

# Indonesian School Principals' Strategic Leadership in Implementing 21st-Century Learning

Heru Widodo<sup>1</sup>, Munjin<sup>2</sup>, Sumiarti<sup>3</sup>, Novan Ardy Wiyani<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Doctoral Student, Department of Islamic Studies, UIN Saifuddin Zuhri, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup>Professor, Management of Islamic Education, UIN Saifuddin Zuhri, Indonesia

<sup>3,4</sup>Associate Professor, Management of Islamic Education, UIN Saifuddin Zuhri, Indonesia

## Abstract

In the 21st century, school principals are pivotal in navigating educational quality amidst evolving challenges and continuous changes. Effective principals must adapt to curriculum shifts, policy updates, and rapid technological advancements while possessing substantial information and communication technology skills.

This research concluded that Indonesian principals must continually enhance their leadership skills, focusing on flexibility and innovation to stay relevant and impactful. Integrating educational technology, particularly in online and hybrid learning, ensures access for students and teachers, helping to bridge the digital divide and improving learning quality. Furthermore, solid managerial capabilities allow principals to allocate budgets and human resources wisely, promoting sustainability despite resource limitations. Finally, transparent and participatory communication strengthens community involvement and support, contributing to Indonesia's overall education quality.

**Keywords:** Education, 4.0, Principal, Competency, 21st century, Digital Literacy

## Introduction

The Fourth Industrial Revolution (IR 4.0) has brought global change, urging Indonesia to adapt to these evolving trends. [Larson and Miller \(2011\)](#) state that for students to be competitive in the 21st century, they must master sixteen different abilities. These skills are divided into three main categories: foundational cognitive, competency, and character skills. Foundational cognitive skills include literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy, which are essential foundations for every student. Literacy, or the ability to read and write effectively, is a fundamental skill students need to understand and process information efficiently. Numeracy, or understanding and working with numbers, is also crucial, especially in an increasingly data-driven ecosystem. Digital literacy, which involves effectively using information and communication technology, has become highly relevant in this digital era. Competency skills encompass critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity, collaboration, and communication. Critical thinking and problem-solving refer to analyzing situations, identifying problems, and finding practical solutions. Creativity is the capacity to generate new and innovative ideas. Collaboration, or the ability to work with others, and communication, the ability to convey ideas and information clearly and effectively, are essential in today's increasingly collaborative and interconnected work environments.

Character skills include curiosity, initiative, perseverance, adaptability, leadership, and cultural awareness. Curiosity drives students to learn and seek more knowledge continually. Initiative is the ability to take action without waiting for instructions. Perseverance, or persistence in facing challenges, is essential for achieving long-term goals. Adaptability, or flexibility in the face of change, is also crucial in a rapidly changing world. Leadership is the ability to influence and inspire others, while cultural awareness is the ability to understand and appreciate cultural differences. Mastering these skills is vital for success in the workplace and becoming active and responsible citizens. Therefore, Indonesia's education system must adapt to ensure that students can develop and master these 21st-century skills. This includes changes in curriculum, teaching methods, and assessment to emphasize developing these competencies.

Additionally, collaboration between the government, industry, and educational institutions is crucial to ensuring the successful implementation of IR 4.0 in Indonesia. The government must provide supportive policies and infrastructure, industries should offer relevant training and job opportunities, and educational institutions must align their curriculum and teaching with the evolving needs of the workforce. With a comprehensive and collaborative approach, Indonesia can ensure its students are prepared to compete and succeed in the 21st century. Implementing IR 4.0 is not only about technology but also about preparing people for the future. The skills outlined by [Kereluik et al. \(2013\)](#) are crucial to achieving this goal and ensuring that future generations are ready to face upcoming challenges and opportunities. To address this challenge, the Indonesian government, through the Indonesian Education Master Plan (IEMP), has committed to enhancing 21st-century pedagogy skills among teachers ([Halim, 2022](#)). This commitment is realized through various initiatives and training programs to help teachers develop the skills and knowledge needed to teach in the digital age. One of the leading programs is the improvement of teacher competence through intensive and continuous training. This training includes mastery of educational technology, project-based teaching methods, and developing critical thinking, collaboration, communication, and creativity skills.

The Vision for Indonesia 2045 aims to establish Indonesia as a developed, competitive, prosperous, and equitable nation. One key pillar to achieving this vision is improving the quality of education and healthcare for all citizens, especially for the most vulnerable and economically disadvantaged groups. The main focus of this policy is to ensure that every citizen has equal access to quality education and healthcare services. The government has launched various programs to increase access to and quality of education, including the Indonesia Pintar Program, which provides financial assistance to students from low-income families. In addition, the Kartu Indonesia Sehat (Healthy Indonesia Card) program aims to ensure that all citizens, especially those in poverty, have access to adequate healthcare services.

However, providing quality education is not solely on the Ministry of Education and Culture but also involves local governments and school leaders. School principals in Indonesia are crucial in ensuring that government policies and programs are well-implemented at the school level. They must think strategically and possess strong leadership skills to address various challenges in the field. Effective principals should be able to inspire teachers and students, build strong relationships with parents and the community, and efficiently manage school resources. They must also be capable of identifying emerging issues, finding appropriate solutions, and making decisions based on the best interests of students and the school. In this context, the professional development of school principals becomes essential. Continuous training and education for principals can help them develop the skills and knowledge needed to be effective leaders.

Furthermore, government, community, and private sector support must ensure principals have the resources to succeed. Thus, the success of achieving the Vision for Indonesia 2045 relies not only on

government policies and programs but also on the strategic leadership of school principals who can translate this vision into concrete actions on the ground. Outstanding school principals will play a key role in creating a supportive, innovative, and inclusive learning environment, which will ultimately help Indonesia attain its status as a developed and prosperous nation. Therefore, this paper is prepared to discuss the concept of strategic leadership as applied by school principals and its impact on school organizations in implementing 21st-century learning.

## Literature Review

### Leadership Theory

Leadership is one of the most critical aspects of organizations and society. Since the early 20th century, researchers have sought to understand what makes a leader effective. The evolution of leadership theories reflects shifts in the understanding of leadership over time. Initially, the trait theory dominated leadership studies, positing that inherent characteristics, such as intelligence, confidence, and assertiveness, determine effective leadership. Early research, such as [Stogdill's \(1948\)](#) study, suggested that leaders have distinguishing characteristics that set them apart from non-leaders. However, by the 1950s, research shifted from innate traits to learned behaviors. Behavioral theory argues that effective leadership is not solely about what a leader possesses but also about what a leader does. Research from Ohio State University and the University of Michigan identified two main dimensions of leadership behavior: task orientation and relationship orientation. Effective leaders are those who can balance both orientations. In the 1960s, Fiedler's contingency model introduced the idea that leadership effectiveness depends on the situation. The degree to which a leader's style is appropriate for a given situation determines the degree to which that style is effective. Fiedler distinguished between task-oriented and relationship-oriented leadership approaches.

Situational factors influencing effectiveness include leader-member relations, task structure, and leader position power. In the 1970s, Robert House developed the path-goal theory, suggesting leaders should help subordinates achieve their goals by providing direction, support, and necessary resources. This theory identifies four main leadership styles: directive, supportive, participative, and achievement-oriented. Effective leaders adapt their styles to the needs of their subordinates and the situation at hand. In the late 1970s, transformational leadership theory was introduced by James MacGregor Burns and expanded by Bernard Bass in the 1980s. Transformational leadership focuses on a leader's ability to inspire and motivate subordinates to achieve higher performance and develop their potential. Transformational leaders create a compelling vision, inspire commitment, provide individual support, and encourage innovation.

In contrast, transactional leadership focuses on the exchange relationship between leaders and subordinates. Transactional leaders use rewards and punishments to motivate employees and achieve desired performance, setting clear goals, monitoring performance, and providing regular feedback. Charismatic leadership theory emphasizes leaders' power and ability to inspire and influence others through charisma. Charismatic leaders often have a strong vision, excellent communication skills, and the ability to elicit emotions and commitment from their followers. Later developments introduced authentic leadership theory, which emphasizes the importance of leaders being genuine and sincere in their interactions with others. Authentic leaders demonstrate integrity, transparency, and consistency between their values and actions. Servant leadership theory, popularized by [Greenleaf \(1998\)](#), stresses that leaders should prioritize the needs of others above individual interests, focusing on empowering and developing their subordinates. Finally, adaptive leadership theory, developed by Ronald [Heifetz and Marty Linsky](#)

(2014), highlights leaders' ability to help organizations and followers face complex changes and challenges. The development of these leadership theories shows an evolution in understanding what makes a leader effective, from inherent traits to learned behaviors and from situational approaches to more inclusive and adaptive leadership styles. Understanding these theories can help leaders develop the skills to lead effectively in different contexts. According to [Sunday et al. \(2014\)](#), five leadership skills are crucial for organizational leaders: empowerment, intuition, self-understanding, vision, and alignment of values. Briefly, the five leadership skills proposed by [Hellriegel and Slocum \(1992\)](#) include: (i) readiness to share power and organizational control with followers; (ii) the ability to understand, anticipate, and take risks in environmental situations that impact and change the organization; (iii) self-awareness of one's strengths and weaknesses; (iv) a clear vision of organizational goals; and (v) an awareness of organizational principles and the values of subordinates. A leader must master these skills to ensure the excellence of their organization.

### **Strategic Leadership**

The word "strategy" originates from the ancient Greek term "strategia," derived from "stratos" (army) and "ago" (to lead or direct). Initially, strategy referred to the art or science of leading or organizing military forces in battle. Over time, the strategy concept extended beyond its original military context and began to be applied in various fields, including business, politics, and organizational management. A strategy is a plan or series of actions to achieve specific goals by considering available resources and existing environmental conditions. In management, strategy represents a long-term plan that includes goal-setting, internal and external environmental analysis, formulation of actions, plan implementation, and evaluation of results. Strategy helps organizations direct their efforts effectively, improve operational efficiency, and create a competitive advantage.

Developing strategic theories such as Michael Porter's competitive positioning theory, Barney's resource-based view, and Gulati's network theory provides various approaches to understanding how organizations can effectively and efficiently achieve their goals. Overall, strategy has evolved beyond military tactics to become an essential tool in modern management for attaining competitive advantage and long-term success in diverse organizational contexts. By holistically understanding the origin and concept of strategy, school management can better apply strategic principles to effectively and adaptively manage their organizations in a dynamic environment.

### **Concept of Strategic Leadership**

According to [Schoemaker et al. \(2013\)](#), strategic leadership skills refer to a leader's ability to anticipate, challenge, interpret, decide, align, and learn from various situations in managing an organization. These skills reflect the essential capabilities leaders need to adapt to environmental changes and take proactive initiatives to face challenges and opportunities. Effective strategic leaders can anticipate future trends, question the status quo, accurately interpret complex information, and make decisions based on in-depth analysis. They can also align the organization's vision and goals with concrete actions that support long-term objectives. Additionally, continuous learning is a critical aspect of strategic leadership. Leaders must be able to evaluate the outcomes of their decisions and actions, utilizing this experience to improve organizational performance in the future. By combining all these skills, a leader can create an environment where innovation is valued, creativity is encouraged, and long-term success is sustainably achieved. Leaders who understand and develop these strategic leadership skills can lead their organizations through

change and challenges with confidence and high effectiveness.

### Strategic Leadership Model

Being a school leader is one of the most challenging positions in the education system, and the ability to implement external changes within the school organization is a primary requirement for school leaders. While there are numerous educational leadership studies, few have examined strategic leadership in Indonesia and internationally. Strategic leadership involves discovering what the organization needs to do well and, more importantly, what it can do to grow. After making this discovery, strategic leadership creates conditions that enable collective effort around these implications. This can only happen if the organization understands strategy as a learning process. The primary role of strategic leadership is to allow the organization to become a learning center and to foster this process by continually developing and discovering strategies while keeping them in a state of continuous evolution—formulation, implementation, reassessment, and revision. In the educational context, school leaders must continually seek new ways to improve the teaching and learning processes and school management. They must be able to analyze educational trends, identify improvement opportunities, and implement strategies to enhance overall school performance.

Furthermore, school leaders must promote a learning culture among staff and students, ensuring that all parties are engaged in continuous development and improvement. This process includes several key steps. First, leaders must conduct an in-depth analysis of the school's internal and external environment. Second, they must formulate clear strategies based on this analysis. Third, strategy implementation should involve all organization members to achieve shared goals. Fourth, regular evaluation should be conducted to assess the effectiveness of the implemented strategies and make necessary adjustments. Thus, strategic leadership is about making long-term decisions and ensuring that those decisions can be successfully implemented and adapted to changing environments. Effective leaders can create adaptive, responsive, and sustainable organizations that can learn from experience and continue to grow in the face of future challenges.



Figure 1. Strategic Leadership Model (Hughes et al., 2013)

The image above illustrates the concept of strategic leadership with several interrelated key elements. Strategic leadership lies at the core of all strategic activities within an organization. Strategic leaders are responsible for guiding, influencing, and managing the strategic changes necessary to achieve the organization's long-term vision. Strategic influence refers to a leader's ability to direct and shape the behavior and decisions of others within the organization. This influence is essential to ensure all

organization members are committed to the established vision and strategy. Leaders must inspire and motivate their teams to work toward common goals. Strategic planning and thinking involve developing a long-term vision and formulating strategies to achieve the organization's objectives. Strategic leaders must be capable of critical and analytical thinking to devise actionable plans. They need to understand the trends and dynamics of the external and internal environment to make informed decisions. The strategic leadership team comprises critical individuals responsible for developing and implementing strategies. Collaboration within this team is crucial to ensure the successful execution of the strategy. The team works together to identify opportunities and challenges, as well as to formulate effective action plans. Strategic actions encompass the implementation of the planned strategy. This is the stage where plans are translated into actual practice. Leaders and their teams must ensure that every step aligns with strategic objectives and that all organization members understand their role in this process. Strategic learning involves evaluating and learning from the strategy's implementation. It is a process where the organization assesses the effectiveness of the implemented strategy and makes necessary adjustments based on the results of this evaluation. Strategic learning enables the organization to grow and adapt to changing environments continuously.

### **21st Century Learning**

21st-century learning models refer to educational approaches designed to prepare students to face the challenges of a continuously evolving modern world. This approach emphasizes developing critical skills for success in the digital and globalized era. These skills include critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, communication, digital literacy, and an understanding of global citizenship. Critical thinking and problem-solving are key aspects of this model, encouraging students to think analytically when addressing issues. They are prompted to ask questions, evaluate information, and find innovative solutions. Creativity and innovation are also strongly emphasized, giving students space to experiment, try new things, and think beyond the limits of traditional learning. The ability to work in teams has become increasingly important in this era of globalization. Students are taught to collaborate, respect others' opinions, and achieve shared goals. Effective communication is also a primary focus, where students are trained to communicate clearly and convincingly verbally and in writing. Digital literacy has become essential, given the importance of technology in daily life. Students are taught how to use technology wisely and productively. They are also introduced to global citizenship, where they learn to understand and appreciate cultural diversity and assume responsibility as world citizens. The 21st-century learning model focuses on academic achievement, character development, and the skills needed to meet future challenges. With this approach, students are expected to become adaptive, innovative individuals prepared for the dynamics of the workforce and life. This model integrates essential aspects of education relevant to the needs of the modern world, producing graduates who are competent and ready to make positive contributions to society.

### **The Interconnection Between Strategic Leadership and 21st-Century Learning**

The rapid development of the Fourth Industrial Revolution worldwide and advancements in sophisticated technology and machinery require capable and prepared leaders for change. Organizational leaders must know the latest technological advancements, computing, hardware, software, internet, and email developments to face drastic changes in their responsibilities and duties. Numerous technological and transformational leadership studies have examined leadership aspects related to technology and school principals' interpersonal skills in Indonesia. Research by [Juraim and Mohd \(2017\)](#) concluded that a high

level of technological leadership practices among principals in regular high schools has no significant relationship with school performance. Thus, this study suggests that technological leadership practices among these principals are not dependent on the principal's leadership quality but are influenced by other factors. Most studies on transformational leadership among principals are closely related to interpersonal relationships and the personal values of leaders who can enhance followers' moral values and motivation (especially teachers), motivating them voluntarily to contribute to the organization. Strategic leadership is considered a highly needed leadership skill in the 21st century. Having a strategic leader is an advantage for an organization, as strategic leaders possess a clear vision, are highly capable of managing financial or human resources, have strong enthusiasm for performing their duties, and possess remarkable emotional intelligence. From previous studies, it can be concluded that strategic leadership by school leaders has a positive correlation with improving school excellence and effectiveness, making better decisions, and managing changes in the increasingly challenging educational landscape, which must meet the demands of 21st-century learning to prepare students for the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

However, strategic leadership must be supported by a robust organizational culture and commitment from all related parties to achieve this success. A strategic leader must have a clear vision and strong management skills, build strong relationships with staff, and create an environment conducive to learning and innovation. Furthermore, continuous training and development are essential for leaders to stay current with the latest advancements and prepare for emerging challenges. Given the diverse educational dynamics and the need to improve academic quality across various regions, this challenge is increasingly relevant in Indonesia. Strategic leadership in Indonesian schools can create an adaptive and responsive education system that prepares young generations to compete globally. Strategic leadership is the key to success in an ever-evolving and changing educational world. With strong leadership and support from the entire school community, academic institutions in Indonesia can create an environment that fosters learning and growth, equipping students to face the future with confidence and competence.

### **The Excellence and Effectiveness of Strategic Leadership**

Studies on the effectiveness and excellence of schools consistently emphasize the importance of leadership in organizational change, development, improvement, motivation, and teaching quality (Harris, 2004). This is supported by Eacott (2008), who stated that strategic leadership is highly relevant for school leaders to meet the current educational needs. In Indonesia, previous studies have shown that the excellence and effectiveness of schools greatly depend on the strategic leadership of school principals. According to Ibrahim et al. (2019), the strategic elements in leadership require principals to provide their thoughts or ideas in determining the school's short-term and long-term goals. These school leaders must also set the stage and develop practical strategies that the school community can implement. As stated by Schoemaker et al. (2013) in the Harvard Business Review, strategic leaders must be able to anticipate challenges and opportunities. In line with the Ministry of Education's intention to emphasize school-based assessments, the development of higher-order thinking skills (HOTS), the implementation of 21st-century learning, and positioning Indonesia as one of the top-ranking countries in the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) and Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), school leaders play a vital role in guiding teachers and the organization. Change is inevitable and requires strategic leaders with a clear vision and goals. Effective school leaders are visionary leaders who can create logical expectations for the school organization. This leader will tend to prepare an organizational environment that suits the changing teaching and learning needs, including 21st Century Learning. Maolana et al.

(2023) examined strategic leadership and the quality of teaching in Islamic schools in Indonesia. This study found that strategic leadership was at a moderate level with a significant and positive relationship to teaching quality. These findings support issues and challenges related to teachers' readiness to implement 21st-century learning. Permana et al. (2021) found that principals in boarding schools could practice strategic leadership quite well, but there was still room for improvement to enhance their organizational management skills and personal characteristics. The study also found a relationship between strategic leadership practices and the academic sustainability of boarding schools, as they showed sustained excellence in national exams between 2012 and 2013.

Strategic leadership must be supported by a strong organizational culture and commitment from all involved parties to achieve success in Indonesia. Strategic leaders must have a clear vision and good management skills and be capable of building strong relationships with staff and creating an environment conducive to learning and innovation. Additionally, it is crucial to continuously provide training and development for leaders to stay up-to-date with the latest developments and prepare to face emerging challenges. Overall, strategic leadership is the key to achieving success in the ever-evolving and changing world of education. With strong leadership and support from the entire school community, educational institutions in Indonesia can create an environment that fosters learning and growth, preparing students to face the future confidently and competently.

### **Decision-Making Competence**

Leaders in the educational context in Indonesia, particularly school principals, play a crucial role in influencing school performance. Principals can impact various operational and strategic aspects through sound decision-making, human resource management, the implementation of educational programs, and the organization of the school's structure. This is especially important given the unique challenges faced by the educational system in Indonesia. As strategic leaders, principals in Indonesia must be able to identify opportunities and challenges in the external environment as well as the strengths and weaknesses of the school internally. Based on this analysis, they are expected to develop educational strategies that leverage the school's strengths and address its shortcomings. A good strategy will improve the quality of education, attract new students, and strengthen the school's reputation in the community. A Priatna (2018) study shows that effective school leadership significantly improves educational quality.

Regarding human resource management, principals must ensure that teachers and staff possess adequate skills, are motivated, and are well-supported. Effective principals will develop HR policies and practices that support the recruitment, development, and retention of qualified teachers and staff. By creating a positive work environment and providing opportunities for professional development, principals can enhance teacher and staff satisfaction and performance, improving the quality of education offered to students. Research by Santiari et al. (2020) shows that the support and motivation provided by school principals significantly influence teacher performance in schools in Indonesia. School program management involves planning, implementing, and overseeing various educational activities and initiatives. Competent principals will ensure that these programs align with the school's strategic objectives and are carried out efficiently and effectively. They will identify and manage risks, allocate resources wisely, and ensure all stakeholders work toward common goals. Good program management can lead to improved operational effectiveness and better educational outcomes. This aligns with the research findings by Wahyudi et al. (2020), which highlight the importance of the principal's role in program management to enhance student learning outcomes. The organizational structure in a school dete-



rmines how tasks and responsibilities are distributed across the institution.

A good principal will design a structure that facilitates effective communication, collaboration, and decision-making. A clear and organized structure helps avoid confusion, increases efficiency, and enables the school to respond quickly to changes. Additionally, a structure that supports innovation and the initiatives of teachers and staff can encourage creativity and growth. A study by [Maryana & Rachmawati \(2013\)](#) shows that a good school organizational structure creates a conducive learning environment. The principal's role in influencing school performance is multifaceted and complex. The success of a school heavily depends on the principal's ability to make sound decisions, effectively manage human resources, direct educational programs efficiently, and create an organizational structure that supports strategic objectives. With strong and visionary leadership, schools in Indonesia can achieve academic excellence and succeed in providing high-quality education to students.

### Managing Change

The 21st century requires leaders who can plan and make flexible decisions in light of ever-changing circumstances. In Indonesia's education context, school principals are expected to be crucial in navigating the challenges and opportunities that arise with the changing times. One of the main challenges school principals face in Indonesia is the frequent changes in curriculum and education policies. Principals must be able to adapt quickly to these changes and ensure that all teachers and staff in the school understand and are capable of implementing these changes. Flexible leaders can design strategies that comply with new policies and consider the unique needs and potential of students and the school community.

According to [Suryadi et al. \(2023\)](#), adaptive leadership that responds to changes in education policies plays a crucial role in improving the quality of education. Furthermore, technological advancements and digitalization also require school principals to have information and communication technology skills. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated technology adoption in the teaching and learning process, highlighting the importance of school principals who can lead the transition to online or hybrid learning. Principals must be able to plan and implement the effective use of technology in education, ensuring that all teachers and students can use this technology. Research by [Prastiwi & Widodo \(2023\)](#) shows that innovative leadership in utilizing educational technology can improve student engagement and learning outcomes. Flexibility in decision-making is also essential in facing social and economic challenges that impact education. School principals must be able to manage resources wisely, including budgets and personnel, in often uncertain situations. They must find creative solutions to overcome funding limitations or teacher shortages, for example, by establishing partnerships with the community or other institutions. A study by [Khoirudin et al. \(2023\)](#) shows that principals with good managerial skills and flexibility in decision-making can improve operational efficiency and the welfare of teachers.

Additionally, a principal's ability to communicate effectively with various stakeholders, including parents, teachers, students, and the community, is crucial in ensuring broad support and participation in school initiatives and programs. Open and transparent communication helps build trust and collaboration, which can improve the quality of education. According to research by [Fatmawati et al. \(2018\)](#), effective communication between the principal and stakeholders is vital to creating a positive and inclusive learning environment. Overall, school principals in the 21st century must be able to plan and make flexible decisions in the face of various challenges and changes. Adaptive, innovative, and communicative leadership is necessary to ensure that schools can provide high-quality education relevant to the times'

needs. With solid and visionary leadership, schools in Indonesia can thrive and succeed in addressing the dynamics of education in the modern era.

## Conclusion

School principals in the 21st century play a crucial role in ensuring the quality of education amidst the various challenges and continuous changes. They must be able to plan and make flexible decisions, given the need to adapt to changes in curriculum, education policies, and technological advancements. Effective principals must also possess information and communication technology skills and solid managerial abilities to manage resources efficiently. In addition, principals must communicate effectively with various stakeholders to build support and participation in school initiatives. Adaptive, innovative, and communicative leadership is essential to create a positive and inclusive learning environment. With flexibility and visionary leadership, principals can lead schools in Indonesia toward success in providing high-quality education relevant to the modern era's needs. Existing research and literature, as highlighted by [Singphen et al. \(2019\)](#) and [Hambrick & Wowak \(2021\)](#), emphasize the importance of adaptive and responsive leadership in improving the quality of education. Therefore, principals who can manage change and lead with flexibility and innovation will be crucial to success in facing the dynamics of education in the modern era. In facing the educational dynamics of the 21st century, school principals in Indonesia must continue to develop their leadership skills to remain relevant and practical. They must keep learning and adapting quickly to changes in the external environment, including changes in education policies, technological advancements, and socio-economic challenges. The ability of school principals to innovate in the use of educational technology is crucial, especially in the context of online and hybrid learning, which is increasingly becoming an integral part of the education system. They must ensure that all students and teachers have adequate access to technology and can use it effectively to support the teaching and learning process. This enhances the quality of learning and helps reduce the digital divide in society. Furthermore, principals must be able to manage school resources wisely. They need strong managerial skills to ensure that budgets and human resources are used efficiently and effectively. Principals who can find creative and innovative solutions to address resource limitations will be better able to maintain the stability and sustainability of school operations. Effective communication with various stakeholders, including teachers, students, parents, and the community, is also essential to school leadership. Principals must build strong and collaborative relationships with all parties involved in education. Transparent and participatory communication can enhance support and community involvement in school programs, improving the overall quality of education.

## Referensi

1. Fatmawati, Z., Bafadal, I., & Sobri, A. Y. (2018). Komunikasi kepala sekolah dengan warga sekolah untuk mewujudkan visi dan misi sekolah. *Jurnal Administrasi Dan Manajemen Pendidikan*, 1(2), 198-205.
2. Greenleaf, R. K. (1998). *The power of servant-leadership*. Berrett-Koehler Publishers.
3. Halim, A. (2022). Signifikansi dan implementasi berpikir kritis dalam proyeksi dunia pendidikan abad 21 pada tingkat sekolah dasar. *Jurnal Indonesia Sosial Teknologi*, 3(03), 404-418.
4. Hambrick, D. C., & Wowak, A. J. (2021). Strategic leadership. *Strategic management: State of the field and its future*, 337-353.

5. Heifetz, R. A., & Linsky, M. (2014). Adaptive leadership: the Heifetz collection (3 items). Harvard Business Review Press.
6. Hellriegel, Don & John W. Slocum, Jr. (2011). Organizational behavior, 13 edition. South Western: Cengage Learning.
7. Hughes, R. L., Beatty, K. M., & Dinwoodie, D. (2013). Becoming a strategic leader: Your role in your organization's enduring success. John Wiley & Sons.
8. Kereluik, K., Mishra, P., Fahnoe, C., & Terry, L. (2013). What knowledge is of most worth: Teacher knowledge for 21st century learning. *Journal of digital learning in teacher education*, 29(4), 127-140.
9. Maolana, I., Darmiyanti, A., & Abidin, J. (2023). Strategi Kepemimpinan Kepala Sekolah Yang Efektif Dalam Meningkatkan Kualitas Guru Di Lembaga Pendidikan Islam. *Innovative: Journal Of Social Science Research*, 3(4), 83-94.
10. Maryana, R., & Rachmawati, Y. (2013). *Pengelolaan lingkungan belajar*. Prenada Media.
11. Prastiwi, M. A., & Widodo, A. (2023). Peran kepemimpinan kepala madrasah di era 5.0, pendidikan dan teknologi, pada kompetensi 21st century. *PRIMER: Jurnal Ilmiah Multidisiplin*, 1(5), 536-544.
12. Priatna, A. (2018). Manajemen pengembangan mutu sekolah. *Jurnal Administrasi Pendidikan*, 25(1), 80-90.
13. Priyanto, D. (2011). Pengembangan Perencanaan Pendidikan Islam (Konsep Strategi Pengembangan Di Indonesia). *INSANIA: Jurnal Pemikiran Alternatif Kependidikan*, 16(3), 294-307.
14. Singphen, T., Poopayang, P., Siphai, S., & Charoensuk, P. (2019). Strategic Leadership Factors of School Administrators Influencing the Effectiveness of Small-Sized Schools. *International Journal of Educational Administration and Policy Studies*, 11(3), 20-28.
15. Suryadi, I., Pamungkas, R. W. P., & Wahyudi, F. S. (2023). Peran Kepemimpinan Efektif dalam Meningkatkan Kualitas Manajemen Pendidikan. *Journal of International Multidisciplinary Research*, 1(2), 129-145.
16. Taylor, R., Fadel, C., Kim, H., & Care, E. (2020). Competencies for the 21st century. *Center for Curriculum Redesign, and Brookings Institution*, Boston, MA.
17. Wahyudi, A., Narimo, S., & Wafroturohmah, W. W. (2020). Kepemimpinan Pembelajaran Kepala Sekolah Dalam Meningkatkan Hasil Belajar Siswa. *Jurnal Varidika*, 31(2), 47-55.