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Educational Leadership and Management in Diverse and Complex Situations: Opportunities and Challenges in Nepal and Indonesia

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Abstract

This study presents a comparative analysis of educational leadership and management practices in Nepal and Indonesia, systematically reviewing 48 articles to examine how diverse socio-cultural, institutional, and political contexts influence leadership effectiveness in resource-constrained settings. The research investigates the adoption and outcomes of models like transformational, visionary, servant, and spiritual leadership across both nations.

Findings indicate that although styles such as transformational and distributed leadership positively affect teacher motivation, school culture, and innovation, their practical implementation is hindered by significant systemic barriers. These obstacles include pervasive bureaucratic centralization, recurrent political interference in educational affairs, and a severe lack of structured professional development opportunities for leaders. The research also reveals a critical gap in validated, context-specific leadership frameworks, particularly within vocational and religious educational institutions in both countries.

Leadership efficacy is highly context-dependent: in Nepal. In ethical and affiliative leadership, often employed by female principals, fosters strong relational environments. In contrast, Indonesian leadership practices are deeply guided by local wisdom, emphasizing ethical and participatory governance. The study ultimately highlights a persistent research-practice gap, noting a lack of empirical evidence linking current leadership models directly to long-term student learning outcomes or institutional development. It concludes by advocating a shift away from procedural managerialism towards a morally grounded, pedagogically responsive, and culturally informed approach.

Keywords: *comparative analysis, educational leadership, Indonesia, management practices, Nepal, policy recommendations, transformational leadership*

Introduction

People and systems that are already in place need to keep interacting with each other for leadership and management to work. Teaching management is important for improving lessons, maintaining classroom order, and shaping a school's culture. It is the best way to teach kids. The school's overall philosophy, including its spirit and approach to learning, gives teachers direction, goals, and a sense of purpose that helps them run their classes (Clarke & O'Donoghue, 2015). Schools are the main places where people learn about and change their culture.

The best way to do this is through education. Schools need strong leaders and managers to run well and succeed. Both are important skills and types of art. Management is about getting things done quickly, while leadership is about ensuring the right goals are being pursued. School principals need to be good at both to handle many tricky situations (Adhikari, 2025). In today's world, we support a school governance model that includes principals, teachers, students, parents, communities, and experts. This model encourages scientific, democratic, and distributed leadership.

The main goal of schools is to improve learning. The main goal of this effort is teaching, and the classroom is where most learning and growth occurs. This is why the principal needs to lead and manage teaching (Zhang, 2025). The best places to learn things that will help you for the rest of your life are schools and colleges.

Many schools and colleges in Nepal and Indonesia are having trouble finding qualified, knowledgeable school leaders because many principals quit their jobs.In the complex world of schools, leaders face many challenges when trying to meet the needs of students from diverse backgrounds, and they often lack the resources to do so. They need to address social and economic problems, such as poverty and cultural biases, while also strengthening the community.

At the same time, school leaders need to find a balance between being good at teaching and doing a lot of other things, such as managing the school and helping teachers learn new skills and overcome their resistance to new methods. They also have to deal with the different expectations of different stakeholders by being open, having limited power and resources (especially in community schools), and making it hard to implement culturally responsive leadership that works for all students. In the end, outstanding leadership in this situation means being able to change and adapt to the problems and unknowns that come with the education system.

Gu (2014) cites Suhomlinsky and Tao Xingzhi, who said that a good principal makes a good school. They strongly supported and expanded on this idea. He said many times at national conferences for middle and primary school principals in 2004 and 2005 that the principal is the school's heart and soul and its standard-bearer.

He also said that the principal's leadership is at the heart of everything, from the school's growth goals to how it uses its resources (people, money, and society). He also talked about how important a principal's personality is for running a school. He said that a principal's "personality charm, noble character, rich knowledge, educational wisdom, and a friendly and open working style" (Gu, 2008, p. 1) make them a "standard conveyor and spiritual leader."

There is significant interest in educational leadership in the early 21st century because people firmly believe that effective leadership directly impacts student and school success. People around the world, including in Nepal and Indonesia, agree that schools need strong leaders and managers to provide students with the best education. As the global economy improves, governments are beginning to realise that their people are their most valuable asset.

To stay ahead of the competition, they need to hire teachers who are dedicated to training a highly skilled workforce. On the other hand, these teachers need help from other senior and middle managers and direction from great principals. There are many different ideas about what educational leadership and management are, and people still do not agree on what they really are (Adhikari, 2025). A significant question concerns its status as an independent discipline or merely

a subset of management studies (Baraily & Rai, 2022). We have always believed that ideas from other fields can be helpful. However, educational leadership and management should always be focused on the goals of education, which are essential to running a school. If there is not a clear and close link between purpose and management, there is a danger of "managerialism," which puts procedures ahead of core educational goals and values (Bush, Bell & Middlewood, 2019).

This study aims to investigate the impact of effective leadership and management on enhancing the quality of teaching and the school culture. It will examine the problems that school leaders in countries such as Nepal and Indonesia face and how a principal's leadership style affects student success, school growth, and resource use.

It also wants to look into the balance between administrative duties and instructional leadership, the effect of socio-economic factors and community involvement on school leadership, and the connection between educational leadership and broader management theories to avoid "managerialism" while keeping core educational goals in mind.

The research aims to identify the most effective leadership strategies, examine the challenges associated with recruitment, assess the impact of principals on school culture and academic performance, analyse resource management in various contexts, evaluate stakeholder communication, compare diverse leadership models, and delineate the distinctions between educational leadership and general management theories to ensure alignment with educational objectives.

Research objectives

How do various leadership methodologies and styles affect educational quality, institutional culture, and student performance, especially in resource-limited contexts such as Nepal and Indonesia?

What are the key challenges affecting leadership effectiveness in developing educational systems, and how do these impact school development and resource management strategies?

How do stakeholder expectations, community engagement, and different governance models affect their effectiveness?

How can educational leaders balance their administrative duties with their role as instructional leaders while also using culturally responsive practices and avoiding managerialism to keep the focus on education?

Method

We utilised a literature review to gather secondary data from various sources for our research. We searched for articles related to the topic of this study using specific keywords. We collected 48 articles on how to lead and run schools in Nepal and Indonesia across a wide range of complex situations. Before we started collecting data, our team from Nepal and Indonesia met on Zoom to narrow down the search criteria.

We looked for relevant articles using a range of online sources, journals, and Google Scholar. Our Indonesian scholars from Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta found 24 articles from different websites. Oxford College of Engineering and Management in Gaindakot-2, Nepal, also found the exact number of articles. We organized our 48 articles in a specific table format to keep track of the information we needed for further analysis and comparison.

Results

This section discusses the overall results of the articles examined (see Table 1). The results include the table's contents, which examine how important the reviewed articles are for managing and leading education in Nepal and Indonesia, both very different and very complicated places.

Table 1. Summary of the previous studies on education leadership and management in diverse and complex situations between Nepal and Indonesia.

Authors (years)	Topic	Sources	Objectives	Methods	Key results	Research gaps	Keywords
Indrawati, Haryono, Handayani, and Handayani (2022)	BEACCTIVE as an Educational Leadership Model to Create Partnerships with Business and Industry	Journal Cakrawala Pendidikan	To develop and validate a BEACCTIVE model as an educational leadership model to create partnerships with business and industry for vocational high schools	Mixed methods approach	The BEACCTIVE model (building, empowering, actualizing, connecting, and transforming) was validated, emphasizing the importance of communication, collaboration, and evaluation for effective partnerships. It provides a structured framework for leadership and organizational development.	There is no validated leadership framework in Indonesia to guide educational leaders in developing industry partnerships within vocational education. This results in a persistent mismatch between what vocational schools produce and what industries require.	BEACCTIVE model, educational leadership, partnerships, business and industry, vocational high school.
Karim and Sahrodi (2024)	Leader Power of Islamic Higher Education Institutions in Improving the Performance of Human Resources Management	Cogent Arts and Humanities	To analyze the influence of leader power (coercive, reward, legitimate, expert, referent) on the performance of human resources management in Islamic higher education institutions.	Mixed methods approach	Expert power and referent power were found to have a significant positive influence on HRM performance. Coercive, reward, and legitimate power did not significantly influence HRM performance.	Research on the influence of different types of leadership power on human resource practices in Islamic universities is scarce. Additionally, studies rarely consider the unique religious and cultural factors influencing leadership in these institutions.	Leader power, human resources management, Islamic higher education, and performance.
Pratikto, Riantoputra, and Purwanto (2024)	An Exploratory Study on Effective Leadership and Change Management in the Transformation of Indonesian Public Universities Towards World-Class University Status	Cogent Arts and Humanities	To explore effective leadership and change management practices crucial for Indonesian public universities aiming for World-Class University (WCU) status	Qualitative exploratory study (semi-structured interviews).	Identified key leadership attributes (e.g., visionary, collaborative, adaptive) and change management strategies (e.g., clear communication, stakeholder involvement, resource allocation) necessary for successful transformation. Highlighted challenges like resistance to change and resource limitations.	Little empirical research exists on effective leadership strategies for transforming Indonesian public universities into World-Class Universities (WCU). There is also a gap in understanding the localized challenges during such institutional transitions.	Leadership, change management, university transformation, and world-class universities in Indonesia.
Dewantoro et al. (2021)	Liberasi Kepemimpinan Propetik dalam Satuan Sekolah Dasar dan Menengah Muhammadiyah	Millah	To explore and understand the concept and implementation of prophetic leadership liberation within Muhammadiyah basic and secondary schools.	Qualitative research using a phenomenological approach.	Prophetic leadership in Muhammadiyah schools emphasizes moral values, social justice, and educational liberation, all of which are rooted in Islamic teachings. It encourages critical thinking, innovation, and community engagement.	The concept of prophetic leadership, rooted in Islamic teachings, remains underexplored within educational leadership research. The connection between modern leadership theories and Islamic prophetic principles in academic settings needs further investigation.	Prophetic leadership, liberation, Muhammadiyah schools, Islamic education

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Author (Year)	Title	Journal	Objective	Methodology	Results	Gap / Conclusion	Keywords
Lumban Gaol (2021)	School leadership in Indonesia: A systematic literature review	Educational Management Administration & Leadership	To systematically review existing literature on school leadership in Indonesia, identifying prevailing themes, research methods, and findings.	Systematic Literature Review	The results identified various leadership styles (transformational, instructional, visionary), their impacts on school performance, teacher motivation, and student outcomes. Highlighted challenges faced by Indonesian school leaders, such as bureaucracy and limited resources	This study highlights the limited leadership skills among school heads, a lack of research, flawed principal selection processes, and methodological shortcomings like small sample sizes. These issues undermine the quality and generalizability of school leadership research in Indonesia.	School leadership, systematic literature review, educational leadership, and management.
Rahmadani, Hidayat, Syam, and Yunus (2023)	Spiritual Leadership in Educational Organization: A Systematic Literature Review	Journal of Law and Sustainable Development	To synthesize and analyze existing research on spiritual leadership in educational organizations through a systematic literature review	Systematic literature review	Spiritual leadership fosters a positive organizational culture, enhances employee well-being, promotes ethical decision-making, and contributes to improved organizational performance within educational settings.	A more comprehensive understanding of spiritual leadership and its impact on education is needed. Current studies fail to connect theoretical perspectives with real-world educational applications.	Spiritual leadership, educational organization, systematic literature review, spirituality.
Rahman et al. (2025)	Fostering Exemplary Leadership: The Role of Local Wisdom in Cultivating Positive School Climate	WSEAS Transactions on Computer Research	To explore how local wisdom can contribute to fostering exemplary leadership and cultivating a favorable school climate	Qualitative case study approach.	Key Results: Local wisdom (e.g., values, traditions, philosophical principles) can serve as a foundation for ethical leadership, promoting harmony, collaboration, and a supportive learning environment, thereby fostering a favorable school climate.	There is a lack of research linking local cultural wisdom to effective leadership and positive school climates. The role of indigenous knowledge in leadership development also remains underexplored.	Exemplary leadership, local wisdom, favorable school climate, and educational leadership.
Supriadi et al. (2021)	Good School Governance: An Approach to Principals' Decision-Making Quality in Indonesian Vocational Schools	Research in Educational Administration and Leadership	To investigate the influence of sound school governance principles on the quality of principals' decision-making in Indonesian vocational schools	Quantitative approach with a survey method.	Sound school governance principles (transparency, accountability, participation, fairness) significantly and positively influence the quality of principals' decision-making, leading to improved school management.	Empirical evidence is lacking on how good governance impacts principals' decision-making in vocational schools. Studies are needed on how governance frameworks enhance leadership effectiveness.	Good school governance, principals, and decision-making quality in vocational schools in Indonesia.
Puruwita, Jamian & Aziz, (2022)	Instructional Leadership Practices at High-Performing Vocational Schools: Administrators' Vs. Teachers' Perception	Humanities and Social Sciences Letters.	To compare the perceptions of administrators and teachers regarding instructional leadership practices in high-performing vocational schools	Quantitative research using a survey design.	Revealed differences and similarities in perceptions between administrators and teachers regarding instructional leadership practices, particularly in areas like curriculum development, instructional supervision, and professional development.	Disagreements exist between administrators and teachers regarding the effectiveness of instructional leadership in vocational settings. Understanding these perception gaps could improve leadership training and implementation strategies.	Instructional leadership, vocational school, administrators, teachers, and perception.

Author	Research Question/Title	Journal	Objective	Methodology	Findings	Significance/Gap	Keywords
Ripki et al. (2020)	How does transformational leadership among school leaders impact teacher creativity in vocational high schools?	Universal Journal of Educational Research	To examine the impact of transformational leadership practiced by school leaders on teacher creativity in vocational high schools	Quantitative approach using a survey method.	Transformational leadership has a positive and significant impact on teacher creativity. Leaders who inspire, motivate, and intellectually stimulate teachers contribute to a more innovative and creative teaching environment.	Specific empirical evidence on the direct link between transformational leadership and teacher creativity in Indonesian vocational high schools. Applying transformational leadership theory to foster specific teacher outcomes like creativity	Transformational leadership, school leaders, teacher creativity, and vocational high school.
Karim & Sahrodi, (2024).	How do principals act as leaders and managers in boarding and public schools in Indonesia?	Cogent Education	To compare the roles of principals as leaders and managers in both boarding and public schools in Indonesia	Qualitative comparative case study.	Principals in both settings exhibit leadership and managerial roles, but the emphasis and challenges differ. Boarding school principals often have broader oversight (pastoral care, extracurriculars) and deeper involvement in student life, while public school principals focus more on academic and administrative management.	There is no concrete evidence linking transformational leadership to increased creativity among vocational teachers. Applying this theory in such contexts could yield actionable insights for school improvement.	Principals, leadership, management, boarding schools, public schools, Indonesia.
Darmawati (2024)	Study of the Implementation of Visionary Leadership Style in Motivating Culture and Work Commitment of Education Personnel at Doctoral Husni Ingratubun University (Uningrat) in Tual City.	Revista de Gestão Social e Ambiental	To analyze the implementation of visionary leadership style and its impact on motivating culture and work commitment among education personnel at UNINGRAT.	Quantitative approach using a survey method	A visionary leadership style has a significant and positive influence on both the motivating culture and work commitment of educational personnel. Leaders who clearly articulate a vision inspire greater dedication and positive work environments.	This research is limited by its single-institution, quantitative survey approach, which restricts the generalizability of findings and prevents a comprehensive understanding of visionary leadership.	Visionary leadership, motivating culture, work commitment, education personnel, and higher education
Sihombing et al. (2024)	The stagnation of leadership in Catholic religious universities in Indonesia	International Studies in Catholic Education	To explore the factors contributing to the perceived stagnation of leadership in Catholic religious universities in Indonesia.	Qualitative research using interviews	Identified factors such as resistance to change, lack of strategic planning, limited succession planning, bureaucratic hurdles, and a disconnect between leadership and contemporary educational demands as contributors to stagnation.	Catholic universities face leadership stagnation due to specific religious and organizational constraints. Identifying these root issues is crucial for revitalizing leadership in such specialized institutions.	Leadership stagnation, Catholic universities, religious education, and Indonesia.
Lukman (2022)	The Effect of Teacher Collaboration as the Embodiment of Teacher Leadership on Educational Management Students' Critical Thinking Skills	European Journal of Educational Research	To investigate the effect of teacher collaboration, viewed as teacher leadership, on the critical thinking skills of educational management students.	Quantitative research using an experimental design.	Teacher collaboration, when practiced as a form of teacher leadership, has been shown to significantly improve students' critical thinking skills in educational management. Collaborative learning environments foster deeper analytical abilities.	Few studies explore how teacher collaboration (as a form of leadership) enhances students' critical thinking. Empirical data is needed to validate this link in educational settings.	Teacher collaboration, teacher leadership, critical thinking skills, and educational management are taught to students as part of their curriculum.

Author (Year)	Title	Journal	Objective	Method	Findings	Gap / Future Research	Keywords
Wu et al. (2023)	Uncovering patterns of author productivity in educational leadership and management in Indonesia: A bibliometric study using Lotka's law	Record and Library Journal	To analyze patterns of author productivity in educational leadership and management research in Indonesia using Lotka's Law	Quantitative bibliometric study	It revealed that a small number of authors contribute a large proportion of publications, indicating a core group of highly productive researchers in the field. Lotka's law generally applies, with some variations.	A bibliometric analysis of educational leadership research in Indonesia is absent. Applying bibliometric methods could reveal key trends and author productivity in this academic field.	Author productivity, educational leadership, educational management, Indonesia, bibliometric study, Lotka's Law.
Nellitawati, et al (2024)	The influence of instructional leadership and work commitment on teacher performance	Cakrawala Pendidikan: Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan	To examine the influence of instructional leadership and work commitment on teacher performance	Quantitative research using a survey method.	Both instructional leadership and work commitment were found to have a significant and positive influence on teacher performance—effective instructional leaders who foster commitment led to better teaching outcomes.	No empirical studies combine instructional leadership and work commitment as predictors of teacher performance. Research is needed to quantify the combined effect of these factors in Indonesian schools.	Instructional leadership, work commitment, teacher performance, and education.
Subaidi et al. (2023).	Visionary leadership in improving the quality and competitiveness of private Islamic primary schools.	Journal of Governance and Regulation	To analyze the role of visionary leadership in improving the quality and competitiveness of private Islamic primary schools	Qualitative research using a case study approach.	Visionary leadership, characterized by a clear future direction and inspiring communication, played a crucial role in enhancing educational quality, promoting innovation, and increasing the competitiveness of private Islamic primary schools.	There is a need to understand how visionary leadership functions in private Islamic primary schools. This includes challenges related to maintaining quality and competitiveness.	Visionary leadership, quality improvement, competitiveness, and private Islamic primary schools.
Djafri (2025).	Implementing Transglobal Leadership Among Senior High School Principals in the Globalization 4.0 Era: A Merdeka Belajar Perspective During the COVID-19 Pandemic	The International Journal of Educational Organization and Leadership	To explore the implementation of transglobal leadership by senior high school principals, particularly in the context of Globalization 4.0 and the Merdeka Belajar policy during the COVID-19 pandemic	Qualitative approach (Semi-structured interviews).	Principals demonstrated elements of transglobal leadership (e.g., cultural intelligence, global mindset, digital literacy) to navigate the complexities of Globalization 4.0 and adapt to the Merdeka Belajar policy during the pandemic. Challenges included technological readiness and resistance to change.	The application of transglobal leadership amid Merdeka Belajar reforms, COVID-19, and global shifts remains unclear. More research is needed on how leaders adapt during crises in education.	Transglobal leadership, senior high school principals, Globalization 4.0, Merdeka Belajar, COVID-19.
Prasetyo, Budiman and Isa (2021).	Does a higher degree of education affect the performance of healthcare leaders? A systematic review	Bali Medical Journal	To systematically review existing evidence on whether a higher degree of education impacts the performance of healthcare leaders	Systematic Literature Review.	However, a generally positive correlation is suggested between higher education (e.g., master's or doctoral degrees) and improved leadership performance in healthcare settings, particularly in areas such as strategic thinking, decision-making, and organizational outcomes.	Mixed evidence exists on the impact of higher education on leadership in healthcare. Further research is needed to clarify how academic qualifications translate into effective leadership.	Higher education, healthcare leaders, leadership performance, systematic review.

Author	Title	Journal	Objective	Method	Findings	Research Gap	Keywords
Rusdinal et al. (2024)	E-leadership capacity and readiness for change in tackling learning innovation disruption in implementing the Merdeka Belajar policy	Journal Cakrawala Pendidikan	To examine the e-leadership capacity and readiness for change among educational leaders in tackling learning innovation disruption during the implementation of the Merdeka Belajar policy.	Qualitative approach, through interviews and observations	E-leadership capacity, encompassing digital literacy and virtual team management, as well as readiness for change, is essential for educational leaders to effectively manage learning innovation and disruption, particularly under the Merdeka Belajar policy. Challenges include technological infrastructure and the digital divide.	There is a lack of research on the e-leadership skills required for implementing Indonesia's digital education policies. Studies should focus on changing readiness and digital leadership development.	E-leadership, capacity, readiness for change, learning innovation, Merdeka Belajar, digital disruption.
Sasaki et al (2024.	Leadership of school principals for school health implementation among primary schools in Mataram, Indonesia: a qualitative study	Tropical Medicine and Health	To explore the leadership role of school principals in implementing school health programs in primary schools in Mataram, Indonesia	Qualitative approach using in-depth interviews	Principals play a crucial role in facilitating school health programs by providing support, allocating resources, fostering collaboration with local health centers, and promoting a healthy school environment. Challenges include limited funding and a lack of awareness.	On-the-ground leadership practices in primary school health programs are under-researched, particularly in regional contexts. Understanding these practices could inform more effective health initiatives in schools, such as those in Mataram.	School principals, leadership, school health, primary schools, Mataram, Indonesia
Iskandar and Tambunan (2024)	Leadership Transformational College Tall Based on Quality Management in Education Realizing Professional Lecturers in Schools Tall Theology	Journal of Ecohumanism	To analyze the application of transformational leadership based on quality management in education to foster professional lecturers in theology colleges	Qualitative research using a case study approach.	Transformational leadership, when integrated with quality management principles, enables theology colleges to cultivate professional lecturers by emphasizing shared vision, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration, leading to improved educational quality.	There is limited exploration of how transformational leadership and quality management principles combine to enhance lecturer professionalism in theological institutions. Bridging these theories can improve leadership in the field of religious academia.	Transformational leadership, quality management, professional lecturers, theology colleges, and education
Afrianty et al. (2025)	Linking servant leadership and career development to employee voice behavior through engagement and commitment: evidence from State Polytechnics in East Java, Indonesia	Cogent Business & Management,	To examine the mediating roles of engagement and commitment in the relationship between servant leadership, career development, and employee voice behavior in State Polytechnics in East Java.	Quantitative approach using a survey method.	Servant leadership and career development have a positive influence on employee voice behavior, which is mediated by employee engagement and commitment. Leaders who prioritize serving others and fostering career growth empower employees to speak up and take ownership of their professional development.	The relationship between servant leadership, career progression, and employee engagement in polytechnic institutions needs empirical investigation. Understanding how these elements interact can improve institutional culture.	Servant leadership, career development, employee voice behavior, engagement, commitment, State Polytechnics, Indonesia.
Yulia Rachmawati & Santosa (2020)	Principals' managerial competence in actualizing a creative school	Universal Journal of Educational Research	To investigate the managerial competence of principals in actualizing a creative school environment.	Qualitative approach	Principals' managerial competence, including strategic planning, resource management, and organizational skills, is crucial for fostering a creative school environment by providing a supportive structure for innovation and idea generation.	Research is needed on how principals' managerial skills contribute to fostering creative learning environments. Identifying effective practices can help replicate success across schools.	Principals, managerial competence, creative school, and educational leadership.

Adhikari and Saraswati Kendra Nepal (2025)	Educational Leadership and Management in Complex and Diverse Situations (A Case Study of Chitwan).	OCEM Journal of Management, Technology, and Social Sciences	To explore the causes of headteacher attrition in Chitwan	Qualitative approach	Tech access, low motivation, and political pressure are key attrition factors	Limited sample; no mixed methods; excludes stakeholder perspectives	educational leadership, attrition, Chitwan
Dhakal (2025)	Surviving and Thriving in Educational Leadership: Challenges and Coping Strategies of High School Principals in Nepal	European Journal of Educational Management,	To identify challenges and coping strategies of high school principals	Qualitative Approach	Gender bias, resource scarcity, resistance; coping via humility, partnerships	Small and region-limited sample; no longitudinal data; lacks policy linkage	resilience, gender equity, leadership, Nepal
Dhakal, Jones and Lummis (2023)	Leadership as a Challenging Opportunity: Nepali Secondary Principals' Contextual Understandings and Perception of Their Roles	International Journal of Leadership in Education* (ahead of print)	To examine how principals interpret and enact leadership roles	Qualitative approach (Case study; interviews).	Significance of humility, compassion, and leadership as relational concepts	Limited to three principles; lacks quantitative scope	contextual leadership, sociocultural, humility
Khanal, Gaulee & Simpson, (2021)	Higher Education Initiative Challenges Based on Multiple Frames of Leadership: The Case of Nepal Open University	Open Learning: The Journal of Open, Distance and e-Learning	To understand leadership challenges in implementing initiatives at NEU	Qualitative Approach (Semi-structured interview).	Nepal Open University (NOU) has faced financial constraints that have hindered its online learning initiatives. This is exacerbated by faculty members' limited digital teaching experience since 2018, along with operational challenges stemming from the absence of HR structures, bureaucratic delays in program development, and insufficient quality assurance systems. These factors collectively compromise academic standards.	leadership frames, higher education, Open University, Nepal	leadership frames, higher education, Open University, Nepal
Ghimire (2023)	Challenges Facing Women in School Leadership Positions: At Community Schools in Lalitpur, Nepal	Pragyaratna	To explore the experiences of women headteachers	Qualitative approach (In-depth interviews	Cultural, social, and economic barriers; deep bias against female leaders	Small sample, single district; lacks quantitative and comparative data	women's leadership, community schools, gender bias

Author (year)	Title	Journal	Objective	Methodology	Findings	Limitations	Keywords
Rai and Sharma (2024)	Promoting Equity and Inclusivity: Exploring Equitable Leadership Practices in Diverse Nepali Schools	Asia-Pacific Journal of Educational Leadership	To investigate leadership strategies that promote equity and inclusivity	Qualitative approach	Use of culturally responsive methods; community engagement fosters	Little empirical data on long-term outcomes; lacks statistical backing	equitable leadership, diversity, inclusion, cultural responsiveness, Nepal
Shrestha (2024)	Leadership for Inclusive Education: The Case of Nepal	International Journal of Inclusive Education	To assess leadership practices for inclusive education in Nepal	Mixed methods: approach	Inclusive policies are poorly implemented due to a lack of training and resources.	The method only captures the current state; it lacks longitudinal tracking.	Inclusive education, leadership, barriers, and policy implementation
Thapa and Basnet (2023)	Analyzing Current Challenges of School Leadership of Community Schools in Kathmandu Metropolitan	Nepal Journal of Educational Leadership	To identify the main challenges in community school leadership	Qualitative approach (Interviews, principals, document analysis)	Governance issues, insufficient funding, and political interference	Limited geographic representation; lacks impact evaluation	community school, leadership challenges, Kathmandu
Koirala (2023)	Educational Leadership and School Governance in Nepal: Pathways to Improvement	Journal of South Asian Educational Studies	To examine governance mechanisms and improvement strategies	Qualitative approach (Interview)	Centralization and weak accountability undermine school governance	Lacks school-level perspectives; suggests need for field-level pilots	school governance, leadership, accountability, Nepal
Gurung and KC (2024)	Performance of Female Heads of Community Schools in Kathmandu Valley of Nepal	Gender and Education Review	To explore the performance and leadership outcomes of female heads	Mixed methods approach (Survey and Semi-structured interview)	Female heads showed strong student outcomes but limited autonomy	Does not compare with male leaders; suggests comparative longitudinal studies	female leadership, performance, community schools, Kathmandu
Dhakal (2013)	Leading at the "edge of chaos": perceptions and practices of Nepalese school leaders.	Kathmandu Univ. School of Education (MPhil Dissertation)	To explore school leaders' experiences under socio-political chaos in Kathmandu	Qualitative interviews	Found pervasive chaos, a complex leadership environment, and leadership as the key coping strategy	Single-context, single-method; no comparative or quantitative follow-up	chaos theory, complexity, principal perceptions, IPA
Mainali (2024)	Perceptions and Practices of Educational Leadership in Community Schools of Kathmandu Metropolitan City	Nepal Journal of Educational Leadership	To examine leadership practices in urban community schools	Qualitative approach (Interviews)	Found focus on administrative over instructional leadership	Geographic limitation; lacks triangulation with student outcomes	community schools, leadership practices, Kathmandu

Author	Title	Journal	Objective	Methodology	Findings	Limitations	Keywords
Kafle (2013)	Lived Experience of Education Leaders in Nepali Institutional Schools: A Distributed Leadership Perspective	International Journal of Leadership in Education	To explore real-world distributed leadership in institutional schools	Qualitative approach (Narrative or phenomenological interviews)	Principals share leadership responsibilities; centralization still dominates	No scale measurement; lacks rural–urban comparison	distributed leadership, institutional schools, Nepal
Pherali (2016)	School Leadership During Violent Conflict: Rethinking Education for Peace in Nepal and Beyond	Journal of Peace Education	To examine leadership roles during/after conflict	Qualitative approach (Case study)	Principals act as community stabilizers and peacebuilders.	Single-case study; need to compare across conflict zones	conflict, education for peace, school leadership, Nepal
Tangen, Butel & Carrington, (2022)	Facilitators and Barriers to Leadership for Equity and Inclusion in Nepal	Educational Management Review	To identify systemic factors promoting/ inhibiting inclusive leadership	Mixed methods approach (Survey + interviews)	Found a lack of training, policy gaps, and positive community engagement	Lacks longitudinal tracking and intervention design	equity, inclusion, leadership barriers, Nepal
Acharya (2024)	The Whole School Approach for School Improvement: A Study in the Nepalese Context	Educational Research for Policy and Practice	To assess whole-school improvement strategies	Action research across schools	Holistic engagement improved learner outcomes	Limited to pilot schools; no randomized controlled trial.	Whole-school, school improvement, collaborative leadership
Neupane and Dhungana (2021)	Pathways to Teacher Leadership Among EFL Teachers in Nepal's Public Schools	International Journal of Multidisciplinary Perspectives in Higher Education	To explore the emergence of teacher leadership in the EFL context	Qualitative case studies	Peer collaboration and resource constraints shaped leadership	Needs scale-up and trainee-preparation focus	teacher leadership, EFL, public schools, Nepal
Muktan (2020)	Head Teachers' Dilemma in Ethical Decision-Making: A Narrative Inquiry on Community Schools in Nepal	Journal of Educational Ethics	To explore the moral dilemmas faced by headteachers	Narrative interviews	Found tension between accountability and community norms	No comparative analysis with private schools	ethical leadership, narrative inquiry, headteachers, Nepal
Paudel (2021)	The Role of Educational Leadership in the Implementation of Education for Sustainability: Rural Nepal	Sustainability in Education Journal	To explore the principal's role in EFS implementation	Single-case study	Found leadership vital but limited by capacity and infrastructure	No cross-site comparison or strategy testing	sustainability, leadership, rural education

Author (Year)	Title	Journal	Purpose	Methodology	Findings	Limitations	Keywords
Sherchan (2021)	Ethical Leadership of School Principals of Nepal: A Narrative Inquiry	Journal of Moral Education	To detail principals' ethical reasoning narratives	Qualitative narrative inquiry	Principals strive to balance community and policy demands	Lacks policy linkage and a larger sample	ethical leadership, narrative inquiry; Nepal
Acharya (2024)	Affiliative Leadership Styles of Female Headteachers in Public High Schools in Nepal	Gender & Education	To investigate relational leadership styles among female principals	Surveys interviews	Affiliative style boosted teacher morale, yet was constrained by patriarchy.	Needs male comparison and student outcome assessment	affiliative leadership, gender, public high school, Nepal
Pant (2024)	Diversity Management: Critical Pedagogy in Nepalese Education	Critical Pedagogy Journal	To analyze enactments of crucial pedagogy for diversity	Curriculum review interviews	Found limited teacher training, some innovative practices	No impact study; lacks system-level policy analysis	diversity, critical pedagogy; Nepal
Baraily and Rai (2022)	Leading to Diversity Management: Case of Community School Head Teacher's Style in Nepal	Journal of Educational Leadership Study	Explore headteacher leadership styles promoting diversity	Qualitative approach (Case study)	Identified adaptive, participative styles	Single case, needs comparative research	diversity management, leadership styles, community school

Summary of research gaps in educational leadership and management

Recent research on educational leadership in developing countries shows significant gaps in knowledge across many areas. There is a constant lack of consistency between validated leadership frameworks for vocational education and industry partnerships. This causes a mismatch between what training programs produce and what the job market needs. There is a lack of comprehensive research on the dynamics of leadership power in Islamic universities, and insufficient attention to the influence of religion and culture in this context. Catholic organisations also face problems with leaders not advancing. We still do not know enough about how transformational leadership affects teacher creativity and the move towards world-class status in institutions, especially in vocational and Islamic schools. Some of the most significant problems with modern studies' methods are small sample sizes, geographic limitations, and the lack of longitudinal or mixed-methods designs.

Previous studies on educational leadership and management lack robust theoretical and conceptual frameworks for integrating indigenous knowledge, applying spiritual leadership, and harmonising modern and traditional leadership, particularly in the context of prophetic leadership models. There are gaps in the research on how well governance works, how ready digital leaders are for projects like Merdeka Belajar, and how well leaders handle crises when things go wrong, like during the COVID-19 pandemic.Without examining how men and women lead in different situations, gender leadership studies are incomplete. Also, community-engaged leadership research is incomplete without examining how policies affect the whole system. Technical deficiencies include the lack of bibliometric analyses of Indonesian leadership scholarship and insufficient measurement tools for principal managerial competencies.

Also, the study does not show clear cause-and-effect relationships between different leadership styles and outcomes, such as how well students think critically, how well teachers do their jobs, or how well school health programs work. It is especially worrying that there are gaps in understanding the problems

specific to certain regions, such as Nepal's Open University, and differences in leadership between rural and urban areas. There are not enough studies examining how leadership works in regular, religious, and vocational schools. Most studies do not examine long-term effects or link leadership practices to measurable learning outcomes. This makes it hard to understand what makes for good educational leadership in developing countries. We need a coordinated research agenda that uses both rigorous methods and frameworks grounded in culture to address these interconnected gaps.

Summary results

The results included a critical look at four research questions. They shared eight key combined findings from the 48 articles they reviewed on educational leadership and management in the complex and varied settings of Nepal and Indonesia.

How do different styles and approaches to leadership affect the quality of teaching, the culture of the school, and the success of students, especially in places with few resources like Nepal and Indonesia?

The results show that transformational leadership, which focuses on inspiring and intellectually stimulating others, makes teachers more productive, creative, and successful by fostering environments that encourage collaboration and new ideas. This kind of leadership in Indonesia is linked to happier teachers and a better school climate. However, more research is needed to determine whether it really helps students do better in school. However, at places like the Nepal Open University, where resources are limited, transformational leadership cannot be effectively used due to financial constraints, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and a lack of faculty training in online education.

This makes blended learning less effective. In Indonesia, the BEACCTIVE leadership model has been proposed to close the gap between vocational education and business needs. It focuses on communication, collaboration, and evaluation. However, there is no proven framework to help leaders use this method correctly. Islamic values, such as moral values and social justice,

have helped Muhammadiyah schools encourage students to think critically and engage with their communities. However, it is still not well known in the larger academic world. Spiritual leadership has been demonstrated to enhance cultural and moral decision-making in Indonesian educational institutions; however, insufficient empirical evidence exists to substantiate its implementation. Local knowledge, including traditional values such as harmony and cooperation, could also help develop ethical leaders and create supportive school environments in both Indonesia and Nepal. Indigenous knowledge systems are rarely integrated into formal leadership frameworks, thereby missing an opportunity for culturally responsive educational leadership.

What are the key challenges affecting leadership effectiveness in developing educational systems, and how do these impact school development and resource management strategies?

The findings indicate that educational leadership in developing systems must tackle multiple interrelated issues that profoundly influence school development and resource allocation. The absence of validated leadership frameworks, exemplified by Indonesia's vocational education sector, which lacks a structured model to synchronise educational outcomes with industry requirements, results in systemic inefficiencies. Leaders' freedom is also limited by red tape, centralised decision-making, and politics. It is hard to use technology well and ensure it works when there are financial problems, as with Nepal Open University's struggles to set up online classes. Problems with human resources arise when leaders lack sufficient training, the selection process is flawed, and administrators do not know how to use technology. This is shown by the flawed implementation of Indonesia's Merdeka Belajar policy. Cultural and religious factors make things more difficult, and some methods that could be helpful, such as prophetic and spiritual leadership, are underused or understudied.

There are still gender biases, even though female leaders have demonstrated they can help students succeed. These systemic issues all result in inefficient resource allocation due to inadequate governance frameworks, misalignment between educational

and labour market demands, resistance to adopting new technologies and digital transformation, and a neglect of indigenous knowledge systems that could enhance the educational environment and community engagement. The overall effect is slow institutional growth. This is because vocational schools and universities are having a hard time becoming world-class, even though they have leadership models like BEACCTIVE that stress building partnerships through communication and collaboration. To fix the problems above, we need to change the system so that governance is more decentralised, leadership styles are more localised, and strategies for digital transformation and gender-inclusive leadership development are made for each situation.

How do stakeholder expectations, community engagement, and different governance models affect their effectiveness?

The results show that effective education governance requires a balance among stakeholder needs, community involvement, and different types of leadership. The BEACCTIVE framework emphasizes the importance of working together and communicating to close the gap between business needs and vocational education. It also shows that expert and referent power are better at getting people to agree than forceful authority. When culturally responsive, welcoming policies are put in place, community involvement leads to better learning outcomes.

However, these policies often do not work because there are not enough trained people or resources, and there are also problems with gender bias and resistance. The stakeholder governance model prioritizes long-term sustainability and the involvement of many stakeholders. This improves your reputation and productivity, even though it is hard to measure. Collaborative leadership needs trust, shared goals, and the ability to solve problems quickly. Local knowledge, on the other hand, is often underused but can help people reach agreement on decisions. Even though women leaders are doing well, many problems still hinder the practice of transformational leadership. These include money problems, bureaucratic delays, centralisation, and differences between men and

women. Transformational and servant leadership are two ways that teachers can be more creative and involved. Policies like Indonesia's Merdeka Belajar help close the digital divide through e-leadership. In the end, good governance needs to change the system as a whole to fix problems with resources and fairness, while also adapting models like BEACCTIVE to the situation.

In what ways can educational leaders balance administrative duties with instructional leadership while implementing culturally responsive practices and avoiding managerialism to maintain educational focus?

The findings indicate that educational leaders can effectively manage their responsibilities as both administrators and educators by employing diverse, integrated solutions to ensure their practices are culturally responsive. Administrators may help teachers be more creative, and students be more successful by utilising transformational and visionary leadership styles that stress setting clear goals and inspiring others. They can achieve this without resorting to bureaucratic or managerial methods. The BEACCTIVE model provides an organised way to develop partnerships by fostering effective communication and teamwork. This ensures that the teaching is of high quality and that the administration runs smoothly.

Using methods suited to the culture and knowledge of the area helps build learning environments that are fair and grounded in community values and traditions. Distributed leadership models that encourage teachers to work together and make decisions together can make administrators' jobs easier and improve the quality of instruction at the same time. Servant and spiritual leadership styles prioritize moral decisions and the care of workers. These are very significant in faith-based contexts. It is easier to deal with the digital transformation of schools when you have e-leadership skills. To keep these initiatives going, executives need to actively address structural issues such as excessive red tape, excessive top-down control, and gender bias by pushing for decentralised governance and equitable opportunities for professional growth. These tactics assist educational leaders in staying focused on the fundamental goals of teaching and

learning while also meeting the organisation's demands in ways that are respectful of different cultures.
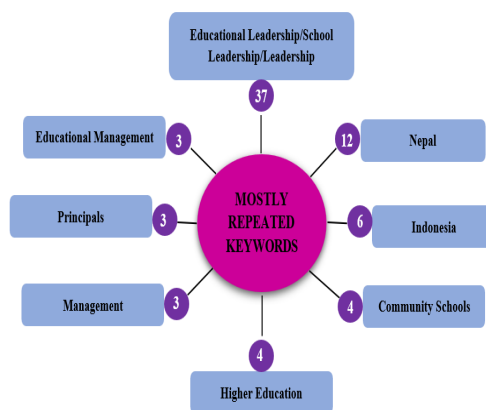
Comprehensive analysis of educational leadership challenges and strategies in Indonesia and Nepal

The findings indicate that the education system faces considerable leadership challenges necessitating a variety of solutions. At the most basic level, there are no proven frameworks for vocational-educational partnerships, so training does not always meet industry needs. There are not enough programs to help people become leaders, and there are also structural problems, such as excessive centralisation and insufficient accountability. Because of these systemic issues, principals are not ready to perform essential tasks such as planning for the future and managing resources. Different leadership styles, such as transformational, servant, and visionary, are helping boost teacher motivation, school culture, and institutional innovation by giving human resources greater power.

This is especially true when these styles are grounded in the moral and spiritual values that are important to religious groups. Culturally responsive leadership that draws on local knowledge and works to address gender inequality is just as important for creating welcoming spaces. However, patriarchal norms still make it hard for women to be leaders, even though they have shown that they can be successful. To drive change, leaders need to be visionary and communicate openly. Working together, like through teacher leadership and community involvement, helps people think critically and build a sense of community. However, bureaucratic inertia and a lack of willingness to change still make it hard for institutions to change, especially at specialised universities. Even though Indonesia's digital infrastructure is not yet perfect, it is essential to learn how to be an e-leader. In the end, we need robust ways to measure the effects of leadership, because most current research is neither very useful nor methodologically sound. To improve the education system, we need to address these
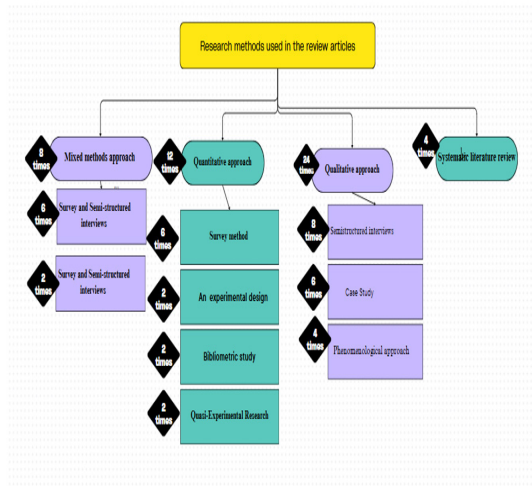
problems in ways that work for each situation and strike a balance between administrative efficiency, instructional quality, and cultural relevance (see Table 1).

The phrase "leadership connecting with education and schools" has been used 37 times in the chosen articles from Nepal and Indonesia. Nepal used it the most (12 times). Indonesia is also third in the number of keywords used in the articles examined. "Community schools," "higher education," "management," "principals," and "educational management" are some other common keywords
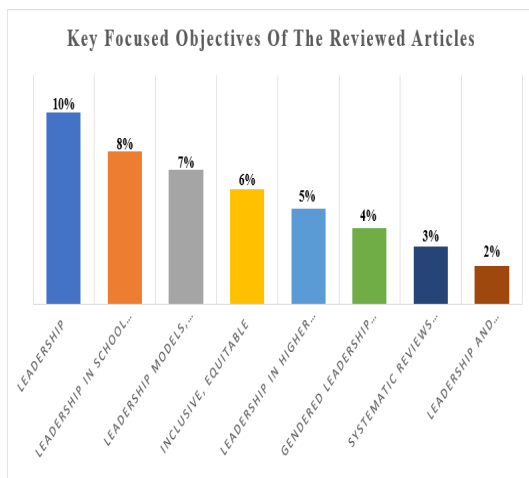

Figure 1. Key repeated keywords in the reviewed articles

The findings indicate that qualitative methodology was utilised in the analysed articles from both nations (24 instances), followed by a quantitative methodology (12 instances). A mixed-methods approach was utilised eight times, succeeded by a systematic literature review on four occasions. A mixed-methods approach was used, which included a survey questionnaire and six semi-structured interviews. Likewise, a qualitative methodology was employed, featuring eight semi-structured interviews, six case studies, and two instances of a phenomenological Approach (see Figure 2).
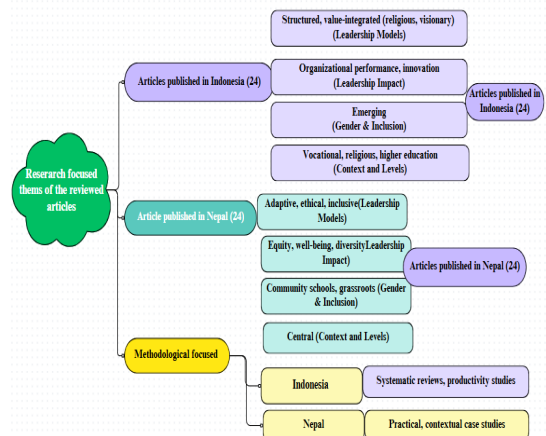
the first through eighth focused objectives (see Figure 3).

Figure 2. Summary of the research approach in the reviewed articles

Figure 4. Countrywide focus area in the reviewed articles

The results indicate that leadership research in Indonesia primarily focuses on organised, value-integrated frameworks, often rooted in religious or visionary paradigms. In Nepal, on the other hand, leaders are more flexible, moral, and open to everyone. Indonesian judges mostly judge leaders by how well their companies do and how creative they are. Nepal, on the other hand, sees leadership as being fair, healthy, and diverse. Nepal focuses on community and grassroots schools, while Indonesia concentrates on leadership in vocational, religious, and higher education contexts. Gender and inclusion are becoming prevalent subjects in Indonesian studies; however, they are seen as fundamental to Nepalese studies. Indonesia favours systematic reviews and productivity-oriented assessments, whereas Nepal favours pragmatic, context-specific case studies that illustrate real-world leadership dynamics (see Table 1).

Discussion and Conclusion

This review's findings show that educational leadership in developing and diverse places like Nepal and Indonesia is a complex issue shaped by numerous cultural, political, social, economic, and institutional factors. The effectiveness of leadership depends not only on the leader's skills

Figure 3. Key focused objectives of the reviewed articles

The results indicate that the primary objectives from the reviewed 48 articles are leadership practices and their impact on organisational outcomes (10%), leadership in educational and community contexts (8%), leadership models, frameworks, and theories (7%), inclusive, equitable, and diverse leadership (6%), leadership in higher education institutions (5%), gendered leadership and female leadership experiences (4%), systematic reviews and bibliometric analyses (3%), and leadership within cultural or local contexts (2%), ranked as

but also on the structures that support it and on governance frameworks that are sensitive to culture (Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008; Bush, 2019). This study has shed light on the complex interactions among different leadership styles, the challenges that arise in different situations, and the ways in which educational management operates in the complex settings of Nepal and Indonesia. In both countries, leadership operates within socially entrenched frameworks that profoundly shape leadership identity and effectiveness (Dhakal, 2025; Dewantoro et al., 2021). The literature identifies many types of leadership, including transformational, servant, visionary, prophetic, and spiritual. Each type is based on a different historical and religious context. Managers do not just choose these models; they also respond to what society and schools expect of them.

Transformational leadership has consistently demonstrated efficacy in both contexts. Leaders who employed transformational leadership in Indonesian vocational schools encouraged teachers to be creative and dedicated, resulting in new teaching approaches and improved learning outcomes (Ripki et al., 2020). Transformational leadership is effective in Nepal for managing institutional change and making schools more welcoming, especially when leaders prioritize a shared vision and motivation (Dhakal, Jones, & Lummis, 2023). Contextual limitations, such as poor digital infrastructure, political appointments, bureaucratic inertia, and centralised control, especially in community and public schools, often affect how well this model works (Khanal, Gaulee, & Simpson, 2021; Lumban Gaol, 2021).

The issues analysed in the studies extend beyond mere individual leadership competencies. Systemic issues, like the lack of proven, locally adapted leadership frameworks, especially for vocational and faith-based schools, still make it hard for leaders to do their jobs well. The BEACCTIVE model (Indrawati et al., 2022) provides Indonesia with a structured approach to closing the gap between education and industry. The emphasis on building, empowering, actualising, connecting, and transforming is intriguing in theory; however, it remains insufficiently tested in practice,

particularly in resource-constrained regions. In Muhammadiyah schools, prophetic leadership grounded in Islamic traditions promotes moral integrity, fairness, and values important to students (Dewantoro et al., 2021). Even though these models are morally strong, they often struggle to gain support in pluralistic or secular schools because they lack sufficient institutional backing and their policies do not align with those of the schools.

The case studies in Nepal teach us an important lesson about the importance of women being leaders. Gurung and KC (2024) and Acharya (2024) found that female principals are more likely to make their schools feel welcoming, earn their students' trust, and act morally with their school communities. Still, they have to deal with deeply ingrained gender roles and being pushed aside by the system. One study found that leadership styles that value empathy, teamwork, and democracy made teachers and students happier and more motivated at school. This was especially true in rural areas where leadership roles are still seen through a patriarchal lens (Ghimire, 2023; Sherchan, 2021). These findings corroborate the global assertions of Coleman (2002) and Lumby & Coleman (2007), yet they hold greater significance in societies marked by entrenched gender hierarchies.

The integration of indigenous knowledge and community engagement represents a crucial perspective that distinguishes leadership in Nepal and Indonesia from dominant Western paradigms. Rahman et al. (2025) and Baraily & Rai (2022) have shown that indigenous values such as gotong royong (cooperation), musyawarah (deliberation), and solidaritas (solidarity) are not only culturally relevant but also helpful in developing ethical and participatory leadership. These habits help schools and the community get along better and make fairer decisions. Even so, these culturally ingrained ways of leading are rarely taught in formal leadership training programs and are often seen as "soft skills" rather than strategic ones. Bush et al. (2019) and Biesta (2010) criticise this oversight as an example of a widespread conflict between contextual responsiveness and managerialism.

They warn that leadership often becomes merely following the rules and being efficient, which goes against educational goals and ethics.

The gap between leadership research and its use in real life is another common theme. The review encompasses numerous studies, predominantly from Nepal, indicating that current leadership models lack empirical validation. For example, Mainali (2024) found that in Kathmandu community schools, leaders were more concerned with running the school than with improving teaching or developing new teaching methods. Lumban Gaol (2021) also found that leadership studies in Indonesia face methodological challenges, including small sample sizes, limited long-term data, and insufficient representation of rural areas. These problems make it hard to use the results in other situations.

New chances are coming up, even with these issues. The rise of e-leadership, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic and policy changes such as Indonesia's Merdeka Belajar, has put digital literacy, remote oversight, and adaptive leadership at the top of the list of changes needed in education (Rusdinal et al., 2024; Djafri, 2025). Leaders employing distributed models, wherein teachers and community members share responsibilities, have more effectively managed the changes and instability of evolving education systems (Kafle, 2013; Acharya, 2024). In this sense, collaborative, ethical, and culturally relevant leadership has shown itself to be both a moral duty and a practical need.

Finally, this study enhances our comprehension of the influence of national ideologies, institutional frameworks, and cultural values on leadership across various countries. Nepali leaders, on the other hand, use contextual ethics, community involvement, and decision-making that includes everyone (Dhakal, 2025; Rai & Sharma, 2024). On the other hand, Indonesian leaders stress structured models and moral authority, often grounded in religious beliefs. These differences offer both countries many opportunities to learn from each other and work together to develop new ideas, especially since they both need to be fair and modernize simultaneously.

This study shows that educational leadership in Nepal and Indonesia works at the intersection of complicated socioeconomic realities, institutional needs, and cultural perspectives. The reviewed research demonstrates that effective leadership in both situations goes beyond mere technical management; it embodies a deeply relational, ethical, and culturally embedded practice (Clarke & O'Donoghue, 2015; Dhakal, 2025). In these changing and diverse communities, being a leader means navigating conflicts between tradition and new ideas, between openness to everyone and hierarchy, and between organisation and kindness. Schools and colleges are using more transformational, servant, visionary, and prophetic leadership styles. This demonstrates that people desire leaders who inspire, empower, and treat them like people (Ripki et al., 2020; Nellitawati et al., 2024; Dewantoro et al., 2021). People are learning more about these models because they help teachers stay motivated, generate fresh ideas, and foster a healthy school atmosphere. Nevertheless, these approaches do not always work due to centralised bureaucracy, political meddling, limited opportunities for professional growth, and a lack of established, context-sensitive leadership frameworks (Lumban Gaol, 2021; Khanal, Gaulee, & Simpson, 2021).

A significant finding of this study is that female leadership and community-based knowledge work well together. Studies conducted in Nepal indicate that female principals have robust moral reasoning, a propensity for collaboration, and a governing approach that prioritises interpersonal ties. These qualities help make schools equitable and hospitable for everyone (Acharya, 2024; Gurung & KC, 2024). Rahman et al. (2025) also show that Indonesian leaders who draw on local expertise can create positive school environments where people trust one another, get along, and take responsibility together. Still, both sources show that these methods are not taken seriously in official leadership development and national policy.

The assessment also found that a gap persists between research on leadership and actual leadership practice. Mainali (2024) and Supriadi

et al. (2021) examine the tendency to emphasise administrative compliance at the expense of instructional leadership, often overlooking the relationship between leadership actions and student learning outcomes or teacher performance. This criticism aligns with Biesta's (2010) argument that education should stop being about management and return to its moral and democratic purposes. New opportunities are emerging, such as the rise of e-leadership and distributed leadership. This is especially true now, as schools are dealing with changes in policy, such as Indonesia's Merdeka Belajar, and disruptions, such as COVID-19. Rusdinal et al. (2024) and Djafri (2025) both highlight the importance of 21st-century leaders using technology to transform their businesses. Leaders who foster collaborative networks and distribute authority among educators and stakeholders are more likely to succeed in unstable, resource-constrained contexts (Kafle, 2013; Acharya, 2024).

Recommendation

Nepal and Indonesia need to make a significant change in how they lead schools in the future. Instead of focusing on rules and regulations, they should focus on teaching and ethics. People should see leadership as more than just a job; it should be a moral calling focused on community, justice, and change. To achieve this objective, this study proposes:

Establishing verified local leadership frameworks tailored to the community's specific needs and beliefs (Indrawati et al., 2022).

Including fairness and equality for both genders in the recruiting, training, and evaluation of leaders (Ghimire, 2023; Acharya, 2024).

Improving e-leadership skills and infrastructure to make digital transformation easier, especially in rural and resource-poor areas (Rusdinal et al., 2024).

Doing research over a lengthy period of time to see how policies affect practice and give helpful information (Lumban Gaol, 2021).

Encouraging educational leaders from Nepal and Indonesia to work together and share new ideas through partnerships and South-South exchanges in order to establish adaptive leadership models (Dhakal, Jones, & Lummis, 2023).

In the end, educational leadership needs to be more than merely managing; it needs to be a force for fairness, inclusivity, cultural renewal, and personal growth.

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