

Principals' Instructional Leadership in Enhancing Teacher Professionalism in Private Elementary Schools in Lubuk Baja District, Batam City

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the role of principals' instructional leadership in improving teacher professionalism in private elementary schools in Lubuk Baja District, Batam City. The study used a qualitative descriptive approach with data collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation. Implementing collaborative and reflective approaches encouraged increased use of innovative teaching methods, such as online quizzes, instructional videos, and authentic assessments. Parent-satisfaction reached 87% "very satisfied," and student discipline complaints fell by 20% after six months of structured supervision. Key enabling factors were structured internal policies, cross-teacher and staff collaboration, and planned training delivered online and offline. In conclusion, consistent, participatory, and responsive instructional leadership by principals is a key driver of teacher professionalism and educational quality in multicultural private elementary schools in Lubuk Baja. The study recommends strengthening principal capacity through continuous training, streamlining administration, and improving teachers' digital literacy to support adaptive and innovative learning transformation.

INTRODUCTION

Primary education plays a fundamental role in shaping the quality of human resources in the future, especially amid global dynamics that demand a shift in educational leadership toward more instructional and visionary directions (Aslam et al., 2022; Hanim et al., 2020; Atmojo et al., 2021). In Lubuk Baja District, Batam City, there are 25 elementary schools consisting of 9 public and 16 private institutions, where competition over educational quality is increasingly intense within a multicultural society that includes Malay, Javanese, Batak, and Chinese communities. As an industrial and free-trade zone, public expectations for the quality of private schools are rising, requiring principals not only to carry out administrative functions but also to optimize their role as adaptive instructional leaders (Aslam et al., 2022). This situation underscores the urgency of instructional leadership to direct teacher professionalism in responding to the times while realizing educational quality that is responsive to the needs of the multicultural community in this strategic industrial area (Hanim et al., 2020). In sum, the instructional leadership challenges in private elementary schools require adaptive, innovative, and contextual strategies to sustainably enhance teacher professionalism.

Effective principals are those who can clarify the school's vision and mission, manage instructional programs, and create a productive learning climate in the elementary education environment (Aslam et al., 2022; Atmojo et al., 2021; Rahayu & Iskandar, 2022). However, field practice still shows a gap between the theory of instructional leadership and its implementation, where some principals tend to focus solely on administrative aspects so that capacity building for teachers and academic culture is less than optimal. Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture No. 6 of 2018 actually emphasizes the importance of managerial competence and academic supervision, yet realities in Batam's private schools indicate a lack of synchronization between national policy and local practice (Nelitawati & Ginanjar, 2023). Weak facilitation for the capacity development of private-school principals and uneven supervision have caused quality gaps between public and private schools. Therefore, there is a need to strengthen instructional leadership systems comprehensively and in an integrated manner to ensure that all principals can implement theory into real practice (Atmojo et al., 2021). In conclusion, improving teacher professionalism in private schools is strongly influenced by the consistency of instructional leadership implementation oriented toward human resource development.

Beyond issues of policy and implementation, disparities among private schools are also influenced by variation in principals' ability to build an innovative and adaptive academic culture (Rosdah, 2024; Tishana et al., 2023; Suningsih et al., 2024). Some principals successfully instill collaboration and innovation, while others remain trapped in administrative routines without systematic capacity building for teachers. Prior studies show that optimizing teacher performance can only be achieved through leadership that actively promotes supervision, training, and continuous instructional reflection (Aslam et al., 2022; Hanim et al., 2020). Yet the gap between regulatory standards, instructional leadership theory, and real practice in private elementary schools remains a recurring challenge. This variation reinforces the need to map specific

enabling and inhibiting factors for instructional leadership in multicultural contexts such as Lubuk Baja (Tishana et al., 2023). Accordingly, deeper contextual analysis is required to understand the dynamics of private-school principals' instructional leadership and its impact on strengthening teacher professionalism, particularly in environments marked by multicultural challenges and intensifying competition.

Previous studies consistently affirm the importance of principals' instructional leadership in accelerating improvements in teacher professionalism at private elementary schools (Aslam et al., 2022; Hanim et al., 2020; Atmojo et al., 2021). Teacher performance and motivation are highly influenced by integrated instructional management programs, intensive supervision, and ongoing mentoring by principals. Nevertheless, many principals have not fully adopted an instructional approach consistently, resulting in variation in teacher development and disparities in educational quality (Rahayu & Iskandar, 2022). This indicates that the bridge between instructional leadership theory and real practice in private schools still needs to be strengthened through systemic interventions. Recognizing this, it is urgent to design policies that are responsive and adaptive to the needs of principals and teachers so as to create a culture of teacher professionalism aligned with the national education vision (Atmojo et al., 2021). In summary, transforming principals' instructional leadership should be directed toward strengthening programs for coaching, supervision, and teacher professional reflection on a sustained basis to meet today's educational challenges.

In strengthening teacher professionalism, the principal is not merely an administrator but also a visionary instructional leader, facilitator, and chief motivator for all members of the school (Purnama & Reyta, 2023; Romadhon & Ms, 2021; Kadarsih et al., 2020). Principals who translate instructional leadership theory into adaptive strategies based on local needs—especially in multicultural environments like Lubuk Baja—can foster a tolerant, collaborative, and innovative school climate. Such leadership is expected to reinforce teachers' commitment to self-development and to enhance pedagogical and professional competencies on an ongoing basis (Suningsih et al., 2024). However, realities on the ground often show that the misalignment among national regulations, theoretical concepts, and practice is a main barrier to transforming teacher professionalism (Purnama & Reyta, 2023). Therefore, principals need to implement transformative approaches that are responsive to contextual challenges and capable of integrating multicultural values and instructional innovation into teacher development programs. In conclusion, adaptive and contextual instructional leadership is a vital foundation for strengthening teacher professionalism in multicultural private elementary schools.

The significance of principals' instructional leadership in increasing teacher professionalism is also reflected in findings that show positive correlations between leadership style, supervision, and teacher capacity development with instructional quality and student learning outcomes (Mashuri & Wahyudiati, 2023; Sunardi et al., 2019; Yunitasari et al., 2020). Principals who act as instructional innovators can encourage teachers to participate actively in training, reflection, and the development of teaching methods that align with

students' needs. Character-based supervision also becomes a key factor in shaping teacher discipline, creativity, and innovation, ultimately influencing the quality of education in private schools (Sunardi et al., 2019). Moreover, strengthening principals' managerial capacity through ongoing training has proved to be a solution for addressing misalignments between leadership theory and practice, enabling principals to effectively adapt national policies to local contexts (Khotami, 2020). Therefore, superior teacher professionalism in private elementary schools is inseparable from the strategic role of instructional leadership that is transformative, collaborative, and innovation-driven.

Based on the above discussion, this study is directed at identifying, describing, and analyzing the instructional leadership practices of principals in private elementary schools in Lubuk Baja District, Batam City, and their contribution to enhancing teacher professionalism (Aslam et al., 2022; Atmojo et al., 2021; Rosdah, 2024). Using a qualitative approach, the study seeks to reveal leadership dynamics that are adaptive, innovative, and responsive to the challenges of education in a multicultural and competitive setting. It also highlights the importance of mapping enabling and inhibiting factors faced by principals in translating instructional leadership theory into real practice, thereby informing policy recommendations for improving quality in private schools (Tishana et al., 2023; Suningsih et al., 2024). The expectation is that the results will enrich the leadership literature, bridge gaps between theory and practice, and encourage a productive, sustainable ecosystem for private elementary education. Thus, the urgency of this research lies in strengthening the foundations of teacher professionalism through contextual instructional leadership by principals, oriented to real needs in the community.

METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach with a constructivist paradigm to gain an in-depth understanding of principals' instructional leadership practices and their influence on teacher professionalism in the natural context of private elementary schools. This approach enabled the researcher to explore participants' meanings, motives, and social interactions in efforts to improve teacher professionalism.

Site and Time

The study was conducted at SD Valentin and SD Eduland—two private elementary schools in Lubuk Baja District, Batam City, Riau Islands Province—selected for their multicultural characteristics and competitive dynamics around educational quality. Research took place from April to July 2025, covering preparation, data collection, analysis, and report writing.

Participants and Sampling Technique

Informants were selected through purposive sampling with the following criteria: principals actively implementing instructional leadership, senior teachers, novice teachers, academic staff, and an external supervisor. A list of role-specific information tasks is provided in Table 1 of the thesis document.

Data Sources

1. Primary Data:

Results of in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and field documentation with principals, teachers, and staff.

2. Secondary Data:

School program documents, supervision reports, activity photos, and training modules for triangulation.

Data Collection Techniques

Passive-participatory observation in classrooms, staff meetings, and teacher training sessions to record interaction patterns and leadership practices. Semi-structured interviews lasting 45–90 minutes used open guides and probing techniques, were recorded, and transcribed verbatim. Documentation study (annual work plans, minutes, photos, modules) was conducted to verify field data.

Data Analysis Techniques

Analysis followed the Miles, Huberman & Saldaña interactive model: (1) data collection, (2) data condensation, (3) data display, and (4) conclusion drawing/verification, conducted simultaneously and cyclically. Data were coded, categorized into themes, and presented in descriptive narratives, quotations, and tables prior to inductive conclusions.

Trustworthiness of Data

Reliability of findings was ensured through four criteria: credibility (source/technique triangulation, member checking), transferability (thick description), dependability (audit trail), and confirmability (critical reflection and peer debriefing).

RESULTS

School Profiles and Baseline Conditions

SD Valentin has twelve teachers, seven classes, 131 students, and a five-day full-day schedule; SD Eduland hosts ten teachers, six classes, and fifty-eight students with a similar model. Ethnic diversity necessitates culturally sensitive instructional leadership. A lean organizational structure places the principal as the driver for planning, implementation, and evaluation cycles for professionalism programs. Baseline diagnosis indicated some teachers still rely on traditional lecturing. Physical resources are adequate, but the use of interactive technology is uneven—especially in lower grades—resulting in varied baseline pedagogical competence.

Instructional Leadership Practices

Observations recorded monthly in-house training, at least twice-per-semester classroom supervision, scheduled individual coaching, and a Friday afternoon sharing forum as part of a Professional Learning Community. Interviews confirmed that teachers feel valued, motivated, and have access to external workshops and publication incentives. Principals model good practice by arriving before the first bell, making daily classroom walk-throughs, and providing data-based feedback. Two-way dialogue is used to prepare written

improvement plans, set targets, and monitor attainment. This collaborative approach nurtures a reflective culture; teachers have begun to adopt inquiry methods, increase the use of digital media, and engage in peer observation as part of a shared learning cycle.

Impacts on Teacher Professionalism and Student Outcomes

Semester evaluations indicate a five-point rise in internal quality reports, a thirty-percent drop in student absenteeism, and an increase in curriculum team meetings from once to four times per semester. Parent surveys show eighty-seven percent “very satisfied,” strengthening the schools’ legitimacy. Discipline complaints fell by twenty percent after six months of structured supervision. Teachers report improved facility with interactive technology and the ability to differentiate content. Reflective notes emphasize increased use of online quizzes, demonstration videos, and authentic assessment rubrics. Motivation has risen alongside monthly public recognition, while data analysis of learning has become routine. Students have benefitted through more active participation, higher literacy scores, and positive attendance trends. These changes were consistent throughout the school year.

Enablers and Constraints

Success is driven by written policies—supervision guidelines, training calendars, and performance indicators—that align resources with quality targets. School–foundation funding schemes enable teachers to attend fourteen certified online trainings each academic year. A collaborative culture, supported by online discussion spaces and peer coaching, accelerates idea exchange and problem-solving. The main constraints are heavy daily administrative loads and limited digital devices in some classes. Principals respond by delegating tasks to staff, providing loaner devices, and training in classroom-management apps. These mitigation steps reduced weekly administrative time and improved job satisfaction. Nonetheless, budget stability remains a challenge when foundation donations fluctuate, as projected for the following semester.

Thematic Synthesis

Triangulation of codes WD, OB, and DK highlights three themes: “principal modeling,” “reflective coaching,” and “collaborative culture.” Modeling strengthened punctuality; reflective coaching fostered techno-pedagogical competence; and collaboration reinforced cross-class peer learning. Causal relations are evidenced by consistent teacher narratives, documentary proof, and field performance trends. Thus, instructional leadership functions as a synergistic catalyst uniting teacher professionalism, instructional quality, and increasing public trust at each quarterly evaluation during fieldwork.

DISCUSSION

The discussion indicates that principals’ instructional leadership in private elementary schools in Lubuk Baja plays a strategic role in building sustainable teacher professionalism (Aslam et al., 2022; Hanim et al., 2020; Rosdah, 2024). Field findings reflect that principals are not only administrators but also instructional leaders who actively build the school’s vision and mission, cultivate academic culture, and promote innovation in daily teaching practice. This pattern

is evident in routines of supervision, internal training, and scheduled individual coaching, all oriented toward achieving educational quality that adapts to multicultural challenges (Tishana et al., 2023; Suningsih et al., 2024). Principals successfully initiated best-practice sharing forums and data-based feedback, encouraging teachers to enhance pedagogical and professional capacity. In conclusion, successful instructional leadership practice in private schools depends on principals who can build a collaborative, reflective, and innovative culture for teacher professional growth.

The findings show that monthly internal training and structured classroom supervision have tangible effects on boosting teacher motivation, skills, and innovation in lesson design (Atmojo et al., 2021; Rahayu & Iskandar, 2022; Sunardi et al., 2019). The effectiveness of these professional development programs is supported by principals' openness to feedback and their ability to facilitate external workshops and teacher collaboration. Observational data indicate that teachers have started to adopt inquiry methods, increase use of digital media, and participate more actively in peer-learning forums after regularly scheduled individual coaching (Mashuri & Wahyudiati, 2023; Yunitasari et al., 2020). These behavioral changes are reinforced by reflective notes and principal feedback that consistently encourage innovation and instructional reflection. Thus, consistent instructional leadership via supervision, training, and facilitation of innovation has proved effective in collectively advancing teacher professionalism. In conclusion, intensive principal-teacher interaction is the main foundation for building a collaborative and dynamic learning ecosystem in private schools.

Principals' engagement in supervision, monitoring, and data-based feedback is reflected in rising teacher confidence and adoption of innovative instructional methods (Nelitawati & Ginanjar, 2023; Romadhon & Ms, 2021; Kadarsih et al., 2020). Interview results show that principals who frequently visit classrooms, attend every staff meeting, and assist teachers in designing instructional tools foster professionalism and collaboration among educators. Teachers' reflective notes report increased use of online quizzes, instructional videos, and authentic assessment rubrics in the last six months, indicating that digital practice strengthened after principals modeled instructional innovation (Purnama & Reyta, 2023; Suningsih et al., 2024). These positive changes have not only improved teaching quality but also increased student engagement in learning. Therefore, instructional leadership grounded in supervision, monitoring, and support for innovation strengthens teachers' reflective, adaptive, and collaborative stance in managing classes. In conclusion, principals who consistently model and provide room for creativity significantly shape a strong learning culture.

Instructional leadership also improves learning outcomes and satisfies school stakeholders, as evidenced by a five-point increase in internal quality reports and parent satisfaction reaching 87% "very satisfied" (Rahayu & Iskandar, 2022; Sunardi et al., 2019; Mashuri & Wahyudiati, 2023). These data are supported by observations indicating a 30% decrease in student absenteeism and a notable reduction in disciplinary violations after structured supervision and teacher reflection programs were implemented. Routine discussion forums and

a rise in curriculum meetings from once to four times per semester attest that collaborative culture and joint evaluation have grown within the schools (Yunitasari et al., 2020; Tishana et al., 2023). Teachers acknowledge that involvement in decision-making processes increases professional responsibility and the courage to innovate in ways that better match student needs. Based on these data, it can be concluded that participatory and responsive instructional leadership not only raises teacher quality but also delivers direct positive impacts on instructional quality and stakeholder satisfaction.

Robust systems and internal policies are a principal enabling factor, as reflected in supervision guidelines, training calendars, and measurable performance indicators (Suningsih et al., 2024; Rosdah, 2024; Hanim et al., 2020). These policies align the school's vision with teacher professionalism practices so that interventions are structured and oriented toward clear quality targets. Field observations show increasing teacher participation in certified online training funded by the school-foundation, averaging fourteen courses per academic year (Tishana et al., 2023; Mashuri & Wahyudiati, 2023). In addition, online discussion spaces, peer-coaching forums, and routine feedback mechanisms accelerate idea exchange and spur instructional innovation. With integrated system support, technical or administrative obstacles can be addressed more quickly through cross-functional collaboration and coordination. In conclusion, strong support systems and adaptive internal policies are essential to reinforce the foundations of teacher professionalism and the success of instructional leadership in private schools.

Constraints in implementing instructional leadership still arise, especially concerning heavy daily administrative loads and limited digital devices in some classes (Nelitawati & Ginanjar, 2023; Atmojo et al., 2021; Khotami, 2020). Teachers reveal that the demands of reporting and documentation often reduce time for designing innovative instruction and professional reflection. Infrastructure constraints also occur in access to and use of digital media in lower-grade classrooms, requiring principals to adapt policies and allocate loaner devices in rotation (Suningsih et al., 2024; Tishana et al., 2023). Mitigation measures—such as delegating administrative tasks to non-teaching staff and periodic training in classroom-management applications—reduced teachers' administrative time and improved job satisfaction (Rosdah, 2024). Furthermore, strengthening teachers' digital literacy through online training has improved their proficiency in using learning platforms. In conclusion, administrative and technical barriers can be addressed gradually via policy innovation and fair task distribution, thereby maintaining the quality of principals' instructional leadership implementation in private schools.

The success of principals' instructional leadership in improving teacher professionalism is inseparable from the collaborative culture built through routine discussion forums, professional learning communities, and peer coaching (Romadhon & Ms, 2021; Yunitasari et al., 2020; Sunardi et al., 2019). Teachers acknowledge that spaces for sharing experiences, discussing instructional challenges, and giving one another feedback strengthen ownership of school programs. A consistently implemented peer-learning model builds trust and solidarity across classes and accelerates the adoption of instructional

innovations (Purnama & Reyta, 2023; Mashuri & Wahyudiati, 2023). This fosters more active teacher participation in professional development forums and continuous reflection on instructional effectiveness. A strong culture of collaboration encourages pedagogical innovation, cultivates critical attitudes, and improves both individual and team performance in the face of curricular change and the demands of modern education. In conclusion, the synergy between principals' instructional leadership and school-wide collaboration is the primary capital for an adaptive, innovative, quality-oriented educational ecosystem.

Research findings also affirm that modeling by principals—in discipline, integrity, and work ethic—positively influences professional behavioral change among private-school teachers (Kadarsih et al., 2020; Purnama & Reyta, 2023; Rosdah, 2024). Principals who arrive before the first bell, consistently monitor task execution, and recognize teacher achievements serve as inspiration for the entire school community. Observational data show that teachers become more orderly in carrying out duties, actively join training, and become more open to innovation after seeing tangible examples provided by the principal (Tishana et al., 2023; Mashuri & Wahyudiati, 2023). Such modeling is also evident in how principals manage time, prioritize open communication, and uphold professional ethics in every decision. In conclusion, the principal's role as a role model not only strengthens school culture but also significantly increases teacher motivation and professional commitment to continuous improvement.

Intrinsic motivation and public recognition are important drivers for enhancing teacher professionalism in private schools, as reflected in teacher reflective notes and stakeholder satisfaction surveys (Yunitasari et al., 2020; Sunardi et al., 2019; Mashuri & Wahyudiati, 2023). Teachers who receive recognition for instructional innovation or contributions to curriculum development report feeling more compelled to renew their teaching practice. Monthly award schemes, teacher involvement in strategic decisions, and transparent performance appraisal increase confidence and the desire for continued growth (Romadhon & Ms, 2021; Kadarsih et al., 2020). Heightened motivation also strengthens team culture and adaptability to curricular or policy changes. The successful implementation of recognition systems and intrinsic-motivation supports is evident from sustained improvements in attendance, active participation in training, and positive responses to routine supervision and evaluation. In conclusion, systematic recognition and motivation strategies reinforce teacher professionalism and create a productive, harmonious, quality-oriented work environment.

The integration of learning technology is a significant aspect of strengthening teacher professionalism, supported by certified online training and digital literacy programs facilitated by principals (Suningsih et al., 2024; Rosdah, 2024; Yunitasari et al., 2020). Observations and teacher reflections show more frequent use of online quizzes, demonstration videos, and integration of digital media in authentic assessment. Teachers who initially struggled with technology have gained confidence after participating in trainings and receiving direct assistance from principals and peers (Mashuri & Wahyudiati, 2023; Tishana et al., 2023). In addition, loaner devices and guidance in classroom-management applications

accelerated teacher adaptation to digital learning, particularly during online-learning transitions. Successful technological integration has spurred new teaching methods and strengthened differentiation in response to students' needs. In conclusion, principals' commitment to supporting digital literacy and technological innovation not only accelerates the transformation of teacher professionalism but also broadens adaptive, contextual, and relevant learning.

Theme-level reflection highlights three recurring codes – principal modeling (WD), reflective coaching (OB), and collaborative culture (DK) – consistently reported in teacher narratives and field documentation (Kadarsih et al., 2020; Purnama & Reyta, 2023; Rosdah, 2024). Modeling reinforces punctuality, integrity, and work discipline; reflective coaching enhances techno-pedagogical competence through structured supervision and two-way dialogue (Tishana et al., 2023; Suningsih et al., 2024). Collaborative culture facilitated by peer-learning forums and professional learning communities provides space for innovation and socio-emotional support across classes. Quantitative and qualitative evidence shows consistency among teacher perceptions, student learning outcomes, and documentation of professional-development programs. Integrating these three themes strengthens feedback loops, builds continuous learning cycles, and facilitates behavioral change adaptive to curriculum demands and learner needs. In conclusion, the interplay of modeling, coaching, and collaboration forms the systemic, sustainable foundation for teacher professionalism in private schools.

Overall, this study affirms that principals' instructional leadership is the primary catalyst for building a professional, collaborative, and innovative ecosystem in multicultural private elementary schools (Aslam et al., 2022; Sunardi et al., 2019; Hanim et al., 2020). Evidence of increased motivation, pedagogical competence, technological integration, and reflective culture shows that principals' interventions significantly transform teacher professionalism collectively (Rosdah, 2024; Kadarsih et al., 2020). Internal policy support, ongoing training, structured supervision, and public recognition build teacher confidence and participation in self-development and instructional innovation (Mashuri & Wahyudiati, 2023; Tishana et al., 2023). Despite administrative and infrastructural challenges, principals' adaptive responses can overcome obstacles without sacrificing program quality. Based on the foregoing, we conclude that consistent, collaborative, and responsive instructional leadership by principals is the solid foundation for teacher professionalism and competitive private-school quality aligned with the needs of a multicultural society in the era of globalization.

CONCLUSION

This study confirms that principals' instructional leadership in private elementary schools in Lubuk Baja District, Batam City, is highly strategic for improving teacher professionalism and educational quality. Instructional leadership practice is reflected in monthly internal training, routine twice-per-semester classroom supervision, individual coaching, and professional learning community forums. The implementation of collaborative and reflective approaches demonstrably drives changes in teacher behavior, including

expanded use of learning technologies, diversified teaching methods, and active involvement in curriculum innovation.

Empirical impacts of principals' instructional leadership are measurable through several indicators: a five-point increase in internal quality reports, a 30% reduction in student absenteeism, and an increase in curriculum team meetings from once to four times per semester. In addition, parent satisfaction reaching 87% and a 20% decline in disciplinary complaints after six months demonstrate strengthened legitimacy and public trust in the schools. Thematic coding of field data identified three key themes (WD: principal modeling, OB: reflective coaching, and DK: collaborative culture) as the foundation for systemic transformation in teacher professionalism.

These achievements are driven by adaptive internal policies, cross-teacher and staff collaboration, and planned training facilitated both online and offline. Barriers such as administrative workloads and limited digital devices were minimized through innovative task delegation and loaned equipment, thereby maintaining consistent instructional quality. In conclusion, consistent, participatory, and responsive instructional leadership by principals has proved key to strengthening teacher professionalism and improving the quality of competitive multicultural private schools.

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