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Integrating Qur'anic Values into School Leadership for Learning Quality: Evidence from Indonesia's School Transformation Program

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Abstract

This study examines how principals in Integrated Islamic Sekolah Penggerak junior high schools integrate Qur'anic values with contemporary school leadership to support learning quality, identifies the strategies used, and analyzes factors that enable or constrain implementation. A qualitative multiple-case design was conducted across three schools in Lampung Province, Indonesia. Participants comprised, selected purposively for their direct involvement in leadership, curriculum, and instructional development. Data were generated through semi-structured interviews, non-participant observations, and document analysis and were analyzed through iterative within-case thematic analysis followed by cross-case comparison. Learning quality was interpreted through qualitative indicators of instructional practice and the learning environment rather than direct measures of student achievement. Across the cases, principals combined visionary, participatory, instructional, and managerial practices with Qur'anic principles of amanah, shura, and akhlaq in strategic planning, collaborative decision-making, supervision, teacher development, and character-oriented learning. The evidence also identified institutional commitment, teacher participation, and shared values as enabling conditions, while limited instructional creativity, gaps in inclusive and preventive policies, and weak long-term evaluation constrained implementation. From the cross-case synthesis, the study proposes the Qur'anic Values-Based Integrated Management Model (QV-BIMM) as a contextually derived framework linking ethical values, leadership processes, and qualitative indicators of learning quality. The model remains provisional and requires further testing in broader settings.

Keywords: Instructional leadership; learning quality; Qur'anic values; Sekolah Penggerak; value-based leadership.

Introduction

Improving the quality of education remains a global concern, particularly in countries striving to enhance human capital competitiveness in an increasingly knowledge based economy. International large scale assessments such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) have become key indicators for evaluating the effectiveness of national education systems in developing essential competencies, including literacy, numeracy, and scientific reasoning (Braun & Chudowsky, 2018; Cresswell et al., 2015; Hernández-Torrano & Courtney, 2021). Indonesia's performance in PISA 2018 and 2022 indicates persistent challenges, as student achievement remains below the OECD average, reflecting structural

issues in instructional quality, school governance, and leadership capacity (Maheshwari & Korla, 2025; *PISA 2018 Results (Volume III)*, 2019; *PISA 2022 Results (Volume I)*, 2023). These findings underscore the urgency of systemic educational reform that prioritizes leadership effectiveness and learning quality at the school level.

Educational quality is widely recognized as a multidimensional construct encompassing instructional processes, curriculum relevance, assessment practices, school culture, and leadership effectiveness (Amatullah et al., 2025; Metsäpelto et al., 2022; Stalmeijer et al., 2023). Contemporary scholarship emphasizes that improving educational outcomes is not solely determined by curriculum reforms or resource allocation, but is critically shaped by the leadership practices of school principals who act as instructional leaders, organizational managers, and agents of change. Effective leadership influences teachers' professional commitment, instructional innovation, and collaborative culture, which in turn directly affect the quality of learning experiences provided to students (Aldridge & McLure, 2024; Diehl & Golann, 2023; Ralebese et al., 2025).

For this study, learning quality is operationalized as the quality of instructional processes and the school learning environment, evidenced qualitatively through teacher professional engagement, pedagogical adaptation and innovation, reflective supervision, character-value integration, and technology-supported participation. These indicators are treated as process- and environment-level evidence rather than as direct measures of student achievement.

In response to these challenges, the Indonesian government has introduced the *Sekolah Penggerak* (School Transformation) program as a strategic policy initiative aimed at accelerating educational reform through leadership strengthening, instructional improvement, and capacity building for teachers and principals (Aini et al., 2024; Karmilasari et al., 2023). The program positions school principals as key drivers of change who are expected to implement data-informed decision making, foster professional learning communities, and promote student centered learning. Empirical studies suggest that leadership focused reform initiatives are more likely to succeed when principals demonstrate transformational and instructional leadership practices aligned with contextual needs (Gechere et al., 2025; Li et al., 2025; Roesminingsih & Windasari, 2025).

Within the Indonesian context, Integrated Islamic Schools (*Sekolah Islam Terpadu*) represent a distinctive educational setting that combines national curriculum standards with Islamic values and moral education. Islamic educational philosophy emphasizes the integration of intellectual, moral, and spiritual development, as reflected in Qur'anic teachings that position knowledge as a means of elevating human dignity and social responsibility (Maksum et al., 2025; Momen, 2024). Previous research has shown that values based leadership in Islamic schools can strengthen school culture, ethical decision making, and character education when effectively embedded in management practices (G. Rahman, 2025; S. F. B. A. Rahman & Smith, 2024). However, the practical integration of Islamic values into contemporary school leadership and quality assurance mechanisms remains uneven and underexplored.

Conceptually, the Qur'anic values most consistently reflected in the empirical material are amanah, shura, and akhlaq. Amanah frames leadership as accountable stewardship; shura provides an ethical basis for consultation, shared decision-making, and collective problem solving; and akhlaq establishes moral conduct as a norm for interpersonal relations, supervision, and professional example. In this formulation, Qur'anic values do not operate as a parallel moral layer but as normative principles that can shape how instructional, transformational, participatory, and managerial leadership practices are enacted (Rahman, 2025; Rahman & Smith, 2024).

Existing Indonesian leadership studies have generated substantial evidence on instructional

supervision, technology leadership, teacher development, and principals' managerial roles (Karim et al., 2025; Rasdiana et al., 2024; Rasmitadila et al., 2025). Research on Islamic or value-based leadership likewise establishes the importance of ethical and religious values for school culture and management (Rahman, 2025; Rahman & Smith, 2024). What remains theoretically under-specified, however, is the process-level mechanism through which explicitly Qur'anic constructs are translated into concrete leadership routines such as strategic planning, consultation, supervision, teacher development, accountability, and reflective evaluation. This gap is particularly salient within state-supported reform settings such as Sekolah Penggerak, where principals are expected simultaneously to enact contemporary instructional and transformational leadership and sustain a distinctive Islamic educational identity.

Accordingly, this study addresses three objectives: (1) to analyze the leadership management practices through which principals in Integrated Islamic Sekolah Penggerak junior high schools integrate contemporary leadership principles with Qur'anic values; (2) to examine the strategies through which these practices support the defined qualitative dimensions of learning quality; and (3) to identify the supporting and inhibiting conditions that shape implementation across the three school contexts. The Qur'anic Values-Based Integrated Management Model (QV-BIMM) is not treated as a separate fourth objective or as a validated intervention; rather, it is developed as an analytical synthesis derived from the cross-case integration of findings from these three objectives. In this way, the study seeks to contribute a process-oriented and context-sensitive account of value-based educational leadership within a national school-transformation program.

Method

This study employed a qualitative multiple-case study design to examine how school principals integrate leadership practices, Qur'anic values, and learning-quality processes across three bounded Integrated Islamic Sekolah Penggerak junior high schools in Lampung Province, Indonesia. Each school constituted a distinct case bounded by institutional setting, formal participation in the Sekolah Penggerak program, and the December 2024–March 2025 data-collection period. The unit of analysis was the set of leadership management practices through which principals linked strategic, participatory, instructional, and managerial processes with Qur'anic values and school-level learning improvement. Within-case analysis was conducted before cross-case comparison so that shared patterns and context-specific variations could be distinguished rather than collapsed (Ebneyamini & Sadeghi Moghadam, 2018; Tomaszewski et al., 2020).

The three cases were SMP IT Bustanul Ulum (Central Lampung), SMP IT Wahdatul Ummah (Metro City), and SMP IT Daarul Ilmi (Bandar Lampung), selected purposively because they participated formally in Sekolah Penggerak, represented different local contexts within the province, and explicitly integrated Islamic values into management and instruction. Participants were principals and teachers directly involved in leadership implementation, curriculum development, instructional supervision, or pedagogical innovation.

Data collection was conducted from December 2024 to March 2025 through semi-structured interviews, non-participant observations, and documentary analysis. Interviews explored leadership strategies, decision-making, instructional supervision, quality-improvement practices, and the integration of Qur'anic values. Observations focused on leadership practices in staff meetings, supervision activities, and school programs, while the document corpus included school planning documents, annual work plans (Rencana Kerja Tahunan), policy guidelines, and supervision reports. The use of multiple sources enabled comparison between participants' accounts, observed practices, and institutional records.

Data analysis followed an iterative thematic procedure conducted concurrently with data

collection (Ahmed et al., 2025). First, interview, observation, and document material was reviewed and coded within each case. Second, related codes were condensed into categories addressing leadership practices, learning-quality strategies, and enabling or constraining conditions. Third, within-case thematic summaries were compared across the three schools to identify convergence, divergence, and context-specific emphasis. Fourth, the cross-case themes were analytically mapped to the Qur'anic values evident in the dataset and to the leadership mechanisms through which those values were enacted. Finally, these relationships were synthesized into the proposed QV-BIMM. This sequence provides an audit trail from empirical material to cross-case themes and model construction rather than treating the model as an *a priori* framework.

Trustworthiness was addressed through triangulation, member checking, an audit trail, reflexive memo writing, and contextual description. Credibility was supported by comparing interview accounts with observation and documentary evidence and by sharing preliminary interpretations with participants. Dependability was supported by documenting research procedures, data-collection decisions, and analytical steps, while confirmability was strengthened through reflexive memo writing intended to distinguish empirical interpretation from researcher assumptions. Transferability was supported through detailed description of the participating school contexts and leadership practices (Tomaszewski et al., 2020).

Informed consent was obtained from participants, and individual identities were protected through pseudonymization and confidential handling of research materials. Because the manuscript identifies the three participating schools by name, institutional anonymity is not claimed in the revised text. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw without consequence, and data collection was conducted in accordance with institutional norms and relevant educational-research ethics.

Results

Leadership Management Practices of Principals in Integrated Islamic Sekolah Penggerak

Across the three cases, leadership practices converged around three recurring functions: vision-based strategic direction, participatory decision-making, and instructional guidance, while the relative emphasis differed by school. SMP IT Bustanul Ulum showed a stronger participatory and visionary orientation, SMP IT Wahdatul Ummah emphasized transformational and instructional leadership, and SMP IT Daarul Ilmi displayed a more managerial and action-plan-oriented pattern. The cross-case pattern therefore suggests a shared leadership architecture with context-specific enactment rather than a single uniform style.

Across the cases, Qur'anic values were embedded in these leadership functions rather than treated solely as symbolic statements. Amanah was reflected in responsibility, planning, and accountability; shura was evident in collaborative decision-making and teacher involvement; and akhlaq informed expectations for professional conduct, mentoring, and character-oriented learning. Strategic plans and interview accounts further indicated that principals sought to align the requirements of Sekolah Penggerak with each school's Islamic educational vision, linking national reform priorities with local ethical commitments.

Table 1. Leadership Management Practices Implemented by Principals

School	Leadership Orientation	Key Management Practices	Dominant Values
SMP IT Bustanul Ulum	Participatory & Visionary	Vision based planning, collaborative decision making, innovation support	Amanah (trustworthiness), responsibility
SMP IT Wahdatul Ummah	Transformational & Instructional	Curriculum innovation, continuous supervision, teacher empowerment	Shura (consultation), commitment
SMP IT Daarul Ilmi	Transformational & Managerial	Action plan oriented management, mentoring, performance evaluation	Akhlaq, discipline, accountability

Table 1 shows convergence in the use of strategic planning, collaboration, and teacher support, but it also preserves meaningful differences in emphasis across the cases. These differences are important because they indicate that the integration of Qur'anic values with contemporary leadership practices was context-sensitive rather than mechanically identical across schools.

Efforts to Improve Learning Quality

Strategies related to learning quality clustered around instructional supervision, teacher professional development, character-based learning, and technology-supported instruction. Consistent with the study's operational definition, these strategies are interpreted as evidence about the quality of instructional processes and the learning environment, not as direct proof of gains in student achievement. Principals facilitated training, workshops, mentoring, and reflective discussion intended to strengthen pedagogical adaptation and responsiveness to curriculum change.

Instructional supervision was described and observed as a developmental process in which classroom observation, feedback, and reflective dialogue were used to encourage adjustment of teaching practice. The integration of Islamic values into instructional content and school culture provided an additional character-oriented dimension. Technology use was likewise treated as a process indicator when digital media or e-learning supported classroom participation. These forms of evidence support claims about enacted practices and perceived or observed instructional change, but they do not establish causal improvement in learning outcomes.

The implementation of learning quality improvement strategies reflects the central role of school leadership in creating conditions that support continuous instructional development. Rather than focusing only on administrative responsibilities, principals were positioned as instructional leaders who facilitated professional learning, encouraged pedagogical reflection, and promoted the integration of contextual values into classroom practices. The identified strategies demonstrate that improving learning quality was approached as an ongoing organizational process involving teachers, leadership support, and adaptive responses to educational transformation. These practices provide insights into how schools construct supportive learning environments, while acknowledging that qualitative evidence of implementation does not necessarily represent measurable changes in student achievement.

Table 2. Learning Quality Improvement Strategies

Aspect	Implementation Practices	Qualitative Indicators of Learning Quality
Instructional Supervision	Classroom observation, reflective feedback	Reported refinement of teaching practice
Teacher Development	Training, workshops, mentoring	Reported pedagogical innovation
Character Based	Integration of Islamic values	Observed value integration in learning

Learning Technology Integration	Digital media and e-learning	Observed technology-supported participation
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The patterns presented in Table 2 suggest that learning quality improvement was achieved through a combination of instructional, professional, cultural, and technological dimensions. Instructional supervision and teacher development served as mechanisms for strengthening teachers' capacity to respond to curricular demands and classroom challenges. Meanwhile, character-based learning and technology integration expanded the scope of instructional improvement by incorporating moral development and digital adaptation into everyday educational practices. These findings highlight that learning quality improvement is multidimensional and cannot be reduced solely to academic performance indicators, particularly when examined through qualitative evidence of school-level implementation.

Nevertheless, the effectiveness and sustainability of these strategies depend on the extent to which schools can institutionalize reflective practices, maintain continuous teacher learning, and provide adequate support for innovation. Although participants reported improvements in teaching practices and classroom engagement, further research using longitudinal designs and outcome-based measures is needed to examine whether these instructional changes contribute to sustained improvements in student learning. Therefore, the findings should be understood as evidence of strengthened instructional processes and organizational capacity rather than definitive evidence of causal effects on educational outcomes.

Taken together, the evidence indicates that the participating schools used these strategies to shape instructional processes toward greater reflection, adaptation, value integration, and technology-supported participation. The indicators reported in Table 2 are qualitative and process-oriented; they should not be interpreted as measured effects on student achievement.

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors Influencing Implementation

Implementation was enabled by institutional commitment, teacher participation, alignment with the Sekolah Penggerak policy framework, and shared Islamic values. Across the cases, these conditions supported coordination between leadership intentions and school-level practice by providing organizational legitimacy, staff involvement, and a common ethical vocabulary for decision-making and instructional development.

Constraints included uneven teacher capacity for creative and technology-integrated instruction, gaps in inclusive-education and violence-prevention policy, and the absence of systematic long-term evaluation of innovation. These constraints qualify the interpretation of value-based leadership: shared values alone were insufficient when professional capacity, policy infrastructure, or evaluation mechanisms were weak. Accordingly, the sustainability of leadership practices depended on both normative commitment and organizational capability.

Table 3. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors

Category	Factors Identified
Supporting Factors	Teacher collaboration, institutional support, Islamic values, leadership commitment
Inhibiting Factors	Limited instructional creativity, weak inclusive policies, lack of systematic evaluation

The findings indicate that supporting factors functioned as interconnected organizational resources rather than isolated elements. Teacher collaboration strengthened the translation of leadership vision into instructional practices by enabling knowledge sharing, collective problem-

solving, and adaptation to contextual challenges. Institutional support also played a crucial role by providing structural legitimacy, resources, and opportunities for professional engagement. In the context of Islamic-oriented schools, shared values further reinforced leadership practices by creating a moral framework that guided decision-making, strengthened collective identity, and encouraged commitment among school members. These findings suggest that leadership effectiveness emerges from the interaction between formal organizational structures and culturally embedded value systems.

However, the inhibiting factors reveal that leadership implementation may face substantial challenges when organizational capacity does not develop alongside strategic intentions. Limited instructional creativity and uneven technology integration among teachers suggest that leadership initiatives require sustained professional development rather than relying solely on policy directives or motivational approaches. Similarly, weaknesses in inclusive education policies and violence-prevention mechanisms indicate that value-based leadership needs to be complemented by concrete institutional procedures to ensure equitable and safe learning environments. Therefore, the presence of shared values should not be interpreted as sufficient evidence of successful implementation without considering the availability of supporting systems and professional competencies.

Furthermore, the absence of systematic long-term evaluation represents an important challenge for assessing the sustainability and broader impact of leadership practices. Without continuous monitoring mechanisms, schools may struggle to determine whether implemented innovations produce meaningful improvements in teaching quality, student outcomes, and organizational development. This finding aligns with the broader understanding that sustainable educational change requires not only visionary leadership but also evidence-informed evaluation and adaptive management. Consequently, strengthening future implementation requires an integrated approach that combines ethical leadership foundations, teacher capacity building, inclusive policy development, and continuous improvement processes.

Cross-Case Analytical Synthesis: Proposed Qur'anic Values-Based Integrated Management Model (QV-BIMM)

The cross-case synthesis links four elements: Qur'anic ethical values, leadership processes, qualitative indicators of learning quality, and contextual enabling or constraining conditions. In the proposed QV-BIMM, Qur'anic values function as normative anchors; leadership practices translate those anchors into strategic, participatory, instructional, and reflective routines; process-level indicators provide evidence of how those routines are experienced or observed in the learning environment; and contextual conditions shape the consistency and sustainability of implementation. The framework is analytically derived from the three cases and is therefore proposed as a provisional, context-bound model rather than as an externally validated or causally tested intervention.

Table 4. Cross-Case Analytical Structure of the Proposed QV-BIMM

Model component	Qur'anic anchor	Leadership process	Qualitative evidence / boundary
Ethical foundation	Amanah, shura, akhlaq	Norms for responsibility, consultation, and moral conduct	Provides the normative basis for leadership enactment
Strategic alignment	Amanah and shura	Vision-based planning and collaborative decision-making	Alignment of reform goals, school vision, and stakeholder participation
Instructional	Amanah and	Supervision, mentoring,	Reported/observed

development	akhlaq	teacher development, innovation support	refinement, adaptation, value integration, and participation
Reflective accountability	Amanah and akhlaq	Feedback, performance review, reflective evaluation	Supports learning from practice; constrained where long-term evaluation is weak
Contextual conditions	Shared Islamic values	Institutional support, teacher participation, policy and capacity	Enablers and constraints condition implementation across cases

The cross-case synthesis presented in Table 4 demonstrates that QV-BIMM operates as an integrative framework connecting moral foundations with organizational and instructional mechanisms. The model highlights that Qur'anic values are not positioned merely as symbolic references but as guiding principles that influence how leadership responsibilities, decision-making processes, and educational practices are interpreted and enacted. Through the integration of values such as *amanah*, *shura*, and *akhlaq*, leadership practices are framed within a broader ethical orientation that emphasizes responsibility, collective engagement, and the cultivation of a positive learning environment. This perspective extends existing discussions on values-based leadership by illustrating how religiously grounded principles may interact with contemporary school management processes.

Furthermore, the findings suggest that the effectiveness of value-based leadership depends on the translation of ethical principles into concrete institutional practices. Values become operationally meaningful when they are embedded in strategic planning, instructional supervision, teacher development, and reflective accountability mechanisms. The cross-case evidence indicates that leadership processes serve as mediating pathways through which normative commitments influence everyday school practices. However, variations in contextual conditions demonstrate that the same value framework may produce different implementation patterns depending on teacher capacity, institutional resources, policy support, and the availability of evaluation systems.

The QV-BIMM framework therefore contributes as an analytical model for understanding how Islamic ethical perspectives can be integrated with contemporary educational leadership approaches. Nevertheless, the framework remains exploratory and context-dependent because it was developed from qualitative evidence across limited cases. Future studies should examine the applicability of QV-BIMM through comparative research involving diverse educational contexts, longitudinal investigations, and mixed-method approaches that incorporate measurable indicators of organizational and learning outcomes. Such investigations would provide further evidence regarding the transferability, refinement, and theoretical development of the proposed model.

Discussion

The principal contribution of the findings is not simply that leadership matters for learning quality, a proposition already well established in educational leadership research, but that the three cases reveal a mechanism through which contemporary leadership routines are normatively reframed by Qur'anic values. International studies associate instructional, distributed, and transformational leadership with teacher learning, innovation, and organizational change (Galdames-Calderón, 2023; He et al., 2024; Hsieh et al., 2025; Li et al., 2025). The present cases extend that discussion by showing how *amanah*, *shura*, and *akhlaq* can operate inside strategic planning, consultation, supervision, and accountability rather than remaining external statements of school identity.

The role of *shura* is especially important for interpreting the participatory pattern. Shared leadership research commonly explains participation through collaboration, autonomy, and collegiality (Hsieh et al., 2024; Hsieh et al., 2025; Roesminingsih & Windasari, 2025). In the Islamic

school contexts examined here, consultation also carried an ethical meaning: participation was framed as a responsibility to deliberate collectively and preserve institutional trust. At the same time, the three schools did not enact participation identically. The stronger participatory orientation at Bustanul Ulum, the instructional-transformational emphasis at Wahdatul Ummah, and the managerial orientation at Daarul Ilmi indicate that the ethical principle is stable while its organizational expression varies with school routines and priorities.

Amanah and akhlaq also help explain why supervision was represented as developmental rather than purely compliance-oriented. Research on instructional leadership emphasizes observation, feedback, teacher learning, and professional development as mechanisms for improving teaching practice (He et al., 2024; Ralebese et al., 2025; Rasdiana et al., 2024). In these cases, supervision combined that professional logic with expectations of responsibility and ethical conduct. This interpretation should nevertheless remain bounded by the evidence: the study documents leadership routines, participant accounts, and observed instructional processes, but does not directly measure changes in student achievement. Accordingly, the findings support a contextualized explanation of instructional improvement processes rather than a causal claim about learning outcomes.

The proposed QV-BIMM therefore differs from a generic values-based leadership statement by specifying relationships among ethical anchors, leadership processes, qualitative learning-quality indicators, and contextual conditions. Prior Islamic leadership and values-based management scholarship has established that religious values can shape school culture, ethical decision-making, and educational quality (Rahman, 2025; Rahman & Smith, 2024). The present synthesis adds a more explicit process architecture: values are translated through strategic alignment, participatory governance, instructional development, and reflective accountability, while implementation is conditioned by teacher capacity, institutional support, policy infrastructure, and evaluation. The model is theory-building rather than validated; its contribution lies in organizing the cross-case evidence into a testable framework.

The inhibiting factors also define the boundaries of the model. Limited instructional creativity, uneven technology-related competence, gaps in inclusive and preventive policy, and weak long-term evaluation show that normative alignment does not substitute for organizational capacity. This finding qualifies overly normative accounts of Islamic leadership: Qur'anic values may provide legitimacy and ethical direction, but sustainable school transformation also requires professional learning, policy support, and evaluative infrastructure. For leadership-development programs, the implication is that values-based preparation should be connected to concrete competencies in instructional supervision, collaborative decision-making, data use, inclusion, and systematic evaluation rather than delivered as an isolated moral component.

Several limitations constrain transferability and causal interpretation. The study covers three Integrated Islamic schools within one Indonesian province, relies on qualitative evidence from principals and teachers, and does not include longitudinal or quantitative measures of student learning outcomes. The model was derived analytically from cross-case themes and was not externally validated. Future research should test the proposed relationships across a wider range of Islamic and non-Islamic schools, incorporate student and parent perspectives where relevant, and use mixed-method or longitudinal designs to examine whether the proposed mechanisms are associated with measurable changes in instructional quality, student learning, and character development.

Conclusion

This multiple-case study shows that principals in three Integrated Islamic Sekolah Penggerak junior

high schools combined contemporary leadership practices with Qur'anic values through strategic planning, consultation, instructional supervision, teacher development, and reflective accountability. Across the cases, amanah, shura, and akhlaq functioned as ethical anchors for leadership enactment, while institutional commitment, teacher participation, professional capacity, policy support, and evaluation shaped how consistently these practices could be implemented. The evidence supports process-level interpretations of learning quality—such as reflective teaching, pedagogical adaptation, value integration, and technology-supported participation—rather than causal claims about student achievement. QV-BIMM is therefore presented as a contextually derived and provisional framework that organizes the observed relationships among ethical values, leadership processes, qualitative learning-quality indicators, and contextual conditions. Its theoretical and practical value should be tested through broader, longitudinal, and mixed-method research before claims of general effectiveness are made.

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