



Issues and Management in Elementary Schools: Toward a Holistic Improvement in Educational Quality



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Abstrak

Peningkatan akses pendidikan dasar di Indonesia belum selalu diikuti dengan pemerataan mutu pendidikan yang holistik. Kajian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis peran manajemen sekolah dasar dalam mewujudkan pendidikan yang mengintegrasikan aspek akademik, karakter, sosial-emosional, dan pemerataan akses bagi semua peserta didik. Metode yang digunakan adalah *Systematic Literature Review* terhadap penelitian yang diterbitkan pada periode 2022–2026, terkait manajemen sekolah, pendidikan holistik, pendidikan karakter, inklusivitas, dan kesejahteraan siswa. Hasil analisis menunjukkan bahwa manajemen sekolah yang efektif, termasuk kepemimpinan transformasional, perencanaan strategis, tata kelola partisipatif, evaluasi berkelanjutan, serta kolaborasi dengan komunitas, menjadi fondasi utama pendidikan holistik. Integrasi pendidikan karakter dan sosial-emosional melalui pendekatan *whole-school*, budaya sekolah positif, dan kurikulum yang adaptif terbukti meningkatkan perkembangan siswa secara menyeluruh, baik akademik maupun psikososial. Meskipun demikian, tantangan implementasi masih muncul, seperti keterbatasan kompetensi guru, inkonsistensi kebijakan, ketidakmerataan sumber daya, dan hambatan sistemik, terutama di daerah terpencil. Kesimpulannya, keberhasilan pendidikan holistik menuntut manajemen sekolah yang sistematis, inklusif, dan kolaboratif, serta komitmen kolektif antara kepala sekolah, guru, orang tua, masyarakat, dan pemerintah untuk memastikan pemerataan, keberlanjutan, dan mutu pendidikan yang utuh di sekolah dasar.

Abstract

The expansion of access to primary education in Indonesia has not always been accompanied by equitable, holistic educational quality. This study aims to analyze the role of primary school management in realizing education that integrates academic, character, social-emotional aspects, and equitable access for all students. The method employed is a Systematic Literature Review of studies published

between 2022 and 2026, focusing on school management, holistic education, character education, inclusivity, and student well-being. The analysis indicates that effective school management including transformational leadership, strategic planning, participatory governance, continuous evaluation, and collaboration with the community serves as the primary foundation for holistic education. Integrating character and social-emotional education through a whole-school approach, fostering a positive school culture, and implementing an adaptive curriculum has been shown to enhance students' overall development, both academically and psychosocially. Nevertheless, implementation challenges persist, such as limited teacher competencies, policy inconsistencies, uneven resource distribution, and systemic barriers, particularly in remote areas. In conclusion, the success of holistic education requires systematic, inclusive, and collaborative school management, along with a collective commitment among principals, teachers, parents, the community, and the government to ensure equity, sustainability, and comprehensive quality in primary education.



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INTRODUCTION

Access to primary education in Indonesia has improved—more children are now attending school—but this progress does not automatically guarantee adequate learning quality (Reni et al., 2023). Although school enrollment has increased, the learning achievement gap remains wide; many students have not yet met the minimum literacy and numeracy standards, and the distribution of educational quality between urban and remote areas is highly unequal (Barumbun et al., 2023). One of the root causes is the lack of equitable access in many elementary schools, particularly in remote areas, where infrastructure facilities, connectivity, the number of teachers, and pedagogical support remain severely limited (Cahyani, 2024). Furthermore, teacher quality and their ability to teach effectively are critical factors; without competent teachers supported by training and evaluation, the teaching-

learning process often fails to yield optimal results (Rachmadtullah et al., 2025; Zaqiah et al., 2024).

On the policy and management front, reforms such as the freedom of learning program aim to shift the paradigm from an input-oriented and standardized system to a more flexible, contextual approach focused on core competencies and 21st-century skills (Sarrayu et al. 2025). However, the implementation of these reforms faces various managerial challenges, ranging from planning and resource allocation to the simultaneous engagement of schools, teachers, and communities (Agustian et al. 2025; Pratami et al. 2025).

Therefore, to achieve truly high-quality and holistic basic education that emphasizes not only academic aspects but also character development, student well-being, and equity, effective school management, policies prioritizing equity and quality, and a commitment to strengthening teacher capacity and systemic support are required (Sumarto et al. 2023; Tsaqinah et al. 2025; Alistriana et al. 2024). This introduction underscores that access alone is not enough; quality and management are key to ensuring elementary schools can serve as a solid foundation for the future of Indonesia’s children.

LITERATURE REVIEWS

The following is a review table of 35 selected articles. This table provides a summary of key information from each article, including the author and year, article title, research methods, and main findings. Presenting this information in tabular form allows readers to systematically compare and identify connections between studies, thereby facilitating further analysis to address the research focus.

Table 1. Review Artikel

No	Author & Year	Title	Key Findings	Relevance to the Title
1	Adams, dkk. (2025)	Toward effective inclusive practices: dynamics among school leadership, academic optimism, and teacher collaboration	Inclusive leadership and teacher collaboration support vulnerable students; enhancing access to and participation in learning	Highlighting the importance of inclusivity and collaborative management in elementary schools for holistic quality
2	Aldridge & McLure (2024)	Investigating the influence of the school climate of church-based	A positive school culture supports students' moral development and	Highlighting the role of school culture in

No	Author & Year	Title	Key Findings	Relevance to the Title
		schools on students' moral identity development	psychological well-being	holistic elementary school education
3	Alzoraiki, dkk. (2024)	The role of transformational leadership in enhancing school culture and teaching performance in Yemeni public schools	Transformational leadership strengthens school culture and teaching performance	Relevant to school leadership as the foundation of holistic quality
4	Amelia, dkk. (2025)	Multidimensional Student Development in Elementary School	Holistic management enhances students' academic, character, and social-emotional development	Emphasizing the need for school management that supports students' multidimensional development
5	Ayu (2024)	Strategic Management for Improving Education Quality at Al Irsyad Al Islamiyyah 01 Elementary School	Strategic planning, ongoing monitoring, and a culture of reflection improve the quality of education	Examples of strategic management practices for improving elementary school quality
6	Balqis, dkk. (2025)	Partnership in Participative Leadership and Organizational Communications	Participatory governance improves academic performance and the school climate	Supporting the principles of good governance in human resources management
7	Fauzan, dkk. (2025)	Model Kepemimpinan Adaptif Dan Partisipatis Kepala Sekolah Dalam Lembaga Sekolah	Adaptive and participatory leadership strengthens teacher collaboration and learning innovation	Demonstrating the principal's leadership as a driver of holistic quality
8	Feraco, dkk. (2023)	An integrated model of school students' academic achievement and life satisfaction	The effectiveness of school management is correlated with students' academic achievement and social-emotional well-being	Supporting academic and social-emotional integration in elementary school management
9	Gusti, dkk. (2025)	Holistic Education Management in Schools, Madrasahs, and Pesantren	School management as the foundation of holistic education; strategic planning and a culture of reflection enhance quality	Emphasizing school management as a strategic tool for improving elementary school quality
10	Hua, dkk. (2025)	How social-emotional learning promotes reading achievement?	Social-emotional learning (SEL) supports students' academic achievement and well-being	Supporting the integration of social-emotional aspects into human resources management
11	Irfan & Usman (2023)	Character education management with whole	Whole-school character education fosters	Demonstrating the integration of character education into

No	Author & Year	Title	Key Findings	Relevance to the Title
		school development approach	empathy, discipline, and responsibility in students	elementary school management
12	Kontak, dkk. (2025)	The process of student engagement in school health promotion: a scoping review	A whole-school approach enhances engagement and fosters a positive learning environment	Highlighting the importance of a holistic approach in elementary school environment
13	Kurniawan, dkk. (2025)	Toward holistic education: Performance-based student affairs management with social and institutional collaboration	Inclusive leadership and collaboration promote equity and student participation	Relevant to inclusivity and social justice in elementary school management
14	Ma, dkk. (2025)	Building communities, weaving trust: How principals transform participative leadership practices into teacher professional happiness	Participatory leadership enhances teachers' professionalism and the school climate	Supporting the principles of good governance in elementary schools
15	McCoy & Hanno (2023)	Systemic barriers and opportunities for implementing school-based social-emotional learning interventions	Barriers to the implementation of SEL include systemic limitations and a lack of support	Highlighting managerial challenges in holistic elementary school education
16	Megawati & Kamaruddin (2023)	Pengaruh Kepemimpinan Transformasional Kepala Sekolah Dan Kepribadian Guru Terhadap Motivasi Belajar	Transformational leadership has a significant impact on teacher motivation and student academic achievement	Highlighting the principal's role in holistic management
17	Mitchell, dkk. (2025)	Endogenous systems leadership of education provision during crises	Inclusive leadership and adaptive policies enhance student access and participation	Supporting inclusivity as a dimension of holistic educational quality
18	Najjarpour (2025)	Teachers' perceptions of challenges to integrating social emotional learning	Limitations in teachers' competencies pose a barrier to the implementation of holistic management	Highlighting the challenges elementary schools face in implementing holistic management
19	Norozi (2023)	The Nexus of Holistic Wellbeing and School Education	Holistic education requires the integration of academics, character, and student well-being	Supporting a holistic educational framework in elementary schools
20	Nurasiah, dkk. (2022)	Cultural values' integration in character development in elementary schools	Integrating character values into the curriculum is more effective than an incidental approach	Supporting the integration of character in human resource management

No	Author & Year	Title	Key Findings	Relevance to the Title
21	Prisilia, dkk. (2025)	Eksplorasi Praktik Reflektif Guru Sekolah Dasar Dalam Meningkatkan Kualitas Pembelajaran	Teachers' reflective practices improve the quality of learning	Highlighting the importance of a reflective culture in school management
22	Rohaeni (2024)	Implementation of School-Based Improvement Management	Synergy between internal management and external support improves the quality of education	Highlighting school management as the foundation for holistic quality improvement
23	Shengyao, dkk. (2024)	Emotional intelligence impact on academic achievement and psychological well-being among university students	Emotional intelligence influences academic achievement and well-being	Supporting social-emotional integration in educational management
24	Sklar, dkk. (2024)	Implementation and implementation leadership in context	Leadership in implementation enhances the effectiveness of school policies	Highlighting the importance of governance and leadership in the quality of elementary schools
25	Tamam, dkk. (2025)	Improving The Quality of Education: Implementation of School-Based Quality Improvement Management	Reforms to improve the quality of basic education must begin with strengthening the school management system	Highlighting the strategic implications of school management for holistic quality
26	Tambunan (2024)	Peran Kepemimpinan Kepala Sekolah Dalam Meningkatkan Kualitas Pembelajaran Sekolah Penggerak	The principal as a driving force behind a holistic vision of academic and character integration	Supporting the leadership role of school principals in holistic education
27	Tóth & Csapó (2022)	Teachers' beliefs about assessment and accountability	Accountability fosters teacher professionalism and the efficient use of resources	Strengthening the relevance of good governance to educational quality
28	Tumiyati, dkk. (2025)	Data-Driven Learning Community Planning: The Principal's Strategy in Teacher Professional Development	Data-driven planning and the involvement of teachers, parents, and the community support quality improvement	Demonstrating managerial strategies for holistic educational quality
29	Ventista & Brown (2023)	Teachers' professional learning and its impact on students' learning outcomes	Continuing professional development and academic supervision are essential for the quality of implementation	Highlights the need to strengthen elementary school capacity through internal and external management
30	Wang (2026)	Socio-Pedagogical Support for Students with Special Educational	An inclusive approach strengthens collaboration between	Emphasizing equity and social justice in

No	Author & Year	Title	Key Findings	Relevance to the Title
		Needs in Inclusive Mainstream Schools	teachers and the community in supporting vulnerable students	human resource management
31	Werang, dkk. (2025)	Asta Brata leadership practices and its impact on school culture and student character in Indonesia's elementary schools	Value-based leadership practices strengthen school culture and student character	Demonstrating the relationship between leadership, school culture, and character education
32	Yang, dkk. (2025)	Towards a Sustainable Future in Education: A Systematic Review and Framework for Inclusive Education	An inclusive approach supports the sustainability of education and equitable access	Relevant to school inclusivity and governance in holistic quality
33	Yanti, dkk. (2026)	Principal Leadership and Educational Quality Management: A Case Study in Indonesian Elementary School	School leadership and governance have a significant impact on the quality of education	Emphasizing the challenges of human resource management as the foundation of holistic quality
34	Yuan, dkk. (2025)	Testing the Social-Emotional and Character Development (SECD) approach	Social-emotional and character integration enhances student well-being and achievement	Supporting holistic education through integrated human resources management
35	Zak, dkk. (2025)	A qualitative evaluation of a whole-school approach to improving resilience in childhood and adolescence	A whole-school approach enhances student engagement, the learning environment, and psychological resilience	Demonstrating the effectiveness of holistic management in elementary education

The following table classifies the articles based on their main themes, sub-focuses, relevant articles, and a summary of their relevance. This table helps readers understand the distribution of research focus, identify patterns in the findings, and see the relationship between each article and the main research theme.

Table 2. Article Classification

Main Theme	Sub-Focus	Related Articles	Summary of Connections
School Management & Leadership	Transformational leadership, management strategies, reflective practices, data-driven planning	Yanti et al. (2026); Gusti et al. (2025); Tamam et al. (2025); Megawati & Kamaruddin (2023); Werang et al. (2025); Fauzan et al. (2025); Ayu (2024); Prisilia et al. (2025); Sklar et al. (2024); Feraco et al. (2023);	School leadership and management influence academic quality, teacher motivation, and school culture.

Main Theme	Sub-Focus	Related Articles	Summary of Connections
		Alzoraiki et al. (2024); Tumiyati et al. (2025)	
Integration of Character Education and Social-Emotional Learning	Whole-school approach, social-emotional learning, character education, positive school culture, social skills	Yuan et al. (2025); Zak et al. (2025); Irfan & Usman (2023); Nurasiah et al. (2022); Hua et al. (2025); Amelia et al. (2025); Shengyao et al. (2024); Aldridge & McLure (2024)	Integrating character and social-emotional education enhances student engagement, discipline, empathy, and well-being.
Inclusivity, Governance, and Implementation Challenges	Good governance, inclusivity, teacher competence, policy inconsistency, external support, supervision, community collaboration	Balqis et al. (2025); Tóth & Csapó (2022); Ma et al. (2025); Rohaeni (2024); Ventista & Brown (2023); Adams et al. (2025); Kurniawan et al. (2025); Mitchell et al. (2025); Wang (2026); Yang et al. (2025); Najjarpour (2025); McCoy et al. (2023); Tambunan (2024); Alzoraiki et al. (2024); Feraco et al. (2023)	Good governance and inclusivity support educational equity and school effectiveness.

METHOD

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) using the PRISMA 2020 framework to identify and analyze studies related to elementary school management, holistic education, educational quality, character education, and student well-being. Literature was collected from national and international journals, research reports, and policy documents published in the last five years (2022–2026), using keywords related to elementary education and school management. The SLR process includes identification based on relevance and quality, screening of key data from selected studies, and the feasibility of identifying patterns and best practice recommendations for holistically improving the quality of elementary education (Sitanggang, 2025). The following is an illustration of the PRISMA SLR stages, depicting the systematic process of conducting a Systematic Literature Review.

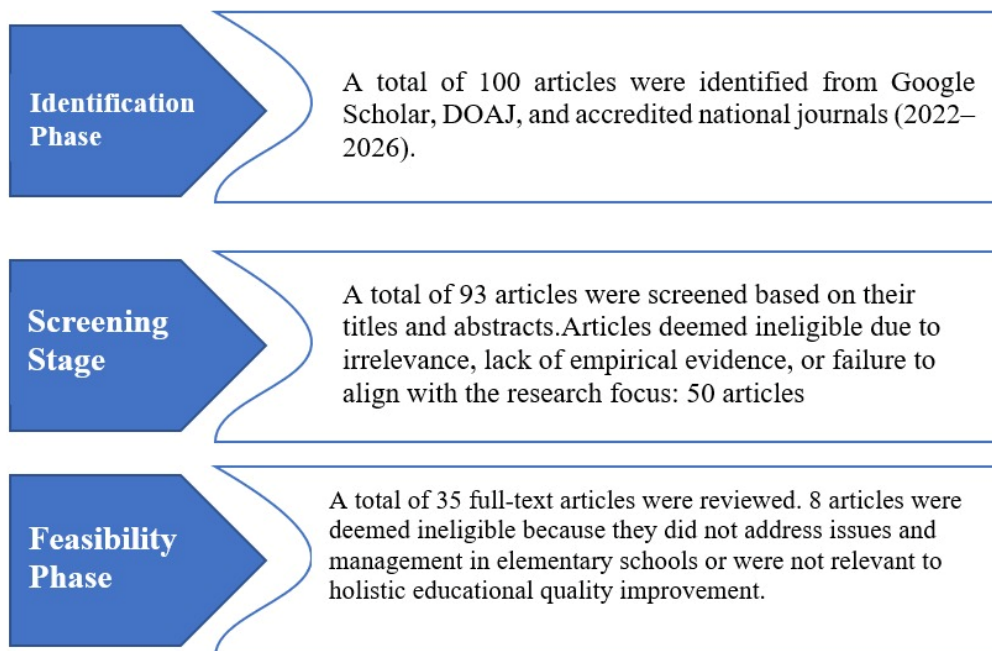


Figure 1. Stages of the PRISMA SLR

Source: Sitanggang, 2025

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The quality of elementary school education cannot be separated from how schools are managed and directed (Yanti et al., 2026). Various issues that have emerged—ranging from weak governance, inconsistent implementation of character education, limited teacher competencies, to challenges in inclusivity—indicate that improving quality cannot be achieved solely through curriculum reform or by focusing solely on academic achievement. Holistically quality education requires a management system capable of integrating academic, character, social-emotional, and student well-being aspects into a single, cohesive, and sustainable framework (Yuan et al. 2025).

A number of international studies over the past decade have confirmed that school leadership, participatory governance, a positive school culture, and collaboration with the community are key factors in building a comprehensive educational ecosystem. Therefore, this discussion aims to provide an in-depth analysis of how elementary school management can serve as a strategic tool in addressing these various challenges while simultaneously fostering the realization of holistic educational quality. School Management as the Foundation of Holistic Educational Quality

Research findings indicate that elementary school management serves as the primary foundation for realizing holistic education (Gusti et al., 2025). International studies confirm that the effectiveness of school management is significantly correlated with both academic achievement and students' social-emotional well-being (Feraco et al., 2023; Shengyao et al., 2024). Schools with strategic planning, continuous monitoring, and a culture of reflection tend to demonstrate more consistent improvements in quality (Ayu, 2024). Thus, quality issues in elementary schools cannot be separated from the quality of their governance and management systems.

Conceptually, holistic education requires the integration of academic, character, and student well-being aspects (Norozi, 2023). Research indicates that a whole-school approach to management can enhance student engagement, a sense of safety, and a positive learning climate (Zak et al., 2025; Kontak et al., 2025). This reinforces the notion that educational quality is not measured solely by academic grades but also by students' social-emotional and moral development (Hua et al., 2025). Therefore, school governance must be designed to support students' multidimensional development (Amelia et al., 2025). School Governance and the Principles of Good Governance

The implementation of good school governance principles—such as transparency, accountability, participation, and fairness—has been shown to enhance the effectiveness of school organizations. Studies indicate that schools with participatory governance exhibit better academic performance and a more positive school climate (Balqis et al., 2025; Ma et al., 2025). Clear accountability also fosters increased teacher professionalism and the efficient use of resources (Tóth & Csapó, 2022). This underscores that quality issues often stem from weak internal school oversight and coordination systems.

Furthermore, collaborative school leadership strengthens a culture of collective work and learning innovation. Research indicates that transformational leadership has an indirect yet significant impact on learning outcomes through increased teacher motivation (Megawati & Kamaruddin, 2023). In the context of elementary schools, the principal serves as the driving force behind a holistic vision that integrates academics and character (Tambunan, 2024). Without strong leadership, holistic policies risk becoming mere administrative programs (Sklar et al., 2024). Integration of Character Education into the School System

One of the primary challenges in elementary schools is that character education has not been systematically integrated. International research indicates that integrating character values into the curriculum and school culture is more effective than an incidental approach (Nurasiah et al., 2022). Comprehensive school-based implementation (whole-school character education) has been proven to enhance students' empathy, discipline, and responsibility (Irfan & Usman, 2023). This indicates that character education must be an integral part of curriculum management, not merely an additional activity.

In addition, a positive school culture serves as a medium for the internalization of values. Studies show that a supportive school climate contributes to students' moral development and psychological well-being (Aldridge & McLure, 2024). Therefore, school administrators must ensure consistency between policies, teaching practices, and daily routines. This integration is key to achieving holistic and sustainable educational quality. Inclusivity and Equity as Holistic Dimension.

The quality of holistic education is also determined by the extent to which schools can accommodate student diversity. Mitchell et al. (2025) emphasize that inclusive leadership and adaptive policies significantly influence equitable access to and participation in learning. Schools that are responsive to differences in social background, academic ability, and special needs demonstrate increased student ownership and participation (Wang, 2026). Thus, the problem of educational inequality can be minimized through adaptive and fair management.

Recent research also shows that an inclusive school leadership approach strengthens collaboration between teachers and the community in supporting vulnerable students (Adams et al., 2025). Holistic education cannot be achieved if some students are marginalized by the system; therefore, school governance must be oriented toward social justice as part of educational quality (Kurniawan et al., 2025).

Implementation Challenges: Teacher Competencies and Policy Consistency

Although the concept of holistic management promises positive impacts, various studies indicate implementation barriers. Limitations in teachers' competencies regarding the integration of academic and social-emotional learning present a major challenge (Najjarpour, 2025). Additionally, policy inconsistencies and a lack of systemic support often result in character and well-being programs being unsustainable (McCoy et al., 2023). These issues highlight the need to strengthen human resource capacity in elementary schools.

Schools with limited resources also face challenges in optimally implementing a holistic approach. International studies indicate that policy support, ongoing professional development, and effective academic supervision play a crucial role in ensuring the quality of implementation (Ventista & Brown, 2023). Therefore, improving the quality of elementary education requires synergy between internal school management and external support from the government and the community (Rohaeni, 2024).

Managerial Implications for High-Quality and Holistic Elementary Schools

These findings confirm that school management is not merely an administrative function but a strategic instrument in building holistic educational quality. The integration of good governance, transformational leadership, a positive school culture, and character education has been shown to strengthen academic achievement and student well-being (Alzoraiki et al., 2024; Werang et al., 2025). Thus, reforming the quality of basic education must begin with strengthening the school management system (Tamam et al., 2025).

The practical implications include the need for data-driven planning, ongoing evaluation, teacher training, and the active involvement of parents and the community (Tumiyati et al. 2025). Elementary schools, as the foundation of national education, must be managed as reflective and adaptive learning organizations capable of responding to change (Fauzan et al. 2025; Prisilia et al. 2025). Through a systematic and inclusive management approach, holistic improvements in educational quality can be achieved sustainably (Yang et al. 2025).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The quality of elementary school education cannot be separated from how schools are managed and directed (Yanti et al., 2026). Various issues that have emerged—ranging from weak governance, inconsistent implementation of character education, limited teacher competencies, to challenges in inclusivity—indicate that improving quality cannot be achieved solely through curriculum reform or by focusing solely on academic achievement. Holistically quality education requires a management system capable of integrating academic, character, social-emotional, and student well-being aspects into a single, cohesive, and sustainable framework (Yuan et al. 2025).

A number of international studies over the past decade have confirmed that school leadership, participatory governance, a positive school culture, and collaboration with the community are key factors in building a comprehensive educational ecosystem. Therefore, this discussion aims to provide an in-depth analysis of how elementary school management can serve as a strategic tool in addressing these various challenges while simultaneously fostering the realization of holistic educational quality. *School Management as the Foundation of Holistic Educational Quality*

Research findings indicate that elementary school management serves as the primary foundation for realizing holistic education (Gusti et al., 2025). International studies confirm that the effectiveness of school management is significantly correlated with both academic achievement and students' social-emotional well-being (Feraco et al., 2023; Shengyao et al., 2024). Schools with strategic planning, continuous monitoring, and a culture of reflection tend to demonstrate more consistent improvements in quality (Ayu, 2024). Thus, quality issues in elementary schools cannot be separated from the quality of their governance and management systems.

Conceptually, holistic education requires the integration of academic, character, and student well-being aspects (Norozzi, 2023). Research indicates that a whole-school approach to management can enhance student engagement, a sense of safety, and a positive learning climate (Zak et al., 2025; Kontak et al., 2025). This reinforces the notion that educational quality is not measured solely by academic grades but also by students' social-emotional and moral development (Hua et al., 2025). Therefore, school governance must be designed to support students' multidimensional development (Amelia et al., 2025). *School Governance and the Principles of Good Governance*

The implementation of good school governance principles—such as transparency, accountability, participation, and fairness—has been shown to enhance the effectiveness of school organizations. Studies indicate that schools with participatory governance exhibit better academic performance and a more positive school climate (Balqis et al., 2025; Ma et al., 2025). Clear accountability also fosters increased teacher professionalism and the efficient use of resources (Tóth & Csapó, 2022). This underscores that quality issues often stem from weak internal school oversight and coordination systems.

Furthermore, collaborative school leadership strengthens a culture of collective work and learning innovation. Research indicates that transformational leadership has an indirect yet significant impact on learning outcomes through increased teacher motivation (Megawati & Kamaruddin, 2023). In the context of elementary schools, the principal serves as the driving force behind a holistic vision that integrates academics and character (Tambunan, 2024). Without strong leadership, holistic policies risk becoming mere administrative programs (Sklar et al., 2024). **Integration of Character Education into the School System**

One of the primary challenges in elementary schools is that character education has not been systematically integrated. International research indicates that integrating character values into the curriculum and school culture is more effective than an incidental approach (Nurasiah et al., 2022). Comprehensive school-based implementation (whole-school character education) has been proven to enhance students' empathy, discipline, and responsibility (Irfan & Usman, 2023). This indicates that character education must be an integral part of curriculum management, not merely an additional activity.

In addition, a positive school culture serves as a medium for the internalization of values. Studies show that a supportive school climate contributes to students' moral development and psychological well-being (Aldridge & McLure, 2024). Therefore, school administrators must ensure consistency between policies, teaching practices, and daily routines. This integration is key to achieving holistic and sustainable educational quality. **Inclusivity and Equity as Holistic Dimension.**

The quality of holistic education is also determined by the extent to which schools can accommodate student diversity. Mitchell et al. (2025) emphasize that inclusive leadership and adaptive policies significantly influence equitable access to and participation in learning. Schools that are responsive to differences in social background, academic ability, and special needs demonstrate increased student ownership and participation (Wang, 2026). Thus, the problem of educational inequality can be minimized through adaptive and fair management.

Recent research also shows that an inclusive school leadership approach strengthens collaboration between teachers and the community in supporting vulnerable students (Adams et al., 2025). Holistic education cannot be achieved if some students are marginalized by the system; therefore, school governance must be oriented toward social justice as part of educational quality (Kurniawan et al., 2025).

Implementation Challenges: Teacher Competencies and Policy Consistency

Although the concept of holistic management promises positive impacts, various studies indicate implementation barriers. Limitations in teachers' competencies regarding the integration of academic and social-emotional learning present a major challenge (Najjarpour, 2025). Additionally, policy inconsistencies and a lack of systemic support often result in character and well-being programs being unsustainable (McCoy et al., 2023). These issues highlight the need to strengthen human resource capacity in elementary schools.

Schools with limited resources also face challenges in optimally implementing a holistic approach. International studies indicate that policy support, ongoing professional development, and effective academic supervision play a crucial role in ensuring the quality of implementation (Ventista & Brown, 2023). Therefore, improving the quality of elementary education requires synergy between internal school management and external support from the government and the community (Rohaeni, 2024).

Managerial Implications for High-Quality and Holistic Elementary Schools

These findings confirm that school management is not merely an administrative function but a strategic instrument in building holistic educational quality. The integration of good governance, transformational leadership, a positive school culture, and character education has been shown to strengthen academic achievement and student well-being (Alzoraiki et al., 2024; Werang et al., 2025). Thus, reforming the quality of basic education must begin with strengthening the school management system (Tamam et al., 2025).

The practical implications include the need for data-driven planning, ongoing evaluation, teacher training, and the active involvement of parents and the community (Tumiyati et al. 2025). Elementary schools, as the foundation of national education, must be managed as reflective and adaptive learning organizations capable of responding to change (Fauzan et al. 2025; Prisilia et al. 2025). Through a systematic and inclusive management approach, holistic improvements in educational quality can be achieved sustainably (Yang et al. 2025).

CONCLUSION

Based on a review of the literature, holistic improvements in the quality of elementary school education depend heavily on the quality of school management and governance. Transformational leadership, strategic planning, and reflective practices by school principals create an adaptive learning environment that supports academic achievement and teacher motivation. The integration of character and social-emotional education through a whole-school approach strengthens students' discipline, empathy, responsibility, and psychological well-being, affirming that educational quality extends beyond purely academic aspects. Furthermore, the application of good governance principles, inclusive leadership, collaboration with the community, and external support are key to addressing educational inequities and program implementation challenges, while limitations in teacher competencies and resources remain obstacles. Overall, a systematic, inclusive, and reflective school management approach serves as a strategic instrument for realizing holistic basic education, integrating academic, character, and social-emotional aspects, and ensuring equitable access for all students.

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