

# Empowering School Communities: A Leadership Model for Improving Educational Quality in Resource-Constrained Areas

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## Info Artikel

## Abstract

### Keywords:

Principal's Strategy, School Quality, Transformational Leadership

This study aims to analyse the leadership strategies employed by the principal in improving the quality of education at SDN 2 Menoro, Sedan District, Rembang Regency. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation, involving the principal, teachers, school committee members, and students. The findings show that the principal applies four main strategies: (1) Participatory strategic planning, where annual evaluations involve all stakeholders in data-driven decision-making; (2) Competency-based organizational structure, prioritizing task distribution based on expertise and flexibility in forming ad-hoc teams; (3) Program implementation through multi-channel communication, using WhatsApp, social media, and regular meetings to ensure information is effectively disseminated; and (4) Continuous monitoring and evaluation system, including classroom observations and parent satisfaction surveys to improve programs dynamically. This research contributes to the development of an Integrated Strategic Leadership (ISL) model, which combines participatory planning, competency-based management, and data-driven evaluation within a continuous improvement cycle. This model is relevant for schools with limited resources, optimising the involvement of all stakeholders in enhancing education quality. The limitations of this study lie in its single-case design and short data collection period. Therefore, future research is recommended to employ multi-case designs and quantitative approaches to test the sustainability and long-term impact of this model across various educational contexts.

### Kata Kunci:

Strategi Kepala Sekolah, Mutu Sekolah, Kepemimpinan Transformasional

### Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis strategi kepemimpinan kepala sekolah dalam meningkatkan mutu pendidikan di SDN 2 Menoro, Kecamatan Sedan, Kabupaten Rembang. Menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif, penelitian ini mengumpulkan data melalui observasi, wawancara mendalam, dan dokumentasi dengan melibatkan kepala sekolah, guru, anggota komite sekolah, dan siswa. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kepala sekolah menerapkan empat strategi utama: (1) Perencanaan strategis partisipatif, di mana evaluasi tahunan melibatkan seluruh pemangku kepentingan untuk pengambilan keputusan berbasis data; (2) Struktur organisasi berbasis kompetensi, yang mengutamakan pembagian tugas sesuai keahlian dan fleksibilitas dalam pembentukan tim ad-hoc; (3) Implementasi program melalui komunikasi multi-saluran, dengan penggunaan WhatsApp, media sosial, dan pertemuan rutin untuk memastikan informasi tersebar dengan baik; dan (4) Sistem pemantauan dan evaluasi berkelanjutan, yang mencakup observasi kelas dan survei kepuasan orang tua untuk meningkatkan program secara dinamis. Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi terhadap pengembangan model kepemimpinan strategis terpadu (Integrated Strategic Leadership/ISL), yang menggabungkan perencanaan partisipatif, pengelolaan berbasis kompetensi, dan evaluasi berbasis data dalam siklus perbaikan berkelanjutan. Model ini relevan untuk sekolah-sekolah dengan sumber daya terbatas, mengoptimalkan keterlibatan seluruh pemangku kepentingan dalam meningkatkan kualitas pendidikan. Keterbatasan penelitian ini terletak pada studi kasus tunggal dan durasi pengumpulan data yang terbatas, sehingga disarankan

## INTRODUCTION

Primary education is a fundamental stage that shapes the long-term quality of human resources, encompassing the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor development of children. In Indonesia, the 12-year compulsory education program reflects the state's commitment to ensuring every child's right to basic education. (Priasti & Suyatno, 2021). However, recent data from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek, 2023) The Computer-Based National Assessment (ANBK) reveals significant gaps in literacy and numeracy between urban and rural schools. The proportion of students at the lowest literacy level reaches 31% in rural areas, compared to 15% in urban areas. For numeracy, this proportion is 26% in rural areas, compared to 14% in urban areas. These gaps underscore that quality challenges extend beyond academic issues to encompass structural and managerial aspects, necessitating targeted interventions to mitigate educational disparities.

**Table 1. Learning Gap for 2023**

Indicator	School Location	Proportion of Students at Level 1 (lowest)
Literacy	Rural & Remote	31%
	Urban	15%
Numeracy	Rural & Remote	26%
	Urban	14%

Source: Educational Assessment Centre (Pusmendik), Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, 2023

Contemporary leadership theory emphasises a shift from traditional administrative roles toward transformational and distributed leadership that emphasises shared vision, intellectual stimulation, and collective responsibility. (Mackay & Wu, 2024). Transformational leadership in educational settings has been proven to correlate positively with teacher motivation, instructional innovation, and student achievement. (Jainiyah et al., 2023). School effectiveness research identifies key factors, including a clear academic focus, regular monitoring of learning progress, and strong instructional leadership. (Nuzula & Oktaviana, 2019). However, most research has been conducted in urban contexts or schools with adequate resources, creating a research gap regarding the application of these principles in rural primary schools with limited resources. (Nuzula & Oktaviana, 2019).

The gap between ideal leadership theory and empirical realities in rural schools becomes an important concern in the context of improving national education quality. SDN 2 Menoro, Sedan District, Rembang Regency, was selected as the research locus because it shows significant transformation dynamics. The 2023 National Assessment data indicate that literacy and numeracy scores are below the national average. (Maulita et al., 2022), but the 2024 results show encouraging improvements in the education report. This improvement is noteworthy, given that the school still faces complex structural limitations, including limited infrastructure, a non-functional library, and the absence of a laboratory. This phenomenon raises a fundamental question: What kinds of leadership practices did the principal employ that enabled positive change in such challenging conditions?

The four-function management model (*planning, organising, leading, and controlling*) provides a *comprehensive framework for analysing* leadership effectiveness in the school context. (Fauzan Wakila,

2021). However, applying these functions in rural primary schools must consider unique contextual factors such as limited financial resources, inadequate facilities, and reliance on community support. Implementation strategies in rural schools require special attention to change management principles, especially in overcoming teacher resistance and building collective capacity through incremental innovation and peer mentoring. (Wati et al., 2022). (Riski et al., 2021) Monitoring and evaluation practices are often hindered by the absence of advanced information systems, requiring principals to utilise simpler tools such as classroom observations and community feedback. (Ideswal et al., 2020)

Although there is extensive literature on educational leadership, research gaps remain. *First*, there is limited attention to leadership strategies specific to rural primary schools with limited resources. (Lamirin et al., 2023). *Second*, most studies focus on individual leadership behaviours rather than a comprehensive strategic management approach that integrates the functions of planning, organising, implementation, and evaluation. (Khuliyati, 2022). *Third*, research is still lacking on how principals in developing countries adapt international leadership models to local contexts and limitations. (Siburian, 2020).

Based on this context, this study aims to comprehensively analyse the principal's management strategies in improving the quality of education at SDN 2 Menoro using a strategic management function framework. Specifically, this study is designed to: (1) Identify and analyze the principal's strategic planning strategies in formulating the vision, mission, and quality improvement programs; (2) Examine the organizational structure and mechanisms for organizing human resources, infrastructure, and financing; (3) Describe and analyze implementation strategies in translating plans into effective learning and management practices; and (4) Evaluate the monitoring and evaluation system to track progress and ensure continuous improvement. This study is expected to make theoretical contributions to enrich the educational leadership literature by providing a context-based strategic management model for rural schools, as well as offering practical guidance for principals, supervisors, and policymakers in designing adaptive quality improvement strategies that align with local conditions.

## **METHOD**

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach to examine the principal's strategies in improving the quality of education at SDN 2 Menoro, Sedan District, Rembang Regency. (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). This approach was chosen because the study aims to explore leadership practices and authentic experiences that cannot be adequately captured through quantitative data alone. The research was conducted over six months, from February to July 2025, at SDN 2 Menoro, which was purposively selected because it represents the complex challenges faced by rural elementary schools, such as limited infrastructure and resources, yet shows improvement in national assessment results. (Assyakurrohim et al., 2023).

The research subjects consisted of ten informants, selected based on the concept of data saturation, including the principal, three teachers, two school committee members, and four upper-grade students (Assyakurrohim et al., 2022). Data collection was carried out through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The researcher acted as the main instrument, supported by observation, interviews, and documentation guidelines. Observations were conducted passively in learning activities, school meetings, supervision activities, and the implementation of quality improvement programs. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore the strategies employed by the principal. Data validity was enhanced through source and

method triangulation, as well as member checking, where informants provided feedback on interim findings to clarify any discrepancies (Moleong, 2017).

**Table 2. Informant Data**

Informant	Code	Number	Description
Principal	KS	1	–
Teachers	GR	3	–
School Committee	KMT	2	–
Students	S	4	Grades 3–6
<b>Total</b>		<b>10</b>	

Source: Data Collection, 2025

Data analysis was performed using the interactive analysis model developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana, which includes data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. The condensation process involved systematic coding from interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents, which were then categorised into thematic groups related to leadership communication, supervisory practices, and community involvement. (Miles, 2007). Data were presented in the form of descriptive narratives, tables, and graphs to illustrate emerging patterns and relationships between categories in detail. (Saldana, 2002).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Result

#### Data-Based and Participatory Strategic Planning

The success of quality improvement greatly depends on the principal's leadership capacity in designing, implementing, and evaluating various programs systematically. This study reveals the principal's leadership practices in improving quality at SDN 2 Menoro, Sedan District, Rembang Regency, which demonstrate a comprehensive and structured approach. The results identified four interrelated strategic dimensions. These four dimensions form an integrated and continuous quality management cycle.

Observations of the planning process at SDN 2 Menoro show a consistent and systematic pattern. At the beginning of each academic year, the principal holds an evaluation meeting involving all teachers, the school committee, and parent representatives. This meeting serves as a substantive forum for analysing student achievement data, attendance patterns, facility conditions, and community feedback.

Planning documents show the systematic use of quantitative and qualitative data. Academic performance data from the past three years were analysed to identify trends and areas requiring intervention. Diagnostic assessment results at the beginning of the year became the basis for designing remedial and enrichment programs. The process of setting the school's vision was carried out through multi-stakeholder consultation. The formulated vision is a collective consensus that considers the aspirations of teachers, parents, and the local community's needs. This approach creates a shared sense of ownership over the school's development direction.

*"We begin each academic year with a comprehensive evaluation involving all teachers, school committee members, and parent representatives. We systematically review student achievement data, attendance patterns, facility conditions, and community feedback to inform our decision-making process".*

*"These data form the basis for identifying priority areas that require intervention. Becoming an excellent school that is character-driven, high-achieving, and environmentally cultured" (KS-01, KMT-02)*

An interesting finding from the observation is the implementation of a bottom-up approach in program design. Teachers were given autonomy to propose programs based on classroom-level needs assessments. Each proposal was reviewed in a coordination meeting of the quality improvement team before being integrated into the school's master plan. This mechanism ensures that the programs designed are relevant to the actual needs of learning.

### **Competency-Based Organizational Structure with Multi-Channel Communication**

The review of organizational documents and interviews revealed that the Quality Improvement Team at SDN 2 Menoro is structured based on the principles of *competency-based management*. This means that role assignments within the team are determined not by seniority but by individual expertise, work capacity, and commitment. The team consists of coordinators for curriculum, infrastructure, and public relations. Each coordinator mentors two to three teachers in their respective areas of competence, thereby creating an effective and sustainable internal mentoring system.

Field observations showed that the team operates with clear and measurable role divisions. Each team member has specific performance targets documented in a responsibility matrix, ensuring a systematic workflow. The curriculum coordinator is primarily responsible for ensuring the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, developing teaching modules, supervising instructional practices, and strengthening formative assessment. Meanwhile, the infrastructure coordinator focuses on maintaining school facilities, ensuring the availability of learning media, and planning procurement based on actual classroom needs.

This distribution of responsibilities has had a positive impact on teachers' effectiveness. Lower-grade teachers, for instance, are assigned to focus on strengthening foundational literacy and numeracy. They regularly identify students who experience learning difficulties and design remedial programs using engaging pedagogical approaches. Classroom observations revealed the use of concrete learning media, including picture-word cards, educational games, and physical teaching aids. These strategies have proven to enhance students' participation and learning motivation.

The organisational structure is also adaptive. The principal applies a mechanism of task rotation and role adjustment according to situational needs. During critical periods such as accreditation preparation, the implementation of the National Assessment (AN), or the development of flagship programs, the principal forms ad-hoc teams consisting of teachers with relevant competencies. This flexibility increases organisational responsiveness while providing teachers with broader opportunities for professional growth.

*"I dedicate 30 minutes each day for remedial support for students struggling with reading, writing, and arithmetic. We use enjoyable methods such as picture-word cards and interactive games to maintain students' motivation." (KS-01, GR-03)*

Observations of the socialisation and implementation processes indicate the strategic use of multiple communication channels. The principal does not rely solely on formal meetings but also utilizes digital platforms, such as WhatsApp groups, the school's social media, and notice boards, to ensure information is disseminated evenly. Monthly teacher meetings serve as the primary forum for introducing new programs, evaluating progress, and collectively solving problems. In these meetings, the principal not only delivers instructions but also opens space for dialogue and practical simulations. For instance, when introducing differentiated learning methods,

teachers are invited to practice student grouping strategies and adjust materials according to ability levels.

Classroom-level implementation shows a variety of strategies tailored to students' needs. For foundational literacy and numeracy programs, teachers allocate a dedicated 30-minute daily session for remedial support for students experiencing difficulties. One teacher, Hamdani, explained the practice: The principal's support during the implementation phase is not only administrative but also pedagogical. The principal periodically conducts classroom visits, provides constructive feedback, and facilitates peer observations among teachers. This practice fosters a collaborative learning culture in which teachers share best practices.

### Continuous Monitoring and Evaluation System

The monitoring system at SDN 2 Menoro is designed in a gradual and comprehensive manner to ensure tangible impacts on learning. Observations indicate the use of three main instruments: structured observation, questionnaire surveys, and a digital tracking system with visual indicators. Ahmad Baydhowi explained the monitoring system that has been implemented. The principal and field coordinators conduct structured observations on a scheduled basis. Each month, at least two classroom visits are carried out to observe the implementation of learning and the use of agreed-upon strategies. Observation results are documented in standard forms covering planning, implementation, and assessment aspects. Feedback is provided immediately after the observation, allowing teachers to make timely improvements.

Questionnaire surveys are used to measure stakeholders' perceptions of the programs implemented. Parents are given a simple questionnaire at the end of each semester to assess school communication, their children's learning progress, and satisfaction with school services. Survey results are analysed and used as material for evaluation during coordination meetings.

The digital tracking system was developed using a simple spreadsheet-based dashboard that displays visual indicators, such as graphs and colour codes. The dashboard contains data on student attendance, periodic assessment results, program target achievement, and teacher development progress. Data visualisation facilitates the identification of trends and areas requiring immediate intervention.

*"Monitoring includes structured observation, questionnaire surveys, and a digital tracking system with visual indicators. This ensures that programs achieve the expected outcomes, not merely administrative compliance." (KMT-02, S-04)*

The most important aspect of this monitoring system is its orientation toward continuous improvement rather than punitive evaluation. The data collected are used for constructive dialogue on how to enhance program effectiveness. This positive evaluative culture encourages openness and a willingness to learn from failures.

**Table 3. Summary of Research Findings**

Aspect	Research Findings
<b>Strategic Planning</b>	1. The principal leads annual evaluations with all teachers, school committee members, and parents.
	2. Decision-making is driven by both quantitative data (achievement, attendance) and qualitative data (community feedback).

<b>Organizational Structure</b>	3.	School vision is formulated through a participatory process, with input from multiple stakeholders.
	4.	Teachers are involved in the bottom-up approach, proposing programs based on classroom-level assessments.
	1.	The Quality Improvement Team is composed based on competency and commitment, not seniority.
	2.	The team includes coordinators for curriculum, infrastructure, and public relations, each of whom mentors 2–3 teachers.
<b>Program Implementation</b>	3.	Responsibilities are clearly defined, with measurable performance indicators.
	4.	The principal fosters flexibility through task rotation and the formation of ad-hoc teams as needed.
	1.	Information is disseminated through multiple channels, including formal meetings, WhatsApp, social media, and notice boards.
	2.	Monthly meetings provide a space for dialogue, feedback, and simulations, enabling teachers to refine their practices.
<b>Monitoring and Evaluation</b>	3.	A daily 30-minute remedial support period is allocated for literacy and numeracy improvement for students who need it.
	4.	The principal conducts regular classroom visits, offering constructive feedback and encouraging peer observations among teachers.
	1.	Monitoring is based on structured observations, questionnaire surveys, and a digital tracking system.
	2.	Classroom observations occur at least twice a month with feedback provided immediately.
	3.	Parents complete satisfaction surveys at the end of each semester, which are analysed to inform decision-making.
	4.	A digital dashboard tracks progress visually, using graphs and colour coding to display key data points.
	5.	The monitoring system prioritises continuous improvement, focusing on learning and adapting to challenges.

Source: Data Collection, 2025

## DISCUSSION

### Participatory Strategic Planning: for Reconceptualising Evidence-Based Decision-Making

The findings of this study provide significant theoretical contributions through the development of the Integrated Strategic Leadership (ISL) Model, which synthesises various perspectives on educational leadership within a coherent management framework. Unlike conventional approaches that separate instructional leadership from administrative management, the ISL model demonstrates how these two dimensions can be systematically integrated to achieve sustainable organisational improvement. (Kinvig et al., 2022). The theoretical significance of this model lies in its ability to address the fragmentation that has long been a fundamental weakness in the school leadership literature, where leadership aspects are often treated as separate domains without explaining the mechanisms by which they are integrated in actual practice.

The identified ISL model comprises four interdependent dimensions: participatory strategic planning, adaptive organizational architecture, multi-channel implementation, and a

continuous improvement cycle. These four dimensions do not operate linearly; instead, they form a circular system that continuously reinforces one another. This integration addresses theoretical gaps long recognised in the educational leadership literature, particularly the absence of a comprehensive framework linking transformational leadership behaviours with strategic management processes in resource-constrained school contexts. (Rasheed et al., 2023). The significance of this finding is further highlighted considering that the majority of schools in Indonesia, especially public elementary schools in non-urban areas, operate under similar resource limitations, making this model widely applicable.

The primary theoretical contribution lies in demonstrating that transformational leadership does not operate solely at an inspirational or motivational level but can be operationalised through structured, concrete management practices. This expands the understanding of transformational leadership theory, developed by Bass and Avolio, by illustrating specific mechanisms through which a transformational vision is translated into measurable organizational actions within the context of Indonesian elementary education. (Ghufron, 2020). Such operationalisation is crucial because it bridges the gap between normative leadership theory, which is often abstract, and empirical practice that practitioners in the field can replicate. Consequently, this study contributes to the development of a middle-range theory that connects the grand theory of transformational leadership with the micro-level realities of school leadership practice.

The strategic planning approach identified in this study demonstrates a significant evolution from traditional top-down planning models toward what can be termed “*collective strategic sense-making*.” This approach integrates stakeholder theory principles with evidence-based decision-making practices, creating a planning process that is both inclusive and analytical (Ramadhani & dkk, 2021). The concept of collective strategic sense-making goes beyond mere symbolic participation or pro forma consultation, which are often observed in school planning practices. Instead, it involves substantive engagement, where various stakeholders not only provide input but also actively participate in the collective interpretation of data, the identification of priority issues, and the co-construction of potential solutions.

The integration of systematic situational analysis with multi-stakeholder consultation reflects a deep understanding of the complexities of educational decision-making. In strategic management literature, this approach is recognized as “emergent strategy,” where the organizational direction is not entirely dictated by the top-level hierarchy but emerges from dynamic interactions between multiple organizational levels and external stakeholders. (Mustangin et al., 2021). This is particularly relevant in education, where successful implementation heavily depends on teachers’ professional commitment and sense of ownership. The emergent strategy process also creates a powerful organisational learning mechanism, as dialogues among diverse perspectives generate a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by the school.

The application of a bottom-up approach in program design illustrates the practical operationalisation of the professional learning community concept within the context of strategic planning. By providing space for teachers to identify classroom-level needs and propose solutions, the principal not only enhances program relevance but also builds teachers’ professional capacity as change agents. (Setyaningsih & Rahmawati, 2019). This approach addresses a fundamental weakness in education policy implementation, namely, the gap between policy design and the realities of classroom practice. Notably, the findings highlight how the principal institutionalises teachers’ voices through formal structures such as class-based planning forums and needs-



identification workshops, transforming teacher input from an optional privilege into a structural right.

Resource allocation strategies that prioritise direct instructional programs reflect an understanding of the educational production function. Extensive research in the economics of education demonstrates that investment in instructional quality yields higher returns compared to investment in physical infrastructure or administrative expansion. (Septiari et al., 2020). These findings provide empirical evidence on how school leaders in resource-constrained contexts can optimise their impact through strategic prioritisation, rather than simply increasing budgets. Furthermore, this prioritisation demonstrates courageous leadership in making difficult trade-offs and allocating limited resources to core educational functions, despite competing demands. Such allocation decisions also reflect an intense clarity of purpose, whereby the principal consistently directs resources toward activities with the most direct linkage to student learning outcomes.

### **Adaptive Organisational Architecture, Balancing Structure and Flexibility**

The organisational design identified in this study demonstrates an advanced application of contingency theory in the educational context. The formation of the Competency-Based Quality Improvement Team, rather than a seniority-based team, marks a shift from traditional bureaucratic models toward what (Sarnoto, 2021) The term “*adhocracy*” refers to a form of organisation that prioritises expertise and adaptability over formal hierarchy. This shift is particularly significant within the traditional organisational culture of Indonesian schools, where seniority and formal position often constitute the primary sources of authority and influence. By prioritising competency as the primary criterion, the principal not only optimises the utilisation of available expertise but also conveys a strong cultural message about the value of meritocracy and professionalism.

This structure creates a delicate balance between standardisation for accountability and flexibility for innovation. In organisational theory, this is recognised as the exploration-exploitation paradox, where an organisation must simultaneously maintain operational efficiency while remaining open to innovation and learning. (Rupnidah & Eliza, 2022). The principal’s ability to design a structure that accommodates both needs through permanent and ad-hoc teams demonstrates sophisticated organisational design rarely seen in elementary school leadership literature. Permanent teams provide the stability and continuity required to operationalise regular programs, while ad-hoc teams offer flexibility to respond to emerging issues or innovative projects requiring specialised expertise.

The implementation of distributed leadership identified in this study goes beyond simple task delegation, involving the substantive distribution of decision-making authority. This aligns with contemporary conceptualizations of distributed leadership, which emphasize the distribution of expertise and authority rather than merely task allocation. (Nugraha & Irnawati, 2022). In this context, field coordinators do not merely execute the principal’s instructions but possess professional autonomy to make decisions within their domain of expertise, with accountability for collectively agreed-upon outcomes. This form of distributed leadership generates multiple sources of initiative within the organisation, enhancing the school’s responsiveness and adaptive capacity. Furthermore, this distribution of authority functions as a leadership development mechanism, preparing future leaders through experiential learning in bounded yet meaningful leadership roles.

The integration of digital communication technologies with traditional coordination mechanisms demonstrates the organisation’s ability to adapt to technological changes without

compromising the essence of critical human interactions in educational settings. This reflects an understanding that technology serves as an enabler, not a replacement, for high-quality professional relationships. (Mufti et al., 2022). This hybrid approach is especially relevant in the post-pandemic context, where schools must integrate digital modalities with face-to-face interactions. Notably, the principal strategically utilises different communication channels for distinct purposes: digital platforms for information dissemination and documentation, formal meetings for decision-making and conflict resolution, and informal interactions for relationship building and sense-making. This differentiation in channel use demonstrates sophisticated media literacy and an understanding of the distinct affordances of each communication medium.

### **Multi-Channel Implementation: From Design to Practice**

The implementation strategy identified in this study demonstrates a deep understanding of organisational change theory, particularly the importance of multi-directional communication and active participation in the adoption of innovation. The multi-channel approach, which integrates formal meetings, digital platforms, and informal communication, creates communicative redundancy that increases the probability that messages reach all organisational members with an accurate understanding. (Ramadhan et al., 2022). This communicative redundancy does not imply mechanical repetition of the same message, but rather a re-articulation of core messages through diverse formats and contexts, facilitating progressive and deeper comprehension.

In change management literature, this approach aligns with the principle of communication redundancy, which asserts that in change situations, organisations require a much higher volume of communication than in everyday operations to overcome resistance, uncertainty, and misunderstandings. (Soekarman, 2021). The use of multiple channels also accommodates individual communication preferences, enhancing the inclusivity of the change process. Furthermore, the multi-channel approach creates multiple entry points for participation, allowing organisational members with different communication styles, from those who are vocal in public forums to those who are more comfortable with written or one-on-one communication, to engage meaningfully with the change initiatives.

The emphasis on practical simulation and peer observation during the implementation phase demonstrates an understanding of adult learning and effective professional development. Experiential learning theory emphasises that changes in professional practice necessitate more than the transfer of information; they require opportunities for practice, reflection, and feedback within a secure context. (Arjuni et al., 2023). Implementation strategies that integrate these elements increase the likelihood of sustainable adoption, rather than temporary compliance. Peer observation, in particular, provides a powerful learning mechanism by allowing teachers to observe new practices in action within a familiar context, reducing abstractness and enhancing the sense of feasibility. Moreover, peer observation fosters horizontal accountability and a mutual support system that is more sustainable than vertical monitoring alone.

The allocation of dedicated time for remedial programs (30 minutes daily) represents the concrete operationalisation of commitment to individual learning. In instructional systems theory, learning time (*time on task*) is among the most consistent predictors of student achievement. (Faisal, 2019). By integrating remedial time into the daily structure, the school institutionalises attention to individual needs, transforming it from an ad-hoc initiative into a systematic practice. This institutionalisation is crucial because it ensures that remedial programs are not dependent on individual teacher initiative or sporadic availability, but rather become an integral component of

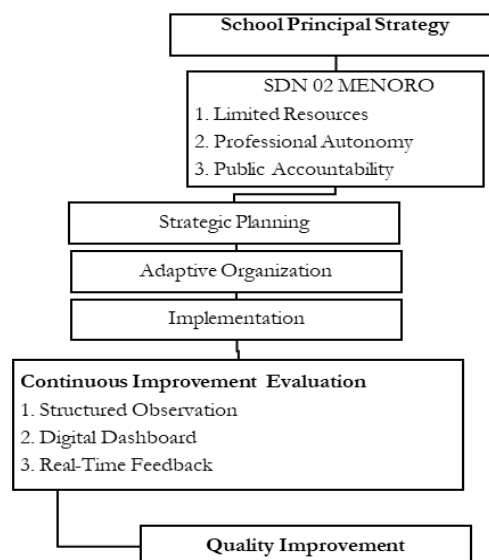
the school's operational rhythm. Furthermore, the regularity of remedial programs normalises the receipt of additional support, reducing the stigma often associated with remedial interventions and increasing the participation rate of students who need it.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation for Continuous Improvement: Creating a Learning Organisation**

The monitoring and evaluation system identified in this study reflects what Argyris and Schön conceptualize as “*double-loop learning*,” an organizational learning approach that not only corrects deviations from established standards but also reviews and modifies the standards themselves based on an evolving understanding. (Anas, 2023) The integration of three monitoring instruments, structured observations, surveys, and a digital dashboard, creates data triangulation, thereby enhancing the validity and reliability of the information for informed decision-making. (Gustini & Mauly, 2019) This triangulation not only increases confidence in the data but also provides multiple lenses to understand complex phenomena, capturing nuances that might be missed if only a single method were employed. For example, while the digital dashboard provides quantitative trends, classroom observations reveal the mechanisms and contextual factors that explain these trends, and surveys capture subjective perceptions and experiences that give meaning to the objective data.

The evaluation system's orientation toward improvement rather than punitive assessment demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of motivation psychology and organisational learning. (Simon Paulus Olak Wuwur, 2023). Extensive research in organisational behaviour indicates that evaluation systems perceived as threatening elicit defensive behaviours and information withholding, whereas systems perceived as learning-focused encourage openness and experimentation. (Howard et al., 2009). The evaluative culture identified in this study fosters psychological safety, which is crucial for innovation and continuous improvement. This psychological safety is cultivated not merely through rhetoric but through the principal's consistent actions in responding to evaluation findings, focusing on systems and processes rather than individual blame, celebrating learning from mistakes, and modelling vulnerability by acknowledging and learning from suboptimal leadership decisions.

The use of a digital dashboard with data visualisation demonstrates the practical application of data literacy principles in educational leadership. In the era of data-driven decision-making, the ability to transform raw data into actionable insights is a critical competency for school leaders. (Sawaluddin, 2022). Data visualisation not only makes information more accessible but also facilitates pattern recognition and the identification of trends that may not be apparent in tables or narrative reports. More importantly, data visualisation democratises access to information, enabling stakeholders with varying levels of statistical literacy to engage with data and participate in data-informed dialogue. (Fionita et al., 2024). This transforms data from an administrative monopoly into a shared resource for collective problem-solving and decision-making.

**Figure 1. School Principal Strategy Flow**

The integration of multi-stakeholder perspectives in evaluation, including parental satisfaction surveys, demonstrates the application of stakeholder theory in educational accountability. (Setemen, 2010). This approach recognises that school effectiveness cannot be assessed solely from administrative or academic perspectives but must consider the broader impact on the communities served (Phafiandita et al., 2022). It reflects a shift from bureaucratic to professional and responsive models of accountability. Incorporating parental voice in the evaluation system also strengthens school-family partnerships, signalling that parents' perspectives are valued and influential in shaping school practices. Furthermore, attention to parental satisfaction can function as an early warning system for issues that may not be detected through academic or administrative metrics.

### **Practical Implications: Guidelines for Implementing the ISL Model**

The findings of this study offer several significant practical implications for educational practitioners and policymakers. *First*, the ISL model provides a framework that can be replicated and adapted by other school leaders, particularly in contexts with limited resources. The framework demonstrates that school quality improvement does not necessarily require massive financial investment but can be achieved through the optimisation of human resources, systematic communication, and evidence-based decision-making. (Febriany et al., 2021). The replicability of this model is enhanced by its clarity and specificity. Each dimension of the model is articulated in terms of concrete practices and mechanisms that can be adopted and adapted to local contexts. (Rahmaniar & Prastowo, 2021). Successful replication, however, requires not merely copying practices but understanding the underlying principles and thoughtfully adapting them to different contextual realities.

*Second*, the study emphasises the importance of developing holistic leadership capacity by integrating strategic management competencies with instructional leadership. Preparation and professional development programs for school principals should move beyond a singular focus on pedagogical leadership or administrative management, toward an integrative approach that demonstrates how both dimensions reinforce each other in practice. (Herlina et al., 2020). This highlights the need to redesign leadership preparation programs, which often still employ siloed

approaches. Developing integrative leadership may require more experiential and situated learning opportunities, such as residencies, coaching, and action learning projects, allowing aspiring leaders to practice integrating multiple leadership dimensions in authentic problem-solving contexts.

*Third*, the findings emphasise the importance of data infrastructure and school-level educational management information systems. Although the schools in this study utilised relatively simple technology (spreadsheet-based dashboards), the underlying principles of systematic data collection, analysis, and utilisation for decision-making can be applied across varying levels of technological sophistication. (Kornelius et al., 2022) The critical factor is not the technology itself but the commitment to evidence-based decision-making. This suggests that investments in school data systems should focus not only on technology but also on developing data literacy and a culture of inquiry among educators. Technology without the mindset and capability to use it effectively will remain underutilised.

*Fourth*, the study emphasises the importance of establishing a collaborative and evaluative culture as a foundation for ongoing quality improvement. Such a culture cannot be established solely through policies or structural arrangements; it requires leadership that consistently models openness to feedback, willingness to experiment, and learning from failures. Culture-building is a long-term endeavour that requires persistent attention and reinforcement through both symbolic actions and substantive practices. Leaders need to recognise that every decision and interaction sends cultural messages and must be intentional in ensuring that these messages align with the values and norms they aim to cultivate (Mustajab & Rahmawati, 2021). Building this culture also requires addressing potential barriers, such as the fear of judgment, a lack of time for collaboration, and the absence of structures that facilitate collaborative work.

**Figure 4. Summary of Analysis and Discussion**

Research Findings	Theoretical Analysis	Contribution
<b>Strategic Planning:</b> The principal involves all stakeholders in annual evaluations to make informed, data-driven decisions. Teachers propose programs based on classroom needs, ensuring strategies are relevant and inclusive.	Participatory Leadership Theory: This finding aligns with the principles of participatory leadership, where decisions are made collectively, enhancing engagement and ownership among stakeholders (Ramadhani & dkk, 2021).	This research contributes to the understanding of participatory leadership in rural educational contexts, where stakeholder involvement directly impacts the relevance and success of educational strategies.
<b>Organisational Structure:</b> The leadership team is based on competency rather than seniority, with clear role divisions and flexibility through ad-hoc teams formed during critical periods.	Contingency Theory: The flexibility and adaptability of the leadership structure reflect contingency theory, which posits that organisational structures must be flexible to respond to changing conditions (Sarnoto, 2021).	The study provides practical insights into adaptive organisational structures in schools with limited resources, highlighting how competency-based teams enhance operational efficiency and responsiveness.
<b>Program Implementation:</b> Communication is facilitated through multiple channels, ensuring that all stakeholders are informed and involved in	Change Management Theory: The use of multiple communication channels and peer observations aligns with change management theory, which emphasises the	This research contributes to understanding how multi-channel communication and peer observations can sustain program implementation and

the decision-making process. Regular classroom visits and peer observations foster a collaborative environment.	importance of communication redundancy and active participation in change adoption (Ramadhan et al., 2022).	foster a culture of continuous improvement among educators.
<b>Monitoring and Evaluation:</b> The principal utilises structured observations, surveys, and a digital tracking system to monitor progress and ensure continuous improvement, focusing on learning and adapting to challenges.	Double-Loop Learning: The focus on continuous improvement through multiple evaluation tools reflects double-loop learning, where organisations not only correct deviations but also modify underlying processes based on new insights (Argyris & Schön, 1978).	The study introduces a practical model of monitoring and evaluation for rural schools, demonstrating how simple yet effective systems can drive ongoing improvement by emphasizing learning and adaptation.

Source: Data Collection, 2025

## CONCLUSION

This study explores the leadership strategies employed by the principal of SDN 2 Menoro in improving the quality of education at the school. The research reveals that the principal's approach is multifaceted, involving participatory strategic planning, a competency-based organisational structure, effective program implementation, and a robust monitoring and evaluation system. These strategies collectively contribute to a continuous improvement cycle, demonstrating that even in resource-constrained environments, effective leadership can drive meaningful educational advancements. The involvement of teachers, school committee members, and students in the planning and evaluation processes ensures that the strategies are contextually relevant and tailored to meet the school's specific needs.

However, this study has limitations, notably its single-site focus and the short data collection period of six months, which may not capture the long-term dynamics or broader applicability of the findings. Future research is recommended to expand the scope by conducting multi-case studies across different educational contexts, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of the transferability of the leadership strategies. Additionally, longitudinal studies are necessary to evaluate the sustainability of these strategies over time and to assess their impact on measurable student outcomes. Finally, future studies should incorporate mixed methods or quantitative approaches to test the relationship between leadership practices and academic achievement empirically.

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