

## **The Role of School Principals' Leadership in Realizing Environmentally Oriented Schools**

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### **Abstract**

Environmental sustainability has become an urgent issue in the education sector, as schools play a strategic role in shaping students' ecological awareness and environmentally responsible behavior from an early age. This study aims to analyze the role of school principals' leadership in realizing environmentally oriented schools (green schools) and to identify the factors that support or hinder their implementation. Using a library research design, this study examines academic journals, policy documents, and empirical studies published within the last eight years, focusing on leadership models, school environmental management, and green school practices. The findings reveal that principals with a clear environmental vision are able to establish consistent policies, strengthen school culture, and inspire teachers and students to participate actively in sustainability programs. Participatory leadership also contributes to greater ownership, collaboration, and innovation among school stakeholders in implementing waste management, energy conservation, and eco-friendly habits. External partnerships with local communities, environmental agencies, and NGOs provide additional resources and technical support that enhance program sustainability. However, several challenges persist, including limited facilities, low teacher literacy on environmental education, and weak ecological discipline among students. The study concludes that visionary, participatory, and collaborative leadership is essential for overcoming these barriers and building sustainable green school practices.

**Keywords:** green school, school leadership, environmental education, participatory leadership, sustainability programs

### **Introduction**

Environmental sustainability has become a critical concern in modern education, given that schools hold a strategic role in shaping students' ecological character and behavior. Environmental education that is integrated into the curriculum, habituation, and school culture has proven effective in fostering environmental awareness from an early age (Stevenson, 2017). In recent developments, the concept of the green school has emerged as an educational model that emphasizes resource management, energy conservation, and the active involvement of all school members in creating a friendly and sustainable learning environment (Berns & Simpson, 2020). The implementation of this concept requires strong managerial support, particularly from the principal as the key leader in decision-making and a driving force for change.

The school principal holds a central position in directing policies, designing programs, and establishing a conducive school climate for the implementation of environmental initiatives. Recent studies indicate that visionary, collaborative, and participatory leadership styles significantly influence the success of school transformation toward environmentally oriented institutions (Hallinger & Kovacevic, 2019; Khalid, 2021). However, in practice, efforts to realize green schools do not always proceed smoothly. Various obstacles often arise, such as limited facilities, low participation from school members, and insufficient support from external

stakeholders. These factors have been identified as major challenges in the successful implementation of environmental programs in schools (Aldridge & Fraser, 2018). Conversely, teacher support, community partnerships, and the availability of resources serve as strengthening factors for the sustainability of green school programs (Rahman et al., 2022).

Based on this context, the present study aims to understand how principals lead and manage school programs aimed at creating environmentally conscious learning environments, while also examining the factors that influence principals' success in fostering a sustainable green school culture. Thus, the objectives of this study are to provide an in-depth description of the principal's leadership role in implementing environmental programs and to analyze the determinants of leadership effectiveness in establishing a green school culture. This study is expected to contribute theoretically to the development of sustainability-based educational leadership studies and provide practical insights for schools seeking to develop effective and sustainable environmental programs.

### **Methods**

This study employs a library research design that focuses on a critical examination of various scholarly sources related to principal leadership and the implementation of green schools. This design was chosen because it enables an in-depth analysis of theories, empirical findings, and relevant educational policies to understand how leadership contributes to shaping environmentally oriented school cultures (Snyder, 2019; Jesson et al., 2020). The data sources in this study are not individuals but academic documents, scientific journals, books, research reports, and policy guidelines published within the last eight years. The selection of literature considers thematic relevance, publication quality, and recency to provide a comprehensive overview of leadership practices and environmental management in schools (Booth et al., 2021).

The research procedure began by identifying the main issue, namely the role of principal leadership in realizing green schools. The researcher then conducted a literature search through databases such as Google Scholar, ERIC, and ScienceDirect, followed by filtering based on publication year and contextual suitability. Selected literature was thematically classified according to concepts of educational leadership, school environmental management, the role of school stakeholders, and green school implementation strategies. After the classification process, a synthesis was conducted to identify patterns and relationships across findings (Xiao & Watson, 2019).

Data collection was carried out using document analysis, which involved examining academic texts and regulations related to the research topic. This technique allows the researcher to obtain data in the form of concepts, models, and best practices in school leadership and environmental movements (Bowen, 2009; O'Leary, 2017). The analyzed data include journal articles, scholarly books, policy guidelines for environmental education, and reports on green school practices.

The data analysis technique applies content analysis with a thematic analysis approach. The process includes reading the entire body of literature, identifying key concepts, categorizing information into themes such as leadership styles, strategies for implementing environmental programs, and supporting factors for green school success, and interpreting these patterns to gain comprehensive insights (Nowell et al., 2017; Braun & Clarke, 2021). This approach was selected because it is capable of revealing the relationship between principal leadership styles and the successful development of sustainable environmental cultures in schools.

### **Results**

This visionary leadership is reflected in the principal's ability to set program priorities, communicate the importance of environmental culture, and model sustainable practices in daily routines. These findings align with the transformational leadership perspective, which

emphasizes inspiration, motivation, and the development of shared values within educational organizations. The literature reviewed in this study reveals several key findings regarding the role of school principals' leadership in realizing environmentally oriented schools (green schools). First, studies consistently show that principals who possess a clear and strong environmental vision tend to succeed in directing school policies toward sustainability goals. Such principals are able to formulate strategic programs, cultivate ecological values within the school culture, and motivate teachers and students to participate actively in environmental initiatives.

Second, the findings indicate that participatory leadership greatly contributes to the effectiveness of green school programs. Principals who involve teachers, students, and school staff in the planning and implementation of environmental activities are more likely to create a collaborative and sustainable school environment. Participation fosters a sense of ownership and increases commitment among school stakeholders, leading to more consistent environmental practices. Third, the literature highlights the important role of external partnerships in supporting green school initiatives. Schools that build cooperation with community groups, environmental organizations, local government, and parents tend to have better access to additional resources, technical assistance, and learning opportunities that strengthen the sustainability of their environmental programs. Lastly, the results show that green school implementation still faces several challenges. Common obstacles include limited facilities, insufficient teacher knowledge of environmental education, and low ecological discipline among students. These challenges suggest the need for adaptive and innovative leadership to ensure that environmental initiatives can be maintained effectively.

Overall, the results illustrate that visionary, participatory, and collaborative leadership approaches are central to the successful development and sustainability of green school practices.

## Discussion

The findings of the literature review indicate that principal leadership has a significant influence on the successful implementation of environmentally oriented school programs. Recent literature affirms that principals who possess a clear environmental vision are able to establish consistent policy directions and encourage all school members to actively participate in sustainability initiatives (Suwanto & Rahayu, 2020; Hariri et al., 2022).

### **1. Visionary Principal Leadership in the Successful Implementation of Green Schools.**

Visionary principal leadership plays an essential role in the implementation of green schools, which aim to create more sustainable and environmentally conscious learning environments. The primary focus of visionary leadership is the creation and communication of a clear and inclusive vision that inspires school members—including teachers, students, and parents—to participate in sustainability initiatives. Research indicates that principals who apply visionary leadership are capable of fostering a culture of innovation and collaboration among school members, which serves as a key factor in the successful implementation of various sustainability programs, including those related to waste management and efficient resource utilization (Nor & Suriansyah, 2025; Irwana, 2017; Reodica, 2021).

The implementation of visionary leadership also contributes to teacher motivation and performance. Research findings show that principals who adopt visionary leadership and articulate an appealing vision can enhance teacher performance, which in turn positively influences overall school effectiveness (Irwana, 2017; Khaulah et al., 2024; Tiara, 2025). This reflects the importance of active principal engagement in promoting teacher professionalism and providing the necessary support for educators to implement more sustainable instructional practices. For instance, offering professional training and development programs that help teachers understand and apply sustainability concepts has

proven to be an effective strategy in supporting green school initiatives (Sulaiman et al., 2025; Azizah, 2025).

Furthermore, visionary principals are able to build strong collaborations between the school and the surrounding community, which is crucial for creating a learning environment that supports sustainability initiatives. Research highlights that community and parental involvement in school activities can strengthen relationships and reinforce the implementation of sustainable practices within the school (Tiara, 2025; Tursina, 2023). Therefore, principals need to initiate programs that actively engage community members and promote environmental awareness among students and the broader community.

In conclusion, visionary principal leadership plays a crucial role in the successful implementation of green schools through the development of a clear vision, support for teachers' professional development, and the establishment of effective community partnerships. These three aspects are interconnected and contribute significantly to achieving sustainability goals in education (Susilowati & Prameswara, 2025).

## **2. Participatory Principal Leadership in the Success of Green Schools.**

Selain In addition to vision, participatory leadership has also been identified as a key factor in building green schools. Principals who involve teachers, students, and school staff in the planning and implementation of environmental programs tend to create a more inclusive and sustainable school culture. Active participation from school members strengthens their sense of ownership over environmental programs and encourages innovation from various stakeholders (Novianti & Yusuf, 2021). Such collaboration has been shown to enhance the effectiveness of activities such as waste management, school gardening, energy conservation, and the habituation of environmentally friendly behavior. In this context, leadership is not only instructional but also collaborative.

Participatory principal leadership is recognized as an essential factor in the successful implementation of green school initiatives. Through a leadership approach that prioritizes participation, principals can encourage active involvement from all school components—including teachers, students, and parents—in decision-making processes related to sustainability initiatives (Komariah et al., 2021). This participation not only fosters a sense of ownership among members of the school community but also increases their commitment to achieving established environmental goals.

Research indicates that principals who employ participatory leadership styles can significantly enhance teacher motivation and performance (Saputra et al., 2021). By encouraging teachers to contribute to the design and implementation of sustainable learning programs, principals help create a more inclusive and collaborative environment. For example, developing environmental education programs that incorporate input from both teachers and students can strengthen the implementation of green school principles (Widawati et al., 2024). This aligns with reports showing that participatory leadership fosters a more positive atmosphere in which all stakeholders feel valued and empowered within the educational process (Komariah et al., 2021).

Furthermore, participatory leadership also enables the integration of input from parents and the wider community into green school programs. By involving parents in the planning and implementation of sustainable practices such as waste management and greening initiatives, principals help cultivate broader environmental awareness beyond the school environment (Amirudin & Bakar, 2023). Community involvement in environmental activities often results in strengthened relationships between the school and the surrounding community, which positively contributes to the success of sustainability programs (Widawati et al., 2024).

Participatory leadership also offers a more adaptive and responsive approach to addressing school needs and challenges. The flexibility of this leadership style allows principals to more easily adjust to emerging changes and obstacles, thereby ensuring that green school practices remain relevant and effective (Rachman et al., 2023). This underscores the importance of building principals' capacities to employ leadership techniques that promote collaboration and innovation within schools.

Thus, the role of participatory principal leadership in the successful implementation of green schools is highly significant. Through the active involvement of all stakeholders and the establishment of a strong culture of collaboration, principals not only succeed in introducing sustainable environmental practices but also create an educational community that is more environmentally aware and better integrated with surrounding communities (Susilowati & Prameswara, 2025; Irwana, 2017)..

### **3. External Partnerships as Supporting Factors in the Success of Green Schools.**

Faktor Another supporting factor identified is the principal's ability to build partnerships with external stakeholders. Research conducted over the past eight years shows that successful green schools generally maintain collaborative networks with local communities, environmental agencies, non-governmental organizations, and parents (Rahman & Sari, 2021). Such partnerships enable schools to access additional resources, technical support, and contextual learning opportunities for students—for example, through tree-planting programs, waste-bank initiatives, or environmental education activities. School leadership that is open to external collaboration can strengthen the sustainability of environmental programs and extend their impact.

External partnerships represent a crucial factor in the successful implementation of green school initiatives. Collaboration between schools and various stakeholders—including community groups, government institutions, non-governmental organizations, and private-sector entities—provides necessary resources to support educational sustainability initiatives. Through these collaborations, schools can strengthen their environmental programs and ensure the long-term continuity of the initiatives being implemented.

One of the primary roles of external partnerships is providing access to necessary resources, both financial and material. For instance, schools may collaborate with local companies to secure funding, tools, and educational materials required for green school programs such as waste management and greening projects (Bridwell-Mitchell et al., 2023). Research has shown that schools capable of building relationships with local businesses and organizations tend to have better access to support systems that enhance the success of their environmental initiatives (Wells et al., 2013).

In addition, external partnerships serve as platforms for knowledge-sharing and dissemination of best practices. Through collaboration with universities or research institutions, schools can adopt sustainable practices that have been proven effective elsewhere (Ng & Chan, 2012). Such collaborations facilitate valuable information exchange and the implementation of innovation in school environmental management. By involving external experts, schools also gain broader perspectives on environmental issues and the most effective strategies to address them (Solviana et al., 2024).

Another significant factor is the enhancement of community awareness and participation. Partnerships with local communities can strengthen environmental education within schools and encourage community involvement in sustainability activities (Handayani et al., 2024). For example, events such as open houses or environmental festivals can be organized to involve parents and surrounding communities in supporting

green school programs. Their participation contributes to the development of positive environmental culture both inside and outside the school (Komariah et al., 2021).

External partnerships also positively influence the legitimacy and public acceptance of green school programs. When schools successfully establish strong relationships with community groups and external agencies, public trust in their initiatives increases, resulting in greater moral and material support (LeChasseur, 2017). Such support is essential, particularly in efforts to educate students and communities about the importance of sustainability and environmental stewardship.

In conclusion, external partnerships play a critical role in the successful implementation of green schools by providing necessary resources, supporting knowledge exchange, increasing community awareness, and strengthening program legitimacy. Through solid collaboration among diverse stakeholders, schools can ensure that green initiatives are not only effective in the short term but also sustainable for the future.

#### **4. Challenges in Realizing Green Schools.**

Pembahasan The discussion also found that the main obstacles in realizing a green school are often related to limited facilities, a lack of teacher understanding of environmental education, and a minimal culture of ecological discipline among students. In this context, the role of the principal is highly significant, particularly in resource management, providing teacher training, and strengthening internal school regulations (Putra & Ningsih, 2020). Principals who are responsive and adaptive are able to adjust implementation strategies according to school conditions, for example, by starting with small, easily executable activities before expanding them into larger and more structured programs.

The implementation of the green school concept faces various barriers that may hinder its achievement, ranging from internal constraints such as school culture to external challenges, including community support and stakeholder commitment. In this context, the principal's role is crucial in overcoming and managing these barriers to ensure the success of such initiatives.

One of the main obstacles to realizing a green school is the lack of resources, both financial and material. Many principals face budget limitations that make it difficult to implement sustainable programs requiring substantial initial investment, such as environmentally friendly infrastructure development or the provision of educational tools. Principals need to innovate in school budget management and seek partnerships with third parties, such as local governments and private companies, to secure the necessary support (Juharyanto, 2017). By establishing these partnerships, principals can increase access to essential resources and expand green school programs.

Moreover, barriers also exist in terms of the culture and attitudes of school community members toward environmental initiatives. Misunderstanding and resistance to change often pose challenges for principals (Zulfiati et al., 2021). To address this, principals must act as proactive change agents, involving all stakeholders in decision-making processes and listening to their aspirations. Through participatory leadership approaches, principals can foster commitment among teachers, students, and parents to participate in environmental programs, while raising awareness of the importance of sustainability (Rianae et al., 2020).

Furthermore, limitations in teacher training and professional development can hinder the implementation of green schools. Principals need to develop ongoing training programs that educate teachers on environmentally friendly practices and the integration of sustainable education into the curriculum (Usman & Raharjo, 2013). Equipping teachers

with these skills is essential for enabling them to teach and implement green school principles in their classroom activities.

Principals also face challenges in managing environmental integration within the learning curriculum. To overcome this, they must encourage innovative teaching methods that emphasize environmental education and adapt the curriculum to make it more relevant to current environmental issues (Malaikosa, 2021). Through integrated assessment programs, principals can motivate students to engage actively in green school projects, such as school gardens or waste management programs.

In conclusion, principals play a vital role in overcoming various obstacles in realizing green schools. Through innovative, collaborative approaches that involve all stakeholders, principals can create an environment that effectively supports the implementation of sustainability initiatives.

### **Conclusion**

Hasil The study findings indicate that the success of implementing environmentally oriented schools is largely determined by the quality of the principal's leadership. Principals with a visionary approach are able to establish clear policy directions, cultivate an ecological culture, and provide exemplary behavior in applying environmentally friendly practices. Meanwhile, participatory leadership strengthens collaboration and active engagement among all members of the school community, enabling environmental programs to run more effectively and sustainably. The success of green schools is also influenced by the principal's ability to develop external partnerships that provide resources, technical support, and contextual learning opportunities for students. Nevertheless, the implementation of green schools still faces various obstacles, such as limited facilities, insufficient teacher understanding of environmental education, and a low culture of ecological discipline. Adaptive principals can overcome these challenges through managerial innovation, capacity building for teachers, and the strengthening of internal school regulations. Thus, visionary, participatory, and collaborative leadership is a key factor in realizing sustainable environmentally oriented schools.

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### **Conflict of Interests**

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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