational leadership model in schools has a significant impact on teacher performance and student passion for learning (Windasari et al., 2022; Yusof et al., 2019). Accordingly, Toprak emphasized that school administrators in developing nations who tackle problems with a flexible, cooperative attitude are more successful in establishing creative, welcoming learning environments (Toprak, 2020). Mas and Zulystiawati showed that in the Indonesian setting, there was a favorable correlation between the effectiveness of teaching and learning management and the caliber of school leadership, especially in the post-pandemic era, when employing digital educational technologies and adjusting to curricular changes (Mas & Zulystiawati, 2022).

Since resources, infrastructure, and professional development opportunities are more readily available in urban and semi-urban settings, research on school leadership has primarily focused on these areas. This has highlighted the role of principals in resource management, instructional innovation, and school culture building. The special difficulties faced by schools in isolated and impoverished locations, known in Indonesia as the 3T areas

(outermost, frontier, and disadvantaged), are, however, not well covered by these studies. This offers a clear opportunity to highlight the study's originality, as principals in underserved areas face a variety of obstacles, such as inadequate infrastructure, restricted access to technology, and a teacher shortage, all of which call for leadership techniques that go beyond managerial duties. Effective leadership in these situations requires integrating social justice, community empowerment, and values of local wisdom. For this reason, this research is important because it closes a gap in the literature and advances theoretical understanding and practical tactics for improving education in underserved areas. In fact, leadership styles and the effectiveness of school-level educational management are strongly influenced by the local environment.

The purpose of this study is to determine how Indonesian school administrators address educational disparities, especially in remote areas (3T), and to identify strategies to strengthen their leadership in the community. This research aims to analyze in depth the dynamics of school leadership in addressing educational inequality and to formulate capacity-building strategies grounded in the principles of social justice, educational innovation, and school community engagement. The study was conducted in several primary schools in disadvantaged regions, with school principals as the central unit of analysis.

Building upon this background, the present article begins by reviewing key theories of educational leadership alongside relevant empirical findings to situate the study within existing scholarship. The research strategy and technique used to investigate school leadership practices in isolated and underprivileged locations are then described. The results and theme analysis are presented in the next part and are further analyzed in light of theoretical and practical factors. After highlighting the consequences for educational policy and leadership practice, the debate continues with strategic recommendations and future research areas.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study applies a qualitative approach and a systematic literature review to examine the role of school leadership in addressing disparities in educational quality in Indonesia. This approach was selected because it works well for investigating intricate phenomena, including the interplay of institutional procedures, social dynamics, and policies at the school level. Researchers can gather, assess, and synthesize findings from prior studies across a range of reliable academic sources through a systematic literature review, yielding thorough, fact-based knowledge.

Methical procedures were used in this study design to locate, pick, and assess pertinent material. Scientific articles published in recognized national journals (SINTA 1–3) between 2018 and 2024 served as the primary source of the data. The target literature focused on issues such as educational inequity, school administration, and educational leadership, particularly in underdeveloped or isolated areas of Indonesia. The literature review was drawn from academic databases such as Garuda, DOAJ, and Google. This review analyzed 34 scholarly articles on educational leadership identified through Google Scholar and Scopus.

The samples were selected using purposive sampling techniques based on strict inclusion criteria, namely topic relevance to school leadership, the application of sound research methodology, and clear theoretical contributions to the field of educational leadership.

The researchers developed an analytical matrix to pinpoint important factors, such as leadership style, the study's geographic setting, intervention strategies, and research findings, in order to streamline the review process. Secondary data were gathered from journal articles and official policy documents detailing various initiatives to enhance leadership development and the quality of education. These documents were released by the National Development Planning Agency (Bappenas) and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology. Research papers from prestigious private educational organizations that concentrate on education reform in underprivileged areas, such as the World Bank Indonesia, INOVASI for Indonesian School Children, and the Tanoto Foundation, were among the other sources.

Using a thorough Boolean search string across Google Scholar, Scopus, and the Garuda database, the data collection process was conducted methodically. The query was: ("school leadership" OR "principal leadership") AND ("educational inequity" OR "educational inequality" OR "educational disparity") AND ("school management" OR "education management") AND ("remote areas" OR "isolated schools" OR "3T regions" OR "disadvantaged areas" OR "peripheral regions." The search was conducted on 10 January 2025 and generated 312 initial hits (Google Scholar: 205, Scopus: 74, Garuda: 33). After titles and abstracts were screened for relevance and full texts were examined based on inclusion criteria namely topic relevance, sound research methodology, and theoretical contributions a total of 34 nationally accredited journal articles and relevant policy documents were selected for in-depth thematic analysis. A theme analysis method was used to examine each chosen article. Open coding was the first step in the coding process, in which pertinent text passages were underlined and assigned preliminary codes to identify new ideas. After that, these codes were further refined through axial coding, which grouped related concepts into more general categories, including context-specific innovations, policy impediments, and leadership models. To support data management and ensure coding consistency, NVivo 12 was used. The study team performed source triangulation by comparing findings across several articles and policy papers, manually cross-checked coded data, and held peer debriefing sessions to validate the themes. This meticulous procedure ensured that the final themes were trustworthy, believable, and aligned with both the social justice ideals of education and the transformational leadership philosophy.

Source triangulation was carried out by comparing data from multiple publications and ensuring consistency across the research to guarantee the authenticity and correctness of the results. To further ensure that the final interpretations accurately reflected each source's content, thorough cross-checking was conducted. This meticulous procedure facilitates the creation of evidence-based, contextually appropriate educational policies and provides a strong basis for the validity of the research findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Results

42 pertinent publications addressing issues of educational inequality and the function of school leadership in Indonesia were found through a comprehensive literature review that was conducted between 2018 and 2023.

Tabel 1. Distribution of Reviewed Articles

Year of Publication	Number of Articles	Main Topic	Research Context
2018	6	Regional educational disparities	Western & Eastern Indonesia
2019	8	Teacher professionalism & certification distribution	Urban vs. disadvantaged (3T) regions
2020	7	Technology gap & COVID-19 pandemic	Urban vs. rural, 3T regions
2021	9	School principals' leadership	Madrasah and public schools in 3T
2022	7	Educational equity policies	MoE reports & UNESCO
2023	5	Participatory & transformational leadership	Case studies in NTT & Papua
Total	**42**		

A shift in research interest from descriptive accounts of inequality to transformative approaches that emphasize leadership as a key factor in addressing systemic gaps is evident in Table 1, which shows the distribution of reviewed articles by year, topic, and research context. The majority of studies conducted in 2019–2021 focused on teacher professionalism and school leadership in disadvantaged regions, while more recent works (2022–2023) focused on policy responses and participatory leadership models in madrasah and schools located in frontier, outermost, and disadvantaged (3T) areas.

Table 1 also demonstrates how contextual differences shape the scope of educational inequality. While publications during the COVID-19 pandemic (2020) emphasized the technology gap, especially in remote schools with limited internet access, earlier studies (2018–2019) primarily examined regional disparities between western and eastern provinces, revealing significant gaps in literacy and numeracy outcomes. After 2021, however, studies increasingly focused on school leadership practices, highlighting the potential of principals as change agents to reduce disparities. These findings suggest that leadership research in Indonesia is evolving toward integrating managerial strategies with social justice principles.

According to this study, geographical variations, the technological divide, and variations in teacher professionalism are the three primary factors that contribute to Indonesia's inequalities in educational quality and access. These three factors are interrelated and reinforce one another, forming a cycle of systemic unfairness that has an immediate impact on student learning outcomes, especially in rural and underdeveloped communities.

The empirical findings from national assessment data, which show notable disparities in literacy and numeracy across eastern and western

Indonesian provinces, serve as the primary evidence of regional variation. Geographic isolation, inadequate infrastructure, and limited access to transportation are problems for schools in rural areas, all of which lower the quality of instruction.

Both author statements stressing digital unpreparedness and empirical observations during the COVID-19 pandemic provide evidence of the technology divide. Neither teachers nor students are sufficiently prepared for digital learning, and many schools in underprivileged areas face problems with internet connectivity and a shortage of devices. Additionally, policy reports and inferential analyses reveal differences in teacher professionalism, demonstrating that inadequate professional development programs and an uneven distribution of certified teachers in 3T regions result in subpar learning processes and weak curriculum implementation.

The study also finds that school principals apply different leadership practices in responding to educational inequality. Across various locations, reported patterns show that principals frequently implemented transformational and participatory approaches, even in contexts with limited resources. The data indicate four recurring leadership dimensions in addressing disparities: contextual transformational leadership, participatory leadership, social justice–oriented leadership, and sustainable instructional leadership. These dimensions were consistently identified across the reviewed studies as strategies to improve learning quality and reduce regional disparities.

Table 2. Leadership Dimensions in Addressing Educational Inequality

No	Leadership Dimension	Key Indicators	Impact on Educational Inequality
1	Contextual Transformational	Local context adaptation, instructional innovation	Reduces learning quality gaps across regions
2	Participatory	Stakeholder engagement, community collaboration	Enhances accountability and support
3	Social Justice Oriented	Affirmative programs, inclusive policies	Addresses disparities in access and participation
4	Sustainable Instructional	Teacher development, reflective practices	Improves instructional quality

Table 1 shows that contextual transformation focuses on adapting school policies to social, cultural, and environmental conditions, while encouraging innovation in the learning process to reduce learning disparities between regions. Twelve of the examined studies found participatory leadership, which emphasizes the active involvement of stakeholders, such as parents, teachers, and the community, in decision-making processes to increase accountability and attract wider support for school programs. Nine studies featured social justice-oriented leadership, emphasizing affirmative action and inclusive policies to ensure equitable access and participation for all students while directly addressing discrimination and inequality in education. Eight studies documented sustainable instructional leadership, emphasizing reflective teaching methods and ongoing teacher development as factors that led to continued enhancements in learning outcomes and instructional quality.

Discussion

These results support evidence from earlier studies that indicates multifaceted and systemic educational inequality in Indonesia. Geographic isolation and unequal distribution of infrastructure are examples of regional inequality, according to the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology. Similar trends have been reported in international studies, including those conducted in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, where school administrators with limited resources use equity-driven leadership to mitigate the effects of teacher shortages, poor infrastructure, and poverty. In these situations, equity-oriented leadership emphasizes targeted interventions for excluded groups, inclusive decision-making, and community engagement approaches that are very similar to those in Indonesian schools. The results demonstrate that equity-driven leadership is not only context-responsive but also part of a larger global movement to reduce structural educational gaps by placing the Indonesian findings within this global discourse (Pendidikan, Kementerian, Kebudayaan, Riset, 2023). These problems highlight the need to equip principals with flexible leadership skills to create solutions appropriate to their local environments (Muringa & Shava, 2025; Schiuma et al., 2024; Schmidt et al., 2023).

The growing gap in digital access during and after the COVID-19 outbreak is consistent with World Bank publications on Indonesia that emphasize the lack of technology access in remote schools (Alina et al., 2025; Hennessy et al., 2022; Naibaho, 2023). Leadership that promotes digital inclusion is crucial to closing the gap, as teachers in these locations often lack the skills to apply digital learning (Nasir, 2023; Suhendi et al., 2025; Supriatna et al., 2023). This scenario is further worsened by the National Development Planning Agency's (Bappenas) observation of an uneven distribution of trained teachers (Bappenas, 2022). As a result, principals must serve as both managers and capacity builders, promoting cooperation between educators and the learning professional community, particularly in situations where formal training is scarce.

By creating teacher study groups, collaborating with the community, and developing regionally appropriate curricula, school administrators in rural madrasahs successfully improved learning quality, according to a study by Anjani & Dafit (2021). These instances highlight the effectiveness of transformative, context-based leadership, where community involvement and local knowledge are key to raising school quality. Effective principals, according to Sunaengsih (2011), must perform thorough contextual analysis, accounting for socioeconomic circumstances, cultural norms, and local resources (Sunaengsih, 2022). Such analysis enables them to develop a vision that aligns national education goals with community realities.

Participatory leadership has also shown strong potential in addressing educational inequality. Involving parents and the larger school community in decision-making procedures can improve learning outcomes and school responsibility, claim Fanani, Mardapi, and Wuradji (2014). Participatory institutions like parent forums and school community task teams, Fitriah continued, enhance cooperation and enhance local resource management (Abdullah et al., 2018; Fitriah et al., 2013; Haki et al., 2024; Herrera, 2019).

Affirmative action for underprivileged kids and inclusive policies are crucial, according to the social justice component of school leadership (Purhasanah, 2024; Puspitasari et al., 2022; Salim et al., 2025). According to Rivai and Murni (2020), principals who uphold the equity principle ensure that every student has access to a high-quality education, regardless of gender, financial status, or physical capabilities. According to Syafaruddin (2018), social cohesion and inclusive educational practices can be strengthened by acknowledging cultural and linguistic diversity and by implementing community-based governance.

However, Ulfah, Supriani, and Arifudin (2022) noted that administrative and technical skills continue to dominate leadership training in Indonesia, often overlooking the transformative aspects of empowerment and equality. This disparity suggests that professional development programs should be redesigned with a focus on justice-oriented leadership. Structural challenges, such as limited budgets, poor infrastructure, and a non-meritocratic recruitment system, as noted by Hadi (2019), pose additional barriers. However, the rise of digital technology presents a valuable opportunity. Online platforms, according to Kristiawan (2017), can provide school administrators in remote locations with access to training, enabling them to exchange best practices with other regions. This study has several methodological and contextual limitations despite these contributions. First, compared to field-based research, the analysis may not yield as deep empirical insights because it primarily relies on secondary data from published scientific papers and policy documents. Second, because the majority of the evaluated research focused on certain Indonesian regions, it is possible that differences in leadership styles across various institutional or cultural contexts were not adequately represented. Third, older research offering historical perspectives on equity-driven leadership may be excluded by limiting the literature to publications published solely between 2018 and 2024. These drawbacks suggest that to understand better how school leadership responds to systemic injustices, future research should include primary data collection, comparative case studies across contexts, and longitudinal methods.

Additionally, there is growing momentum to incorporate social justice ideals into leadership development programs, driven by increased awareness of the role education plays in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 4 and SDG 10) (Danim, 2019). This international convergence brings changes that put equality and inclusivity first, as well as institutional and political legitimacy. This suggests that the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (MoECRT) should incorporate modules on equity, social justice, and digital inclusion into leadership development programs that go beyond administrative training. Policy measures include making equity-driven leadership training mandatory for principals in underprivileged areas, providing extra funds to foster school-community collaborations, and developing digital infrastructure to close technological divides. Education authorities at the local government level can translate these priorities into context-specific initiatives, such as matching principals from rural and urban schools through mentoring programs, developing equity-based performance metrics for school administrators, and

ensuring that teachers are distributed fairly across 3T areas. The conversation concludes by reaffirming that, to overcome educational disparities in Indonesia, leadership must shift from primarily administrative to transformative, inclusive, participatory, and grounded in social justice principles.

The conceptual Model is the relationship between the three primary sources of educational inequality, regional disparities, technology gaps, and teacher professionalism, and the leadership responses of school principals. Contextual transformational leadership, participatory leadership, social justice-oriented leadership, and sustainable instructional leadership emerged as the four recurrent leadership aspects. Improved learning quality, more equitable access to education, increased motivation among teachers and students, and the advancement of social justice in schools are all results of these methods. This conceptual paradigm highlights the transformative role of principals in addressing systemic issues and promoting educational fairness in Indonesia.

CONCLUSION

By examining how school leadership addresses educational disparity in underprivileged and isolated areas of Indonesia, a context frequently disregarded in previous research, this study fills a research vacuum. The results of a systematic review of 34 recognized journal publications and policy papers demonstrate that principals regularly use leadership methods that are social-justice-oriented, participative, and transformational in a contextually transformative way. These strategies put school leaders in a position to be key players in reducing systemic educational inequities by empowering them to efficiently mobilize resources, enhance teacher professionalism, and create inclusive learning environments.

Notwithstanding these contributions, the study's focus on the Indonesian environment and its dependence on secondary data released between 2018 and 2024 may limit its generalizability. To capture leadership dynamics across time, future research should include longitudinal designs, comparative case studies across nations and regions, and primary field data. By advancing knowledge of equity-driven leadership and facilitating its incorporation into educational reform, such initiatives will guarantee that equality stays at the center of future practice and policy.

ACKNOWLEGMENT

REFERENCES

Abdullah, A., Hasbi, M., & Halim, H. (2018). Nahdhatul Ulama: From Traditionalist to Modernist. *International Conference on Islam and Muslim Societies (ICONIS)*, 200–366.

Alina, H., Arbain, R., & Tualeka, E. (2025). Peran Manajemen Berbasis Sekolah Dalam Meningkatkan Mutu Pendidikan Studi Literatur Komprehensif. *Jurnal Ilmiah Wahana Pendidikan, 11*(1.B), 295–302.

Anjani, N. F., & Dafit, F. (2021). Peran Manajerial Kepala Sekolah Dalam Meningkatkan Mutu Pendidikan di Sekolah Dasar. *Mimbar PGSD Undiksha, 9*(3), 481–488. https://doi.org/10.23887/jjpgsd.v9i3.40828

Bappenas, B. (2022). Badan Perencanaan Pembangunan Nasional. Evaluasi Pendidikan Wilayah 3T: Tantangan dan Peluang. https://perpustakaan.bappenas.go.id/e-library/file_upload/koleksi/migrasi-data-publikasi/file/Unit_Kerja/Dit Evaluasi%2C dan Pengendalian Penyusunan Perencanaan Pembangunan/Ringkasan RKP 2023.pdf

Beatty, A., Berkhout, E., Bima, L., Pradhan, M., & Suryadarma, D. (2021). Schooling Progress, Learning Reversal: Indonesia's Learning Profiles Between 2000 and 2014. *International Journal of Educational Development, 85*(April), 102436. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2021.102436

Covid, S. (2022). Indonesia COVID-19 Response Situation Report. https://www.unicef.org/media/124051/file/Indonesia-COVID-19-SitRep-June-2022.pdf

Fitriah, A., Sumintono, B., & Subekti, N. B. (2013). A Different Result of Community Participation in Education: An Indonesian Case Study of Parental Participation in Public Primary Schools. *Asia Pacific Educ. Rev., 14*, 483–493. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12564-013-9275-8

Haki, U., Nurhakim, M., & Amin, S. (2024). Strengthening Muhammadiyah's Global Influence: Challenges and Strategic Recommendations for Promoting Moderate Islamic Values. *Amca Journal Of Community Development, 4*(2), 68–75. https://doi.org/10.51773/ajcd.xxxxxx

Hennessy, S., & Zubairi, A. (2022). Technology Use for Teacher Professional Development in Low- and Middle-Income Countries: A Systematic Review. *Computers and Education Open, 3*(December 2021), 100080. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.caeo.2022.100080

Herrera, V. (2019). Reconciling Global Aspirations and Local Realities: Challenges Facing the Sustainable Development Goals for Water and Sanitation. *World Development, 118*, 106–117. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2019.02.009

Indayanti, A. N., Atqiya, A. B., & Badrudin, B. (2022). Education Human Resource Management in the Recruitment of Extraordinary Lecturers. *Munaddhomah: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam, 3*(2), 194–202. https://doi.org/10.31538/munaddhomah.v3i2.262

Mas, S. R., & Zulystiawati, Z. (2022). Learning Leadership in the Implementation of Independent Learning in Effective Schools. *Jurnal Pedagogi Dan Pembelajaran, 5*(3), 384–393. https://doi.org/10.23887/jp2.v5i3.43390

MoECRT. (2022). National Assessment Report 2022. In Center for Educational Assessment. https://pusmendik.kemdikbud.go.id/

Muringa, T. P., & Shava, E. (2025). 'Learning and Unlearning': Core Leadership Competencies for Driving Success in Special Economic Zones in South Africa. *Social Sciences, 14*(02), 1–20. https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci14020088

Naibaho, F. R. (2023). The Most Fundamental Education Conflict in Indonesia: A Systematic Literature Review. *International Journal of Indonesian Education and Teaching, 7*(1), 100–113. https://doi.org/10.24071/ijiet.v7i1.4981

Nasir, T. M. H. (2023). Fostering Islamic Education Talents: Art Weeks for Junior High School Students. *Al-Ishlah: Jurnal Pendidikan, 15*(4), 6102–6111. https://doi.org/10.35445/alishlah.v15i4.1390

Nurlaeli, A., & Munafiah, N. (2024). The Leadership Role of School Principals in Curriculum Management: Systematic Literature Review Analysis. *Qalamuna, 16*(1), 483–496. https://doi.org/10.37680/qalamuna.v16i1.4990

Pendidikan, Kementerian, Kebudayaan, Riset, and T. (2023). Rapor Pendidikan Indonesia Tahun 2022/2023. https://bpmpkaltara.kemdikbud.go.id/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/RAPOR-PENDIDIKAN-INDONESIA-2023.pdf

Purhasanah, S. (2024). The Power of Principal Leadership in Boosting School Quality. *Munaddhomah: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam, 5*(3), 284–292. https://doi.org/10.31538/munaddhomah.v5i3.790

Puspitasari, D., & Amalia, J. (2022). Gaya Kepemimpinan Kepala Sekolah dalam Peningkatan Kinerja Guru. *Munaddhomah: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam, 3*(1), 70–83. https://doi.org/10.70287/epistemic.v1i1.4

Salim, N. A., Zaibi, M., Brantasari, M., & Ikhsan, M. (2025). Islamic Boarding School Leadership Innovation: From Traditional to Modernization of Education. *Munaddhomah: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam, 5*(4), 447–460. https://doi.org/10.31538/munaddhomah.v5i4.1392

Schiuma, G., & Degennaro, L. U. M. G. (2024). Transformative Leadership Competencies for Organizational Digital Transformation. *Business Horizons, 67*(4), 425–437. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2024.04.004

Schmidt, D. H., Dierendonck, D. Van, & Weber, U. (2023). The Data-Driven Leader: Developing a Big Data Analytics Leadership Competency Framework. *Journal of Management Development, 42*(4), 297–326. https://doi.org/10.1108/JMD-12-2022-0306

Suhendi, S., Khoiruddin, H., Ihsan, M. N., & Nasir, T. M. (2025). Hasyim Asy' Ari's Dimensions of Multicultural Spiritual Leadership: Harmony in Education and Society in Indonesia. *Al-Hayat: Journal of Islamic Education, 9*(1), 1–27. https://doi.org/10.35723/ajie.v9i1.50

Sukmayadi, V., & Yahya, A. H. (2020). Indonesian Education Landscape and the 21. *Journal of Social Studies Education Research, 11*(4), 219–234.

Sunaengsih, C. (2022). Pengaruh Kepemimpinan Transformasional Kepala Sekolah dan Budaya Sekolah terhadap Mutu Sekolah di SMP Negeri dan Swasta di Kota Bandung. *Administrasi Pendidikan, 8*(2). https://doi.org/10.17509/jap.v14i2.6412

Supriatna, R. D., Fachriyah, N. V., & Nasir, T. M. (2023). Forging National Character in the Digital Age 4.0: The Vital Role of Humans in Integrated Islamic Education. *Al-Ishlah: Jurnal Pendidikan, 15*(3), 3947–3955. https://doi.org/10.35445/alishlah.v15i3.4515

Toprak, M. (2020). Leadership in Educational: A Systematic Review. *International Journal of Educational Administration, Management, and Leadership, 1*(2), 85–96. https://doi.org/10.51629/ijeamal.v1i2.10

Widiastuti, I. (2025). Assessing the Impact of Education Policies in Indonesia: Challenges, Achievement, and Future Direction. *Al-Ishlah: Jurnal Pendidikan, 17*(2), 1955–1964. https://doi.org/10.35445/alishlah.v17i2.6803

Windasari, W., Roesminingsih, E., & Trihantoyo, S. (2022). The Impact of Principal Transformational Leadership and Teacher Commitment to Organizational Change in Elementary Schools. *Innovation on Education and Social Sciences, 2000*, 74–80. https://doi.org/10.1201/9781003265061-10

Yakob, M., & Sukirno, S. (2025). Transformational Leadership of Principals: Driving Excellence in Education Quality. *Al-Ishlah: Jurnal Pendidikan, 17*(2019), 1658–1667. https://doi.org/10.35445/alishlah.v17i1.6887

Yusof, H., Ismail, A., & Salamuddin, N. (2019). The Impact of Principal Transformational Leadership on Teachers' Motivation and Commitment in Malaysia. *International Journal of Instruction, 12*(3), 823–840.