



## INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES OF SCHOOL PRINCIPALS IN ENHANCING LANGUAGE TEACHERS' PERFORMANCE

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### ABSTRACT

The instructional leadership at SDN Pelajau Baru plays a significant role in improving language teachers' performance and the overall quality of language instruction through structured managerial strategies. This study highlights the implementation of various instructional leadership strategies, including the establishment of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), data-driven supervision, and participatory leadership approaches. The findings reveal that effective instructional leadership in this school is supported by the principal's and teachers' professional competence, digital literacy, and emotional intelligence. Nonetheless, the study also identifies key challenges such as excessive administrative workload and limited time for instructional supervision. Strengthening the capacity of school principals through intensive training and integrating supervision practices into PLC forums are recommended to address these issues. Overall, the research underscores that consistent and well-executed instructional leadership has a positive impact on enhancing language teachers' motivation, professionalism, and the quality of language teaching in primary education.

**Keywords:** *Instructional Leadership, Language Teachers, Teacher Performance, Professional Learning Community, Primary Education.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Instructional leadership has emerged as a pivotal factor in advancing educational outcomes, especially in primary schools, where teaching quality greatly influences student development. Unlike administrative leadership models that emphasize managerial duties, instructional leadership focuses directly on the core mission of schooling: teaching and learning (Valesky & Owens, 2021; Windasari et al., 2024; Day et al., 2020). Seminal framework outlines key components such as curriculum management, academic goal setting, and instructional supervision, all of which shape the school climate and teacher performance. Principals

who adopt this model act not only as administrators but also as facilitators of pedagogical excellence (Jalal et al., 2024; Aslamiyah et al., 2023; Jaya et al., 2025). Empirical evidence increasingly supports the influence of such leadership on improving teacher professionalism. Aslam et al. (2022) found that schools led by principals with strong instructional vision tend to foster professional learning communities (PLCs), provide consistent evaluation systems, and empower teachers to grow. Sarah et al. (2023) similarly reported that principal-led supervision improved lesson planning and instructional delivery at an elementary school in Purwakarta. These findings are echoed by Purwanti et al. (2024), who highlighted that

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effective supervision centered on mentorship and reflection rather than control strengthens teacher commitment and professional integrity.

In line with this, Jalal et al. (2024) emphasized that integrating instructional, transformational, and participative leadership strategies leads to increased collaboration and performance among teachers. The implementation of distributed leadership and PLCs not only decentralizes authority but also creates a more inclusive and sustainable school environment (Susanty, 2024; Purwanti, Aslamiah, & Suriansyah, 2024; Sujiati et al., 2023). Moreover, studies by Halimatussa'diyah et al. (2024) and Cinantya et al. (2024) illustrate how leadership that is sensitive to school dynamics such as teacher readiness, resource availability, and community culture can align with strategic management practices in education. However, while instructional leadership presents a promising framework, its implementation often encounters practical barriers. Case studies, such as Hoerudin (2023) research at SD Islam Nurul Huda Bekasi, revealed significant gaps between leadership planning and its execution, often due to time constraints, administrative overload, and lack of professional training. This indicates that school-based leadership must be responsive to contextual challenges, including teacher motivation, work discipline, and systemic support (Nasution et al., 2024; Nor & Aslamiah, 2025; Putri et al., 2023).

The synergy between leadership strategies and teacher attributes is therefore essential in optimizing school performance. As Ramadhani and Purwanti (2024) and Hayati et al. (2024) argue, effective instruction is not merely a function of individual effort but of organizational collaboration. In this context, professional learning communities become vital mechanisms for promoting continuous reflection and capacity-building. Adriyani and Darmiyati (2024) further stress the importance of classroom management and

school support in shaping literacy-rich and student-centered learning environments. The principal's role, then, transcends bureaucratic function; it involves mentoring, inspiring, and co-constructing educational goals with teachers (Agusta, Darmiyati, & Rachman, 2024; Irma, Asniwati, & Purwanti, 2023; Jacobi, 2019). Ultimately, student success is strongly linked to teacher excellence formed through structured leadership, shared vision, and reflective practices.

Therefore, the aim of this literature review is to develop applicable, evidence-based, and context-sensitive instructional leadership strategies that can enhance the performance of language teachers at the primary school level. The review synthesizes theoretical frameworks and empirical findings to offer strategic insights for school leaders, particularly those seeking to strengthen teacher professionalism, classroom engagement, and educational service quality in line with 21st-century learning demands (Huda, 2023; Rizka, Metroyadi, & Agusta, 2023; Celia & Aslamiah, 2024).

## 2. METHODS

This study was conducted through a combination of observation, literature review, and limited interviews with the school principal and selected teachers at SDN Pelajau Baru. Data collection involved an in-depth analysis of scholarly sources, including nationally and internationally accredited journals, academic textbooks, empirical research reports, and the latest educational policy documents published between 2020 and 2024 (Susanto et al., 2023; Mauliddiyah, 2021). To establish a solid theoretical basis for instructional leadership, several foundational studies and relevant frameworks were also incorporated.

Academic databases such as Google Scholar, DOAJ, ERIC, and Garuda were systematically explored using targeted keywords, including “instructional

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leadership,” “teacher performance,” “strategic education management,” and “school principals.” The brief interviews with the school principal and several teaching staff provided valuable real-world insights into how instructional leadership is applied in daily practice, supporting findings in the literature (Jalal, Ernawati, & Mardizal, 2024; Sarah et al., 2023).

The data were analyzed using a qualitative descriptive approach by categorizing emerging information into several thematic areas: leadership strategies, the role of the principal, enabling and constraining factors, and the influence of leadership practices on teacher performance (Makbul, 2021; Sugiyono, 2021). This thematic analysis facilitated the synthesis of literature and field data, offering a comprehensive understanding of effective instructional leadership in the context of primary education. As emphasized by Nasution, Amini, and Aktar (2024), strong instructional leadership is directly associated with enhanced teacher performance and overall school improvement.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1 *The Form of School Principal Leadership in Elementary School Education Management*

The principal at SDN Pelajau Baru demonstrates a clear instructional leadership model consistent with the dimensions outlined by Hallinger and Heck (2015): establishing an academic mission, managing instructional programs, and nurturing a school climate conducive to learning. In the local context, as explored by Aslam et al. (2022), this leadership includes setting academic direction, supervising classroom instruction, and developing a collaborative culture among teachers. Adriyani & Darmiyati (2024) further emphasize that effective classroom management when guided by this leadership style significantly

improves children’s literacy, revealing how instructional decisions and resource coordination align with the principal’s strategic role. Moreover, Aslamiah et al. (2023) highlight that in the post-pandemic “new normal,” principals must blend participatory leadership with digital adaptation and community engagement to maintain instructional continuity and school quality.

#### 3.2 *The Role of Instructional Leadership in Improving Teacher Performance*

Instructional leadership plays a critical role in elevating teacher performance by providing structured coaching, ongoing supervision, and professional development. Rusdarti et al. (2021) established that effective schools are led by principals who prioritize instructional excellence. Following this, Jalal et al. (2024) show that principals who engage directly in instructional oversight via mentoring, feedback, and classroom walkthroughs achieve measurable gains in teacher professionalism. Complementing this, Huda (2023) found that the synergy between a principal’s instructional leadership and teachers’ professional competence can raise performance levels by up to 78.4%. Aslam et al. (2022) affirm that when principals lead in instructional methodology and reflective practice, teacher commitment, instructional planning, and overall classroom quality improve substantially. Further corroboration comes from Sarah (2023), who notes that teachers under instructional leadership become more motivated and adept in lesson delivery and pedagogical innovation.

#### 3.3 *The Influence of Principal Leadership on the Implementation of Character Education*

Leadership by the principal is instrumental in shaping character education

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within the school environment. Cinantya et al. (2024) assert that when principals integrate religious or moral values into school ethos, rituals, and instruction, they significantly influence both teachers' and students' behavior. Similarly, Purwanti, Aslamiah & Suriansyah (2024) highlight that effective character education is rooted in leadership that consistently embodies and promotes local wisdom, ethical principles, and collaborative practices. Halimatussa'diyah et al. (2024) further reinforce that leadership grounded in spiritual and moral reference frames can transform student attitudes and school culture in boarding-school settings demonstrating the principal's broader role as a moral exemplar in nurturing character development at the elementary level.

### ***3.4 Principal's Strategy in Building a Professional Learning Community (PLC)***

To establish a sustainable PLC culture, the principal emphasizes collaboration, data-driven reflection, and collective responsibility. Windasari et al. (2024) defines PLCs as teacher-led collaborative units focused on student learning, sharing best practices, and regularly analyzing results. Zhang (2022) adds that principals must champion structured dialogue, professional inquiry, and continuous improvement through data. In local practice, this aligns with observations at SDN Pelajau Baru, where teachers frequently meet under the principal's guidance to review student outcomes, reflect on instructional gaps, and co-develop solutions. Windasari et al. (2024) demonstrate that when led effectively, PLCs elevate both teacher practice and student achievement. Augusta, Darmiyati and Rachman (2024) also identify a positive correlation between PLC activity and student satisfaction with school services indicating that unified leadership and teacher

collaboration directly enhance the educational environment.

### ***3.5 The Role of Teachers, Parents, and the Community in Supporting Principal Leadership for Educational Quality***

Support from teachers, families, and community stakeholders is vital in reinforcing the principal's leadership vision and strategies. Rovio-Johansson (2020) observe that participatory governance where stakeholders contribute to decision-making yields stronger program implementation and higher student engagement. Susanty (2024) show that community participation in school development projects bolsters instructional initiatives, resource mobilization, and institutional credibility. Celia and Aslamiah (2024) emphasize that a positive quality of work life and organizational harmony among teachers and leaders is often linked to such collective involvement, which in turn enhances school performance. Thus, by facilitating open communication and shared responsibility among all actors, the principal establishes a more robust foundation for teaching and learning excellence.

### ***3.6 Challenges in Implementing Transformational and Distributed Leadership in the New Normal Era***

Principals encounter several significant obstacles when attempting to implement transformational and distributed leadership in the current educational climate. Jensen et al. (2019) argues that transformational leadership requires innovation, empowerment, and trust qualities that are difficult to foster in times of transition. Nurmiyanti and Candra (2019) explains that distributing leadership across staff can be hindered by hierarchical school cultures and lack of formal training. Aslamiah et al. (2023) report that Indonesian

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elementary school principals often struggle to maintain instructional leadership while complying with health protocols, implementing digital learning, and meeting shifting community expectations. Resistance to change from teachers unaccustomed to decentralized decision-making, limited digital literacy, scarce resources, and inadequate policy support further complicate leadership transformation. Therefore, principals must balance vision with practical adaptation, empowering teacher leaders where possible and seeking external support to navigate these emerging challenges.

**4. CONCLUSION**

This study concludes that effective leadership by elementary school principals plays a vital role in enhancing the quality of education through instructional supervision, teacher empowerment, character education integration, and the development of a collaborative learning culture. The principal's ability to lead with a clear vision, support professional learning communities, and involve key stakeholders such as teachers, parents, and the local community significantly contributes to improving school performance. Despite challenges posed by the evolving educational landscape, particularly in the post-pandemic era, principals who adopt adaptive, participatory, and distributed leadership models are better positioned to sustain quality education.

The findings suggest that principal leadership is not only central to managing school operations but also crucial in shaping instructional quality and fostering an environment of shared learning. For educational institutions and policymakers, this underscores the importance of leadership development programs that equip principals with the competencies required for instructional leadership, stakeholder engagement, and transformational change. Furthermore, schools that cultivate strong

professional learning communities and promote collective responsibility among educators are more likely to experience continuous improvement in teaching and student outcomes.

Future research should explore the long-term impact of principal leadership on student academic achievement and character development in diverse educational contexts. Studies could also investigate how digital leadership competencies influence the effectiveness of school leadership in the era of technological integration. Additionally, comparative studies between urban and rural school settings may offer deeper insights into context-specific leadership challenges and strategies. Action research involving school principals and teacher leaders could further enrich understanding of practical interventions to strengthen instructional supervision and collaborative practices in elementary schools.

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