Leadership and management practices in enhancing educational services: a case study of a faith-based school in Madiun, East Java, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Leadership and management are pivotal in enhancing service quality within faith-based educational institutions. This study examines how leadership and management synergy improves school services in a faith-based educational institution in Madiun, East Java. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach, data were collected through interviews, observations, and document analysis. The findings reveal that effective leadership fosters collaboration among stakeholders, optimizes resource allocation, and implements innovative educational strategies that enhance interdisciplinary learning and student engagement. The school also emphasizes character education to support holistic student development, integrates digital tools to modernize teaching practices, and adopts adaptive assessment strategies to ensure comprehensive evaluation of student competencies. Furthermore, the dual governance system, blending religious identity with national educational standards, highlights the importance of adaptive leadership in maintaining institutional balance. Challenges identified include disparities in resource allocation, scalability of character development programs, and uneven implementation of technology integration. These findings offer a framework for other faith-based institutions to enhance service quality by prioritizing collaborative leadership, professional development, and sustainable management practices. This research contributes valuable insights into effective leadership models in the context of faith-based education and provides actionable recommendations for achieving long-term excellence in service delivery.

1. Introduction

Education plays a pivotal role in shaping individuals and society, and faith-based schools hold a unique position in this landscape. These institutions aim to integrate academic excellence with moral guidance, creating a dual framework that requires skillful navigation [1]. In the context of Indonesia, faith-based schools have historically played a crucial role in bridging education with cultural and spiritual enrichment, especially in diverse communities [1]. The success of these faith-based schools, however, hinges on the quality of their leadership and management, which together drive the provision of effective school services. This study delves into the intricate relationship between leadership and management in faith-based schools, focusing on how this synergy contributes to service quality in one such institution in Madiun, East Java. Faith-based schools face distinct operational dynamics that set them apart from

public and secular institutions. While their mission to combine academic excellence with moral guidance appeals to diverse communities, achieving this mission often presents challenges. The dual-governance model, where these schools must comply with both religious and governmental authorities, adds layers of complexity. Adapting the national curriculum while preserving religious doctrines requires nuanced leadership and dynamic management [1]–[4]. To address this gap in understanding, the study explores the practices that ensure both effective service delivery and the preservation of institutional identity in a faith-based school in Madiun, East Java [1]–[3]. The Indonesian education system is defined by its diversity, encompassing both public and private institutions. Within the private sector, faith-based schools play a critical role in expanding access to education, particularly in rural and underserved areas [5]. Despite their vital contribution, the consistency of service quality among these schools remains uneven. Accreditation data from 2020 highlights this contrast, with 35% of faith-based schools in East Java achieving the highest "A" rating from the National Accreditation Board, reflecting strong leadership and effective resource management [6]. Conversely, a 2018 report by the Ministry of Education revealed that 40% of rural faith-based schools failed to meet minimum educational standards due to inadequate infrastructure, limited teacher training, and inconsistent governance structures [5].

The disparities in service quality among faith-based schools are influenced by varying levels of resources and support. Schools located in urban areas or those affiliated with larger religious organizations often benefit from better funding, access to professional development for teachers, and robust infrastructure, allowing them to provide higher-quality education [7]. In contrast, rural faith-based schools frequently face resource limitations, resulting in inadequate facilities, undertrained teachers, and fragmented management. These challenges underscore the importance of strategic leadership and resource optimization in ensuring consistent quality across faith-based institutions. While existing literature has extensively examined leadership and management practices in public schools, the specific context of faith-based schools remains underexplored. Most studies focus on isolated metrics, such as teacher performance [8] or academic outcomes in private institutions [9], without addressing the broader ecosystem of leadership and management that supports these results. This gap highlights the need to investigate how leadership and management practices interact to sustain high-quality education in faith-based schools, particularly in diverse and resource-constrained environments. As societal expectations of education evolve, the role of faith-based schools becomes even more significant. Parents increasingly demand institutions that offer a holistic education—integrating rigorous academics with moral and spiritual grounding [10], [11]. Faith-based schools are well-positioned to meet these demands, but their ability to do so depends heavily on the effectiveness of their leadership and management structures. Principals and administrators must not only foster collaboration among teachers, parents, and the community but also align their operational strategies with the school's mission. Effective management ensures the availability of resources and the smooth functioning of the institution, while visionary leadership inspires and unites stakeholders toward shared goals [12], [13].

However, the processes that enable such synergy are not well-documented. Theoretical frameworks often lack specificity in addressing the unique challenges and opportunities faced by faith-based schools, particularly in balancing religious identity with academic excellence [8]. Empirical studies, while abundant in Western contexts, rarely explore the Indonesian setting, where cultural and religious diversity adds additional layers of complexity [14]. Furthermore, practical applications of leadership and management strategies in faith-based institutions remain underexplored, leaving a gap in actionable insights for practitioners. This research aims to address these gaps by examining how leadership and management structures interact to sustain high-quality education in faith-based schools in Indonesia. This research responds to these gaps by examining a faith-based school in Madiun, East Java, as a case study. The institution represents a microcosm of the challenges and opportunities faced by faith-based schools in Indonesia. By focusing on this specific context, the study aims to provide a deeper understanding of how leadership and management interact to shape service quality. Through qualitative methods, the research gathers insights from a range of stakeholders, including principals, teachers, students, and parents, offering a multidimensional perspective on the factors influencing school services. The findings shed light on the unique dynamics of faith-based schools, highlighting both their strengths and areas for improvement. This study goes

beyond identifying challenges; it also uncovers strategies that enable faith-based schools to navigate their complex operating environments effectively. For instance, it examines how schools can harmonize the requirements of religious foundations and government mandates, ensuring compliance without compromising their core values. Additionally, it explores how leadership fosters a culture of collaboration, motivating staff and engaging the community to support the school's mission. By focusing on these dynamics, the research offers practical insights that are both locally relevant and globally applicable to similar institutions.

The broader implications of this research extend beyond the immediate context of the selected school. Faith-based schools worldwide operate within diverse cultural and regulatory frameworks, but they share common challenges related to balancing academic rigor with moral and spiritual guidance [1], [15], [16]. The findings of this study contribute to the global discourse on educational leadership and management, providing valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and administrators seeking to enhance service quality in faith-based schools. Furthermore, the study emphasizes the importance of a cohesive approach, where leadership inspires and management structures support the shared mission of the institution. By addressing the interaction between leadership and management within a dual-governance framework, this research not only fills a critical gap in the literature but also provides a model for best practices in faith-based education. While the findings are derived from a specific institution, the principles and strategies identified—such as fostering collaboration, aligning operational strategies with institutional missions, and integrating character education with academic rigor—can be adapted to other faith-based schools facing similar challenges. These insights have the potential to guide broader educational frameworks, particularly in culturally diverse contexts where balancing religious identity with academic standards is critical. Furthermore, the study offers practical implications for policymakers by highlighting the need for targeted professional development programs that equip principals and administrators with the skills required to manage dual-governance structures effectively. At the systemic level, these findings could inform the design of accreditation criteria, funding policies, and support mechanisms tailored to the unique needs of faith-based institutions. By contributing to both theoretical and practical discourse, this research aims to reimagine how faith-based schools across different regions can adapt and thrive amidst evolving educational demands, ensuring their continued role as pillars of academic excellence and moral development.

2. Method

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive approach, designed to explore the interplay between leadership and management in enhancing school services within a faith-based educational institution located in Madiun, East Java. The research site is a private school under the management of a religious foundation, chosen for its reputation for delivering high-quality educational services, achieving accreditation, and fostering character and academic development. For instance, the school achieved an "A" accreditation from the National Accreditation Board in 2020 and consistently reported an 85% average score in standardized literacy and numeracy tests over the past three years (https://dapo.kemdikbud.go.id/sekolah). The qualitative approach enables an in-depth exploration of phenomena in their natural context, relying on non-numerical data to uncover patterns, relationships, and insights [17]. To uphold ethical standards, the identity of the institution and participants has been anonymized, and informed consent was obtained from all stakeholders before data collection [18]. The research setting involves both the physical and organizational environment of the school. Observations were conducted in classrooms and communal areas to capture the dynamics of interactions among the principal, teachers, administrative staff, students, and parents. The school's unique integration of religious and educational practices provided a rich context for examining leadership and management strategies [19], [20]. Ethical considerations were paramount throughout the study, ensuring confidentiality, voluntary participation, and respectful engagement with all informants [19], [21], [22]. Participants included the principal, two teachers, two administrative staff members, two students, and two parents, chosen to provide diverse perspectives on the school's operations and services.

Data were collected using a combination of observations, semi-structured interviews, documentation, and complementary quantitative indicators. Observations focused on everyday practices, leadership behaviors, and the implementation of management strategies, providing

real-time insights into the school's operations [23]. Semi-structured interviews allowed for in-depth exploration of participants' experiences and perspectives, covering topics such as the principal's leadership role, teachers' and staff's contributions to management, and stakeholders' perceptions of service quality [24], [25]. Documentation, including school policies, accreditation reports, records of student achievements, and standardized test scores, was analyzed to contextualize and validate findings. For example, literacy scores showed a consistent improvement from 78% to 85% proficiency over three years (2018–2021), aligning with the school's focus on systematic literacy programs. Data collection was iterative, allowing the researcher to refine questions and focus areas based on emerging themes. To ensure the validity and reliability of findings, triangulation was employed. Source triangulation involved cross-verifying information from different participants to identify consistencies and discrepancies [26], [27]. Method triangulation combined data from observations, interviews, documentation, and quantitative indicators to provide a holistic understanding of the research questions [28]–[30]. Time triangulation ensured the consistency of data by capturing information at different points in the academic year [27]. Additionally, peer debriefing and member checking were used to confirm the accuracy and credibility of interpretations, with participants reviewing and validating key findings [31], [32].

Data analysis followed an interactive model, comprising data collection, reduction, display, and conclusion drawing. A key component of this process was constant comparison, where data were continuously reviewed and compared throughout the analysis process to refine emerging themes and validate findings. For example, after identifying initial patterns such as "collaborative leadership" and "resource optimization" from interviews, these themes were cross-checked with data from observations and school documents, such as meeting minutes and policy guidelines. Discrepancies—such as differing perspectives on decision-making processes—were addressed by revisiting raw data or seeking clarification from participants in follow-up interviews. During the conclusion-drawing phase, progressive validation was employed by presenting preliminary findings to participants and educational management experts. Their feedback informed the refinement of themes and ensured alignment with the research context. This process was also supported by member checking, allowing participants to confirm the accuracy of interpretations based on their input. By maintaining this cycle of comparison and validation, the study ensured that findings were comprehensive, credible, and reflective of the complex dynamics of the faith-based school environment.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. School Services

Interviews revealed that the school's services in literacy and numeracy were effective and well-structured. Teachers highlighted consistent literacy activities, such as dedicated reading sessions every morning, and numeracy sessions embedded in project-based learning. One teacher noted, "Students' literacy and numeracy skills are reinforced through systematic and engaging routines." Observations confirmed these claims, showcasing active student participation in reading and problem-solving activities. Students demonstrated consistent improvements in literacy and numeracy competencies, supported by projects integrating real-world applications. Documented evidence, such as classroom activities and student projects, further substantiated these efforts. Character education was emphasized through the "6S" framework, which includes Smile, Greet, Salute, Politeness, Courtesy, and Patience. One teacher highlighted,

> "*The cultivation of good character among students can be demonstrated by practicing serviam values and serving as character ambassadors each month. It can also be reflected in applying good character at school through the 6S framework (Smile, Greet, Salute, Politeness, Courtesy, Patience).*"

Observations and documentation revealed well-organized programs, such as role-playing and mentorship sessions, designed to instill these values in students. Observations and documentation revealed well-organized programs, such as role-playing and mentorship sessions, designed to instill these values in students. In the area of teaching services, interviews with school leaders and teachers revealed regular evaluations to ensure pedagogical

competence. These evaluations focused on specific competencies, including lesson planning, classroom management, differentiated instruction, and the integration of technology in teaching. Teachers reported that assessments were conducted through classroom observations, self-assessments, and peer evaluations, which were then followed by constructive feedback sessions. One principal stated, "Continuous evaluations and training are vital to maintaining high teaching standards." The training sessions provided were tailored to address the needs identified during these evaluations. For example, workshops on project-based learning (PBL) equipped teachers with strategies to design interdisciplinary projects, while sessions on digital literacy enhanced their ability to integrate multimedia tools into lessons. Peer-learning opportunities, such as collaborative lesson study sessions, enabled teachers to share best practices and refine their instructional approaches. The effectiveness of these initiatives was measured through several methods: classroom observations to monitor the application of new strategies, student performance data (*e.g.*, improved engagement and test scores), and teacher self-reports on their professional growth. Observations supported these findings, showcasing meetings where teachers received actionable feedback on their performance. Participation in external workshops and seminars further highlighted a commitment to professional growth. These practices aligned with the school's objective to ensure pedagogical and professional excellence, as evidenced by improvements in both teaching quality and student outcomes.

The school effectively implemented the Merdeka Curriculum, integrating project-based approaches such as the "Project of Entrepreneurship" (POE) to encourage interdisciplinary learning. Interviews with teachers emphasized the positive impact of these initiatives on student engagement. A teacher explained, "The POE framework not only enhances academic learning but also fosters creativity and collaboration among students." Observational data demonstrated how the curriculum was delivered through interactive sessions, such as storytelling activities like "DORAMA" (*Dongeng Rabu Pertama*) and outdoor learning programs. These activities aligned with the curriculum's objectives to connect learning with real-life applications and values-based education. However, interviews also revealed disparities in the benefits received by teachers through evaluations and training programs. While most teachers acknowledged improved teaching practices and enhanced skills, some reported challenges in accessing equal opportunities for professional development. For instance, senior teachers with additional administrative responsibilities often struggled to participate fully in training sessions due to time constraints. Similarly, some younger teachers expressed a need for more targeted support in integrating project-based learning into their classrooms. Additionally, logistical barriers such as limited availability of trainers and uneven access to resources, such as digital tools for implementing interactive learning, were noted. These challenges occasionally created inconsistencies in the application of training outcomes across classrooms. Despite these obstacles, the school demonstrated a commitment to addressing these gaps through mentorship programs and peer-to-peer learning initiatives, aiming to ensure that all teachers could benefit equally from professional development opportunities.

The use of teaching materials was noted as a strength of the school. Teachers described the materials as well-structured and aligned with learning objectives. Interviews revealed that students found lessons easier to comprehend due to the clarity and relevance of the materials provided. A student shared, "Our learning experience is more enjoyable and effective thanks to the engaging teaching materials." Observational data corroborated this, with teachers utilizing books, worksheets, and multimedia resources during lessons. Documentation highlighted examples of student projects and classroom activities demonstrating the application of these materials. The integration of media and technology was a significant aspect of the school's services. Teachers frequently used multimedia tools, including videos, animations, and presentations, to enhance student engagement and understanding. A teacher remarked, "Digital tools allow us to present concepts in a more interactive and visually appealing way." Observation of classrooms showed widespread use of digital resources, such as LCD projectors and educational videos, to supplement traditional teaching methods. Examples of lessons facilitated through these technologies emphasized the school's efforts to modernize its teaching practices. In assessment practices, the school implemented Adaptive Competency Measurement (AKM) assessments to evaluate and improve student learning. Teachers emphasized the importance of providing additional support, such as practice sessions and guidance, to familiarize students with AKM formats. One teacher noted:

> "*As educators, we have allocated special additional hours specifically for all fifth-grade students to familiarize themselves with solving AKM problems. These sessions are designed not only to improve their competence in handling various question formats but also to build their confidence in approaching assessments with a strategic mindset. By integrating problem-solving exercises into these additional hours, we ensure students are equipped with both technical skills and the resilience needed to tackle adaptive assessments effectively.*"

This information aligns with the findings from observations, which showed active participation in these preparatory sessions, and documentation reflected consistent efforts to integrate AKM into the school's evaluation framework. This approach demonstrates the school's commitment to maintaining high standards in assessment and learning outcomes. The findings highlight a well-coordinated and structured approach to literacy and numeracy development, reflecting the school's commitment to foundational academic excellence. The systematic morning reading sessions and numeracy integration into project-based learning are consistent with constructivist theories of education, which emphasize active and contextualized learning experiences. These initiatives, validated through classroom observations and student projects, illustrate how experiential learning fosters cognitive and practical skill development. This aligns with the research which highlights that project-based activities not only enhance skill acquisition but also promote higher-order thinking abilities [33], [34]. The visual evidence of students engaging in real-world applications substantiates the claim that these methodologies prepare students for complex problem-solving tasks [35], [36]. The implementation of the "6S" character education framework further demonstrates the school's holistic approach to student development. As depicted in role-playing and mentorship sessions, students are provided with practical avenues to internalize values such as politeness and patience (see Fig. 1). This resonates with research which argue that character education is most effective when embedded in relatable, experiential contexts [37], [38]. However, while these methods yield observable behavioral improvements, the resource-intensive nature of such programs may limit scalability. This is particularly critical in contexts where mentorship resources are constrained, necessitating alternative strategies such as peer-led mentorship or digital character education tools [39]–[41].

Fig. 1. Students' activities during the First Wednesday Storytelling Session (DORAMA).

The adoption of the Merdeka Curriculum, particularly through initiatives like POE and DORAMA, underscores the school's innovative pedagogical practices. These approaches not only align with interdisciplinary and inquiry-based learning principles but also resonate with contemporary educational models emphasizing student agency and creativity. Observations of DORAMA storytelling sessions reveal an engaging, student-centered dynamic that connects theoretical learning to practical applications. This aligns with research results which emphasize the role of narrative in fostering empathy and critical thinking [42], [43]. Nonetheless, the sustainability of such activities depends heavily on teacher readiness and the availability of supporting resources. Regular professional development to equip educators with the skills needed for these methodologies is imperative for ensuring consistency and effectiveness.

The integration of multimedia and digital tools into teaching practices is another significant strength of the school. By leveraging technologies such as videos, animations, and educational software, the school modernizes traditional teaching methods, enhancing student engagement and accessibility. Several research support this, indicating that multimedia resources bridge learning gaps by presenting complex concepts in visually comprehensible formats [44], [45]. However, as evidenced by observational disparities in technology usage among classrooms, the success of digital integration hinges on equitable access to training and resources. Institutional efforts should therefore focus on minimizing these inconsistencies by standardizing professional development and resource allocation to ensure all educators are equally equipped to harness digital tools effectively. The school's commitment to high standards in assessment practices, particularly through AKM integration, is noteworthy. By providing targeted preparatory sessions for fifth-grade students, the school addresses both technical skill development and confidence-building in tackling adaptive assessments. This dual focus is aligned with global best practices emphasizing formative assessment as a tool for fostering learner adaptability and resilience [46]–[48]. However, such preparatory sessions demand sustained effort and coordination among educators, raising questions about the scalability of these interventions. Balancing rigorous assessment preparation with broader instructional objectives remains a critical area for strategic focus.

3.2. School Management

Effective school leadership is a cornerstone of organizational success, and this is exemplified through a meticulous approach to planning, organizing, actuating, and supervising educational and administrative processes. In a faith-based educational institution, the principal's leadership creates a cohesive framework that integrates curriculum innovation, resource management, and professional development, ensuring optimal learning environments for students. Through interviews, observations, and documentation, it becomes evident that the principal's strategic planning emphasizes both academic excellence and operational efficiency. This synthesis of visionary leadership and practical execution is reflected in every aspect of school management, from curriculum implementation to performance evaluations, fostering a dynamic and supportive culture that empowers educators and enhances educational outcomes. The principal explained,

> "*In implementing the Merdeka Curriculum, the principal plays a role in driving student-centered learning processes and granting autonomy to educators and educational staff. The principal's role in curriculum development focuses on the implementation of curriculum documents, emphasizing the alignment between teaching guidelines and systems to achieve optimal outcomes.*"

The school's planning processes reflect a well-coordinated approach toward curriculum development and resource management. In curriculum planning, the principal has effectively implemented the Merdeka Curriculum, emphasizing a student-centered learning approach. Interviews highlighted that the principal actively guides curriculum development to integrate teaching guidelines with systems that optimize learning outcomes. A Grade 5 teacher shared, "The role of the principal in curriculum development focuses on implementing curriculum documents, linking teaching guidelines to systems for better results." Observations in classroom activities supported this statement, as demonstrated by a science lesson where students used mirrors and flashlights to explore concepts and conducting ICT-based information searches using computers connected to the internet. (see. Fig.2). This alignment of leadership with pedagogical practices showcases the school's commitment to fostering an engaging and effective learning environment.

In terms of physical and financial resource planning, the school has established a systematic approach by appointing a coordinator for facilities and infrastructure. This role ensures that the procurement and maintenance of resources are well-managed. The principal explained during an interview, "The school's infrastructure coordinator ensures that maintenance and procurement are effectively managed." Observations confirmed this through visible improvements, such as the renovation of basketball and volleyball courts, reflecting the school's commitment to creating conducive learning environments. The organizational aspect of school management involves the effective delegation of responsibilities and the establishment of a structured framework to support the staff. The principal has delegated administrative tasks

efficiently, ensuring smooth operations across various school domains. This was affirmed in interviews, with the Head of Administration stating, "Administrative matters are centralized, ensuring smooth operations across all domains." Observations also highlighted regular meetings where the principal assigned tasks to teachers and administrative staff. A clear organizational structure has further streamlined the school's operations, enabling educators and staff to perform their roles effectively. Interviews and observations revealed that the structure supports collaboration, ensuring responsibilities align with individual expertise. A Grade 5 teacher remarked, "A clear organizational structure facilitates the execution of roles effectively." This structured approach is depicted in the school's organizational chart, which provides a comprehensive overview of responsibilities.

Fig. 2. Students search for information using computers connected to the internet.

The actuating aspect of management focuses on motivating and guiding staff to achieve educational goals. The principal plays a pivotal role in classroom management, offering consistent guidance, monitoring, and evaluation to ensure quality learning experiences. Interviews revealed that the principal frequently observes classes, provides constructive feedback, and supports teachers in addressing challenges. This proactive approach is reflected in activities where the principal interacts with staff to review and improve teaching practices. Teacher performance development is another critical component of the actuating aspect. The principal facilitates professional growth through training sessions and a supportive work environment. Teachers acknowledged the principal's efforts to create opportunities for skill enhancement. One teacher shared, "The principal's support in professional development greatly motivates us to excel in our roles." Observations captured instances of collaborative training sessions aimed at fostering professional growth and improving teaching strategies. Supervision at the school focuses on enhancing efficiency and evaluating performance to maintain high educational standards. The principal has implemented measures to improve work effectiveness among educators and administrative staff. These measures include setting clear performance standards, conducting regular evaluations, and providing actionable feedback. Interviews highlighted efforts to establish a disciplined and professional work culture, supported by periodic reviews of staff performance. Observations of monitoring sessions further substantiated these findings, as shown in a staff meeting to discuss performance objectives. In addition to improving work efficiency, the principal oversees regular evaluations of teacher and staff performance. These evaluations identify areas for improvement and promote continuous professional growth. Interviews with teachers revealed that the evaluations incorporate self-assessments and feedback sessions, fostering accountability and motivation. A Grade 6 teacher noted.

> "*The school principal has carried out their role as a supervisor to monitor the pedagogical abilities of teachers at the school. The principal and the school leadership team evaluate the pedagogical capabilities of the teachers. Annually, each staff member is required to submit a report and conduct a self-assessment related to their work, which is then submitted to the principal. The principal prepares a DP3 (Employee Performance Assessment Document), which includes*

performance appraisals, evaluations, and motivational steps that every staff member must take to improve their performance. For example, setting performance standards, conducting observations and evaluations, supporting performance improvements, and utilizing evaluation results to enhance the quality of learning at the school."

The findings underscore the critical role of effective leadership in the systematic planning and implementation of educational and administrative processes. The principal's meticulous approach to aligning the Merdeka Curriculum with student-centered pedagogical practices exemplifies a progressive leadership style that bridges policy and classroom application. This alignment, as demonstrated in science lessons where students engage in ICT-based research (Fig. 2), reflects a deliberate effort to foster digital literacy and critical thinking. However, the success of these initiatives depends heavily on continuous teacher training to adapt to evolving technological and pedagogical demands [49]–[51]. The principal's delegation of resource management to a dedicated infrastructure coordinator illustrates an innovative administrative strategy that prioritizes efficiency and sustainability. The renovation of sports facilities, as documented, not only addresses physical resource requirements but also reflects a commitment to holistic student development. Nevertheless, potential disparities in resource allocation, particularly between core academic and extracurricular areas, warrant critical attention. Ensuring equitable distribution across all domains is essential for fostering a well-rounded educational environment [52], [53]. The establishment of a clear organizational structure and effective delegation of responsibilities further highlights the principal's ability to create a cohesive and collaborative work environment. By centralizing administrative processes, as noted in interviews, the principal ensures operational consistency and efficiency. This structured framework, illustrated by the school's organizational chart, facilitates role clarity and accountability among staff members. However, fostering collaboration in hierarchical systems requires consistent communication and periodic reviews to adapt to changing needs and expectations [54].

The principal's emphasis on teacher performance development demonstrates a proactive approach to fostering professional excellence. Regular evaluations and constructive feedback sessions are instrumental in identifying areas for improvement and motivating educators to excel in their roles. Observations of collaborative training sessions validate the efficacy of this strategy. However, the pressure of continuous evaluations, while beneficial for accountability, may inadvertently create stress among staff. Ensuring a balance between rigorous standards and professional autonomy is crucial for sustaining a positive work culture and preventing burnout [55], [56]. The principal's supervisory role, particularly in monitoring pedagogical competencies, highlights their commitment to maintaining high educational standards. By implementing measures such as the DP3 performance review system, the principal fosters a culture of accountability and continuous improvement. Integrating self-assessment into these reviews adds a layer of empowerment that encourages educators to take ownership of their professional growth. This balance of external evaluation and self-reflection represents a best practice in fostering sustainable professional development [57], [58].

3.3. School Leadership

The study highlights the exceptional leadership demonstrated by the principal of a faith-based educational institution, showcasing their ability to integrate managerial, leadership, administrative, motivational, educational, and innovative roles. Through detailed interviews, observations, and documentation, the principal's transformative impact on the institution's development and service quality becomes evident. As a manager, the principal excels in strategic planning, organizing, mobilizing, and supervising various school programs. These efforts are characterized by inclusive collaboration with teachers, staff, parents, and the broader community. Observations reveal active participation in program development and execution, with tangible improvements in teaching practices and student learning outcomes. The adoption of interactive technologies has further enhanced classroom engagement, emphasizing the principal's commitment to maintaining instructional quality and fostering innovative learning environments. Regarding these learning innovations, interviews with two different teachers provided the following insights:

Teacher 1:

"*The principal has effectively carried out their role as a manager, as evidenced by planning, organizing, mobilizing, and supervising the development of all school programs while receiving input from all stakeholders, including staff, parents, students, the school committee, and community leaders.*"

Teacher 2:

"*To develop school programs aimed at improving service quality, the principal undertakes planning, organizing, mobilizing, and supervising the creation of all school programs. To ensure progress in service quality at this institution, the principal involves all members of the school community in program development.*"

The principal's leadership extends to inspiring a shared vision within the school community. By mobilizing resources and empowering teachers, they have successfully introduced innovative curriculum approaches, including Project-Based Learning (POE) and DORAMA, which prioritize student-centered education. The alignment of school activities with the institution's vision and mission is reflected in achievements such as high accreditation scores and awards for academic excellence. These accomplishments underscore the principal's ability to motivate and unite the community toward common goals. In their administrative capacity, the principal demonstrates adaptability and resourcefulness by implementing creative policies and efficient management systems. Observations of well-maintained infrastructure and effective delegation processes highlight their commitment to operational excellence. Renovation projects and strategic resource allocation further underscore their proactive approach to creating an optimal educational environment. These efforts are complemented by a data-driven management style that ensures the institution adapts to evolving societal demands while maintaining a focus on quality education. Motivating educators and staff is another area where the principal's leadership shines. By fostering a culture of continuous professional development, the principal has empowered teachers to embrace modern methodologies and enhance their instructional effectiveness. Workshops and training sessions provide opportunities for creative exploration and innovation, which are integral to sustaining educational quality. The principal's emphasis on teamwork, performance evaluation, and professional discipline has cultivated a productive and supportive work culture, strengthening the institution's overall performance.

As an educator, the principal inspires creativity and professional excellence among the teaching community. Their encouragement for teachers to pursue advanced learning opportunities and adopt cutting-edge strategies ensures that the institution remains a leader in educational innovation. Recognizing and celebrating creativity among staff further motivates them to uphold high standards in their roles. The principal's innovative mindset is also evident in their efforts to modernize teaching practices. By integrating digital tools and interactive resources, they have redefined the learning experience, significantly enhancing student engagement and collaboration (see Fig.3). The principal's leadership extends beyond the internal workings of the school, cultivating strong, harmonious relationships with parents, committees, and the broader community. Initiatives such as outreach programs, charity events, and collaborative school activities demonstrate a holistic leadership approach that aligns with the institution's mission and values. These efforts establish the school as a benchmark for excellence in faith-based education. By fostering a shared sense of purpose, the principal creates a network of stakeholders who actively contribute to the school's development. However, ensuring the sustainability of such engagement requires consistent and transparent communication to balance diverse stakeholder priorities with institutional goals [59]–[61]. The principal's ability to integrate managerial, administrative, and motivational roles illustrates a comprehensive and inclusive leadership style. The collaborative frameworks established within the school community underscore the importance of participatory leadership. This approach builds trust and cultivates a sense of collective ownership among stakeholders, as evidenced by the alignment between the school's vision and its daily practices. While highly effective, these frameworks necessitate robust communication strategies to ensure alignment across diverse perspectives, a challenge that must be addressed to maintain long-term cohesion and operational efficiency [62], [63].

Fig. 3. The digital ecosystem in learning utilizing various ICT devices

The implementation of innovative curriculum approaches, such as Project-Based Learning (POE) and DORAMA, highlights the principal's commitment to fostering creativity and interdisciplinary learning. These methods actively engage students, enhancing their critical thinking skills and connecting theoretical knowledge with practical applications. Observations and documented high accreditation scores validate the success of these initiatives. However, the reliance on teacher preparedness and institutional support underscores the need for sustained professional development. Addressing the potential for teacher burnout in such demanding pedagogical environments requires workload management strategies and additional institutional support to maintain effectiveness [64], [65]. The principal's data-driven management style and strategic resource allocation reflect their commitment to both academic and extracurricular excellence. Renovation projects and infrastructure development, including the improvement of sports facilities, demonstrate a focus on creating a conducive learning environment. While these improvements significantly enhance institutional capacity, disparities in resource allocation across different school programs highlight a need for greater equity. Ensuring that both academic and extracurricular areas receive proportional support is essential for fostering a holistic educational experience that prioritizes all facets of student growth [66]. The principal's emphasis on professional development fosters a culture of innovation and continuous learning among educators. Through workshops, collaborative training sessions, and regular performance evaluations, teachers are equipped with modern methodologies to enhance instructional quality. Observations of these professional development activities validate their role in improving teacher competence and motivation. However, the intensity of performance evaluations must be balanced with efforts to maintain teacher morale. Providing teachers with the autonomy to explore creative approaches while ensuring accountability is essential for sustaining a positive work culture [67], [68].

The integration of digital tools into teaching practices, as depicted in Fig. 3, illustrates the principal's forward-thinking approach to modernizing education. Multimedia tools such as animations and videos enhance engagement and cater to diverse learning styles, bridging traditional and contemporary pedagogical methods. However, the uneven implementation of technology across classrooms reveals the need for equitable teacher training and access to digital resources. Ensuring consistent technological integration and providing all educators with upskilling opportunities are crucial for maintaining the momentum of educational innovation [69]. The principal's outreach efforts, including community engagement programs and collaborative activities, demonstrate their commitment to creating an inclusive and resilient school environment. These initiatives not only enhance the school's social capital but also reinforce its identity as a collaborative community hub. Visual documentation of these programs highlights their success in fostering trust and engagement among stakeholders. To sustain such initiatives, structured feedback mechanisms and clear alignment of goals between the school and its stakeholders are necessary. This ensures that the school's community engagement efforts continue to align with both institutional objectives and broader community needs [60], [70], [71].

4. Conclusion

This study highlights the crucial interplay between leadership and management in enhancing the quality of services in faith-based educational institutions. The findings demonstrate that effective leadership, combined with robust management practices, fosters

collaboration among stakeholders, optimizes resource allocation, and supports both academic and non-academic outcomes. By aligning teaching practices with interdisciplinary and values-based education, the institution has successfully promoted holistic development and strengthened its operational framework. The study also underscores the importance of continuous professional development in equipping teachers to adopt innovative and student-centered pedagogical approaches. Regular evaluations, training sessions, and stakeholder engagement have proven critical in maintaining high standards of teaching and learning. However, challenges such as resource disparities, uneven adoption of technology, and risks of teacher burnout highlight the need for more equitable and sustainable management practices. These findings have significant implications for broader educational contexts. Policymakers could use these insights to shape national education strategies that support faith-based institutions in balancing their missions with academic excellence. By developing guidelines for governance systems and resource distribution, strategies can be designed to ensure that faith-based schools operate effectively within diverse socio-cultural landscapes. Additionally, the study offers practical contributions to leadership training programs, emphasizing the need to build competencies in adaptive leadership, strategic resource management, and collaborative decision-making. These programs can empower school leaders to address complex challenges and create environments conducive to educational innovation and excellence. Beyond faith-based institutions, the strategies identified in this study are relevant to other schools facing similar challenges, particularly in diverse or resource-limited settings. The focus on aligning educational practices with contextual realities provides a scalable model for enhancing teaching, learning, and organizational effectiveness. In conclusion, this research contributes to the broader discourse on sustainable education by highlighting the vital role of leadership and management in creating resilient educational institutions. Future research should explore the long-term impact of these practices, investigate strategies for equitable resource allocation, and develop scalable models to address the dynamic needs of diverse educational settings.

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