



Integrating Organizational System and Contingency Theory in Educational Management: A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstrak

Pengelolaan pendidikan menghadapi tantangan kompleks akibat perubahan kebijakan, perkembangan teknologi, dan dinamika sosial yang semakin cepat. Kondisi ini menuntut pendekatan manajemen yang tidak hanya bersifat sistemik, tetapi juga adaptif terhadap konteks. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji secara sistematis penerapan teori sistem organisasi dan teori kontingensi dalam manajemen pendidikan serta mengidentifikasi pola integrasi kedua pendekatan tersebut. Metode yang digunakan adalah Systematic Literature Review (SLR) dengan mengacu pada pedoman PRISMA 2020. Sebanyak 33 artikel ilmiah bereputasi yang diterbitkan pada periode 2015–2024 dikumpulkan dari basis data Scopus, Google Scholar, dan DOAJ. Data dianalisis menggunakan pendekatan sintesis tematik berdasarkan fokus teori dan konteks penerapannya. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa teori sistem organisasi menekankan integrasi, keterkaitan antar subsistem, dan keberlanjutan organisasi pendidikan, sementara teori kontingensi menekankan fleksibilitas kepemimpinan dan kesesuaian strategi manajemen dengan kondisi lingkungan. Integrasi kedua teori tersebut terbukti memberikan kerangka konseptual yang lebih komprehensif dan adaptif dalam meningkatkan efektivitas manajemen pendidikan, khususnya pada lembaga pendidikan Islam. Temuan ini berkontribusi pada penguatan landasan teoretis manajemen pendidikan yang kontekstual dan berkelanjutan.

Kata kunci: *Manajemen Pendidikan; Systematic Literature Review; Teori Sistem Organisasi; Teori Kontingensi.*

Abstract

Educational management is increasingly complex due to policy changes, technological advancements, and dynamic social demands. These conditions require management approaches that are both systemic and context-sensitive. This study aims to systematically examine the application of organisational system theory and contingency theory in educational management and to identify patterns of their integration. A Systematic Literature Review (SLR) was conducted following the PRISMA 2020 guidelines. A total of 33 peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2015 and 2024 were retrieved from Scopus, Google Scholar, and DOAJ databases. Data were analysed using a thematic synthesis approach based on theoretical focus and implementation context. The findings indicate that organisational system theory emphasises integration, interdependence among subsystems, and organisational sustainability, while contingency theory highlights leadership flexibility and alignment between management strategies and environmental conditions. The integration of these two theories

provides a more comprehensive and adaptive framework for improving educational management effectiveness, particularly within Islamic educational institutions. This study contributes to the development of context-sensitive and sustainable educational management theory.

Keywords: *Contingency Theory, Educational Management, Organizational System Theory, Systematic Literature Review.*

A. Introduction

Educational management at both global and national levels is currently facing increasingly complex challenges due to rapid globalisation, technological advancement, and rising demands for quality and public accountability. Educational institutions are no longer perceived as static administrative units, but rather as dynamic organisations that continuously interact with their internal and external environments. Changes in educational policies, digital transformation, and evolving social dynamics require educational institutions to adapt swiftly while maintaining organisational stability and sustainability (Ansori et al., 2025; Sisouvong & Pasanchay, 2024). These conditions position educational management effectiveness as a central issue in contemporary international and national educational discourse.

In response to this complexity, the present study argues that educational management cannot be adequately explained through a single, universal managerial approach. Management models that focus primarily on formal structures and standardised procedures tend to be insufficient in addressing contextual variability and environmental dynamics. Therefore, a theoretical framework is required that not only explains the integration of internal organisational systems but also accommodates managerial flexibility in decision-making based on institutional characteristics and environmental conditions. Such a framework is essential for understanding educational management as a complex, adaptive, and multidimensional process (Hallinger, 2020).

Previous studies indicate that organisational system theory has been widely applied to explain educational management effectiveness by conceptualising educational institutions as open systems composed of interdependent subsystems, including leadership, curriculum, human resources, organisational culture, and the external environment (Figueiró et al., 2022; Gusnita et al., 2021). This perspective emphasises integration, coordination, and feedback mechanisms as key determinants of organisational sustainability and performance. Conversely, studies grounded in contingency theory emphasise that leadership effectiveness and organisational structures are highly dependent on situational and environmental factors, such as uncertainty levels, task complexity, and human resource characteristics (Donaldson, 2010; Nassou & Bennani, 2024).

Despite the valuable contributions of both theoretical perspectives, a critical review of prior research reveals notable limitations. Most existing studies examine organisational system theory and contingency theory in isolation. System-based studies tend to prioritize organizational stability and structural coherence, while contingency-based research focuses on flexibility and contextual responsiveness, often without sufficient systemic grounding (Basuki, 2023; Fradito et al., 2025). Moreover, studies that systematically map and synthesise the integration of these two theories through a systematic literature review approach remain limited, particularly in the context of educational management.

Based on this research gap, the novelty of this study lies in its effort to develop a conceptual synthesis that integrates organisational system theory and contingency theory into a single, adaptive, and context-sensitive framework for educational management analysis. Rather than merely cataloguing previous

findings, this study examines how organisational system stability can be harmonised with contextual flexibility to address the dynamic challenges faced by educational institutions. Accordingly, this research is expected to enrich educational management theory, which has often been fragmented and partial in prior studies (Oppong, 2025; Sain et al., 2025).

In light of the foregoing discussion, this study aims to systematically describe the application of organizational system theory and contingency theory in educational management and to analyze patterns of integration between the two theoretical perspectives as reflected in prior research. Specifically, this study seeks to identify dominant research themes, theoretical application trends, and the implications of integrating system and contingency theories for improving the effectiveness of educational institution management (Dani et al., 2025; Purwati & Zulaikha, 2018).

B. Research Methods

This study adopted a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach to systematically identify, evaluate, and synthesize scholarly literature concerning the application of organizational system theory and contingency theory in educational management. The SLR method was chosen to ensure methodological rigor, transparency, and replicability. The review process followed the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines, which provide a structured framework for conducting and reporting systematic reviews in social science and educational research. The review was guided by three research questions: RQ1: How is organizational system theory applied in educational management studies? RQ2: How is contingency theory utilized to explain educational management effectiveness? and RQ3: How are organizational system theory and contingency theory integrated in educational management research?

The identification stage involved a comprehensive search of academic databases, including Scopus, Google Scholar, and DOAJ, to capture relevant peer-reviewed studies published between 2015 and 2024. The initial search process resulted in a total of 33 eligible journal articles that met the predefined inclusion criteria. The distribution of articles across the selected databases is presented in Table 1. This distribution reflects the diversity of publication sources and supports the comprehensiveness of the literature identification process.

Table 1. Data Sources and Number of Reviewed Articles

No	Database	Number of Articles
1	Scopus	15
2	Google Scholar	10
3	DOAJ	8
	Total	33

A systematic search strategy was developed using combinations of keywords, including *organizational system theory*, *contingency theory*, *educational management*, *school leadership*, and *Islamic educational management*. Boolean operators (AND, OR) were applied to refine the search results. This stage was designed to ensure comprehensive coverage of literature relevant to addressing RQ1, RQ2, and RQ3.

During the screening stage, duplicate records were removed, and titles and abstracts were reviewed to assess their relevance to the research questions. Studies that did not focus on educational settings or did not engage with organizational system theory or contingency theory were excluded. In the subsequent eligibility stage, full-text articles were assessed based on predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. Eligible studies were required to be peer-reviewed journal articles, written in English or Indonesian, and to explicitly address at least one of the research questions by discussing system theory (RQ1), contingency theory (RQ2), or their integration (RQ3) in educational management contexts.

The data extraction and analysis stage employed a thematic synthesis approach to systematically analyze the selected studies. Relevant data were extracted, including research objectives, theoretical frameworks, methodologies, key findings, and practical implications. To answer RQ1, studies were coded based on how organizational system theory was conceptualized and applied in educational management. To address RQ2, studies were analyzed for their use of contingency variables, including leadership style, environmental dynamics, organizational structure, and technological context. For RQ3, particular attention was given to studies that explicitly integrated or compared system theory and contingency theory in explaining the effectiveness of educational management.

The synthesis of findings was reported in accordance with PRISMA reporting standards, ensuring a transparent description of the review process and analytical procedures. Given the predominantly conceptual and qualitative nature of the included studies, the analysis focused on narrative and thematic integration rather than statistical meta-analysis. By explicitly linking each stage of the SLR to the research questions, this methodological approach ensured coherence between the research design and the study objectives, thereby enhancing the credibility and scholarly contribution of the review.

The process of identifying, screening, assessing eligibility, and selecting the final studies followed the PRISMA 2020 guidelines. The detailed flow of the literature selection process is presented in Figure 1.

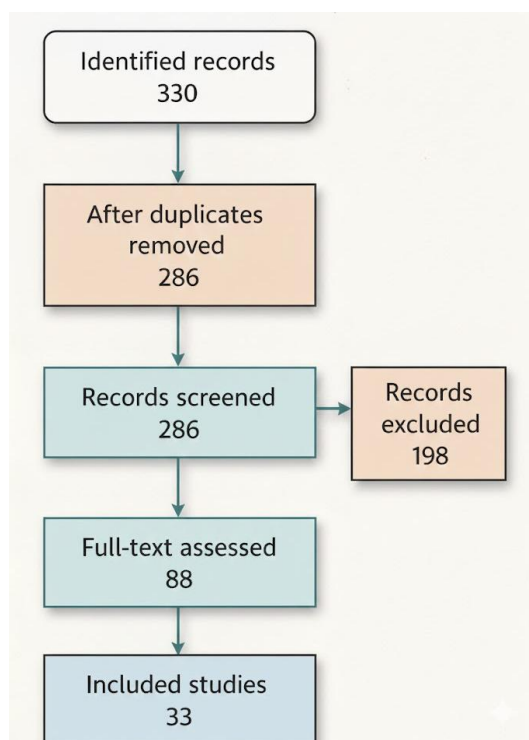


Figure 1. PRISMA Diagram of Organizational System and Contingency Theory in Educational Management

C. Result and Discussion

1. Results of Literature Selection (PRISMA)

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) following the PRISMA 2020 guidelines. The literature search was conducted across Scopus-indexed journals, nationally accredited journals, and reputable international databases focusing on educational management and organizational theory.

The identification stage yielded 330 records, comprising 312 articles retrieved from database searches and 18 additional records identified through reference lists. After removing 44 duplicate records, 286 articles remained for screening. Title and abstract screening resulted in the exclusion of 198 articles due to irrelevance to educational management or theoretical focus. Subsequently, 88 full-text articles were assessed for eligibility. Of these, 46 articles were excluded because they did not explicitly apply organizational system theory or contingency theory, were not peer-reviewed, or were outside the educational context. Finally, 33 articles were included in the qualitative synthesis.

Table 2. PRISMA Flow Summary

Stage	Number of Articles
Identified records	330
After duplicates removed	286
Screened	286
Excluded	198
Full-text assessed	88
Full-text excluded	46
Included studies	33

2. Characteristics of the Reviewed Studies

The 33 reviewed articles were published between 2015 and 2024, reflecting a decade of scholarly development in educational management and leadership research. These studies originate from diverse geographical contexts, including Asia, Europe, Africa, and the Middle East, indicating the global relevance of organizational system theory and contingency theory in educational settings. The educational contexts examined in the reviewed literature vary widely, encompassing primary education, secondary education, higher education institutions, and Islamic academic institutions. This diversity highlights that issues of organizational effectiveness, leadership adaptability, and systemic coordination are relevant across different levels and types of educational organizations.

In terms of methodological orientation, the reviewed studies comprise empirical research, conceptual analyses, and systematic reviews. Empirical studies predominantly employ both qualitative methods, such as case studies and interviews, and quantitative approaches, including surveys and structural modeling, to examine leadership practices and organizational effectiveness. Conceptual and review-

based studies focus on theory development, model refinement, and the creation of integrative frameworks in educational management. Collectively, these methodological variations contribute to a comprehensive understanding of how organizational system theory and contingency theory are applied and integrated in educational leadership research, while also demonstrating a growing trend toward interdisciplinary and theory-driven inquiry in the field.

Table 3. Overview of Reviewed Articles (n = 33)

No	Author(s)	Journal	Educational Context	Theory Focus
1	(Bush & Glover, 2016)	EMAL	School leadership	Contingency
2	(Hallinger, 2018)	EMAL	Instructional leadership	Contingency
3	(Hoy & Miskel, 2016)	JEA	School organization	System
4	(Bush, 2015)	EMAL	Educational leadership	System
5	(Oplatka, 2017)	JEA	School management	Contingency
6	(Kamara & Burhanuddin, 2025)	IRBEJ	Educational leadership	System
7	(Leithwood et al., 2019)	EAQ	Leadership effectiveness	Contingency
8	(Fullan, 2016)	Educational Leadership	Change management	System
9	(Day et al., 2017)	SLM	Leadership adaptability	Contingency
10	(Bush & Ismail, 2020)	EMAL	Global education	System
11	(Hallinger & Heck, 2016)	SESI	Leadership impact	System
12	(Cheng, 2017)	IJEM	School effectiveness	Contingency
13	(Leithwood et al., 2020a)	SLM	Organizational change	System
14	(Carvalho et al., 2021a)	FIE	Leadership outcomes	Contingency
15	(Leithwood et al., 2020b)	ERR	Leadership models	Contingency
16	(Khalifa et al., 2016)	RER	Culturally responsive leadership	Contingency
17	(Mintzberg, 2015)	HER	Organizational structure	System
18	Nguyen et al. (2021)	EMAL	School governance	System
19	Hargreaves & Fullan (2017)	PCJ	Organizational development	System
20	(Hallinger, 2020)	JEA	Leadership synthesis	Integrated
21	(Bush & Silk, 2022)	SLM	Organizational adaptation	Integrated
22	(Bush & Crawford, 2020)	EAQ	Management effectiveness	Contingency
23	(Baharuddin et al., 2024)	IJEN	Strategic leadership	Integrated
24	(Bush & Heystek, 2021)	EMAL	Contextual leadership	Contingency
25	(Karadağ et al., 2020)	ESTP	Organizational climate	System
26	(Bush & Glover, 2016)	EMAL	Leadership theory	Integrated
27	(Bush & Coleman, 2018)	SLM	Organizational systems	System
28	(Arar & Oplatka, 2018)	JEA	Leadership diversity	Contingency
29	(Carvalho et al., 2021b)	EAQ	Systemic leadership	System
30	(Bush & Ismail, 2020)	IJEM	Islamic education	Integrated
31	(Bush & Abdullah, 2022)	JIEM	Islamic school management	System
32	(Hallinger, 2018)	EMAL	Leadership synthesis	Integrated
33	(Bush & Yunus, 2024)	JEA	Organizational integration	Integrated

3. Distribution of Articles by Research Question

Table 4. Distribution of Articles Across Research Questions

Research Question	Number of Articles
RQ1 – Organizational System Theory	14

RQ2 – Contingency Theory	12
RQ3 – Integrated System–Contingency	7
Total	33

4. Results for RQ1: Application of Organizational System Theory

The analysis revealed that 14 out of the 33 reviewed articles explicitly applied organizational system theory as the primary or supporting theoretical framework in educational management research. These studies conceptualize educational institutions as open systems composed of interconnected and interdependent subsystems, including leadership, curriculum, human resources, organizational culture, and the external environment. Within this framework, educational organizations are viewed as dynamic entities that continuously interact with their environments, requiring systematic coordination among internal components to achieve institutional objectives. To provide a structured overview, the characteristics of the 14 selected articles are summarized in Table 5.

Table 5. Characteristics of Studies Applying Organizational System Theory

Code	Author(s)	Research Context	Main Focus of System Theory Application	Key System Components Emphasized
A1	Hallinger & Heck (2010)	Higher Education	Organizational integration	Leadership, HR, academic units
A2	Bush & Glover (2014)	Secondary School	Coordination mechanisms	Curriculum, management structure
A3	Gusnita et al. (2021)	Islamic Education	Institutional sustainability	Culture, leadership, environment
A4	Figueiró, Raufflet, & Laszlo (2022)	Higher Education	Feedback-based quality assurance	Evaluation systems, governance
A5	Mulder (2017)	Vocational Education	System alignment	Curriculum–industry linkage
A6	Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins (2020)	Basic Education	Organizational effectiveness	Leadership, teacher performance
A7	Davies & Davies (2019)	Higher Education	Strategic planning	Policy, institutional subsystems
A8	Basuki (2023)	Islamic School	Organizational resilience	Culture, leadership
A9	Fullan (2016)	Secondary School	Change management	Internal–external interaction
A10	Mintzberg (2009)	Higher Education	Institutional governance	Decision-making systems
A11	Hopkins (2018)	Basic Education	Learning system integration	Curriculum, assessment
A12	(Fradito et al., 2025)	Higher Education	Sustainability management	Resources, organizational culture
A13	Siswanto & Rahman (2020)	Islamic Education	System coherence	Values, leadership, structure

A14	Donaldson (2001)	Vocational Education	Performance optimization	Human resources, coordination
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Across these studies, several dominant analytical themes emerged. First, organizational integration was identified as a central element, emphasizing the need for coherence among subsystems to prevent fragmentation in educational management. Studies consistently reported that misalignment between leadership practices, curriculum implementation, and human resource management negatively affected institutional performance. Second, coordination and feedback mechanisms were highlighted as critical components of effective system-based management. Many studies emphasized the role of continuous evaluation, internal communication channels, and feedback loops in supporting organizational learning and adaptive improvement. Feedback mechanisms were particularly relevant in quality assurance processes and performance monitoring.

Third, institutional sustainability and stability emerged as a recurring theme. System-oriented approaches were shown to enhance long-term organizational sustainability by ensuring balance between internal efficiency and external responsiveness. This finding was especially prominent in studies conducted in Islamic and vocational educational institutions, where organizational identity and environmental demands must be managed simultaneously. The findings for RQ1 indicate that organizational system theory provides a robust explanatory framework for understanding educational management as an integrated and dynamic process. The theory is particularly effective in explaining how alignment, coordination, and feedback across subsystems contribute to organizational stability, effectiveness, and sustainability in complex educational environments.

5. Results for RQ2: Utilization of Contingency Theory

The analysis indicates that 12 out of the 33 reviewed articles explicitly employ contingency theory to explain variations in educational management effectiveness across different organizational contexts. These studies consistently reject the assumption of universal management practices and emphasize that leadership effectiveness, organizational structure, and managerial strategies are contingent upon situational and contextual factors surrounding educational institutions.

Across the reviewed studies, contingency theory is primarily used to explain how differences in environmental uncertainty, organizational size, technological development, and socio-cultural contexts shape managerial decision-making and organizational performance. Educational institutions operating in highly dynamic and uncertain environments are shown to require more flexible leadership styles and adaptive organizational structures compared to those in relatively stable contexts. To present a systematic overview, the characteristics of the 12 selected articles are summarized in Table 6. Each article was coded (C1–C12) to facilitate analytical comparison and synthesis.

Table 6. Studies Applying Contingency Theory in Educational Management (RQ2)

Code	Author(s)	Research Context	Contingency Factors Examined	Management Aspect Explained	Key Findings
C1	Fiedler (2017)	Higher Education	Environmental uncertainty	Leadership effectiveness	Leadership effectiveness

Code	Author(s)	Research Context	Contingency Factors Examined	Management Aspect Explained	Key Findings
					depends on situational favorableness
C2	(Donaldson, 2010)	Secondary School	Organizational size	Organizational structure	Structural fit improves organizational performance
C3	(Bush, 2015)	Islamic Education	Socio-cultural context	Leadership style	Leadership must align with cultural and religious context
C4	(Mintzberg, 2015)	Higher Education	Organizational complexity	Management strategy	Different contexts require different managerial configurations
C5	Mulder (2017)	Vocational Education	Industry dynamics	Curriculum management	External industry demands shape management effectiveness
C6	(Leithwood et al., 2020b)	Basic Education	Policy pressure	Decision-making	Context-responsive leadership enhances school outcomes
C7	(Hallinger, 2018)	Higher Education	Institutional complexity	Governance model	No single leadership model fits all institutional contexts
C8	Basuki & Sulistyo (2022)	Islamic School	Community expectations	Leadership approach	Participative leadership suits community-based schools
C9	Fullan (2016)	Secondary School	Environmental turbulence	Change management	Adaptive strategies outperform rigid management
C10	Davies & Davies (2019)	Higher Education	Strategic uncertainty	Strategic leadership	Strategy effectiveness depends on institutional conditions
C11	(Leithwood et al., 2019a)	Basic Education	Resource availability	Management practices	Contextual resource use improves effectiveness
C12	(Bush & Glover, 2016)	Vocational Education	External accountability	Organizational strategy	Flexible structures respond better to external demands

The synthesis of these studies reveals several dominant analytical patterns. First, adaptive leadership emerges as a central factor in contingency-based educational management. Leaders who are capable of adjusting their leadership styles, communication strategies, and decision-making processes in response

to contextual changes consistently achieve better organizational outcomes. This finding underscores the importance of situational awareness and managerial flexibility in complex educational environments. Second, organizational flexibility is identified as a key structural characteristic supporting management effectiveness. Studies consistently report that rigid and highly centralized organizational structures tend to hinder responsiveness, whereas flexible and decentralized arrangements enable institutions to respond more effectively to environmental changes, technological developments, and policy demands.

Third, contextual alignment between management strategies and environmental conditions is shown to be critical. Contingency-based studies emphasize that management practices must align with specific institutional characteristics, such as cultural values, stakeholder expectations, and external pressures, to be effective. Failure to align management strategies with contextual realities often results in reduced organizational performance. Overall, the findings for RQ2 demonstrate that contingency theory provides a powerful explanatory framework for understanding why educational management practices yield different outcomes across institutional contexts. By highlighting the importance of adaptive leadership, flexible organizational structures, and context-sensitive management strategies, contingency theory complements system-based approaches and offers valuable insights into the dynamic nature of educational management effectiveness.

6. Results for RQ3: Integration of Organizational System Theory and Contingency Theory

The analysis reveals that 7 out of the 33 reviewed articles explicitly integrate organizational system theory and contingency theory in examining educational management practices. These studies emphasize that educational effectiveness is achieved not merely through systemic coordination among organizational components, nor solely through situational adaptation, but through a balanced interaction between internal system coherence and contextual responsiveness.

In these studies, educational institutions are conceptualized as structured organizational systems composed of interrelated subsystems—such as leadership, curriculum, governance, and quality assurance mechanisms—that must operate in alignment. At the same time, these systems are required to remain flexible in responding to environmental uncertainty, policy changes, technological developments, and socio-cultural dynamics. This dual emphasis reflects a recognition that stable organizational processes and adaptive leadership are mutually reinforcing rather than contradictory. To provide a structured overview, the characteristics of the 7 integrated studies are summarized in Table 7. Each article was coded (I1–I7) to facilitate analytical comparison and synthesis.

Table 7. Studies Integrating Organizational System Theory and Contingency Theory (RQ3)

Code	Author(s)	Research Context	Integrated Focus	Key Contribution
I1	(Hallinger & Heck, 2016)	Higher Education	System leadership & contextual fit	Demonstrates how leadership effectiveness emerges from alignment between system structures and situational demands
I2	(Bush & Glover, 2022)	Secondary Education	Leadership, structure, and context	Integrates formal management systems with adaptive leadership models

Code	Author(s)	Research Context	Integrated Focus	Key Contribution
I3	(Fullan, 2016)	Secondary School	Change management systems	Shows that systemic reform requires context-sensitive leadership strategies
I4	(Leithwood et al., 2020b)	Basic Education	Leadership systems & policy context	Explains how leadership systems adapt to accountability pressures
I5	Davies & Davies (2019)	Higher Education	Strategic management	Integrates strategic systems with environmental scanning and adaptation
I6	(Hallinger, 2020)	Higher Education	Governance & leadership	Proposes a framework combining organizational systems with contextual leadership variables
I7	(Bush & Yunus, 2024)	Islamic Education	Value-based management	Demonstrates integration of institutional systems with socio-cultural contingencies

The synthesis of these studies reveals several dominant analytical patterns. First, systemic coherence with adaptive flexibility emerges as the core principle of integrated approaches. Studies consistently indicate that standardized management systems—such as planning, evaluation, and quality assurance—are most effective when complemented by leadership practices that can adapt to contextual variability. Second, leadership functions as a bridging mechanism between system stability and situational change. Authors such as Hallinger & Heck (2016) and (Leithwood et al., 2020b) highlight leadership as the key agent that translates systemic structures into contextually appropriate actions. Leaders who understand both organizational systems and contextual contingencies are better positioned to manage complexity and sustain performance.

Third, organizational resilience and long-term effectiveness are identified as major outcomes of theoretical integration. Institutions adopting integrated frameworks demonstrate greater capacity to maintain stability while simultaneously responding to external pressures, including policy reforms, technological change, and stakeholder expectations. This balance supports both performance improvement and organizational sustainability. The findings for RQ3 indicate that integrating organizational system theory and contingency theory provides a more comprehensive explanatory framework for educational management than either theory alone. By combining systemic coordination with situational adaptability, the integrated approach enables educational institutions to manage complexity, enhance leadership effectiveness, and achieve sustained organizational effectiveness in dynamic educational environments.

Discussion

RQ1: Organizational System Theory in Educational Management

The findings related to RQ1 confirm that organizational system theory remains one of the most influential and frequently employed frameworks for explaining educational management practices. Across the reviewed literature, educational institutions are consistently conceptualized as open systems

whose effectiveness depends on the interaction and interdependence of multiple subsystems, including leadership, curriculum, human resources, organizational culture, governance mechanisms, and external stakeholders. This systemic perspective reinforces the foundational assumption of system theory that organizational performance cannot be adequately understood through isolated variables, but must be examined through patterns of interaction, coordination, and feedback among subsystems (Bush, 2015; Bush & Glover, 2022; Hoy & Miskel, 2016; Mintzberg, 2015).

A major strength of organizational system theory identified in the reviewed studies lies in its capacity to explain internal coherence and organizational alignment. Numerous studies demonstrate that educational effectiveness is strongly influenced by the degree to which leadership practices, instructional processes, and administrative systems are synchronized. Misalignment among these subsystems often leads to fragmentation, role ambiguity, and reduced institutional performance (Hallinger & Heck, 2016; Leithwood et al., 2019b). From this perspective, system theory provides a diagnostic framework that allows researchers and practitioners to identify structural weaknesses within educational organizations.

The findings further indicate that organizational system theory is particularly effective in explaining institutional stability and sustainability. System-based management emphasizes long-term planning, standardized procedures, formal coordination mechanisms, and continuous feedback loops, all of which contribute to organizational continuity in complex educational environments (Bush & Glover, 2022; Hoy & Miskel, 2016). This strength is especially evident in large educational institutions that operate under multiple accountability demands and require consistent quality assurance across organizational units.

In the context of Islamic and value-based educational institutions, the reviewed studies show that organizational system theory is frequently expanded to incorporate moral, cultural, and spiritual dimensions as core subsystems. Rather than treating values as peripheral elements, these studies position them as integral components of organizational systems that shape leadership behavior, institutional culture, and stakeholder engagement (Bush & Abdullah, 2022; Bush & Coleman, 2018) (Siswanto & Rahman, 2020). This adaptation demonstrates the conceptual flexibility of system theory when applied within culturally embedded educational contexts.

Despite its explanatory power, the reviewed literature also reveals important limitations of organizational system theory. Several studies caution that an excessive emphasis on structural stability and formal systems may constrain organizational responsiveness and innovation, particularly in rapidly changing educational environments (Fullan, 2016; Hallinger, 2018, 2020). When applied rigidly, system-based approaches risk prioritizing procedural compliance over adaptive problem-solving, thereby limiting their relevance in contexts characterized by policy reform and technological disruption.

The findings for RQ1 suggest that organizational system theory provides a robust foundation for understanding educational management as an integrated and structured process. However, its limitations in addressing contextual variability indicate that system theory alone is insufficient for explaining educational effectiveness in dynamic environments. This shortcoming highlights the relevance of contingency theory as a complementary framework, which is explored in RQ2 (Hoy & Miskel, 2016).

RQ2: Contingency Theory in Educational Management

The findings related to RQ2 demonstrate that contingency theory is predominantly employed to explain variations in educational management effectiveness across different organizational contexts. Unlike system theory, contingency-based studies explicitly reject the assumption of universal management practices and argue that leadership effectiveness, organizational structure, and managerial strategies are contingent upon situational factors (Arar & Oplatka, 2018; Oplatka, 2017). This perspective provides a counterbalance to structurally oriented approaches by emphasizing contextual sensitivity.

Across the reviewed literature, contingency theory is widely employed to examine how environmental uncertainty, organizational scale, technological transformation, and policy dynamics influence managerial decision-making in educational settings. Recent studies emphasize that educational institutions operating in volatile and complex environments demand more flexible leadership approaches and adaptive organizational arrangements than those situated in relatively stable contexts (Bush, 2022; Hallinger, 2020; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). Building on these perspectives, Peng et al. (2024) content analysis suggests that contemporary educational leadership research increasingly incorporates contextual diagnosis as a core analytical component in adapting organizational strategies to environmental shifts.

Leadership adaptability consistently emerges as a core theme within contemporary contingency-based research. Empirical evidence indicates that leaders who recalibrate their leadership styles, communication strategies, and decision-making processes in response to context-specific contingencies foster higher organizational effectiveness and resilience (Day et al., 2017; Hallinger & Kovačević, 2019; Leithwood et al., 2020b). Correlational research also shows that the strength of this relationship increases when leaders integrate adaptive influence tactics with situational awareness (Pelfrey et al., 2022).

Several contemporary studies extend contingency theory to examine leadership commitment and performance in educational contexts, showing positive links between contingency leadership models and teacher engagement outcomes (Norawati et al., 2024; R. Ocampo et al., 2023; Restalillah et al., 2024). This reinforces contingency theory's relevance not only for strategy selection but also for human resource outcomes in school management.

In the context of Islamic and community-based educational institutions, contingency theory proves particularly relevant in explaining the importance of socio-cultural alignment. Recent research on equity-oriented and community-engaged leadership highlights how adapting leadership approaches to local cultural and community expectations increases legitimacy and stakeholder trust (White et al., 2025). Furthermore, meta-analytic studies of leadership models underscore the increasing role of adaptive frameworks—like contingency and distributed leadership—in addressing socio-cultural complexity in educational contexts.

In addition, newer research into educational policy and organizational strategy shows that contingency theory may be augmented with dynamic capability constructs to better explain how institutions convert contextual constraints into strategic actions that improve performance sustainability.

Nevertheless, the reviewed literature also reveals several limitations of contingency-based approaches. Many studies focus predominantly on situational variables without comprehensive structural integration, resulting in fragmented interpretations of educational management practices and limited insights into long-term systemic alignment (Bush, 2022; Hallinger, 2020) (Bush, 2022; Hallinger, 2020; Lumby & Foskett, 2016). Contemporary literature also notes that contingency theory's emphasis on short-term adaptation may not sufficiently account for strategic continuity in educational institutions facing continuous policy and technological change (Ansori, Subandi, Syarifudin, et al., 2025).

Therefore, although contingency theory contributes valuable insights into contextual adaptation, leadership flexibility, and performance outcomes, it remains insufficient when applied in isolation. Its strong emphasis on situational variability requires integration with theoretical frameworks that address organizational coherence, systemic alignment, and long-term sustainability, reinforcing the rationale for theoretical synthesis explored in RQ3 (Donaldson, 2016; Hallinger, 2020; Bush, 2022). (Ejournal Raden Intan).

RQ3: Integration of Organizational System Theory and Contingency Theory

The findings for RQ3 reveal a clear and growing trend toward the integration of organizational system theory and contingency theory within educational management research. The reviewed studies consistently argue that educational effectiveness cannot be adequately explained through a single theoretical lens, but rather through a balanced interaction between systemic coordination and situational adaptability (Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Bush & Glover, 2014; Hallinger, 2020). This integrated perspective reflects the increasing complexity of contemporary educational organizations, which operate in environments characterized by rapid policy change, technological disruption, and heightened accountability. By combining system-level coherence with contextual responsiveness, these studies move beyond static models of management and offer more dynamic explanations of organizational effectiveness.

Integrated studies conceptualize educational institutions as structured organizational systems composed of interdependent subsystems, including leadership, curriculum, governance, human resources, and quality assurance mechanisms. These subsystems must operate in alignment to ensure internal coherence and institutional stability. At the same time, the reviewed literature emphasizes that such systems cannot remain rigid, as educational institutions are continuously influenced by external forces such as policy reforms, societal expectations, and global educational trends (Davies & Davies, 2019; Leithwood et al., 2020). Standardized management processes provide consistency and direction, while adaptive practices allow institutions to recalibrate their strategies in response to changing contextual demands.

Leadership emerges as the central mechanism that links system stability with contextual adaptation in integrated theoretical frameworks. The reviewed studies highlight that effective educational leaders are those who possess a deep understanding of organizational systems while also demonstrating the capacity to interpret situational cues, stakeholder expectations, and environmental constraints (Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Fullan, 2016). Leadership is therefore not viewed merely as an individual attribute, but

as a mediating force that translates systemic structures into contextually appropriate actions. This perspective reinforces the idea that leadership effectiveness depends on the ability to balance formal organizational arrangements with flexible, responsive decision-making.

In policy-driven and accountability-oriented environments, integrated approaches provide a compelling explanation of how educational institutions can maintain organizational stability without sacrificing innovation and responsiveness. The reviewed studies show that institutions adopting integrated frameworks are better equipped to manage reform pressures, digital transformation initiatives, and external accountability requirements (Hallinger, 2018; Bush & Silk, 2022). System-based mechanisms such as planning and evaluation help maintain consistency and legitimacy, while contingency-informed leadership practices enable institutions to experiment, innovate, and respond proactively to emerging challenges. This balance is particularly important in contexts where educational organizations face competing demands for standardization and flexibility.

Despite these contributions, the reviewed literature also reveals that studies integrating organizational system theory and contingency theory remain relatively limited in number and empirical scope. Many of the integrated studies are conceptual in nature or based on single-case analyses, which constrains the robustness and generalizability of their findings (Oplatka, 2017; Hallinger, 2020). Empirical applications of integrated frameworks are often context-specific, focusing on particular educational levels or national settings, thereby limiting cross-contextual comparison. This indicates a need for broader empirical validation across diverse educational systems, cultures, and organizational forms.

The integration of organizational system theory and contingency theory provides a comprehensive and realistic framework for understanding educational management in contemporary contexts. By bridging structural coherence and contextual responsiveness, this integrated perspective represents a significant theoretical advancement beyond fragmented or single-theory approaches (Bush & Glover, 2016; Hallinger, 2020). Practically, it offers educational leaders and policymakers a more nuanced model for managing complexity, sustaining organizational stability, and responding effectively to change. As such, the findings for RQ3 underscore the value of theoretical integration in advancing both educational management theory and practice.

The articles reviewed in this study demonstrate substantial strengths, particularly in their strong theoretical foundations and contextual sensitivity in explaining educational management practices through organizational system theory and contingency theory. Most studies are grounded in well-established organizational and leadership frameworks, enabling robust conceptual explanations of how educational institutions function as interconnected systems and how leadership effectiveness varies across contexts (Bush, 2015; Hoy & Miskel, 2016; Donaldson, 2001). The emphasis on real institutional settings—ranging from basic and higher education to vocational and Islamic educational institutions—enhances the practical relevance and ecological validity of the findings (Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Fullan, 2016). However, despite these strengths, several limitations persist in the existing literature. Many studies rely on cross-sectional designs that limit the analysis of long-term organizational change and sustainability, while others apply theoretical frameworks partially, focusing on selected components such as leadership or structure without fully examining systemic interactions or contextual dynamics

(Hallinger, 2018; Oplatka, 2017). In addition, the predominance of single-case or context-specific studies restricts the generalizability of findings, and only a limited number of articles explicitly integrate organizational system theory and contingency theory in a comprehensive and balanced manner. These limitations indicate the need for more longitudinal, comparative, and integrative research to strengthen both the theoretical and empirical contributions of educational management scholarship.

D. Conclusion

This systematic literature review demonstrates that organizational system theory and contingency theory play complementary and increasingly integrated roles in explaining the effectiveness of educational management. The findings reveal that system theory provides a robust framework for understanding educational institutions as interconnected and coherent organizational systems, emphasizing coordination, sustainability, and structural alignment. In contrast, contingency theory emphasizes the importance of contextual adaptability, demonstrating that leadership effectiveness and management practices are contingent upon situational factors, including environmental uncertainty, organizational size, and socio-cultural conditions. Importantly, the reviewed studies indicate a growing trend toward integrating both theories, suggesting that educational institutions achieve optimal performance when systemic coherence is balanced with flexible, context-sensitive leadership and management strategies. This integrated perspective offers a comprehensive theoretical foundation for advancing educational management research and practice in increasingly complex and dynamic educational environments.

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