https://research.adra.ac.id /index.php/ijen/
P - ISSN: 2988-1579
E - ISSN: 2988-0092

Leading through Stories: A Qualitative Study of Narrative-Driven Management in Educational Institutions

Cittra Juniarni[1], Zain Nizam[2], Nurul Huda[3]
[1]Universitas Al-Qur'an Ittifaqiah Indralaya, Indonesia
[2]Universiti Malaysia Sarawak, Malaysia
[3]Universiti Utara, Malaysia

ABSTRACT

Background. Educational institutions increasingly encounter complex challenges requiring leadership approaches that move beyond administrative control toward practices emphasizing meaning, identity, and collective engagement. Narrative-driven management has emerged as a relevant perspective because stories enable leaders to communicate values, construct organizational identity, and strengthen relationships among institutional members.

Purpose. This study aims to explore how educational leaders utilize narratives as strategic management practices and to examine the role of storytelling in shaping institutional culture, motivation, and organizational development.

Method. A qualitative research approach with a phenomenological case study design was employed involving educational leaders, academic coordinators, and teachers from selected educational institutions. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, observations, and document analysis, followed by thematic analysis to identify patterns of narrative-driven leadership practices.

Results. The findings reveal that stories function as strategic instruments for identity formation, vision communication, motivation enhancement, change management, and institutional memory preservation. The study demonstrates that authentic and contextual narratives strengthen organizational commitment by connecting institutional goals with members' personal experiences.

Conclusion. The research concludes that narrative-driven management represents a human-centered leadership approach that complements conventional educational management models by emphasizing meaning construction and relational engagement.

KEYWORDS

Educational Leadership, Institutional Culture, Narrative Management

INTRODUCTION

Educational institutions in the contemporary era face increasingly complex challenges arising from technological transformation, social change, cultural diversity, and evolving expectations toward organizational performance. Traditional managerial approaches that emphasize administrative control, procedural compliance, and hierarchical decision-making are gradually being reconsidered because they often provide limited responses to the emotional, cultural, and relational dimensions of institutional development.

Citation: Juniarni, C., Nizam, Z & Huda, N. (2026). Leading through Stories: A Qualitative Study of Narrative-Driven Management in Educational Institutions. *International Journal of Educational Narrative*, *4*(6), 2467–2482. https://doi.org/10.70177/ijen.v4i6.4477

Correspondence:

Cittra Juniarni,
cittrajuniarni@uqi.ac.id

Received: June 12, 2026

Accepted: September 15, 2026

Published: November 22, 2026

Leadership in educational contexts is no longer understood merely as the process of directing human resources and achieving institutional targets, but also as the ability to construct meaning, inspire collective commitment, and cultivate shared identities among organizational members. The growing attention toward human-centered leadership approaches highlights the importance of communication, trust-building, and emotional engagement as essential components in managing educational institutions effectively (Bellei, 2025; Singh, 2025).

Narrative-based leadership has emerged as an influential perspective that recognizes stories as powerful mechanisms for shaping organizational culture, transmitting values, and motivating collective action. Stories enable leaders to communicate institutional visions in ways that are more meaningful and accessible compared with abstract statements or formal policies. Within educational institutions, narratives may function as tools for strengthening professional identity, preserving institutional memory, and connecting individual experiences with broader organizational goals. Leaders who utilize narratives strategically can transform ordinary organizational experiences into meaningful collective lessons, encouraging teachers, students, and staff members to participate actively in institutional improvement. The use of stories in leadership practices reflects a shift from leadership as a purely managerial activity toward leadership as a process of meaning-making and social influence (Peng, 2025; Ward, 2023).

Educational institutions represent unique organizational environments where values, relationships, knowledge exchange, and human development are central elements of daily practice. Unlike business organizations that primarily focus on economic outcomes, educational institutions pursue multidimensional objectives involving intellectual growth, character formation, social responsibility, and cultural continuity. Narrative-driven management becomes particularly relevant in such contexts because stories can bridge institutional missions with the lived experiences of organizational members. Through narratives, educational leaders may articulate shared aspirations, respond to organizational challenges, and strengthen a sense of belonging among stakeholders. The exploration of how educational leaders employ stories in managing institutions therefore provides valuable insights into alternative leadership practices that prioritize meaning, identity, and relational dynamics (Romero-Lora, 2024; Yu, 2026).

Despite significant developments in educational leadership studies, many institutional management practices remain strongly influenced by rational-planning models that emphasize efficiency, accountability, and measurable outcomes. Although these approaches contribute to organizational stability, they often overlook the symbolic and emotional dimensions that influence how individuals interpret institutional goals and participate in collective efforts. Educational leaders frequently encounter difficulties in implementing organizational changes because policies and strategic plans alone may not generate genuine commitment among teachers and staff. The absence of deeper understanding regarding how leaders create shared meaning within institutions indicates the need to investigate leadership practices that move beyond technical management approaches.

Existing discussions regarding leadership communication often acknowledge the importance of vision-sharing and interpersonal relationships; however, the specific role of storytelling as a systematic management practice remains insufficiently explored, particularly within educational institutions. Stories are frequently viewed as informal communication tools rather than strategic resources capable of influencing organizational behavior and culture. This limited perspective creates a gap in understanding how educational leaders construct, deliver, and utilize narratives to address institutional challenges. Questions remain regarding what types of stories leaders use, how these narratives influence organizational members, and how storytelling contributes to leadership effectiveness in educational environments (Hsieh, 2025; Suárez-Amaya, 2025).

The limited empirical exploration of narrative-driven management creates challenges in understanding the practical mechanisms through which stories contribute to institutional leadership. Many existing studies examine leadership theories from conceptual or quantitative perspectives, while fewer investigations explore the lived experiences of leaders who integrate narratives into their daily management practices. Educational institutions require context-sensitive research that examines how storytelling operates within real organizational settings, considering cultural factors, interpersonal relationships, and institutional traditions. A qualitative inquiry is therefore necessary to uncover the meanings, strategies, and experiences associated with narrative-driven management among educational leaders (Hsieh, 2025; Suárez-Amaya, 2025).

This study aims to explore how educational leaders employ narratives as part of their management practices and how stories become integrated into institutional leadership processes. The research seeks to identify the forms of narratives utilized by leaders, including personal experiences, institutional histories, success stories, and value-based narratives that contribute to organizational development. Through qualitative exploration, the study intends to reveal how leaders construct meaningful messages and transform individual or collective experiences into narratives that support institutional objectives.

This research aims to analyze the functions and impacts of narrative-driven management within educational institutions. The study focuses on understanding how stories influence organizational culture, strengthen motivation, enhance communication, and facilitate institutional change. By examining leaders' experiences and perspectives, the research seeks to identify the processes through which narratives contribute to building trust, reinforcing shared values, and encouraging collaborative engagement among institutional members.

The study aims to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of leadership practices by examining storytelling not merely as a communication technique but as a strategic management approach. The research expects to provide theoretical and practical insights into how narrative practices can support educational leadership development. Through qualitative analysis, the study seeks to develop a conceptual understanding of how stories function as leadership instruments in educational institutions and how these practices may contribute to more meaningful and human-centered management approaches (León, 2026; Yuan, 2024).

Current leadership literature has extensively examined various leadership models, including transformational leadership, distributed leadership, instructional leadership, and servant leadership. However, the narrative dimension of leadership remains relatively underdeveloped compared with other theoretical perspectives. Although several studies acknowledge that leaders communicate through vision and symbolic actions, fewer studies specifically investigate storytelling as a fundamental mechanism through which leaders construct organizational meaning. This theoretical limitation demonstrates the need for further investigation into narrative-driven management as a distinct perspective within educational leadership studies (Özbay, 2026; Stork, 2026).

Many previous studies on educational leadership rely on surveys, quantitative measurements, and standardized leadership assessments to evaluate effectiveness. While these approaches provide valuable general patterns, they often fail to capture the complexity of leaders' personal experiences, interpretations, and contextual practices. Narrative-driven management involves subjective processes related to meaning construction, cultural interpretation, and interpersonal interaction, which require qualitative approaches to be fully understood. The lack of qualitative investigations focusing on leaders' narratives represents an important methodological gap that this study seeks to address (Guo-Brennan, 2026; Wahyudin, 2025).

Research on storytelling and organizational narratives has frequently been conducted within corporate environments, where the primary focus is organizational performance, innovation, and competitive advantage. Comparatively, educational institutions possess distinctive characteristics because their organizational practices are closely connected with learning processes, moral values, and social development. The application of narrative-driven management within educational settings requires specific investigation to understand how stories function within institutions dedicated to human development. This contextual gap highlights the importance of examining narrative leadership practices specifically within educational organizations.

This study introduces narrative-driven management as an innovative perspective that expands understanding of educational leadership beyond administrative and functional approaches. The novelty of this research lies in examining stories as strategic leadership resources that shape institutional culture, strengthen collective identity, and facilitate organizational transformation. Rather than viewing narratives as secondary communication practices, this study positions storytelling as an essential component of leadership processes within educational institutions (Chacón-Docampo, 2026; Kayyali, 2024).

The significance of this research is reflected in its potential contribution to both theoretical development and practical leadership practices. Theoretically, the study enriches educational leadership literature by providing deeper insights into the relationship between narratives, organizational meaning, and institutional management. Practically, the findings may assist educational leaders in developing more reflective, relational, and culturally responsive leadership strategies. Understanding how stories influence institutional dynamics can support leaders in creating environments where organizational members feel connected to shared missions and values (Lima, 2024; Sabbagh, 2025).

A qualitative approach is essential for investigating narrative-driven management because stories are inherently connected with human experiences, interpretations, and social contexts. This research is justified by the need to understand not only whether storytelling influences educational leadership but also how and why narratives become meaningful within institutional environments. By exploring the experiences of educational leaders, this study provides a comprehensive perspective on the role of stories in shaping leadership practices. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of more contextualized and human-centered approaches to educational management in contemporary institutions.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore the practice of narrative-driven management in educational institutions. A qualitative approach was selected because the research focuses on understanding the meanings, experiences, interpretations, and leadership practices constructed by educational leaders through storytelling. Narrative-driven management represents a complex social phenomenon that cannot be adequately examined through numerical measurement alone, as it involves personal experiences, organizational culture, symbolic communication, and relational processes among institutional members. The study adopted an interpretive perspective to investigate how leaders use stories as instruments for building shared values, communicating institutional visions, strengthening organizational identity, and managing educational development (Chalwell, 2024; Lagadia, 2025).

The research utilized a phenomenological case study approach to obtain an in-depth understanding of how educational leaders experience and implement narrative practices within their institutional contexts. The phenomenological dimension enabled the researchers to explore the lived

experiences of participants, while the case study framework provided a contextual analysis of narrative-driven management practices within specific educational environments. This design allowed the study to examine the forms of narratives used by leaders, the purposes behind storytelling practices, and the perceived influence of narratives on institutional management processes.

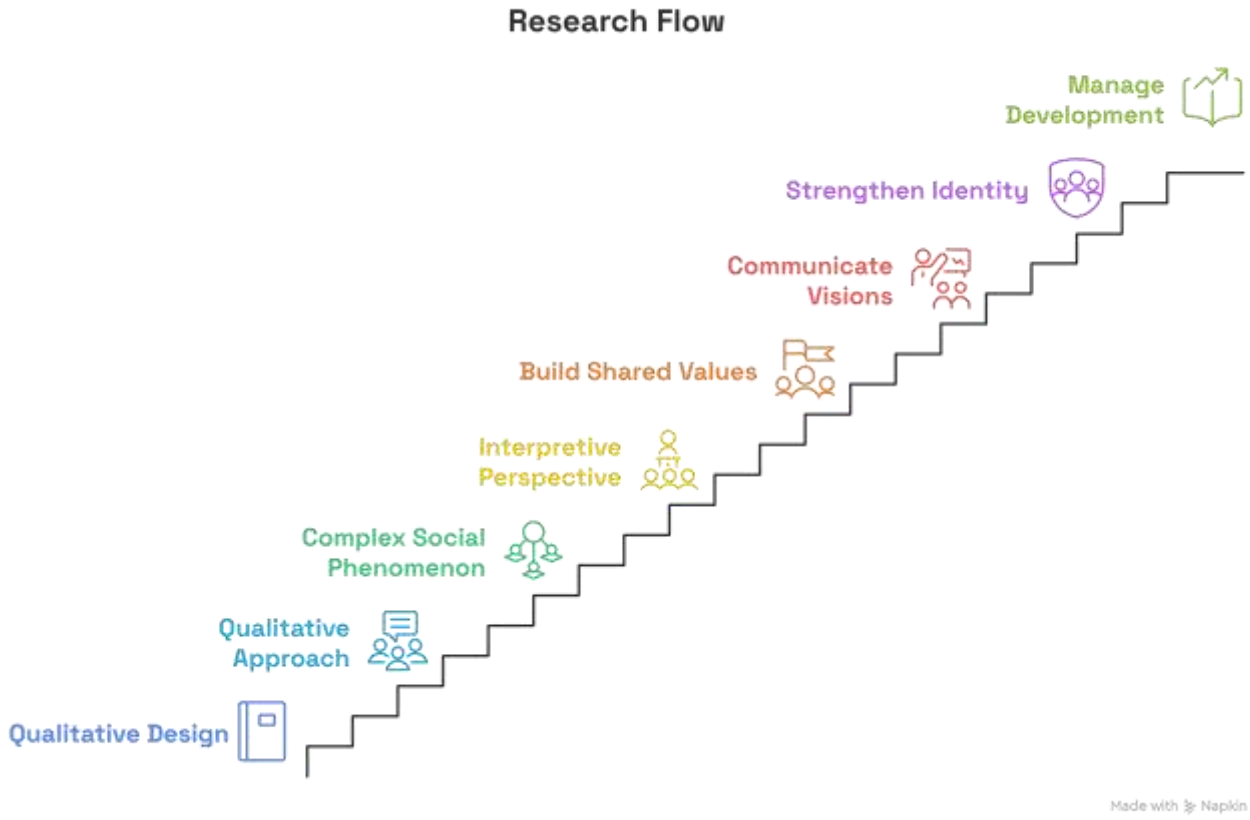


Figure 1. Research Framework for Qualitative Study Development and Implementation

The qualitative design was considered appropriate because leadership practices are shaped by contextual factors, including institutional history, cultural values, interpersonal relationships, and organizational expectations. The research focused on capturing authentic perspectives from educational leaders and related stakeholders to develop a comprehensive understanding of storytelling as a strategic management approach. Data interpretation emphasized the connection between individual experiences and broader institutional dynamics to generate meaningful insights regarding narrative leadership in education.

The population of this study consisted of educational leaders and institutional members involved in management practices within educational institutions. The participants included school principals, institutional directors, academic coordinators, and selected teachers who had direct experiences with leadership communication and organizational development processes. These participants were selected because they possessed relevant knowledge regarding institutional narratives, leadership strategies, and the implementation of storytelling practices in educational management.

The study employed purposive sampling to select participants who could provide rich and relevant information related to the research objectives. The selection criteria included educational leaders who had demonstrated experience in managing institutional programs, communicating

organizational values, and utilizing personal or collective stories as part of leadership practices. Supporting participants, such as teachers and administrative staff, were included to obtain broader perspectives regarding how leadership narratives were perceived, interpreted, and experienced by institutional members (Fleming, 2026; Nogueira, 2025).

The sample size was determined based on the principle of data saturation, in which additional interviews no longer generated significant new information related to the research themes. Approximately 10–15 participants were expected to participate in the study, consisting of educational leaders and institutional stakeholders from selected educational institutions. The variation of participant roles was considered important to ensure diverse perspectives and to strengthen the credibility of the findings through multiple viewpoints regarding narrative-driven management practices.

The primary instrument used in this qualitative study was a semi-structured interview guide developed based on the research objectives and relevant theoretical perspectives on narrative leadership and educational management. The interview instrument consisted of open-ended questions designed to explore participants' experiences, perceptions, and strategies regarding the use of stories in leadership practices. The questions focused on several key areas, including the types of narratives created by leaders, the purposes of storytelling, the processes of communicating institutional values through stories, and the perceived impact of narratives on organizational culture and educational management.

The interview guide was reviewed by experts in educational leadership and qualitative research methodology to ensure the relevance, clarity, and alignment of the questions with the research focus. The flexibility of the semi-structured format allowed researchers to explore emerging themes during interviews while maintaining consistency across participants. Additional instruments included observation guidelines and document analysis forms used to examine institutional materials, leadership speeches, policy documents, and other narrative sources that reflected organizational values and management practices (Kao-Ian, 2025; Masoumi, 2025).

Data triangulation was applied by combining interviews, observations, and document analysis to enhance the reliability and validity of the research findings. The use of multiple data sources enabled researchers to compare participants' statements with actual institutional practices and documented narratives. This approach strengthened the depth of analysis and reduced potential bias arising from reliance on a single source of information.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The qualitative analysis generated a comprehensive dataset consisting of interview transcripts, institutional documents, leadership narratives, and observational records collected from educational institutions implementing narrative-driven management practices. The study involved 12 participants consisting of educational leaders, academic coordinators, and teachers who had direct experiences with leadership communication and institutional development processes. The demographic characteristics of participants are presented in Table 1 to provide an overview of the data sources used in this research.

Table 1. Characteristics of Research Participants Involved in Narrative-Driven Management Practices

Participant Category	Number of Participants	Educational Experience (Years)	Main Contribution to Data
School Principals/Institutional Leaders	5	15–28 years	Leadership strategies, institutional narratives, decision-making processes
Academic Coordinators	3	10–18 years	Program implementation, organizational communication, coordination practices
Teachers	4	5–20 years	Perception of leadership narratives, cultural influence, professional experiences
Total	**12**	**5–28 years**	**Comprehensive qualitative perspectives**

The dataset revealed that participants represented diverse institutional roles and professional experiences, allowing the study to capture multiple perspectives regarding the implementation of narrative-driven management. The variation in professional backgrounds strengthened the depth of the findings because leadership narratives were examined not only from the perspective of decision-makers but also from the experiences of individuals directly influenced by these practices. The collected data consisted of approximately 18 hours of recorded interviews, 47 pages of institutional documents, and field observation notes describing leadership communication activities.

The analysis identified five major themes reflecting how educational leaders utilize narratives as management strategies: (1) constructing institutional identity, (2) communicating vision and values, (3) strengthening teacher motivation, (4) managing organizational change, and (5) preserving institutional memory. The thematic distribution obtained from the qualitative coding process is summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Major Themes Identified from Qualitative Data Analysis

Emerging Themes	Frequency of References	Percentage of Coded Statements	Illustrative Meaning
Institutional identity formation	42	26.1%	Stories strengthen shared organizational values and identity
Vision and value communication	38	23.6%	Narratives clarify institutional goals and expectations
Teacher motivation enhancement	31	19.3%	Stories encourage commitment and emotional engagement
Organizational change management	28	17.4%	Narratives support adaptation and acceptance of change
Institutional memory preservation	22	13.6%	Stories maintain historical continuity and collective learning
Total	**161**	**100%**	

The thematic analysis demonstrated that narrative-driven management functions beyond simple communication activities. Participants consistently described stories as strategic tools that enabled leaders to translate institutional objectives into meaningful experiences. Leaders frequently

used personal experiences, historical events, and examples of successful practices to create emotional connections with organizational members. These findings indicate that narratives operate as mechanisms for developing shared understanding and strengthening collective commitment within educational institutions.

The qualitative findings indicated that educational leaders employed various forms of narratives in their daily management practices. Personal leadership stories represented the most frequently identified narrative form, followed by institutional success stories, student achievement narratives, and historical accounts of organizational development. These narrative forms were commonly delivered through staff meetings, professional development activities, institutional ceremonies, and informal interactions between leaders and teachers.

The data showed that storytelling practices were embedded within routine leadership activities rather than conducted as isolated communication events. Leaders explained that narratives were intentionally selected according to organizational needs, such as motivating teachers during challenging periods, introducing institutional changes, or reinforcing professional values. The presence of recurring narrative practices demonstrated that storytelling had become an integrated component of institutional management rather than merely a rhetorical strategy.

The interpretive analysis suggested that narrative-driven management contributes to leadership effectiveness by transforming abstract organizational goals into personally meaningful experiences. The findings indicated that leaders who effectively utilized narratives were more capable of establishing emotional connections with institutional members. Stories provided contextual explanations for policies and decisions, allowing teachers and staff members to understand not only what actions were required but also why those actions were important.

The analysis further indicated that narrative practices influenced organizational behavior through three interconnected mechanisms: cognitive understanding, emotional attachment, and behavioral commitment. Cognitive understanding occurred when stories clarified institutional expectations, emotional attachment developed through shared experiences and values, while behavioral commitment emerged when organizational members identified themselves as contributors to institutional missions. This pattern demonstrates that narratives function as mediating mechanisms between leadership communication and organizational engagement.

The relationship among identified themes demonstrated that institutional identity formation served as the central element connecting other narrative-driven management practices. Leaders who successfully constructed strong institutional narratives were also more effective in communicating visions, motivating teachers, and managing organizational changes. The interaction among these themes suggests that storytelling operates as an interconnected leadership system rather than a single managerial technique.

The findings revealed a sequential relationship between narrative construction and organizational outcomes. Institutional stories created shared meanings, shared meanings strengthened organizational commitment, and commitment supported collective actions toward institutional improvement. This relationship indicates that narrative-driven management influences educational organizations through gradual processes of meaning creation and social alignment rather than through direct administrative control.

The case study analysis focused on three educational institutions that demonstrated strong implementation of narrative-driven management practices. Institution A emphasized historical narratives by frequently communicating stories about institutional founders and previous achievements to strengthen organizational pride. Institution B focused on transformational narratives by highlighting stories of innovation, teacher development, and student success.

Institution C utilized personal leadership narratives to build trust and strengthen interpersonal relationships between leaders and institutional members.

The comparative case analysis showed that although each institution applied different narrative approaches, all cases demonstrated similar patterns regarding the strategic use of stories. Leaders in each institution employed narratives to connect organizational history, present challenges, and future aspirations. The case evidence confirmed that storytelling practices were strongly influenced by institutional culture, leadership style, and organizational context.

The case study findings indicated that narrative-driven management was most effective when stories were authentic, contextually relevant, and connected with shared institutional experiences. Participants emphasized that artificial or overly formal narratives were less influential because organizational members could distinguish between genuine leadership communication and symbolic statements without practical meaning. Authenticity emerged as a critical factor determining whether narratives successfully influenced organizational attitudes and behaviors.

The analysis demonstrated that effective narrative leadership required continuous interaction between leaders and institutional members. Stories gained organizational significance when they reflected collective experiences rather than representing individual leadership perspectives alone. This finding highlights that narrative-driven management is a collaborative process in which leaders and members collectively construct institutional meanings.

The results indicate that narrative-driven management represents a meaningful approach for strengthening educational leadership practices in contemporary institutions. Stories function not only as communication instruments but also as strategic resources for shaping organizational identity, strengthening relationships, and facilitating institutional development. The findings suggest that educational leaders can enhance management effectiveness by integrating narratives into everyday leadership processes.

The study contributes to the understanding of educational leadership by demonstrating that effective management involves both structural coordination and symbolic meaning-making. Narrative practices provide leaders with opportunities to create deeper connections with organizational members and develop cultures based on shared values and collective aspirations. The results reinforce the importance of considering storytelling as a significant dimension of leadership research and practice within educational institutions.

The findings of this study demonstrate that narrative-driven management functions as a significant leadership approach within educational institutions by transforming storytelling practices into strategic mechanisms for organizational development. The research revealed that educational leaders utilize narratives not merely as informal communication tools but as instruments for constructing institutional identity, transmitting organizational values, strengthening motivation, and managing change. The qualitative evidence indicated that stories enable leaders to connect institutional goals with the lived experiences of teachers and staff, creating a deeper sense of collective purpose. The results confirm that leadership effectiveness in educational contexts is influenced not only by administrative competence but also by the ability to create meaningful interpretations of organizational experiences.

The study identified five central functions of narrative-driven management: identity formation, vision communication, motivational enhancement, change facilitation, and institutional memory preservation. These findings indicate that narratives provide educational leaders with a mechanism for translating abstract institutional missions into concrete and emotionally meaningful messages. Leaders who integrated personal experiences, institutional histories, and success narratives were able to strengthen organizational commitment among members. The findings

suggest that storytelling operates as a bridge between leadership intentions and organizational responses by creating shared meanings that encourage collective engagement.

The results further indicate that narrative practices are embedded within everyday management activities rather than being limited to formal leadership speeches or institutional ceremonies. Participants explained that stories were strategically selected according to organizational conditions, including periods of transformation, conflict resolution, and professional development. The presence of recurring storytelling practices demonstrates that narrative-driven management represents an ongoing leadership process that shapes organizational culture over time. This finding expands the understanding of educational leadership by emphasizing the importance of symbolic and relational dimensions in institutional management.

The overall findings indicate that educational leadership requires a balance between structural management and meaning-oriented practices. The ability of leaders to construct and communicate compelling narratives contributes to stronger relationships, greater organizational cohesion, and improved acceptance of institutional initiatives. Narrative-driven management therefore represents a leadership approach that acknowledges the human dimension of educational organizations. The results provide empirical support for considering storytelling as an essential component of contemporary educational management practices.

The findings of this study are consistent with previous research emphasizing the importance of transformational and symbolic leadership in educational contexts. Earlier studies have demonstrated that effective leaders influence organizational members through vision articulation, emotional engagement, and value-based communication. The present research extends these perspectives by specifically highlighting storytelling as a practical mechanism through which transformational leadership processes occur. Rather than examining leadership vision as a conceptual statement, this study reveals how narratives become the medium through which visions are interpreted and internalized by institutional members.

The findings are also aligned with organizational storytelling research, which argues that narratives contribute to the creation and maintenance of organizational culture. Previous studies have shown that stories preserve collective memory, transmit norms, and strengthen organizational identity. The current study supports these arguments by demonstrating that educational institutions use narratives to connect historical experiences with future aspirations. The difference lies in the educational context of this research, where storytelling is not primarily directed toward organizational competitiveness but toward educational values, professional commitment, and human development.

Previous research on educational leadership has frequently focused on measurable leadership behaviors, competencies, and management outcomes. Quantitative approaches have provided valuable evidence regarding relationships between leadership styles and institutional performance; however, such approaches often provide limited explanations regarding how leaders create meaning among organizational members. This study contributes a different perspective by revealing the interpretive processes behind leadership influence. The qualitative findings demonstrate that leadership effectiveness is shaped by how individuals understand and emotionally connect with institutional narratives.

The study also differs from previous corporate-focused narrative research because educational institutions possess distinctive cultural and moral dimensions. Stories within educational settings frequently involve teacher dedication, student transformation, institutional struggles, and shared educational missions. These narratives carry ethical and developmental meanings that differ from stories emphasizing market performance or competitive advantage. The findings therefore expand

existing narrative leadership literature by positioning educational institutions as unique environments where storytelling contributes to both organizational management and social transformation (Awad, 2024; Ñacato, 2024).

The findings indicate that narrative-driven management represents a broader transformation in how leadership is understood within educational institutions. The increasing importance of stories in leadership practices reflects a shift from traditional managerial approaches centered on authority and control toward approaches emphasizing connection, interpretation, and shared meaning. The results suggest that contemporary educational leadership requires the ability to understand human experiences as essential components of organizational development.

The findings serve as an indication that organizational members are not motivated solely by formal regulations, institutional targets, or administrative instructions. Teachers and staff members respond more effectively when institutional objectives are connected with meaningful experiences and values. Stories provide this connection by allowing individuals to perceive their roles as part of a larger institutional journey. The research therefore highlights the importance of emotional and cultural dimensions in achieving sustainable organizational commitment (Gupta, 2026; Surjawan, 2025).

The results also indicate that educational institutions function as communities of meaning rather than merely administrative structures. Institutional development depends on the capacity of leaders to cultivate shared interpretations of past achievements, current challenges, and future directions. Narrative practices reveal that organizational culture is continuously constructed through communication processes. Leadership effectiveness is therefore closely related to the ability to shape narratives that represent collective aspirations and institutional values.

The reflection derived from this study suggests that storytelling should be recognized as a legitimate dimension of professional leadership practice. The presence of narrative-driven management demonstrates that effective leaders are not only planners and decision-makers but also interpreters and meaning creators. The findings encourage a broader understanding of leadership competence that includes narrative intelligence, cultural awareness, and the ability to transform experiences into collective learning opportunities (Al-Dosari, 2026; Sun, 2026).

The findings have important theoretical implications for the development of educational leadership studies. The study contributes to expanding leadership theory by positioning narrative practices as a central element in organizational management. Traditional leadership frameworks often emphasize behaviors, structures, and competencies, while this research demonstrates that meaning construction through stories represents another important dimension of leadership effectiveness. Narrative-driven management can therefore be considered a complementary perspective that enriches existing educational leadership models.

The practical implications of the findings suggest that educational leaders should intentionally develop storytelling skills as part of their leadership capacity. Leaders can utilize narratives during strategic planning, professional development activities, institutional communication, and change management processes. Effective storytelling can help reduce resistance, strengthen trust, and encourage participation among organizational members. The findings indicate that leadership training programs should incorporate narrative competence alongside managerial and administrative skills (Hurtado-Romero, 2024; Martsenyuk, 2025).

The research also implies that educational institutions can use narrative practices to strengthen organizational culture. Institutional stories regarding achievements, challenges, and collective experiences can serve as resources for building professional identity among teachers and staff. The

systematic documentation and dissemination of meaningful institutional narratives may contribute to preserving organizational knowledge and strengthening continuity across leadership transitions.

The broader implication of this research relates to the development of more human-centered educational management approaches. The findings demonstrate that institutional success cannot be achieved solely through policies, procedures, and performance indicators. Sustainable development requires attention to relationships, emotions, and shared meanings. Narrative-driven management provides a pathway for educational institutions to create environments where organizational members feel valued, connected, and motivated to contribute.

The emergence of narrative-driven management practices can be explained by the inherently social and cultural nature of educational institutions. Schools and educational organizations are environments where relationships, values, and human experiences strongly influence daily activities. Unlike organizations primarily focused on economic outcomes, educational institutions pursue goals related to intellectual growth, moral development, and social responsibility. These characteristics create conditions in which stories become powerful tools for communicating meanings and maintaining collective commitment (Jaraisy, 2026; Purguaya, 2026).

The findings occurred because narratives provide psychological and social functions that formal management approaches often cannot achieve. Administrative instructions may explain what organizational members need to do, but stories explain why those actions matter. Narratives connect institutional expectations with personal experiences, enabling individuals to understand their contributions within a broader context. This explains why storytelling practices generated stronger emotional engagement and organizational identification among participants.

The results can also be understood through the role of uncertainty and change in contemporary education. Educational institutions continuously face challenges related to technological development, policy transformation, and changing social expectations. During periods of uncertainty, organizational members require meaningful explanations and emotional reassurance. Stories provide leaders with a mechanism to interpret change, reduce ambiguity, and encourage collective adaptation (Chin, 2026; Jaraisy, 2026).

The findings further reflect the importance of authenticity in leadership communication. Participants emphasized that narratives were effective when they represented genuine experiences rather than artificial motivational messages. Authentic stories created trust because organizational members perceived them as reflections of shared realities. The effectiveness of narrative-driven management therefore depends not only on the existence of stories but also on their relevance, credibility, and connection with institutional experiences.

The findings suggest several directions for future research and leadership development practices. Further studies should examine narrative-driven management across different educational contexts, including universities, vocational institutions, religious schools, and international educational organizations. Comparative research could provide deeper understanding regarding how cultural, institutional, and leadership factors influence the effectiveness of narrative practices.

Future research should also explore the relationship between narrative-driven management and specific organizational outcomes, such as teacher engagement, institutional innovation, organizational resilience, and student achievement. While this study provides qualitative insights into leadership experiences, additional research using mixed-method approaches could examine broader patterns and potential causal relationships between storytelling practices and educational outcomes (Kayumova, 2025; Malaeb, 2025).

Educational institutions are encouraged to develop systematic approaches for integrating narratives into leadership practices. Leadership development programs may include training on

narrative construction, reflective communication, and organizational storytelling. Leaders should be encouraged to collect and share meaningful institutional experiences that reinforce values, promote collaboration, and support continuous improvement.

The future direction of educational management requires greater attention to leadership approaches that combine effectiveness with humanity. Narrative-driven management offers a promising framework for understanding how leaders influence institutions through meaning rather than authority alone. Continued exploration of narrative leadership practices can contribute to the development of educational organizations that are adaptive, culturally connected, and capable of responding to complex challenges through shared understanding and collective action.

CONCLUSION

The most significant finding of this study is the identification of narrative-driven management as a distinctive leadership mechanism that enables educational leaders to influence institutional development through meaning construction rather than through administrative authority alone. The research demonstrates that stories function as strategic leadership resources that shape institutional identity, strengthen collective commitment, communicate organizational values, and facilitate adaptation during periods of change. The distinctive contribution of the findings lies in revealing that storytelling is not merely a supportive communication practice but an embedded management process that connects leaders' intentions with the experiences and interpretations of institutional members. The study highlights that authentic, contextual, and experience-based narratives are capable of creating stronger emotional engagement and organizational alignment among teachers and educational stakeholders.

The value of this research lies in its conceptual contribution to the field of educational leadership by expanding the understanding of management practices beyond structural and procedural approaches. The study introduces narrative-driven management as a conceptual framework that positions storytelling as an essential component of leadership practice in educational institutions. Through a qualitative approach, the research provides deeper insights into how leaders construct narratives, how organizational members interpret these narratives, and how stories contribute to the development of institutional culture. The methodological contribution of this study is reflected in its use of an interpretive qualitative design that captures the lived experiences, meanings, and social processes underlying leadership practices, which are often overlooked in quantitative leadership studies.

The study acknowledges several limitations that provide opportunities for future research development. The qualitative design and purposive selection of participants limit the generalizability of the findings to broader educational contexts, as the results primarily reflect the experiences of selected institutional leaders and members. Future studies are recommended to investigate narrative-driven management across diverse educational settings, cultural contexts, and institutional levels using comparative, longitudinal, or mixed-method approaches. Further research may also examine the relationship between narrative leadership practices and measurable organizational outcomes, such as teacher engagement, institutional innovation, organizational resilience, and educational performance, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the long-term impact of storytelling-based management.

DECLARATION OF AI AND AI ASSISTED TECHNOLOGIES IN THE WRITING PROCESS

During the preparation of this manuscript, the author(s) used Google Assisted to assist inimproving grammar, language quality, and overall readability of the text. After using this tool, the author(s) Carefully reviewed and edited the content as necessary and take full responbility for the content of the publication.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

Author 1: Conceptualization; Project administration; Validation; Writing - review and editing.
Author 2: Conceptualization; Data curation; In-vestigation.
Author 3: Data curation; Investigation.

DECLARATION OF COMPETING INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

REFERENCES

Al-Dosari, M. N. A. (2026). Digital empowerment, organizational innovation, and social sustainability: A digital humanities perspective on women's educational leadership in Egypt. *Research Journal in Advanced Humanities*, *7*(3). https://doi.org/10.58256/m16tzq57

Al-Khamaiseh, R. A. M. (2025). Developing a sustainable leadership model for Jordanian schools through participatory and expert engagement. *Management in Education*, (Query date: 2026-09-04 23:12:02). https://doi.org/10.1177/08920206251403082

Awad, A. (2024). Driving HR performance through digital transformation in educational directorates: A strategic imperative. *Problems and Perspectives in Management*, *22*(4), 163–173. https://doi.org/10.21511/ppm.22(4).2024.13

Bellei, C. (2025). Adaptive responses to contextualised and differentiated school improvement. Identifying institutional profiles of secondary schools. *Research Papers in Education*, *40*(3), 365–392. https://doi.org/10.1080/02671522.2024.2394043

Chacón-Docampo, M. (2026). Burnout During Residency: A Thematic Analysis of Stressors, Coping, and Organisational Challenges Among Nursing Residents. *Global Qualitative Nursing Research*, *13*(Query date: 2026-09-04 23:12:02). https://doi.org/10.1177/23333936261426859

Chalwell, K. (2024). Christian middle leadership: How the faith of middle leaders shapes and is shaped by school culture and community. *International Journal of Christianity and Education*, *28*(1), 7–21. https://doi.org/10.1177/20569971231159099

Chin, Y. F. (2026). Data Analytics Integration in Malaysian Higher Education: Issues, Outcomes, and Organizational Readiness. *Journal of Intelligent Decision Making and Information Science*, *3*(5), 1476–1491. https://doi.org/10.59543/jidmis.v3.1281

Fleming, R. K. (2026). Conceptualizing osteopathic medical professionalism: An institutional self-Assessment rubric for colleges of osteopathic medicine. *Journal of Osteopathic Medicine*, (Query date: 2026-09-04 23:12:02). https://doi.org/10.1515/jom-2025-0082

Guo-Brennan, L. (2026). Becoming Global Leaders: Student Perspectives and Experiences in Canadian Higher Education. *Global Public Leadership for an Inclusive and Innovative Future Issues Models and Strategies in the Era of Globalization 4 1*, (Query date: 2026-09-04 23:12:02), 38–60. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003638872-5

Gupta, D. (2026). Digital Leadership and Educational Transformation in ASEAN: Competencies, Contexts, and Strategic Pathways. *Digital Leadership and Innovation in Asean Education*, (Query date: 2026-09-04 23:12:02), 97–123. https://doi.org/10.4018/979-8-2600-1142-3.ch004

Hsieh, C. C. (2025). Analysis of Trends in Global Teacher Community Research. *Journal of Research in Education Sciences*, *70*(2), 43–82. https://doi.org/10.6209/JORIES.202506_70(2).0002

Hurtado-Romero, M. Á. (2024). Dialogical pedagogical gatherings on optimal educational proximity in a general foster care setting. *Pedagogia Social*, (45), 215–229. https://doi.org/10.7179/PSRI_2024.45.12

Jaraisy, I. (2026). Custodians and Institutionalists: The Role of the Palestinian Cultural Elite in Israel. *Cultural Sociology*, (Query date: 2026-09-04 23:12:02). https://doi.org/10.1177/17499755251406585

Kao-Ian, J. (2025). Developing an Innovative Leadership Model of School Administrators under a Multicultural Context. *Educational Process International Journal*, *17*(Query date: 2026-09-04 23:12:02). https://doi.org/10.22521/edupij.2025.17.386

Kayumova, M. (2025). Data Driven Teaching and Real Time Decision Making in Education Management. *ACM International Conference Proceeding Series*, (Query date: 2026-09-04 23:12:02), 756–763. https://doi.org/10.1145/3726122.3726232

Kayyali, M. (2024). Building Organizational Capacity and Strategic Management in Academia. In *Building Organizational Capacity and Strategic Management in Academia* (p. 652). https://doi.org/10.4018/979-8-3693-6967-8

Lagadia, C. D. (2025). Characterization of Program Chairperson Values, Attitude, and Leadership Styles (VALS): A Study from a Private Non-Sectarian University in the Philippines. *2025 International Conference on Smart Learning Courses Scme 2025*, (Query date: 2026-09-04 23:12:02), 146–151. https://doi.org/10.1109/SCME62582.2025.11104866

León, J. A. M. (2026). Analyzing the Development of Research Skills in University Students: A Bibliometric Review. *Journal of Educational and Social Research*, *16*(2), 174–192. https://doi.org/10.36941/jesr-2026-0288

Lima, L. (2024). Challenges posed to leadership: Systematic review based on the relationships between curricular autonomy and teachers' well-being. *Frontiers in Education*, *9*(Query date: 2026-09-04 23:12:02). https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2024.1520947

Malaeb, S. (2025). Developing a Semantic Innovation Capabilities Taxonomy Using Machine Learning, Generative AI, and NLP Techniques. *2025 International Conference on Engineering Management of Communication and Technology Emctech 2025 Conference Proceedings*, (Query date: 2026-09-04 23:12:02). https://doi.org/10.1109/EMCTECH65814.2025.11220567

Martsenyuk, V. (2025). Development of leadership competences in bachelor's and master's students as a factor in the formation of intellectual capital of modern entrepreneurship in the context of digitalization. *Ceur Workshop Proceedings*, *4057*(Query date: 2026-09-04 23:12:02), 220–239.

Masoumi, D. (2025). Developing early career teachers' professional digital competence: A systematic literature review. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, *48*(3), 644–666. https://doi.org/10.1080/02619768.2023.2229006

Ñacato, J. C. M. (2024). Educational management: Quality education centered on the individual. *Revista Venezolana De Gerencia*, *29*(12), 1514–1529. https://doi.org/10.52080/rvgluz.29.e12.40

Nogueira, M. D. (2025). Communication and Marketing Management in Patient Safety within Healthcare Organizations: A Scoping Review. *Portuguese Journal of Public Health*, *43*(3), 172–186. https://doi.org/10.1159/000546355

Özbay, N. F. (2026). Assessed the effectiveness of an educational program for nurses administering antineoplastic drugs; comparative intervention research before and after. *BMC Nursing*, *25*(1). https://doi.org/10.1186/s12912-026-04307-6

Peng, Y. (2025). Adopting blended learning for teaching sport-related cultural heritage: Leveraging the 'internet plus' model. *Education and Information Technologies*, *30*(15), 22275–22313. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-025-13615-4

Purguaya, R. J. T. (2026). Culture of innovation in school management: Managerial strategies for learning and competitiveness. *Revista Venezolana De Gerencia*, *31*(15). https://doi.org/10.52080/rvgluz.31.e15.28

Romero-Lora, G. M. (2024). An analysis of the relationship between organisational resilience and Local Educational Management Units' responses on education services delivery in Peru during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Public Administration and Policy*, *27*(1), 73–84. https://doi.org/10.1108/PAP-01-2023-0012

Sabbagh, M. A. (2025). Change Management and AI Adoption for Enhancing Employee Experience in Higher Education Institutions, Oman. *Studies in Systems Decision and Control*, *601*(Query date: 2026-09-04 23:12:02), 307–315. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-92240-4_28

Singh, H. (2025). Addressing Global Issues of Status Quo Thinking in Higher Education Institutions. *Higher Educational Leadership in Vuca Contexts Accessing Vuca Prime and Wisdom for Effective Leadership*, (Query date: 2026-09-04 23:12:02), 65–82. https://doi.org/10.1108/978-1-83608-682-620251004

Stork, M. (2026). Applying UDL across learning organizations: A case study of doctoral leadership preparation. *Frontiers in Education*, *11*(Query date: 2026-09-04 23:12:02). https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2026.1862917

Suárez-Amaya, W. (2025). ANALYSIS OF THE SCIENTIFIC PRODUCTION ON LEADERSHIP STYLES OF ACADEMICS IN HIGHER EDUCATION. *Interciencia*, *50*(4), 196–204.

Sun, Q. (2026). Digital Competence of Chinese Elementary School English Teachers Under the New Curriculum Standards: A Systematic Literature Review from a Human Resource Management Perspective. *Human Resources Management and Services*, *8*(2). https://doi.org/10.18282/hrms5936

Surjawan, D. J. (2025). Digital Transformation for Institution Operations in Higher Education: A Literature Review. *IEEE Access*, *13*(Query date: 2026-09-04 23:12:02), 61457–61468. https://doi.org/10.1109/ACCESS.2025.3557446

Tuan, K. M. (2025). Developing AI literacy for teachers in Vietnam's schools: Challenges, strategies, and best practices. *International Journal of Education and Practice*, *13*(4), 1404–1423. https://doi.org/10.18488/61.v13i4.4465

Wahyudin. (2025). Beyond Compliance: The Strategic Role of Organizational Citizenship Behavior in Managing Workplace Conflicts within Faith-Based Educational Institutions. *Kharisma*, *4*(2), 175–186. https://doi.org/10.59373/kharisma.v4i2.112

Ward, V. L. (2023). Advancing Health Equity and Inclusion in an Academic Pediatric Medical Center: Priorities Addressed and Lessons Learned. *Journal of the Pediatric Orthopaedic Society of North America*, *5*(Query date: 2026-09-04 23:12:02). https://doi.org/10.55275/JPOSNA-2023-618

Yu, J. (2026). An ecological perspective on the development of Senior Neighborhood Learning Group: A qualitative case study. *Educational Gerontology*, *52*(6), 652–668. https://doi.org/10.1080/03601277.2026.2615367

Yuan, B. (2024). Application of Multidimensional Quality Management Tools in the Management of Medical Adverse Events. *Risk Management and Healthcare Policy*, *17*(Query date: 2026-09-04 23:12:02), 91–99. https://doi.org/10.2147/RMHP.S436083

Copyright Holder :
© Citra Juniarni et al. (2026).

First Publication Right :
© International Journal of Educational Narratives

This article is under:

