

# ENHANCING LEARNING QUALITY: THE ROLE OF INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP, CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT, AND TEACHER PEDAGOGICAL COMPETENCE IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

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## Abstract

This study aims to investigate the influence of instructional leadership, classroom management, and teachers' pedagogical competence on the quality of learning in public elementary schools in Boja District, Kendal Regency. Using a quantitative approach with a correlational survey design, data were collected from 200 elementary school teachers selected through proportionate stratified random sampling. Data were obtained using validated questionnaires and analyzed using multiple linear regression. The findings reveal that all three independent variables have a positive and significant effect on learning quality. Instructional leadership showed the strongest influence ( $\beta = 0.487$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), followed by classroom management ( $\beta = 0.282$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), and pedagogical competence ( $\beta = 0.151$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). The regression model was statistically significant ( $F = 353.166$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), with an adjusted  $R^2$  of 0.841, indicating that the three variables collectively explain 84.1% of the variance in learning quality. These findings underscore the importance of strengthening school leadership, enhancing classroom management practices, and developing teachers' pedagogical skills to improve the overall quality of education. This research contributes practical insights for policy formulation and professional development programs aimed at improving learning outcomes in elementary education.

**Keywords:** *learning quality, instructional leadership, classroom management, pedagogical competence*

## INTRODUCTION

Basic education is the earliest stage in the formal education system and plays a vital role in shaping students' foundational thinking skills, social abilities, and character. Elementary schools hold a strategic position in ensuring that the teaching and learning process occurs optimally to achieve national educational goals. The quality of education at the elementary level greatly affects students' readiness for higher levels of education and their ability to face future life challenges (Mulyasa, 2022). Educational quality refers not only to students' cognitive outcomes but also includes affective and psychomotor dimensions.

Government Regulation No. 4 of 2022, amending Government Regulation No. 57 of 2021 on National Education Standards, defines learning quality as an ideal condition shaped by national standards, including the standards for processes, content, and graduate competencies. In practice, the government has made various efforts to improve learning quality, one of which is through the implementation of the *Merdeka Curriculum*, as stipulated in Regulation of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology No. 12 of 2024. This curriculum emphasizes student-centered learning, differentiated instruction, and strengthening teacher competencies (Kemendikbudristek, 2024).

However, field conditions show that the implementation of this policy has not yet fully ensured a uniform increase in learning quality. The 2024 Education Report Card for elementary schools in Boja District, Kendal Regency, indicates that performance in classroom management, psychological support, and teaching methods is still categorized as moderate. This reveals a gap between policy and classroom practice, suggesting that effective teaching and learning are hindered by both internal and external factors at schools. Previous studies have identified several key factors influencing learning quality, including the instructional leadership of school principals, classroom management, and teachers' pedagogical competence. Leithwood, et al (2020) emphasized that instructional leadership significantly affects school quality and student achievement. Principals who practice strong leadership

can provide direction, motivation, and support for teachers to improve instructional effectiveness. Effective school leaders create a shared educational vision and foster a positive learning culture (Hallinger, 2011). Classroom management is another critical factor in determining learning success. Teachers who can manage their classrooms effectively create an environment conducive to learning, reduce disruptions, and increase student engagement (Marzano & Marzano, 2003). Hattie and Larsen (2021) also highlighted that a safe and orderly classroom environment is a prerequisite for achieving high academic outcomes. Effective classroom management includes organizing the physical space, managing time and activities, and enforcing consistent rules and consequences.

Additionally, teachers' pedagogical competence plays a key role in ensuring high-quality education. This competence includes the ability to plan, implement, and evaluate instruction according to student characteristics (Shulman, 1987; Mulyasa, 2018). Teachers with deep subject knowledge, innovative teaching strategies, and skills in using educational media and technology are more capable of facilitating students in achieving learning objectives. Akbar (2021) found that higher pedagogical competence positively correlates with student engagement and academic achievement.

On the other hand, limited use of technology, lack of professional development opportunities, and insufficient support from principals in teacher capacity building also hinder the creation of quality learning environments (Fullan, 2015; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). In this context, learning quality is not solely the responsibility of individual teachers, but also depends on school leadership in building supportive systems for continuous improvement.

This study aims to answer the following questions: (1) Does instructional leadership affect the quality of elementary school learning in Boja District? (2) Does classroom management affect the quality of elementary school learning in Boja District? (3) Does teachers' pedagogical competence affect the quality of elementary school learning in Boja District? and (4) Do instructional leadership, classroom management, and pedagogical competence collectively affect the quality of elementary school learning in Boja District? By examining these three factors simultaneously, this study is expected to provide practical and policy recommendations for improving the quality of elementary education, especially in Boja District, Kendal Regency.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The quality of learning has become a central issue in education policy and research, particularly in primary education, which forms the foundation of lifelong learning. Numerous studies have attempted to define, assess, and enhance learning quality by examining its underlying factors, such as instructional leadership, classroom management, and pedagogical competence of teachers.

### **Learning Quality: Definitions and Dimensions**

Learning quality is broadly defined as the degree to which the educational process meets national education standards and achieves optimal learning outcomes. According to Government Regulation No. 57 of 2021, it encompasses curriculum planning, teaching implementation, classroom environment, and the use of technology to achieve holistic educational goals (Rizal, 2020). (Rintan, 2023) emphasizes student understanding, active engagement, and mastery of competencies, while Biggs and Tang (in Rosyada, 2021) point to meaningful behavioral and attitudinal changes as indicators of quality learning. Dewey's experiential learning theory further highlights the importance of connecting abstract concepts to real-life experiences, enhancing relevance and retention (Rintan, 2023). Learning quality comprises several key dimensions, including structured processes, conducive learning environments, student engagement, and measurable learning outcomes (Rosyada, 2021; Bloom in Rintan, 2023). Indicators such as effective teacher-student interaction, diverse learning strategies, contextual relevance, and technology integration are central to achieving high-quality education.

### **Instructional Leadership and Learning Quality**

Instructional leadership has emerged as a significant driver of school improvement. Hallinger and Murphy (in Afrina, 2019) define it as the principal's actions to promote a shared learning vision, manage instructional programs, and cultivate a positive learning climate. Effective instructional leadership is strategic, tactical, and relational (Robbins & Coulter, 2007), encompassing curriculum supervision, professional development, and stakeholder collaboration. Leithwood (2020) argues that instructional leadership significantly influences student achievement, particularly when school leaders provide systematic support for teacher development and curriculum alignment.

Despite strong theoretical foundations, some studies suggest variability in the effectiveness of instructional leadership, often influenced by context, resources, and leadership capacity (Swandewi, 2024). Thus, examining its impact in under-researched areas like Boja District provides valuable insights.

### **Classroom Management and Learning Quality**

Classroom management is fundamental to creating an effective learning environment. Marzano & Marzano (2003) emphasize its role in minimizing disruptions and promoting student focus. Effective classroom management involves the physical arrangement, time use, behavioral strategies, and social dynamics (Khofifah, 2019; Marsen, 2021). It ensures that teachers can maximize instructional time while fostering respectful and supportive interactions. Empirical studies such as those by Kurni & Susanto (2018) confirm a strong correlation between classroom management skills and learning process quality, with up to 87.9% of learning quality variance explained by classroom management. Nevertheless, managing classrooms in resource-limited schools remains a challenge, highlighting the need for targeted interventions and professional support.

### **Teachers' Pedagogical Competence and Learning Quality**

Pedagogical competence refers to the teacher's ability to design, implement, and evaluate learning effectively. Shulman's (1987) concept of *pedagogical content knowledge (PCK)* integrates subject matter expertise with instructional strategies tailored to learners' needs. Competent teachers understand students' developmental psychology, differentiate instruction, and foster critical thinking (Mulyasa, 2018; Masruroh, 2022). Research by Fathurrahman et.al (2019) and Rosyada (2021) demonstrates that pedagogical competence positively correlates with learning effectiveness. Yet, disparities in teacher training and access to professional development, particularly in suburban or rural schools, present ongoing barriers to achieving uniformly high teaching quality.

### **Synthesis and Gaps in the Literature**

While numerous studies affirm the individual influence of instructional leadership, classroom management, and pedagogical competence on learning quality, few integrate all three dimensions within a single analytical framework. Moreover, most research is concentrated in urban or well-resourced contexts, leaving suburban areas like Boja District underrepresented. Additionally, limited attention is paid to the interactions among these variables—how effective leadership can enhance classroom management and teacher competence, and how this synergy impacts student learning outcomes. This study addresses these gaps by adopting a holistic approach that examines the simultaneous influence of instructional leadership, classroom management, and pedagogical competence on learning quality in public elementary schools in Boja District. The findings aim to contribute practical insights for school improvement strategies in under-resourced settings and support evidence-based policymaking in education.

### **METHOD**

This study employed a quantitative approach using a correlational survey design to investigate the influence of instructional leadership, classroom management, and teachers' pedagogical competence on the quality of learning in public elementary schools in Boja District, Kendal Regency. As an explanatory research, it aimed to explain the relationship between independent and dependent variables. The study population comprised 397 elementary school teachers from 43 schools across the district. A representative sample of 200 teachers was selected through proportionate stratified random sampling, taking into account the proportional distribution of teachers with different employment statuses (civil servants, contract-based, and honorary teachers). Data were collected through structured questionnaires and interviews. The questionnaires were constructed based on operational indicators for each variable and employed a five-point Likert scale. Structured interviews were conducted with selected respondents to enrich the quantitative data and provide deeper insight into the key variables. Prior to data collection, all instruments were tested for validity and reliability.

The results confirmed that all items were valid ( $r > 0.1161$ ) and reliable, with Cronbach's Alpha values exceeding 0.96 for all variables. To analyze the data, multiple linear regression was used to assess the direct influence of instructional leadership, classroom management, and pedagogical competence on learning quality. Several prerequisite tests were conducted, including the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for normality, tolerance and VIF values for multicollinearity, the Durbin-Watson statistic for autocorrelation, and the Glejser test for heteroskedasticity. Hypothesis testing was performed using the t-test for individual significance, the F-test for simultaneous significance,

and the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) to assess model fit. The study also employed correlation coefficient analysis and calculated both effective and relative contributions of the independent variables to determine their respective impacts on the quality of learning. The research was conducted over a five-month period from October 2024 to February 2025 in Boja District, Kendal Regency.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study involved 200 elementary school teachers in Boja District, with data collected through validated questionnaires and analyzed using SPSS version 25. Descriptive statistics showed that instructional leadership, classroom management, and pedagogical competence were generally perceived positively by respondents. The average scores for each variable were categorized as “good”: instructional leadership ( $M = 149.24$ ), classroom management ( $M = 177.94$ ), pedagogical competence ( $M = 277.52$ ), and learning quality ( $M = 148.52$ ).

The dimension analysis indicated that the strongest aspect of instructional leadership was tactical (0.887), while the weakest was strategic (0.724), suggesting that principals are more focused on operational tasks than long-term strategic planning. For classroom management, time management was strongest (0.894), and social interaction management was weakest (0.653), indicating a gap in relational classroom climate. Within pedagogical competence, understanding learners scored highest (0.856), while evaluation and reflection were the weakest dimensions (0.521), suggesting a need to strengthen assessment literacy among teachers.

Classical assumption tests confirmed that the data met requirements for regression analysis. The normality test showed residuals were normally distributed ( $\text{Sig.} = 0.200$ ). Multicollinearity was absent ( $\text{VIF} < 2.0$ ), and Durbin-Watson value (1.855) indicated no autocorrelation. The Glejser test and scatterplot confirmed no heteroscedasticity ( $p > 0.05$ ).

The results of the t-test analysis revealed that all three independent variables—instructional leadership, classroom management, and pedagogical competence—had a positive and statistically significant effect on the quality of learning. Instructional leadership demonstrated the strongest influence, with a regression coefficient of  $\beta = 0.487$  and a significance value of  $p < 0.001$ . This indicates that when school principals provide clear direction, actively supervise instructional practices, and support teachers professionally, the overall quality of learning tends to improve. Classroom management followed with a coefficient of  $\beta = 0.282$  ( $p < 0.001$ ), showing that effective classroom organization, time management, and behavior regulation by teachers play a crucial role in creating a productive learning environment. Lastly, pedagogical competence had a positive effect as well, with  $\beta = 0.151$  ( $p < 0.001$ ), suggesting that teachers’ abilities to design, implement, and evaluate instruction, though slightly less impactful than the other variables, still contribute meaningfully to enhancing student learning outcomes. These findings confirm the importance of strengthening all three aspects simultaneously to foster high-quality education in elementary schools.

The multiple regression model was significant ( $F = 353.166$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), with an adjusted  $R^2 = 0.841$ , meaning that 84.1% of the variation in learning quality was explained by the three predictors. The correlation coefficients also showed strong relationships: instructional leadership ( $r = 0.847$ ), classroom management ( $r = 0.779$ ), and pedagogical competence ( $r = 0.647$ ).

These findings confirm that instructional leadership, classroom management, and pedagogical competence significantly influence the quality of learning, both individually and collectively. The results align with previous research by Swandewi et al. (2024), Hidayat et al. (2020), and Rosyada et al. (2021), emphasizing the importance of leadership and teacher competence in creating effective learning environments. Notably, the strongest predictor was instructional leadership, highlighting the pivotal role of school principals in driving instructional quality.

The findings also underscore practical implications: enhancing school leaders’ strategic capacity, reinforcing social-interaction aspects of classroom management, and supporting teachers in conducting effective evaluations and reflective practices. These targeted improvements can drive meaningful gains in learning quality across elementary schools in Boja District and beyond.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the objectives outlined in the introduction and the findings obtained from data analysis and discussion, this study concludes that instructional leadership, classroom management, and pedagogical competence all have a positive and significant impact on the quality of learning in public elementary schools in Boja District, Kendal Regency. Instructional leadership proved to be the most influential factor, highlighting the essential role of school principals in setting learning goals, supervising instruction, and supporting teacher performance. Classroom management also significantly contributes by creating a structured, engaging, and safe environment for learning.



Pedagogical competence, while showing a relatively smaller effect, remains a crucial element in ensuring that teachers can deliver instruction effectively, understand learners' needs, and apply appropriate assessment methods. Together, these three variables explain 84.1% of the variance in learning quality, underscoring their collective importance in educational improvement efforts. For future development, it is recommended that school management and educational authorities focus on strengthening strategic leadership training for principals, enhancing teachers' classroom interaction skills, and improving their ability to conduct authentic assessments and reflective practices. These efforts should be supported through continuous professional development programs, collaboration among stakeholders, and policies that promote instructional excellence and teacher empowerment. By addressing these areas, schools can create a more holistic and sustainable foundation for high-quality learning in the future.

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