



## Evidence Review 2024

A Review of Research on the Role of School Leaders in Improving Student Learning Outcomes



## Highlights

- Education systems face a learning crisis in Low and Middle-Income Countries (LMICs) (World Bank, 2018; Pritchett and Sandefur, 2020; Spaull & Taylor, 2015). Governments, international organizations, and financial and technical partners put efforts and collaborate in supporting educational systems and improving learning outcomes for all children.
- Investing in school leadership to improve student learning is potentially a policy solution that is cost-effective yet infrequently used in developing countries (Anand et al., 2023; Bloom et al., 2015; Crawfurd, 2017; Leaver et al., 2019; Tavares, 2015). Recent studies show that school leaders are second only to teachers in influencing student outcomes (UNESCO, 2018; VVOB, 2018). This evidence review aimed to identify how school leaders affect teaching and student learning, particularly those relevant to Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN).
- Existing literature on school leadership focuses on student learning outcomes in general, and not on FLN specifically.

  Effective instructional leadership practices improve early-grade literacy instruction and learner outcomes (Bulat et al., 2017). We reviewed more than 70 sources on the association between school leadership and student learning outcomes, which have important implications for the potential role of school leadership in improving FLN in schools in the context of developing countries.
- Effective school leadership is pivotal in enhancing student outcomes, primarily by shaping teaching practices, fostering teamwork among teachers, and boosting teacher satisfaction.

  Research has consistently highlighted the importance of leadership in driving student success (Leaver et al., 2019; Adelman & Lemos, 2021). Several studies have confirmed the positive impact of leadership on student achievements (de Barros et al., 2019; Bush et al., 2022; Cilliers et al., 2022; De Hoyos et al., 2021; Tavares, 2015). Leaders can elevate learning outcomes by championing reflective teaching practices, overseeing lesson planning, and fostering a culture of collaborative learning among educators (Bellibaş et al., 2021; Lemos et al., 2021). Furthermore, leadership is crucial in promoting teamwork among teachers and enhancing their job satisfaction (Wills & van der Berg, 2021; Shava & Heystek, 2021; Tavares, 2015).



# Highlights

- The relationship between school leadership and student outcomes presents a complex picture with varied findings across different studies. Some randomized controlled trials did not identify a clear link between improved school management and enhanced student outcomes (Muralidharan & Singh, 2020; Lohmann et al., 2020; Garcia-Moreno et al., 2019). Other research indicates that initiatives seen as merely administrative rather than genuine enhancements in leadership and instruction might not achieve the intended outcomes (Muralidharan & Singh, 2020; Aturupane et al., 2022). The challenges in pinpointing the impact of leadership stem from the intricacies of assessing leadership actions, the need for large sample sizes and prolonged study durations, and the diverse ways leadership can affect the teaching and learning process (Blimpo et al., 2015; Smarrelli, 2023; Ganimian & Freel, 2021; Romero et al., 2021).
- The role of school leadership in shaping school culture and the overall learning environment is a growing focus in educational research. A South African study emphasized the crucial role of both material and human resources in advancing literacy skills (Wills & van der Berg, 2021). However, not all interventions have been successful. In Guatemala, a program aimed at guiding principals on teacher interactions did not result in notable outcomes (Lohmann et al., 2020). Likewise, despite introducing new management approaches and training in Sri Lanka, there was no improvement in student learning (Aturupane et al., 2022).
- These findings have important implications for the potential role of school leadership in improving FLN in schools and future interventions and research on school leadership in developing countries. While better school leadership is associated with improved learning outcomes and is potentially very cost-effective compared to teacher training, school leaders often have limited access to training and professional development that would enhance their impact. Future research should focus on strengthening evidence on the role of school leaders in improving FLN and the potential mechanisms for school leaders to influence teaching and learning culture.



## Implications for Promoting Foundational Literacy and Numeracy in Low- and Middle-Income Countries

#### A Review of Literature

Many students in developing countries face a significant learning gap. Nearly 7 in 10 students in these regions are not mastering basic reading skills by age 10 (World Bank, 2022). In comparison, most students in wealthier countries are finishing primary school with better reading, writing, and math abilities. While only 14% of students in places like Europe and North America struggle with basic math and reading, the numbers soar to 84-88% in Sub-Saharan Africa and 76-81% in parts of Asia (Clarke, 2022). Given this, there's a global push from governments and educational groups to find ways to boost learning and ensure every child gets a quality education.

School leadership can improve the quality of education and learning outcomes (Global School Leaders, 2020). School leadership can be defined as processes and actions through which individuals in educational roles, such as principals/ assistant principals/ senior teachers with executive and administrative functions, influence and guide their school communities towards achieving shared educational goals (UNESCO, 2018).

Focusing on strengthening school leadership could be a cost-effective strategy to enhance student learning, especially in developing countries (Anand et al., 2023; Bloom et al., 2015; Crawfurd, 2017; Leaver et al., 2019; Tavares, 2015). While there is ample evidence from wealthier nations about the positive role of school leaders, it is an area often overlooked and understudied in lower-income regions (UNESCO, 2018; Global School Leaders, 2020). We need more insights into how school leaders can address the educational challenges in these regions.



This review delves into the impact of school leadership on student learning, especially in Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN), within developing countries.

We explored the following key questions:

- Is school leadership associated with improved student learning?
- Which leadership practices promote student learning?
- How does leadership promote student learning?
- What factors/conditions enable or hinder school leadership's impact on student learning?



## School Leadership and Student Learning Outcomes

Effective school management practices are linked to better student outcomes. Leaver et al. (2019) found that in a study spanning 65 countries, enhanced school leadership directly benefits student learning. This finding is echoed by Adelman and Lemos (2021) in their research on Latin American and Caribbean schools. A more recent study by Bush et al. (2022) also emphasizes the pivotal role of strong school leadership in enhancing students' learning. Tools like the World Management Survey (WMS) by Bloom et al. (2015) and its counterpart for developing countries, the Development World Management Survey (D-WMS) by Lemos et al. (2021), have been instrumental in gauging school management quality. In Tanzania, leadership practices measured using D-WMS explained as much as 10% of the variation in district exam scores (Cilliers et al., 2022). Despite this evidence on the link between school leadership and student outcomes, it is essential to note that most studies are based on observational data and are correlational.

School leadership interventions can enhance student learning outcomes. Research indicates that leadership interventions can boost student learning by 0.03 standard deviation (Anand et al., 2023). Various studies affirm the effectiveness of leadership and management programs in elevating school management quality (Romero et al., 2022; Beg et al., 2021; Tavares, 2015; Lohmann et al., 2020). For instance, in Argentina, effective leadership practices introduced through a leadership-related intervention were linked to better student performance (de Hoyos et al., 2021). In Brazil, initiatives that emphasized management training and collaboration among principals led to improved test scores in subjects like Portuguese and math (de Barros et al., 2019). A study in São Paulo highlighted that enhancing leadership practices could significantly boost math scores (Tavares, 2015). The intervention in this study consisted of training school principals through a course dedicated to discussing and applying the criteria of good school management.



While the importance of school management is often emphasized, some research suggests it does not always correlate with improved learning outcomes. A comprehensive study in India, which incorporated tools like a school rating system and School Improvement Plans, did not observe significant changes in governance, attendance, or teaching methods. Even more, student learning remained unaffected in follow-up evaluations (Muralidharan & Singh, 2020). Similarly, an initiative in Guatemala that offered a condensed 300-hour management training to principals did not yield improvements in math and reading scores (Lohmann et al., 2020). This observation is consistent with studies from Mexico and South Africa, where certain leadership and management programs did not have a positive impact on student learning (Garcia-Moreno et al., 2019; Romero et al., 2021; Wills & van der Berg, 2021). However, some of these studies showing no relationship between school leadership and learning outcomes are based on interventions not specific to school leadership (e.g., Garcia-Moreno et al., 2019). Their results highlight the challenge of isolating the impact of school leadership in the case of multifaceted interventions.

Some of these studies suggest that a focus on administrative targets may not be effective.

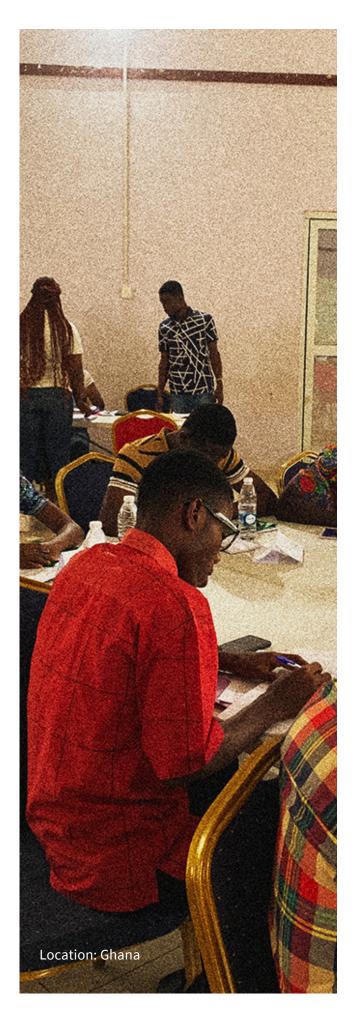
Muralidharan and Singh (2020) postulate that the program in India was perceived as administrative because it focused on the timely submission of required documents rather than a tool for genuine improvement. Another robust study in Sri Lanka that introduced a new school culture with distributed administrative authority across various stakeholders also failed to translate observed changes in principal behavior to improved student outcomes (Aturupane et al., 2022).

The varied results regarding the impact of school leadership on student outcomes indicate that the influence of leadership is not always straightforward to pinpoint. Measuring the effectiveness of leadership practices in schools can be challenging, often needing extensive data to draw clear conclusions. Some research suggests that while leadership can play a role in student success, it might be contingent on specific situations or methods (Blimpo et al., 2015).

Especially in environments where school leaders are primarily tasked with policy implementation and data reporting, simply training them in instructional leadership might fall short. It is essential to also equip them with interpersonal and managerial skills for a more holistic approach to leadership (Susanti et al., 2023).

Research on the influence of school leadership often necessitates extensive data to draw meaningful conclusions. For instance, a study from Peru underscores the need for a broad dataset to accurately gauge the effect of specific interventions on student performance (Smarrelli, 2023). This reinforces what Smarrelli (2023) emphasizes on the critical role of comprehensive sample sizes in detecting significant effects on student test scores.





The varied results regarding the impact of school leadership on student outcomes indicate that the influence of leadership is not always straightforward to pinpoint.

The benefits of school leadership training on student achievement might take time to become evident. For instance, a focused six-week training for school leaders in Argentina did not show immediate improvements in student outcomes three months post-training (Ganimian & Freel, 2021). In Mexico, a program that enhanced principal skills over three years showed positive changes (Romero et al., 2021). Similarly, de Hoyos et al. (2021) in Argentina pointed out that while leadership practices hold promise for better learning outcomes, the full range of their advantages may emerge slowly. This sentiment is echoed by another study in Mexico by de Hoyos et al. (2017), which found a modest improvement in test scores after leadership training, suggesting that the true benefits of such programs might take time to materialize fully.

Finally, direct training for school leaders paired with mentorship can yield more significant results. Research from Mexico demonstrated that when school principals were trained by a team of professional trainers, their managerial skills improved notably compared to cascading training methods (Romero et al., 2022). Similarly, an impact evaluation in Ghana tested two strategies: one focused on differentiated instruction for both teachers and principals, and the other added an enhanced management training component for principals, emphasizing mentorship and collaboration with teachers. The results showed that both strategies improved instructional management, but the latter approach, which incorporated mentorship, had a more profound impact on people management (Beg et al., 2021).

## School Leadership Styles and Student Outcomes

## Instructional leadership tends to be more effective in boosting student outcomes compared to transformational leadership.

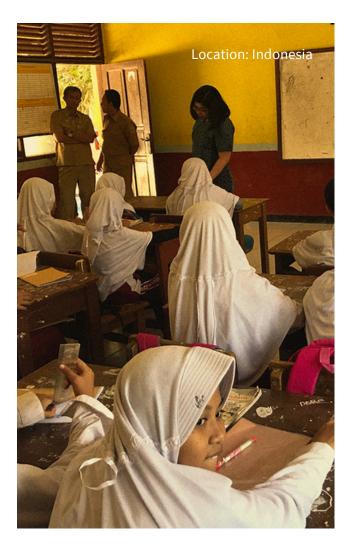
Lemos et al. (2021), in their study in India, highlighted the greater influence of personnel management over operations on student achievement. Meanwhile, a comprehensive analysis by Robinson et al. (2008) contrasted the impacts of both instructional and transformational leadership styles. They described instructional leadership as the role of school leaders in setting educational goals, supervising teaching initiatives, and fostering a conducive learning environment. On the other hand, transformational leadership is characterized by a leader's capacity to motivate staff toward a shared organizational vision. The results indicated that instructional leadership was three times more influential than its transformational counterpart in affecting student outcomes.

Some leadership strategies might take longer to influence student outcomes as their effects are more indirect. For instance, while transformational leadership can shape a school's overarching vision, its immediate effect on day-to-day classroom activities might be limited. Compared to transformational leadership, Malechwanzi (2018) highlighted the relative effectiveness of transactional leadership in enhancing student learning. This latter approach involves setting clear goals with educators, delegating specific tasks to achieve these objectives, and then offering rewards or consequences based on achieving these goals.

Instructional leadership was three times more influential than its transformational counterpart in affecting student outcomes.

## Blending instructional and transformational leadership approaches can yield better results.

Drawing from South African research, an observational study by Shava & Heystek (2021) underscored the benefits of merging these two leadership styles to inspire educators and elevate school performance, particularly in schools that are lagging behind. School leaders in such environments leverage feedback systems to refine teaching methods, which in turn boosts student performance on tests. In essence, while we often categorize leadership styles with specific labels, merging these styles can be a potent strategy to enhance student learning.



## School Leaders Influence Teachers and Teaching Practices

The role of instructional leaders is crucial in **elevating student achievement.** These leaders shape teaching approaches, cultivate a reflective learning environment, oversee lesson development, and champion teamwork among teachers. While leadership strategies differ in their execution and duration, a common goal is to uplift the quality of instruction, directly influencing student success. A comprehensive study across 32 countries affirmed that robust leadership is synonymous with elevated teaching practices (Bellibaş et al., 2021). School leaders can actively participate in lesson planning and classroom evaluations (Lohmann et al., 2020). Their involvement can extend to overseeing curriculum delivery, ensuring consistent teacher presence, monitoring student workbook progress, and fostering active teacher engagement (Wills & van der Berg, 2021). Echoing this, research from India revealed that well-managed schools consistently deliver superior instruction, leading to enhanced student performance (Lemos et al., 2021).

School leaders can encourage specific instructional practices that effectively improve learning outcomes, including FLN. For

educators aiming to enhance their teaching methods, certain instructional practices stand out. Utilizing formative assessments to shape lessons, ensuring access to pertinent learning materials, and maximizing instructional time is pivotal. These elements align with key factors pinpointed for elevating FLN skills and outcomes (Bulat et al., 2017). The foundational components encompass the teaching methodology (Teach), the presence of high-quality, relevant materials for learners (Text), efficient use of teaching time (Time), leveraging formative assessments to inform teaching strategies (Test), and delivering instruction in the most comprehensible language for students (Tongue).

The influence of school leadership on teacher motivation is profound and can ripple into student achievements. Strong school leadership nurtures teamwork among teachers and boosts their job satisfaction, both of which improve student learning. This connection was highlighted in a Rwandan study (WOB, 2020). Additionally, school leaders play a key role in encouraging teachers to learn from one another, a practice that directly enhances the quality of instruction (Bellibaş et al., 2021).

School leadership has a profound impact on teacher behaviors, teamwork, and overall job satisfaction. Research by Wills & van der Berg (2021) highlighted a consistent positive link between effective school leadership and teacher outcomes, including classroom presence, thoroughness in student workbooks, and overall teacher engagement. In the South African context, feedback from school principals has been shown to elevate classroom methods, leading to better student test results (Shava & Heystek, 2021). Moreover, specific leadership strategies, such as setting clear goals, regular monitoring, and offering financial incentives to educators, can notably boost math achievements (Tavares, 2015).





Finally, successful school principals foster a positive learning environment within their **institutions.** This environment encompasses the attributes of the school community, interpersonal relationships, the school's physical setting, and the collective values and beliefs held about the school (Grissom et al., 2021). Leaders play a crucial role in addressing challenges like violence and ensuring a safe learning space for students (Devries et al., 2015). By cultivating a culture that emphasizes engagement, support, and effective teaching (Day et al., 2020), principals set high standards for students and staff, promote collaboration, and champion continuous growth. Such a nurturing and supportive culture lays the groundwork for enhanced student academic achievement.

The success of leadership practices often hinges on the specific environment of a **school.** For instance, in schools primarily serving low-income and diverse student populations, there's a heightened need for open communication with parents to establish a collective vision. On the other hand, schools with a predominantly middle to upper-income student base might not require the same level of parental engagement (Leithwood et al., 2020). Pont (2020) underscores the idea that while leadership is essential for positive learning outcomes, it is the school's context that shapes leadership strategies. As leaders, it is vital to continually reflect and ask, "Under these conditions, what should I do"? This perspective emphasizes the importance of customizing leadership strategies to fit the unique needs of each school rather than relying on a generic approach. In essence, school leaders must be attuned to and address the distinct challenges and requirements of their specific educational environment.

## Enabling Conditions for School Leaders to Influence Student Outcomes

School leaders play a pivotal role in shaping student outcomes, not just through direct teaching practices but also by creating an environment conducive to learning. This influence, often termed 'mediation,' encompasses various aspects like the school's atmosphere, teacher recruitment and retention, instructional methods, and the overall learning culture (Özdemir et al., 2022). It's essential for school leaders to engage with stakeholders at all levels, from the classroom to the district and even national levels. The surrounding context often molds the specific actions and strategies adopted by these leaders (Leithwood et al., 2020).

It is essential to recognize the evolving research on how school leadership shapes the learning environment and overall school culture, with varied outcomes. Research from South Africa underscored the role of both material and human resources in advancing literacy (Wills & van der Berg, 2021). However, not all interventions have been successful. For instance, a Guatemalan program offering guidance to principals on teacher interactions did not produce notable results (Lohmann et al., 2020). Similarly, efforts in Sri Lanka to revamp management structures and provide training did not significantly enhance learning outcomes (Aturupane et al., 2022).

School leaders' management styles are deeply influenced by both their immediate school environment and broader societal contexts. The

interplay between a country's educational framework and its cultural norms shapes leadership practices. This can be seen in explicit forms like policies and training programs or in more subtle ways rooted in societal values (Cruz-González et al., 2021). National values play a pivotal role in shaping behaviors at both individual and organizational levels. As a result, school leaders often align their strategies with societal norms, and their effectiveness is measured against these societal benchmarks (Benoliel & Berkovich, 2018; Benoliel & Barth, 2017). For instance, in Israel, school leaders are encouraged to adopt a more inclusive decision-making approach. While this promotes collaboration, it can sometimes extend decision timelines and may not always center on student learning (Shaked et al., 2020). On the other hand, in Sub-Saharan Africa, school leaders often face challenges like limited professional development opportunities, leading many to step into leadership roles from teaching backgrounds without adequate preparation for leadership challenges (Biamba & Odero, 2016). This underscores the idea that what works in one cultural or national context might not be as effective in another due to these inherent differences (Clarke & O'Donoghue, 2017).

12

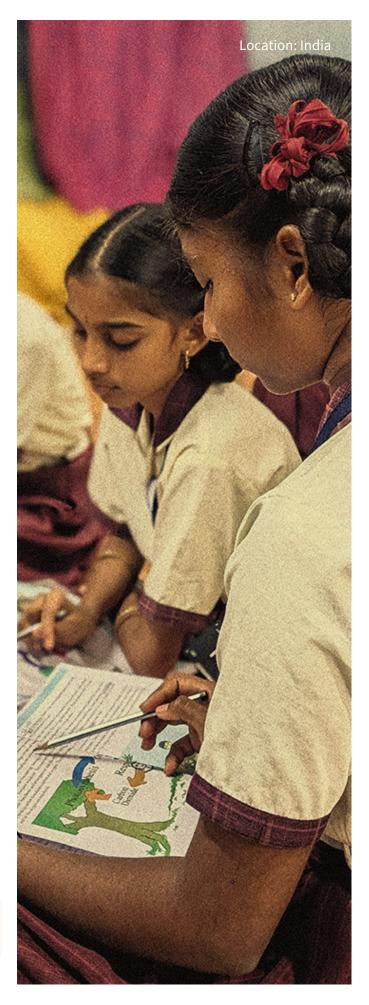


GSL EVIDENCE REVIEW 2024

School leaders play a pivotal role in student success when they have the autonomy to make decisions about teacher recruitment and retention. Research indicates that students tend to perform better in schools where principals have a say in the teacher-hiring process (Leaver et al., 2019). Effective leaders often prioritize attributes in teachers, such as fostering a nurturing environment or possessing deep subject knowledge, which is directly linked to positive student outcomes (Grissom et al., 2021). Supporting this notion, a study revealed that private schools, which often grant more managerial autonomy, excel in selecting, motivating, and retaining their teaching staff (Lemos et al., 2021). Moreover, adept principals tend to retain more teachers by offering them essential resources and personalized support, especially to those new to the profession. When teachers feel valued and supported, they are more driven to enhance student learning and less inclined to leave their positions (Shava & Heystek, 2021). However, a challenge arises in many public and centralized education systems where principals lack the authority to make hiring and firing decisions, limiting their ability to curate an optimal teaching team (Bush & Glover, 2016).

Finally, for school leaders to effectively enhance student outcomes, having access to adequate resources is crucial. In Mexico, a program that combined cash grants for schools with efforts to bolster the principal's managerial skills underscored the significance of financial resources in enabling leadership to positively influence student learning (Romero et al., 2021). This perspective is reinforced by research from Burkina Faso, which highlighted the essential role of financial resources in allowing the benefits of effective school leadership to come to fruition (Sanfo, 2020). Moreover, granting schools greater autonomy in their decision-making processes can further amplify the impact of these leadership practices, especially in areas like teacher management (Pont, 2020).

Granting schools greater autonomy in their decision-making processes can further amplify the impact of leadership practices.



## Conclusion

- This report delves into the intricate ties between school leadership initiatives and their effects on student learning. A growing body of research indicates that effective management practices are closely linked to improved student achievements. However, while some studies highlight the positive role of exemplary school leadership, others have not met expectations. These varied outcomes emphasize the challenges in assessing the true influence of school leadership, pointing to the need for large sample sizes for precise evaluation and suggesting that the full benefits of leadership strategies may emerge over a longer duration.
- Effective school leadership has a profound impact on both the teaching environment and student outcomes. While instructional leadership focuses on setting clear goals and supervising teaching methods, transformational leadership aims to galvanize staff around a collective vision. Interestingly, instructional leadership has been shown to have a more pronounced effect on student outcomes. However, blending these leadership styles can produce even better results, enhancing student performance.
- Furthermore, school leaders are crucial in nurturing teacher motivation and fostering teamwork, indirectly elevating student achievements. Strong leadership is closely tied to high-quality teaching. By cultivating a positive school culture that encourages collaboration and sets high standards, school leaders pave the way for academic excellence. At its core, impactful leadership is about understanding and adapting to the unique needs and challenges of each school's specific environment.
- The success of school leaders is influenced by a myriad of factors, encompassing the immediate school setting, societal values, and overarching education ecosystem. Cultural nuances, like power relationships, can mold how leadership is exercised. Furthermore, a principal's ability to oversee teacher recruitment and retention has a direct bearing on student success. Well-managed schools, particularly in the private sector, stand out in their ability to attract and retain quality educators. Additionally, having adequate resources, especially financial support, enhances the positive effects of leadership on student learning.
- These insights highlight the role school leadership can play in enhancing FLN in educational settings, especially in developing nations. While effective school leadership can lead to better student outcomes and might be more cost-efficient than teacher training, many school leaders lack the training and professional growth opportunities to maximize their influence. Moving forward, research should delve deeper into understanding how school leaders can bolster FLN and the ways they can shape a school's teaching and learning environment.

## Annex 1. Summary of School Leadership Interventions

| Country/Region   | Impact on<br>Student<br>Outcomes | Summary of Interventions   |
|--|----------------------------------|--|
| 65 countries (Leaver et al., 2019)                             | Positive                         | Developing and testing a new approach to measuring school leadership practices and how they might drive learning gains via incentive and selection effects among teachers, students, and parents.  |
| Latin America and the<br>Caribbeans (Adelman & Lemos,<br>2021) | Positive                         | Capturing management processes and practices in Latin America and the Caribbeans.  |
| Argentina (De Hoyos et al., 2021)                              | Positive                         | The program provides schools with relevant data on student learning outcomes to inform management and classroom instruction. In addition, the program provides capacity-building training for supervisors, principals, and teachers to understand and make decisions based on the learning outcomes.   |
| Argentina (Ganimian & Freel, 2021)                             | No impact                        | A six-week intensive training workshop to school principals provided by an international foundation. Evaluation study after 3 months of treatment.   |
| Guatemala (Lohmann et al., 2020)                               | No impact                        | A program with four components: (1) Posters with "rule of thumb" to guide principals in supporting teachers in lesson planning and conducting classroom observation; (2) An implementation checklist for principals; (3) A letter sent by the Ministry of Education to principals on the importance of the materials provided; and (4) A session where all materials are distributed to principals and implementation guidance provided. |
| India (Delavallade et al., 2021)                               | Positive                         | Multi-faceted program involving a school leadership component consisting of volunteers meeting with school management, assisting in preparing school improvement plans, and attending school management meetings.  |
| Mexico (Romero et al., 2021)                                   | No impact                        | Measuring operations management, people management, target setting, and monitoring based on the Development World Management Survey (DWMS).  |

| Country/Region                               | Impact on<br>Student<br>Outcomes | Summary of Interventions   |
|--|----------------------------------|--|
| Sri Lanka (Aturupane et al., 2022)           | No impact                        | New school culture through which new management structures were established and capacity-building training provided to teachers and school leaders.  |
| South Africa (Wills & van der<br>Berg, 2021) | Positive                         | Four kinds of resources are made available to school leaders in promoting literacy in schools. They include material resources, knowledge resources, human resources, and strategic resources. |
| Tanzania (Cilliers et al., 2022)             | Positive                         | Focus on educational leadership practices, including school visits, school and teacher incentives, and performance review of staff.  |

## Annex 2. Methodology

We searched Google Scholar for articles containing the terms 'school leader', 'school principal', 'student achievement', 'learning outcomes', and 'Foundational Literacy and Numeracy', which resulted in a long list of more than 2000 papers. Primary screening of titles and abstracts was done to select relevant papers that have addressed issues related to school leadership and student learning outcomes in their writing based on (Anand et al., 2023). We also selected papers from other sources, including references used by Global School Leaders' (GSL) school leader training designers, a repository of research studies maintained by GSL over the years, and suggestions received from researchers and collaborators.

We have mainly included journal articles, working and discussion papers, and reports by multilateral organizations. More than 270 articles were reviewed by three members of the research team, with around 70 articles being finally selected for an in-depth read for this evidence review. We outlined the specific characteristic information to be extracted from all reviewed sources and organized them using a matrix including author information, year of publication, country, objectives, theoretical/conceptual framework, research questions and hypotheses, methods used, findings, conclusion, limitations, and key insights. We synthesized the insights to identify common themes around school leadership and how it can impact teaching and learning in schools.

16

GSL EVIDENCE REVIEW 2024



### Acknowledgements

This evidence review has been led by Jean-Baptiste M.B. Sanfo, Gautam Anand, and Dewi Susanti. We are thankful to Yue-Yi Hwa, Gina Ikemoto, Avni Gupta-Kagan, Azad Oommen, Sameer Sampat, Adhishree Parasnis, and Tejas Airodi for their feedback and input. We used Open AI's ChatGPT to improve the clarity and brevity of the final document. We also thank the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Jacobs Foundation, and Douglas B. Marshall, Jr. Family Foundation for their funding and support. The report's design direction was led by Adhishree Parasnis, with Krishnendu Nair as Lead Designer and Esmail Bagasrawala supporting report dissemination efforts.

#### Disclaimer

This report has been prepared by GSL staff and consultants. The findings, interpretations, and conclusions expressed in this work do not necessarily reflect the views of GSL. GSL does not guarantee the accuracy of the data included in this work.

### Citation

Global School Leaders, (2024). Evidence Review 2024: A Review of Research on the Role of School Leaders in Improving Student Learning Outcomes. Global School Leaders: Los Angeles.

- Adelman, M., & Lemos, R. (2021). Managing for Learning: Measuring and Strengthening Education
   Management in Latin America and the Caribbean. The World Bank. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1596/978-1-4648-1463-1">https://doi.org/10.1596/978-1-4648-1463-1</a>
- Anand, Gautam, Aishwarya Atluri, Lee Crawfurd, Todd Pugatch, and Ketki Sheth. (2023). "Improving School Management in Low- and Middle-Income Countries: A Systematic Review." CGD Working Paper 648. Washington, DC: Center for Global Development. <a href="https://www.cgdev.org/publication/improving-school-management-low-and-middle-income-countries-systematic-review">https://www.cgdev.org/publication/improving-school-management-low-and-middle-income-countries-systematic-review</a>
- Aturupane, H., Glewwe, P., Utsumi, T., Wisniewski, S., & Shojo, M. (2022). The impact of Sri Lanka's school-based management programme on teachers' pedagogical practices and student learning: Evidence from a randomised controlled trial. Journal of Development Effectiveness, 14(4), 285–305. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1080/19439342.2022.2029540">https://doi.org/10.1080/19439342.2022.2029540</a>
- Beg, S., Fitzpatrick, A., & Lucas, A. M. (2021). Improving Public Sector Service Delivery: The Importance of Management. PSC Fall 2021 Colloquium Series.
   https://conference.iza.org/conference\_files/edu\_2021/beg\_s31721.pdf
- Bellibaş, M. Ş., Gümüş, S., & Liu, Y. (2021). Does school leadership matter for teachers' classroom practice? The influence of instructional leadership and distributed leadership on instructional quality. School Effectiveness and School Improvement, 32(3), 387–412. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1080/09243453.2020.1858119">https://doi.org/10.1080/09243453.2020.1858119</a>
- Benoliel, P., & Barth, A. (2017). The implications of the school's cultural attributes in the relationships between participative leadership and teacher job satisfaction and burnout. Journal of Educational Administration, 55(6), 640–656. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1108/JEA-10-2016-0116">https://doi.org/10.1108/JEA-10-2016-0116</a>
- Benoliel, P., & Berkovich, I. (2018). A Cross-National Examination of the Effect of the Schwartz Cultural Dimensions on PISA Performance Assessments. Social Indicators Research, 139(2), 825–845. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-017-1732-z">https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-017-1732-z</a>
- Biamba, C., & Odero, J. (2016). A policy review of school leadership in Sub-Saharan Africa. 111–136. https://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:hig:diva-23111
- Blimpo, M. P., Evans, D. K., & Lahire, N. (2015). Parental Human Capital and Effective School Management: Evidence from the Gambia. The World Bank. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1596/1813-9450-7238">https://doi.org/10.1596/1813-9450-7238</a>

- Bloom, N., Lemos, R., Sadun, R., & Van Reenen, J. (2015). Does management matter in schools? The Economic Journal, 125(584), 647-674.
- Bulat, J., Dubeck, M., Green, P., Harden, K. K., Henny, C. E., Mattos, M. L., Pflepsen, A. A., Robledo, A., & Sitabkhan, Y. (2017). What works in early grade literacy instruction. RTI Press. Knowledge and Practice in International Development No. 1 RTI Press Occasional Paper No. OP-0039-1702 \_
   <a href="https://doi.org/10.3768/rtipress.2017.op.0039.1702">https://doi.org/10.3768/rtipress.2017.op.0039.1702</a>
- Bush, T., & Glover, D. (2016). School Leadership in West Africa: Findings from a Systematic Literature Review. Africa Education Review, 13(3–4), 80–103. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1080/18146627.2016.1229572">https://doi.org/10.1080/18146627.2016.1229572</a>
- Beg, S., Fitzpatrick, A., & Lucas, A. M. (2021). Improving Public Sector Service Delivery: The Importance of Management. PSC Fall 2021 Colloquium Series.
   <a href="https://conference.iza.org/conference\_files/edu\_2021/beg\_s31721.pdf">https://conference.iza.org/conference\_files/edu\_2021/beg\_s31721.pdf</a>
- Bush, T., KiRezi, J., Ashford, R., & Glover, D. (2022). School leadership and gender in Africa: A systematic overview. Research in Educational Administration & Leadership. <a href="https://doi.org/10.30828/real.1159040">https://doi.org/10.30828/real.1159040</a>
- Cilliers, J., Dunford, E., & Habyarimana, J. (2022). What Do Local Government Education Managers Do to Boost Learning Outcomes? World Bank Economic Review, 36(3), 629–645. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1093/wber/lhac001">https://doi.org/10.1093/wber/lhac001</a>
- Clarke, P. (2022). Education Reform and the Learning Crisis in Developing Countries. Cambridge University Press.
- Clarke, S., & O'Donoghue, T. (2017). Educational Leadership and Context: A Rendering of an Inseparable Relationship. British Journal of Educational Studies, 65(2), 167–182. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1080/00071005.2016.1199772">https://doi.org/10.1080/00071005.2016.1199772</a>
- Cruz-González, C., Rodríguez, C. L., & Segovia, J. D. (2021). A systematic review of principals' leadership identity from 1993 to 2019. Educational Management Administration & Leadership, 49(1), 31–53. https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143219896053
- Crawfurd, L. (2017). School management and public-private partnerships in Uganda. Journal of African Economies, 26(5), 539-560.
- de Barros, R. P., de Carvalho, M., Franco, S., Garcia, B., Henriques, R., & Machado, L. (2019). Assessment of the Impact of the Jovem de Futuro Program on Learning (138507; pp. 1–31). World Bank.

- de Hoyos, R., Ganimian, A. J., & Holland, P. A. (2021). Teaching with the Test: Experimental Evidence on Diagnostic Feedback and Capacity Building for Public Schools in Argentina. The World Bank Economic Review, 35(2), 499–520. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1093/wber/lhz026">https://doi.org/10.1093/wber/lhz026</a>
- de Hoyos, R., Garcia-Moreno, V. A., & Patrinos, H. A. (2017). The impact of an accountability intervention with diagnostic feedback: Evidence from Mexico. Economics of Education Review, 58, 123–140.
   <a href="https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econedurev.2017.03.007">https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econedurev.2017.03.007</a>
- Devries, K. M., Knight, L., Child, J. C., Mirembe, A., Nakuti, J., Jones, R., Sturgess, J., Allen, E., Kyegombe, N., Parkes, J., Walakira, E., Elbourne, D., Watts, C., & Naker, D. (2015). The Good School Toolkit for reducing physical violence from school staff to primary school students: A cluster-randomised controlled trial in Uganda. The Lancet Global Health, 3(7), e378–e386. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1016/S2214-109X(15)00060-1">https://doi.org/10.1016/S2214-109X(15)00060-1</a>
- Ganimian, J., & Freel, S. (2021). Can Principal Training Improve School Management? Short-Term Experimental Evidence from Argentina. Papeles de la Economía Española, 166, 67–83.
- Garcia-Moreno, V., Gertler, P., & Patrinos, H. A. (2019). School-Based Management and Learning Outcomes: Experimental Evidence from Colima, Mexico (8874; pp. 1–27). World Bank.
- Global School Leaders,. (2020). "Evidence Review Report: A Review of the Empirical Research on School Leadership in the Global South," Technical Report, Global School Leaders.
- Grissom, J., Egalite, A., & Lindsay, C. (2021). How Principals Affect Students and Schools: A Systematic Synthesis of Two Decades of Research.
- Leaver, C., Lemos, R., & Scur, D. (2019). Measuring and Explaining Management in Schools: New Approaches using Public Data. The World Bank. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1596/1813-9450-9053">https://doi.org/10.1596/1813-9450-9053</a>
- Leithwood, K., Harris, A., & Hopkins, D. (2020). Seven strong claims about successful school leadership revisited. School Leadership & Management, 40(1), 5–22. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1080/13632434.2019.1596077">https://doi.org/10.1080/13632434.2019.1596077</a>
- Lemos, R., Muralidharan, K., & Scur, D. (2021). Personnel Management and School Productivity: Evidence from India (SSRN Scholarly Paper 3763865). <a href="https://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=3763865">https://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=3763865</a>
- Lohmann, Johannes, Stewart Kettle, M´onica Wills-Silva, Alan Palala, Daniela M´endez, Joseph Cole, Chris Larkin, and Anna Keleher. (2020). "Improving school management in Guatemala with 'rules of thumb'," Project report, Behavioural Insights Team; Ministerio de Educacion
- Malechwanzi, J. (2018). The Impact of Leadership on Learning Outcomes: A Study on Effective Leadership Style for Principals in Vocational Colleges (pp. 308–327).

- Muralidharan, K., & Singh, A. (2020). Improving public sector management at scale? experimental evidence on school governance india (No. w28129). National Bureau of Economic Research.
- Özdemir, N., Gümüş, S., Kılınç, A., & Bellibaş, M. (2022). A systematic review of research on the
  relationship between school leadership and student achievement: An updated framework and future
  direction. Educational Management Administration and Leadership.
  <a href="https://doi.org/10.1177/17411432221118662">https://doi.org/10.1177/17411432221118662</a>
- Pont, B. (2020). A literature review of school leadership policy reforms. European Journal of Education, 55(2), 154–168. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1111/ejed.12398">https://doi.org/10.1111/ejed.12398</a>
- Pritchett, L., & Sandefur, J. (2020). Girls' schooling and women's literacy: schooling targets alone won't reach learning goals. International Journal of Educational Development, 78, 102242.
- Robinson, V., Lloyd, C., & Rowe, K. (2008). The Impact of Leadership on Student Outcomes: An Analysis of the Differential Effects of Leadership Types. http://Lst-liep.liep-Unesco.Org/Cgi-Bin/Wwwi32.Exe/[In=epidoc1.in]/?T2000=026306/(100), 44. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X08321509
- Romero, M., Bedoya, J., Yanez-Pagans, M., Silveyra, M., & De Hoyos, R. (2022). Direct vs indirect
  management training: Experimental evidence from schools in Mexico. Journal of Development
  Economics, 154, 102779. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdeveco.2021.102779">https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdeveco.2021.102779</a>
- Romero, M., Bedoya, J., Yanez-Pagans, M., Silveyra, M., & de Hoyos, R. (2021). School Management, Grants, and Test Scores: Experimental Evidence from Mexico. The World Bank. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1596/1813-9450-9535">https://doi.org/10.1596/1813-9450-9535</a>
- Sanfo, J.-B. M. B. (2020). A three-level hierarchical linear model analysis of the effect of school principals' factors on primary school students' learning achievements in Burkina Faso. International Journal of Educational Research, 100, 101531. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2020.101531">https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2020.101531</a>
- Shaked, H., Benoliel, P., & Hallinger, P. (2020). How National Context Indirectly Influences Instructional Leadership Implementation: The Case of Israel. Educational Administration Quarterly.
- Shava, G., & Heystek, J. (2021). Managing teaching and learning: Integrating instructional and transformational leadership in South African schools context. International Journal of Educational Management, 35(5), 1048–1062. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEM-11-2020-0533">https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEM-11-2020-0533</a>
- Smarrelli, G. (2023). Improving School Management of Violence: Evidence from a Nation-wide Policy in Peru (pp. 1–65) [Technical Report]. <a href="https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ltdki1KiYq7nCRA6UANhhDQv-Or405s2/view?usp=embed\_facebook">https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ltdki1KiYq7nCRA6UANhhDQv-Or405s2/view?usp=embed\_facebook</a>

- Spaull, N., & Taylor, S. (2015). Access to what? Creating a composite measure of educational quantity and educational quality for 11 African countries. Comparative Education Review, 59(1), 133-165
- Susanti, D., G. Anand, F. A. Arifin, and P. Pratama. (2023). Leveraging School Principals to Address Learning Loss in Indonesia through Group and Individual Targeting. ADBI Working Paper 1392. Tokyo: Asian Development Bank Institute. Available: <a href="https://doi.org/10.56506/PXOO8818">https://doi.org/10.56506/PXOO8818</a>
- Tavares, P. A. (2015). The impact of school management practices on educational performance: Evidence from public schools in São Paulo. Economics of Education Review, 48, 1–15.
   <a href="https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econedurev.2015.05.002">https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econedurev.2015.05.002</a>
- UNESCO. (2018). Activating policy levers for Education 2030: The untapped potential of governance, school leadership, and monitoring and evaluation policies. Paris: UNESCO.
- VVOB. (2018). Putting SDG4 into practice: School leadership. Technical brief no. 1. Brussels: VVOB.
- VVOB. (2020). Gender-responsive school leadership. VVOB.
- Wills, G., & van der Berg, S. (2021). Measuring school leadership and management and linkages with literacy: Evidence from rural and township primary schools in South Africa. Educational Management Administration & Leadership, 49(5), 708–731. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143220915923">https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143220915923</a>
- World Bank. (2018). World development report 2018: Learning to realize education's promise. The World Bank. <a href="https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/wdr2018">https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/wdr2018</a>
- World Bank. "The state of global learning poverty: 2022 update." (2022).
   <a href="https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/e52f55322528903b27f1b7e61238e416-0200022022/original/Learning-poverty-report-2022-06-21-final-V7-0-conferenceEdition.pdf">https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/e52f55322528903b27f1b7e61238e416-0200022022/original/Learning-poverty-report-2022-06-21-final-V7-0-conferenceEdition.pdf</a>
- World Bank. (2022). "The state of global learning poverty: 2022 update."
   https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/e52f55322528903b27f1b7e61238e416 0200022022/original/Learning-poverty-report-2022-06-21-final-V7-0-conferenceEdition.pdf

GSL EVIDENCE REVIEW 2024

22