

# Instructional Leadership Of The Principal In Learning At Eben Haezer 1 Christian Junior High School In Manado City

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## Abstract.

*This study aims to describe the instructional leadership of the principal and to identify the determining factors of such leadership at SMP Kristen Eben Haezer 1 in Manado City. Employing a qualitative approach with a case study design, data were collected through in-depth interviews, direct observations within the school environment, and document analysis. The data were analyzed thematically using an inductive approach. The findings reveal that the principal exercises instructional leadership in a proactive and participative manner. Beyond administrative duties, the principal is actively involved in lesson planning, classroom observation, and professional development of teachers through supervision, training, and mentoring. Christian values serve as the foundation for decision-making and the development of school culture, fostering strong character among all school members. Several factors contribute to the effectiveness of the principal's instructional leadership, including a clear school vision and mission, strong support from the management team and teachers, open and communicative relationships, and leadership based on personal example. Organizational stability and systematic role distribution also contribute to creating a conducive and high-quality learning environment. This study provides a concrete example of how value-based instructional leadership can be effectively implemented in schools. The findings are significant for school leaders seeking to strengthen their instructional leadership practices and enhance the overall quality of education through collaborative, value-driven approaches.*

**Keywords:** Instructional leadership; school principal; school culture and educational quality.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

In essence, improving student academic achievement in schools requires deliberate interventions aimed at enhancing the quality of teaching and learning. Schools are not only places where students learn and teachers teach, but also where school leaders manage and lead the learning process. Principals play a critical role in ensuring the effectiveness of educational programs by fostering a culture of continuous improvement. Alongside teachers and parents, school principals significantly influence the quality of learning outcomes. In the context of 21st-century education, continuous improvement of instructional quality has become a central issue due to its direct impact on student performance. However, instructional quality does not improve in isolation. It is shaped by various interacting factors, among which the principal's instructional leadership plays a central role. Previous studies (Sisman, 2016; Hallinger et al., 2017; Leithwood et al., 2020; Jalapang & Raman, 2020) confirm that instructional leadership significantly contributes to the improvement of teaching quality and student achievement. Several scholars have studied instructional leadership at various school levels and contexts (e.g., Kraft & Gilmour, 2016; Lavigne & Chamberlain, 2016; Reid, 2019). In Indonesia, recent education reforms have also emphasized the importance of principals demonstrating strong instructional leadership practices (MoECRT, 2020). This policy direction applies to all Indonesian principals, including those at SMP Kristen Eben Haezer 1 in Manado, who are expected to act as instructional leaders.

Preliminary observations at SMP Kristen Eben Haezer 1 revealed inconsistencies in how instructional leadership is practiced. Interviews with several teachers suggested differing perceptions of the principal's role: some emphasized the principal's focus on administrative and managerial responsibilities—such as preparing teaching schedules and handling infrastructure—while others highlighted the principal's involvement in instructional supervision, lesson plan evaluations, and teacher professional development. These contrasting views point to a leadership gap in balancing administrative tasks and instructional responsibilities. Although instructional leadership has been extensively studied across global contexts using

both quantitative and qualitative methods (Sisman, 2016), there is a lack of research specifically addressing this issue in junior high schools within the local context of North Sulawesi.

This study aims to fill that gap by examining the instructional leadership practices and their determining factors at SMP Kristen Eben Haezer 1 in Manado. The theoretical framework underpinning this study is *Leadership for Learning*, particularly as conceptualized by Glickman (2002) and Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon (2010). Their model outlines four orientations of instructional leadership behavior: directive control, directive informational, collaborative, and nondirective. Each reflects varying degrees of leader and teacher involvement in decision-making, ranging from top-down directive approaches to shared and teacher-led professional autonomy. Understanding how these orientations manifest in practice can provide insights into the effectiveness of leadership strategies in supporting teacher growth and student outcomes. Furthermore, examining the factors that enable or hinder such leadership in a specific school context contributes not only to theoretical development but also to policy and practice in school leadership training and development. Therefore, this study aims to explore the characteristics of instructional leadership exhibited by the principal of SMP Kristen Eben Haezer 1 and to identify the internal and external factors that influence this leadership. It is expected that the findings will contribute to both theoretical and practical advancements in educational leadership, particularly at the junior secondary school level in Indonesia.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 1. Instructional Leadership in the School Transformation Program

As previously highlighted, instructional leadership is a key component of the *Sekolah Penggerak* (School Transformation Program) in Indonesia. In this program, the principal is not merely an administrative figure but is expected to act as an instructional leader who facilitates learning improvement and drives educational change within the school environment.

### 2. Definition of Competency

According to Suharsaputra (2010), *competency* refers to individual characteristics that underlie one's performance in carrying out a task—whether in the form of knowledge, skills, attitudes, or motives—which directly impact work outcomes. Therefore, instructional leadership competencies serve as a benchmark for assessing the performance of school principals in leading the teaching and learning process.

### 3. International Standards of Instructional Leadership Competencies (Tennessee, USA)

In the United States, particularly in Tennessee, the Learning Leadership Design Commission (2007) developed a set of seven instructional leadership competency standards, symbolized as standards A to G, as follows:

- Standard A – Continuous Improvement: Involves a systemic and coherent approach to improving academic achievement for all students, through vision setting, stakeholder involvement, strategic planning, and data-based decision-making.
- Standard B – Learning Culture: Encourages the development of an ethical, inclusive, disciplined, and collaborative school climate that supports student achievement and staff development.
- Standard C – Assessment of Learning Outcomes: Facilitates data-driven school improvement based on student assessment and program evaluation.
- Standard D – Professional Development: Promotes sustained professional growth for teachers through supervision, coaching, and collaborative leadership.
- Standard E – School Management: Focuses on efficient resource allocation, procedural transparency, and effective school operations aligned with academic goals.
- Standard F – Ethics: Emphasizes leadership practices grounded in integrity, fairness, accountability, and moral responsibility in decision-making.
- Standard G – Diversity: Supports respect and responsiveness to students' diverse backgrounds (ethnicity, religion, gender), promoting inclusive education and equity.

### 4. National Standards of Instructional Leadership in Indonesia

In Indonesia, the Directorate of Educational Personnel (2009) outlined twelve key instructional leadership competencies, inspired by global theories and adapted to local contexts. These include:

1. Setting an example and inspiring school members
2. Building cohesive teamwork
3. Encouraging a culture of change
4. Implementing characteristics of effective school leadership
5. Promoting continuous improvement
6. Delivering excellent student services
7. Applying visionary and situational leadership
8. Establishing professional learning communities
9. Evaluating and enhancing teacher performance
10. Guiding teaching and learning improvement
11. Formulating and articulating learning objectives
12. Leading curriculum development and innovation

These competencies are aimed at strengthening the role of principals as instructional leaders who foster school improvement, teacher growth, and student success.

### III. METHODS

This study employed a qualitative case study approach to explore the instructional leadership of the principal at SMP Eben Haezer 1, Manado, and the contributing factors that influence such leadership practices. A qualitative approach was deemed appropriate due to its ability to capture the complexity and context-bound nature of leadership phenomena in educational settings (Creswell, 2014; Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2012; Sugiyono, 2013). Through this approach, the researcher assumed the role of the primary research instrument, enabling a flexible and iterative inquiry process. The qualitative case study design also allowed for in-depth analysis within a bounded system, i.e., the school as a single case. The research was conducted from February to April 2025 at SMP Eben Haezer 1, located in Manado, Indonesia. The three-month data collection period facilitated prolonged engagement and immersion in the research setting, essential for obtaining thick, descriptive data. Data collected were predominantly qualitative and consisted of both primary and secondary sources. Primary data were gathered through non-participant observation, unstructured interviews, and document analysis. Secondary data included relevant literature such as journal articles, books, and informal dialogues with stakeholders. This triangulation strategy was employed to enhance the credibility and depth of the findings (Patton, 2015). The non-participant observation technique enabled the researcher to observe the school environment and leadership practices without direct involvement, thus minimizing observer influence on the setting. Observational data were captured in detailed field notes, which included both descriptive accounts and reflective commentary (Gay et al., 2012).

An observation protocol was developed in advance to guide the process and maintain consistency in documenting key aspects of leadership behavior. Unstructured interviews served as a key method for collecting narrative data from the participants. These interviews resembled natural conversations, allowing the researcher to probe emerging themes with flexibility. An interview guide comprising open-ended questions ensured alignment with the research focus while enabling exploration of unforeseen yet relevant topics. Data from interviews were recorded through field notes and audio recordings, with an emphasis on ethical, respectful, and neutral engagement with the participants (Creswell, 2014; Gay et al., 2012). Document analysis complemented observation and interview data by providing written evidence of leadership practices and school management activities. Both printed and digital documents were reviewed, including school reports, planning documents, and correspondence related to instructional leadership. A structured document review guide helped organize this process, and when permitted, key documents were photographed for analysis. The researcher recorded findings promptly in field journals to avoid recall bias and ensure data reliability (Bowen, 2009). Overall, the integration of these three methods—observation, interviews, and document review—provided a robust and triangulated understanding of the principal's

instructional leadership. The qualitative case study design, supported by systematic data collection and analytic rigor, enabled the researcher to explore leadership practices within their natural school context and contribute meaningful insights to the field of educational leadership research.

#### **IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

##### **1. Instructional Leadership Practices of the Principal at SMP Kristen Eben Haezer 1 Manado**

###### **a. Observational Description**

The field observations reveal that the principal of SMP Kristen Eben Haezer 1 Manado demonstrates a strong commitment to instructional leadership, contributing significantly to the enhancement of the school's teaching and learning quality. Several key practices were identified:

###### **1) Active Engagement in Academic Activities**

The principal actively participates in various academic affairs within the school. He regularly attends curriculum meetings not merely as a formal leader, but as a facilitator who encourages teachers to innovate in their instructional practices. Classroom supervision is conducted on a regular basis, not as a form of control, but as a mentoring activity aimed at improving teacher professionalism. A field note documents: "The principal entered class 7C for 15 minutes, sat in the classroom, and took notes on the learning process. He later provided direct feedback to the teacher regarding the use of instructional media." This behavior underscores his hands-on approach and commitment to supporting teachers through direct, constructive engagement.

###### **2) Fostering a Positive Learning Culture**

The principal consistently cultivates a positive learning environment. He frequently motivates both teachers and students, particularly during strategic moments such as flag ceremonies or monthly meetings. Recognition is given to high-achieving students and teachers, often through certificates or public acknowledgments in school forums. As he stated during a staff meeting:

"I want every teacher in this school to feel that their efforts are appreciated, no matter how small."

This emphasis on recognition serves to reinforce motivation and a sense of professional value among staff.

###### **3) Communicating Vision and Learning Goals**

The principal actively communicates the school's vision and mission, especially regarding teaching and learning. He emphasizes the importance of character education grounded in Christian values, and integrates these values into instructional activities. This vision is conveyed through both formal and informal settings and provides strategic direction for the school's academic programs.

###### **4) Professional Development for Teachers**

One of the principal's core initiatives is promoting professional development. He facilitates internal training and collaborates with external organizations for workshops. During a training session, he personally opened the event and highlighted the importance of continuous learning to meet the demands of 21st-century education. He remarked:

"If we don't keep learning, we will fall behind. And our students will bear the consequences."

This initiative reflects his dedication to empowering teachers to grow professionally and pedagogically.

###### **5) Use of Student Learning Data in Decision-Making**

Another prominent practice is the use of student performance data to guide decisions. The principal regularly requests evaluation reports from subject teachers and analyzes trends with the curriculum team. Based on these findings, remedial programs or targeted interventions are implemented to assist struggling students.

###### **6) Concrete Examples of Instructional Leadership Behavior**

Overall, the principal's behavior illustrates the attributes of an instructional leader. He arrives early at school, greets students and staff, and maintains an open-door policy. In one field note, the following observation was recorded:

"The principal approached a teacher who had just finished a class and asked, 'How was the class today? Any challenges we can work on together?'"

Such interactions exemplify his humanistic and supportive leadership style, reinforcing collaboration and continuous improvement in instructional practice.

### **b. Interview Description**

The interviews conducted with the school principal, vice principal, homeroom teacher, and subject teacher indicate that the principal's instructional leadership is widely perceived as positive and impactful in improving teaching and learning quality. The following are the key findings from the interview data:

#### **1) Interview with the Principal**

Mr. Hopny J. Ume, M.Pd, the principal of SMP Kristen Eben Haezer 1 Manado, defined instructional leadership as encompassing not only academic dimensions but also the development of students' character grounded in Christian values. He emphasized that effective learning services are enhanced by instilling Christian teachings, supporting professional development of teachers through training and seminars, fostering a positive learning environment, building collaborative teaching cultures, and making data-informed decisions.

"Instructional leadership at SMP Kristen Eben Haezer 1 Manado does not only focus on academic aspects, but also on forming strong student character based on Christian teachings, thus producing holistic graduates who are ready to face future challenges with integrity and strong faith."

In his leadership, he focuses on the integration of Christian values in all subjects. He leads curriculum development and revision to ensure alignment with the national curriculum, while also embedding spiritual values explicitly into learning content. For instance, science lessons are contextualized with discussions on stewardship of the environment as God's creation, while social studies explore social justice through the lens of Biblical love and service.

The principal also promotes the use of digital learning media infused with Christian values and facilitates professional training on safe, ethical digital platforms. He engages in personal coaching and mentoring with teachers, reinforcing the significance of Christian ethics in teaching practice.

"I also personally conduct coaching sessions with some teachers to help them achieve their professional development goals. In these sessions, I always emphasize the importance of Christian values in their interaction and teaching practices."

The principal's vision is to develop students who embody the Great Commission of Jesus Christ, while his mission involves nurturing students' spiritual growth, shaping Christ-like character, and ensuring learning activities reflect Christian principles. He translates this vision into practice by fostering a continuous learning culture, supporting students to realize their full potential within a faith-based educational environment.

"To realize the school's vision and mission, I take concrete steps to cultivate a school culture of continuous learning and development where each student is supported to reach their best potential in the frame of Christian values."

Monitoring and evaluation are conducted through academic supervision and feedback surveys from students and parents. These are followed up with coaching or professional support to ensure each student receives the best possible education in a Christian-centered environment. To sustain teacher innovation, the principal initiated a teacher learning community (Komunitas Belajar Guru) that serves as a platform for collaboration, problem-solving, and the sharing of best practices.

"I monitor and evaluate instructional quality through academic supervision and satisfaction surveys involving students and parents. Feedback is followed up with coaching to ensure quality education aligned with Christian values."

Supporting internal factors include teacher enthusiasm, commitment to continuous learning, collaboration, openness to innovation, availability of IT resources, and a positive school culture. Hindering factors include excessive workloads, administrative burdens, resistance to change, limited competencies, and restricted time for collaboration. Externally, supportive government policies (e.g., Kurikulum Merdeka), parental involvement, and access to online learning are enablers, while limited funding, differing parental



perspectives, students' socioeconomic background, and rapid tech development pose challenges. The principal envisions a sustainable school culture where instructional innovation is embedded, teacher collaboration is strengthened, and learning is increasingly driven by technology and Christian values. He believes instructional leadership is a shared, ongoing journey requiring commitment and innovation from the entire school community.

## 2) Interview with the Vice Principal

Mr. Ferry Lumantak, M.Pd, the vice principal, emphasized the strategic role of the principal in steering instructional processes. He noted that the principal not only manages administrative duties but also serves as an active instructional leader who sets a clear learning vision and accompanies teachers in practice. He also fosters a culture of continuous learning and motivates staff through consistent guidance. As vice principal, Mr. Lumantak supports the principal particularly in planning (curriculum preparation, teacher assignment, scheduling), and supervises instruction, monitors learning, and facilitates internal workshops. He highlighted strong communication with the principal, involving both scheduled and informal dialogues to coordinate implementation, assess teacher needs, and evaluate learning outcomes. Decisions are made collaboratively, based on discussions and mutual input.

The principal also encourages instructional innovation by allowing teachers to experiment with teaching methods, such as digital media use, project-based learning, and character-based instruction. Teachers are supported through internal MGMP activities and external training, while "best practices sharing" forums further cultivate peer learning. Internal enablers identified by the vice principal include strong managerial support, collaborative teacher culture, and positive school ethos. External factors include government regulations, Kurikulum Merdeka demands, parental involvement, and technology development. He views these as both challenges and opportunities that the principal skillfully addresses. Looking forward, he hopes instructional leadership continues to grow in innovation and collaboration, with the principal remaining a model of lifelong learning and open dialogue. He hopes for expanded professional development in pedagogy and character education, as well as improved relevance and impact of learning. He expressed appreciation for the principal's visionary and servant leadership:

"I feel grateful to be part of a team led by a visionary and servant-hearted principal, and I hope this type of leadership continues to inspire the whole school community to give their best."

## 3) Interview with the Homeroom Teacher

The Homeroom Teacher feels that the Principal possesses strong integrity and a high spirit of innovation, which is reflected in the way he formulates wise policies for school advancement despite the diversity of characters, cultures, and mindsets among both educators and students. The Principal is also open to self-reflection and receptive to suggestions and criticism, which the teacher sees as a positive attitude essential for a leader. According to the Homeroom Teacher, the Principal provides adequate support in classroom learning implementation. He offers guidance in all activities of the homeroom and subject teachers, actively evaluates and provides suggestions for improvement, and continuously encourages teachers to innovate in learning activities, particularly in assessing student performance through formative and summative tests. The Principal communicates the school's vision and learning goals through supervision or discussions, whether in personal meetings, small groups, or general forums.

These efforts are aimed at evaluating, reminding, and mentoring learning practices based on the seven core values of Eben Haezar and the 4S culture (Smile, Greet, Polite, Spirit), which serve as a foundation in shaping student character. The teacher also acknowledged the school's initiatives that positively impact learning quality, such as routine training/workshops for educators' professional development. In this regard, the Principal does not only attend as a leader and facilitator but also participates in the training alongside teachers as part of his own self-development and performance evaluation. Factors influencing the Principal's leadership in learning include his integrity, presence (being available), and communicative nature. He is described as a firm and wise individual who remains sensitive to the needs, conditions, and situations that support learning at school. The Homeroom Teacher expressed hope that the Principal will continue to be a role model for everyone he leads, and remain innovative in creating policies or launching programs that

improve learning quality at school. The teacher also affirmed that the Principal's leadership has had a positive impact on the school's progress.

#### 4) Interview with the Subject Teacher

According to Science Teacher Mrs. Windy Makarawung, S.Pd, the Principal's involvement in matters related to the learning process of science subjects is important and has brought a positive impact. This is evident in how the Principal shows interest and understanding of the challenges and specific needs in the subject, often inquiring about students' learning progress, which motivates teachers to keep innovating and improving their teaching quality. The Principal's involvement includes classroom observation and supervision, discussions on learning strategies, and support for project-based and extracurricular activities related to the subject. The teacher has interacted with the Principal regarding various challenges or innovations in teaching. These interactions include discussions about students' difficulties in grasping specific concepts, where the Principal helped identify the students' potential and suggested solutions, such as the use of more engaging learning media. Moreover, when the teacher implemented a new teaching method, she shared the experience with the Principal, who responded positively with constructive feedback and support. The Principal also supports professional development in the subject area by facilitating teacher participation in relevant training, seminars, or workshops. Furthermore, he encourages collaboration among subject teachers within the school and with teachers from other schools (through subject teacher groups/"MGMP") to share best practices and develop more effective learning materials. This reflects the school's commitment to continuous teacher competency improvement.

There are also school policies and programs that support subject-based learning quality improvement, such as budget allocations for procuring relevant books and learning resources, provision of adequate laboratory and library facilities, and constructive academic supervision aimed at improving teaching practices. The Principal plays a central role in initiating, implementing, and evaluating these policies to ensure they positively impact learning quality. Several factors influence how the Principal leads in the learning domain, including his understanding of the curriculum and teaching processes, a clear school vision and mission that emphasizes academic and spiritual growth, his ability to foster communication and collaboration with teachers, as well as the availability of resources and support from the foundation and the education office. Additionally, the Principal's leadership style and experience also influence how he makes learning-related decisions. The Subject Teacher hopes that the Principal will continue to increase his involvement in understanding the dynamics of each subject's learning process. She also hopes for stronger support for teacher-led learning innovations, along with more intensive facilitation of professional development tailored to each subject's specific needs. Moreover, she expects more open and ongoing discussion spaces between teachers and the Principal regarding strategies to improve learning quality. The teacher concluded by stating that effective instructional leadership requires strong synergy and collaboration between the Principal and all teachers. When the Principal succeeds in fostering a positive, trusting work climate that supports teacher development, it will directly impact learning quality and ultimately improve the overall educational standard of the school.

#### c. Documentation Study Description

The documentation study was conducted by examining various documents relevant to the principal's leadership practices in teaching and learning at SMP Kristen Eben Haezar 1 Manado. The documents reviewed include school work programs, meeting minutes, internal policies, student learning outcome reports, and school activity agendas that support teaching and professional development of teachers.

##### 1) School Work Program Related to Improving the Quality of Learning

Based on the review of the Work Meeting Document for the Preparation of the 2025 Program and Budget held on February 27, 2025, it was found that the principal actively facilitated the formulation of programs focused on improving the quality of learning. The document outlines priority programs such as enhanced teacher training, development of technology-based learning, and the implementation of the *Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project* (P5). This demonstrates the role of the principal as a strategic planner in promoting education quality that is adaptive to contemporary developments.

## 2) Meeting Notes or Minutes Regarding Curriculum and Instruction

In the first teacher and staff meeting of 2025, discussions centered on strategies for implementing the *Merdeka Curriculum*, particularly adjustments to more student-centered teaching methods. This meeting revealed that the principal provided space for teacher discussions and collaboration in lesson planning. The principal's involvement in curriculum discussions indicates an instructional leadership style that supports teaching effectiveness.

## 3) School Policies Supporting Instructional Innovation or Teacher Development

The *Launching of the P5 Project* on January 17, 2025, served as an indicator that the principal encourages instructional innovation through programs that emphasize character values, creativity, and active student participation. The implementation of P5 not only enriches student learning experiences but also challenges teachers to develop contextual and collaborative learning models aligned with the spirit of the *Merdeka Curriculum*. In this context, the principal acts as an innovator and learning leader who is responsive to national education policies. The activity can be seen at the following link: <https://www.instagram.com/reel/DJQvkzzcAS/?igsh=MW9uc3kxdm96ZDV3NQ==>

## 4) Student Learning Outcomes and the Principal's Response

During the distribution of mid-semester summative assessment report cards on March 21, 2025, the principal was actively involved in reviewing student learning outcomes. This reflects a joint evaluation with teachers on student achievements and follow-up mentoring for those requiring further guidance. The principal also provided direction for more structured remedial programs. This highlights the role of the principal as an academic supervisor who prioritizes continuous improvement.

"Students presented their learning achievements in front of their parents. Additionally, they shared their reflections and future learning plans."

## 5) Documentation Enhancement through Innovative Activities

Beyond formal activities, the school also held a number of programs that support contextual learning and character development, such as:

- a) *Grade 7 Entrepreneurship Seminar* (March 27, 2025), which encouraged life skills education.
- b) *School Exams Based on Presentations and Tech Product Demonstrations* (April 29, 2025), which reflected the integration of technology in assessment.
- c) *CCA Competition in Celebration of Christ's Resurrection* (April 24, 2025), which strengthened value-based and spiritual learning for students.

Figure 4.7: CCA Competition in Celebration of Christ's Resurrection

## 2. Determinant Factors of Instructional Leadership of the Principal at SMP Kristen Eben Haezer 1 Manado

### a. Principal's Skills and Competencies

The Principal of SMP Kristen Eben Haezer 1, Mr. Hopny Joki Ume, M.Pd, demonstrates innovative and progressive leadership competencies. This is evidenced by his achievement as 2nd Best Innovative Junior High School Principal in the *GTK Hebat Jamboree of North Sulawesi 2024*, organized by the Teacher Mobilization Center of North Sulawesi Province. This accomplishment shows that he possesses not only strong managerial skills but also the ability to inspire both teachers and students through innovation-driven teaching approaches. Based on interviews with several teachers, Mr. Hopny Joki Ume actively guides the development of instructional materials aligned with the *Merdeka Curriculum* and fully supports the *Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project* (P5). Mr. Hopny's broad and diverse experience forms a solid foundation for his current instructional leadership. Since 1995, he has been dedicated to education as a teacher, a long period that has given him deep insight into classroom dynamics and student needs.

Before serving as principal at SMP Kristen Eben Haezer 1 Manado in 2018, he also gained substantial experience in managing acceleration classes. This equipped him with the expertise to maximize students' potential and design tailored teaching strategies. In 2010, Mr. Hopny was appointed as the principal of SMP Kristen Eben Haezer 2 Manado. This role sharpened his managerial and leadership abilities at the



institutional level. His transfer to SMP Kristen Eben Haezer 1 in 2018 reflects the recognition of his leadership expertise needed to advance the school. This professional journey—from teacher, to special program coordinator, to principal of two schools—has shaped Mr. Hopny Joki Ume's personal vision and mission aligned with educational goals. His practical experience enables him to understand the real challenges faced by teachers and students, allowing him to design relevant and effective policies and programs. His ability to foster a culture of collaboration among teachers is also a result of his long-standing experience in educational leadership.

### **b. School Culture**

A strong culture of collaboration is prominent at SMP Kristen Eben Haezer 1. Based on direct observation and interview results, weekly reflective meetings are held, moderated directly by the principal. He is also known for being open to new ideas from both teachers and students. Christian values such as integrity, love, and cooperation are instilled in daily teaching practices, shaping a holistic learning ecosystem.

### **c. School Resources**

Based on the documentation study, the school is well-equipped with adequate facilities, including a computer lab, stable internet access, and well-designed learning spaces. The principal actively manages BOS (School Operational Assistance) funds and other financial sources to support teaching activities and teacher development. According to an interview with the school treasurer, budget priorities are focused on improving learning quality and providing interactive digital media.

### **d. Government Education Policies**

SMP Kristen Eben Haezer 1 has fully implemented the *Merdeka Curriculum* since the 2023/2024 academic year. The principal facilitated internal training on understanding learning outcomes and formative assessment, and encouraged teachers to participate in online training provided by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemdikbudristek). Observations revealed that the principal also supports the implementation of the P5 project, integrated with local values and the school's spiritual identity.

### **e. Community and Parental Involvement**

Through the school's parent communication forum (school committee), the principal regularly presents reports on students' academic and non-academic development. Interviews with one of the parents revealed that the principal is known for being communicative and responsive to parental expectations, particularly regarding the improvement of learning quality and character formation.

### **f. Networking and Collaboration with Other Schools**

Mr. Hopny Joki Ume, M.Pd, is actively involved in the Christian school principals' community in Manado and also a member of the online forum for Merdeka Curriculum principals. Based on documentation, he frequently shares best practices in workshops and seminars, including serving as a speaker in *Merdeka Curriculum Dissemination Programs* organized by the Manado City Education Office.

### **g. Advancements in Science and Technology**

The principal actively promotes the integration of technology in teaching. He initiated the use of a Learning Management System (LMS) based on Google Classroom and organized training sessions for teachers on how to create instructional videos. Observations indicate that nearly all classes have adopted digital learning, especially in literacy and numeracy.

## **Discussion**

### **1. Instructional Leadership of the School Principal**

#### **a. Instructional Leadership Practices of the Principal**

Based on interviews and document analysis, it was found that the principal of SMP Kristen Eben Haezer 1 implements instructional leadership using a holistic approach grounded in Christian values. Several key practices were identified, including:

- 1) Improving the quality of learning services based on Christian values. The principal stated:

“Instructional leadership at SMP Kristen Eben Haezer 1 Manado is not solely focused on academics but also on the formation of students’ character based on Christian teachings.”

- 2) Continuous professional development for teachers through training, mentoring, and the establishment of teacher learning communities (KomBel).

“I facilitate the establishment of a Teacher Learning Community... as a platform to share experiences, innovative ideas, and collaboratively address teaching challenges.”

- 3) Academic supervision and learning monitoring are carried out through data-based evaluations and satisfaction surveys involving students and parents.

“I conduct academic supervision... and conduct surveys on student and parent satisfaction with the learning services.”

- 4) Curriculum development in collaboration with teachers, integrating biblical principles into general subjects.

“In science classes, we encourage discussions on human responsibility as God’s creation to care for the environment.”

- 5) Strong support for technology-based learning innovations.

“I encourage teachers to develop digital learning media that incorporate Christian values.”

#### **b. Alignment with the Concept of Instructional Leadership**

In the literature review, instructional leadership is described by Hallinger (2003) as leadership that emphasizes the establishment of academic vision, the professional development of teachers, and the creation of a positive learning culture.

The principal's practices at SMP Eben Haezer 1 demonstrate alignment with this framework, as follows:

- 1) Defining the School Mission:

The principal has a clear vision:

*“To develop outstanding students who embody the Great Commission of Jesus Christ.”*

- 2) Managing the Instructional Program:

The principal is actively involved in curriculum development and academic supervision.

- 3) Promoting a Positive Learning Climate:

A school culture is built through the integration of the “7 Eben Haezer Character Values” and the “4S” principles (Smile, Greet, Respect, and Serve).

However, unlike Hallinger’s framework which emphasizes academic performance, the approach at SMP Eben Haezer 1 is more integrative and spiritual in nature. This aligns with the theory of value-based leadership, which emphasizes the core values embedded in leadership actions.

#### **c. Leadership Effectiveness and Its Impact**

The effectiveness of the principal’s leadership is reflected in several areas:

- 1) Supportive and dialogical relationships between the principal and teachers.

“The principal is very open to suggestions and criticism and provides space for reflection.” (Homeroom Teacher)

“I feel involved and encouraged to actively contribute to the development of learning policies.” (Vice Principal)

- 2) Increased motivation and teacher professionalism.

“The principal even participates in training with us as part of evaluating their own performance.” (Homeroom Teacher)

- 3) Increased innovation in learning.

“I discussed students’ difficulties with the principal and was guided to find solutions using more engaging learning media.” (Subject Teacher)

- 4) The creation of a positive learning culture that encourages meaningful learning.

“He constantly motivates teachers to innovate in assessing student capabilities.” (Homeroom Teacher)

In summary, the instructional leadership practices of the principal reflect a high level of effectiveness in fostering a meaningful, participative, and value-driven learning ecosystem. The principal acts not only as an instructional leader but also as a moral and spiritual guide for the school community.

## **2. Discussion of the Determinant Factors of Instructional Leadership**

### **a. Analysis of Internal and External Factors Affecting Instructional Leadership**

The innovative and progressive instructional leadership demonstrated by the Principal of SMP Kristen Eben Haezer 1 Manado, M.Pd, is the result of a complex interaction between internal and external factors. His leadership competencies were recognized when he was awarded 2nd Best Innovative Junior High School Principal in the *2024 GTK Hebat Jamboree* organized by the *Balai Guru Penggerak of North Sulawesi Province*. The school principal's leadership is greatly influenced by his personal skills and competencies. He possesses not only strong managerial abilities but also the capacity to inspire both teachers and students through innovation-based learning approaches. His recognition as an innovative teacher and education personnel reflects his ability to apply progressive strategies. According to teacher interviews, the principal actively guided the development of instructional tools for the *Merdeka Curriculum* and fully supported the *P5 Program (Pancasila Student Profile Reinforcement Project)*. His ability to mentor and support teachers in adapting to the new curriculum highlights his deep understanding of modern teaching needs and his commitment to improving the quality of education in the school.

His educational background and extensive experience also form a strong foundation for his current instructional leadership. With a teaching career that began in 1995, he has accumulated a deep understanding of classroom dynamics and student needs over several decades. This experience is further enriched by his previous role managing an acceleration class before becoming principal at SMP Kristen Eben Haezer 1 in 2018. Earlier, in 2010, he also served as the principal of SMP Kristen Eben Haezer 2 Manado. This diverse professional journey—from teaching, managing special programs, to leading two institutions—has shaped his personal vision and mission aligned with educational goals. His practical experience allows him to comprehend the real challenges faced by teachers and students, enabling him to design relevant and effective policies and programs. Furthermore, his ability to foster a collaborative culture among teachers is a product of his extensive experience in leading and interacting with various educational teams.

The principal's leadership is also significantly influenced by external factors. National policies such as the *Merdeka Curriculum* and the *P5 Program* serve as important catalysts. He is not only responsive to these policies but also leverages them as opportunities for innovation. His active support for policy implementation reflects his ability to translate external directives into concrete actions at the school level, using the momentum of educational reform for advancement. Additionally, the broader educational ecosystem and external recognitions play vital roles. His award at the *GTK Hebat Jamboree 2024* serves as external validation that not only motivates but also enhances his credibility among teachers, students, and parents. This recognition strengthens his position, facilitates the adoption of new initiatives, and fosters a culture of innovation within the school. Equally important, support and trust from teachers and staff constitute a crucial external factor. Teachers' testimonials about receiving guidance and support in developing teaching tools illustrate a positive response from the school's internal environment, creating a conducive atmosphere for instructional leadership where ideas are more easily implemented and collaboration thrives.

Thus, the principal's instructional leadership is a synthesis of strong internal competencies—including personal innovation, honed expertise, and a clear vision—and his ability to adapt to external factors. He is not only responsive to new policies but also proactive in utilizing opportunities to advance the school. This synergistic interaction between personal attributes and a supportive environment enables him to be an effective instructional leader, capable of inspiring and guiding the entire school community toward greater achievements.

### **b. Mechanisms of Influence and Rationale for Determining Factors**

Each identified determinant influences instructional leadership through interrelated mechanisms. The principal's professional competence is a fundamental factor that impacts the entire learning process in the

school. The principal of SMP Kristen Eben Haezer 1, Hopny Joki Ume, M.Pd, demonstrates high professional capacity, evident in his involvement in various innovative activities such as training in video-based learning development and the implementation of formative assessments. This allows him to make strategic decisions focused on enhancing the quality of learning. A conducive and collaborative school culture further strengthens instructional leadership. The principal established a routine of weekly reflection sessions with teachers, creating a dialogical space that enables teachers to actively participate in decision-making. This culture fosters a sense of ownership over the school's learning vision. Meanwhile, the availability of resources such as computer labs, internet access, and interactive digital media enables optimal implementation of learning innovations. The principal manages the budget effectively, prioritizing learning needs and teacher development. National education policies, such as the Merdeka Curriculum and the P5 Program, provide direction and guidance for managing learning programs.

The principal not only implements these policies administratively but also contextualizes them locally—for instance, by conducting P5 projects themed “Local Wisdom,” which align with the school's spiritual values. Furthermore, the influence of the community and parents reinforces the principal's accountability. Regular dialogues between the school and parents provide space for feedback, assessment of learning quality, and alignment with societal expectations for student development. In addition, the principal's involvement in inter-school networks serves as an important avenue for sharing best practices and expanding professional insights. By participating in forums for Merdeka Curriculum-implementing principals, he gains exposure to new innovations that are later adapted in the school. Lastly, the advancement of science and technology presents both challenges and opportunities. The principal responds by encouraging teachers to integrate educational technologies such as Google Classroom, Canva, and Quizizz into the teaching and learning process, ensuring students stay in step with current developments.

### **c. Relationship Between Findings and Previous Research**

The findings of this study are consistent with prior research on instructional leadership. Hallinger (2011) stated that the effectiveness of instructional leadership depends heavily on the principal's professional capacity and the local context in which they operate. This is affirmed by the situation at SMP Kristen Eben Haezer 1, where the principal exhibits high professional capacity and leads with a deep understanding of the school's Christian value-based context. Research by Blase and Blase (1999) also emphasizes the importance of teacher coaching and collaborative culture in strengthening instructional leadership. This is evident in the principal's regular teacher reflection forums and the inclusion of teachers in instructional decision-making. Furthermore, Mulyasa (2013) notes that school leadership effectiveness is greatly influenced by resource management and community support.

These findings align with the study's context, where the principal maximizes school resources and maintains open communication with parents. There were no findings that directly contradicted previous studies; however, the contextual characteristics of a Christian value-based school integrated with the Merdeka Curriculum present a unique nuance. This enriches the body of knowledge on instructional leadership within religious-based educational settings. Therefore, this study not only supports previous findings but also offers a locally and religiously contextualized perspective relevant to the formation of a strong and meaningful learning culture.

### **d. Implications of the Determining Factors for the Improvement of Instructional Leadership in Schools**

The findings regarding the factors influencing instructional leadership at SMP Kristen Eben Haezer 1 Manado have significant implications for efforts to improve the quality of principal leadership, particularly in the instructional context. First, the high competency of the principal must be continuously maintained and enhanced through ongoing professional development programs, such as training based on best practices, peer learning, and active participation in principals' professional learning communities. The principal's ability to initiate and facilitate innovative learning is a vital asset in creating meaningful instructional transformation for students. In addition, the school's collaborative and reflective culture must continue to be developed as a foundation for instructional leadership. Principals are expected not only to act as administrative managers but

also as instructional leaders who foster positive relationships with teachers and encourage active involvement in instructional improvement processes. A culture of dialogue, reflection, and the sharing of best practices should be systematically facilitated to build a dynamic learning ecosystem. Another implication is the importance of strategic and adaptive management of school resources.

Principals must be capable of directing budgets, facilities, and technical support to meet instructional needs, including the integration of digital technologies. In this regard, the involvement of parents and the wider community becomes a key element in providing both moral and material support for school programs. Regular communication forums between the school and parents can strengthen transparency, accountability, and participation in instructional policy-making. Furthermore, the principal's involvement in collaborative networks and responsiveness to technological developments provides momentum for ongoing innovation. Principals need to position themselves as lifelong learners who are responsive to the dynamics of change, both in terms of national education policies and the evolution of modern instructional methods. Therefore, the enhancement of instructional leadership depends not only on the principal's personal capacity but also on their ability to build synergy between internal school factors and the continuously evolving external environment.

### **Key Research Findings**

The study conducted at SMP Kristen Eben Haezer 1 in Manado yielded several key findings concerning the principal's instructional leadership, which is characterized as holistic, integrative, and rooted in Christian values. These findings address the research questions regarding how the principal exercises instructional leadership and what factors influence it.

#### **1. Instructional Leadership Based on Christian Values**

The principal implements instructional leadership that emphasizes not only academic achievement but also character formation, grounded in Christian values. This approach includes the integration of spiritual values into the curriculum, school culture, and instructional innovations.

#### **2. Ongoing Professional Development for Teachers**

The principal facilitates training, mentoring, and the establishment of teacher learning communities (Kombel) as platforms to continuously enhance teachers' professional capacity, while fostering innovation and collaboration in the teaching-learning process.

#### **3. Data-Based Academic Supervision and Active Participation**

Academic supervision and learning evaluations are conducted systematically using data and satisfaction surveys from students and parents. This creates a culture of transparency and accountability.

#### **4. Collaboration and Innovation in Curriculum and Learning Media Development**

The principal promotes teacher collaboration in developing a contextualized curriculum infused with biblical values and supports the use of innovative and digitally integrated learning technologies that align with the school's core values.

#### **5. Determinants of Instructional Leadership: Competence, Culture, and External Support**

The principal's professional competence, a collaborative and reflective school culture, and internal resources such as facilities and technology serve as the primary internal factors. External influences—including national education policies (such as the Merdeka Curriculum and the Pancasila Student Profile Project), parental and community involvement, school networks, and developments in science and technology—further strengthen the effectiveness of leadership.

#### **6. Leadership Effectiveness Seen Through Supportive Relationships and Sustainable Innovation**

The principal maintains dialogic and supportive relationships with teachers, which foster motivation and professionalism. A positive learning culture is cultivated through meaningful instructional innovations and the school's adaptability to technological and policy changes.

#### **7. Unique Finding: Integration of Spirituality in Instructional Leadership**

The most distinctive finding of this study is the integration of Christian values as the foundation of instructional leadership. This differentiates SMP Kristen Eben Haezer 1 from other schools and contributes to the literature on instructional leadership by offering a religious-values-based perspective in a local context.



## Research Limitations

### 1. Focus on a Single School

This research was conducted solely at SMP Kristen Eben Haezer 1 in Manado City, making the findings highly contextual and specific to that particular school. As a result, the generalizability of the findings to other schools—with potentially different characteristics, cultures, and contexts—is limited.

### 2. Limited Data Collection Period

The limited timeframe for data collection may have affected the depth and breadth of the data gathered. Certain aspects of instructional leadership or supporting factors may not have been fully observed or adequately documented.

### 3. Potential Researcher Bias

As the researcher was directly involved in conducting interviews and analyzing the data, there is a potential for subjective bias in interpreting the findings—particularly in understanding participants' responses related to the principal's leadership. This could affect the objectivity and validity of the study's outcomes.

## V. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that the principal's instructional leadership at SMP Kristen Eben Haezer 1 Manado is characterized by a transformative, inspirational, and integrative approach. The principal functions not merely as an administrator but as a visionary educational leader rooted in Christian values, fostering a collaborative and innovative academic culture. Actively involved in planning, implementation, and evaluation, the principal promotes continuous teacher professional development through supervision, training, and learning communities. He demonstrates a strong commitment to improving instructional quality by aligning it with student needs and the school's spiritual context. The effectiveness of this leadership is influenced by internal factors such as the principal's competence, leadership experience, staff support, and an established school culture. External factors include foundation support, government policies, parental involvement, and the integration of educational technology. These combined factors provide a solid foundation for strategic and sustainable instructional leadership.

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