

**PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES IN SCHOOL MANAGEMENT
COMMITTEES: EXAMINING SHARED VISION AND COLLECTIVE
LEADERSHIP IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS**

**COMUNIDADES PROFISSIONAIS DE APRENDIZAGEM EM COMITÊS DE GESTÃO
ESCOLAR: EXAMINANDO A VISÃO COMPARTILHADA E A LIDERANÇA
COLETIVA NAS ESCOLAS PRIMÁRIAS**

**COMUNIDADES PROFESIONALES DE APRENDIZAJE EN COMITÉS DE GESTIÓN
ESCOLAR: EXAMINANDO LA VISIÓN COMPARTIDA Y EL LIDERAZGO
COLECTIVO EN LAS ESCUELAS PRIMARIAS**



Mamie Suhana binti MOHD NOOR¹
e-mail: mamiesuhana@gmail.com



Hailan SALAMUN²
e-mail: hailan@umt.edu.my



Asyraf Ab RAHMAN³
e-mail: asyraf@umt.edu.my



Firdaus Khairi ABDUL KADIR⁴
e-mail: firdauskhairi@umt.edu.my



Hamdan bin AZIZ⁵
e-mail: hamdan.aziz@umt.edu.my



Ismar Liza Mahani ISMAIL⁶
e-mail: ismarhani@umt.edu.my

How to reference this paper:

Mohd Noor, M. S. b., Salamun, H., Rahman, A. A., Abdul Kadir, F. K., Aziz, H. b., & Ismail, I. L. M. (2026). Professional learning communities in school management committees: examining shared vision and collective leadership in primary schools. *Revista on line de Política e Gestão Educacional*, 30(esp1), e026023. <https://doi.org/10.22633/rpge.v30iesp1.20927>



| Submitted: 06/01/2026
| Revisions required: 17/02/2026
| Approved: 15/03/2026
| Published: 30/03/2026

Editor: Prof. Dr. Sebastião de Souza Lemes

Deputy Executive Editor: Prof. Dr. José Anderson Santos Cruz

¹ University Malaysia, Malaysia. Ph.D. Student, Centre for Fundamental and Continuing Education. Terengganu.

² University Malaysia Terengganu, Malaysia. Associate Professor, Centre for Fundamental and Continuing Education.

³ University Malaysia Terengganu, Malaysia. Centre for Fundamental and Continuing Education.

⁴ University Malaysia Terengganu, Malaysia. Associate Professor, Centre for Fundamental and Continuing Education.

⁵ University Malaysia Terengganu, Malaysia. Ph.D. Senior Lecturer, Centre for Fundamental and Continuing Education.

⁶ University Malaysia Terengganu, Malaysia. Centre for Fundamental and Continuing Education.

ABSTRACT: In an increasingly complex and accountability-driven educational landscape, schools are expected to function as adaptive learning organizations that build collective leadership capacity. While Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) are widely recognized as mechanisms for professional development, limited attention has been given to School Management Committees (SMCs) as agents of organizational learning. This study examines the enactment of PLC practices within primary school SMCs, focusing on shared vision and collective leadership. An explanatory sequential mixed-methods design was employed, integrating survey and semi-structured interview data. Findings indicate high levels of shared vision and moderate-to-high levels of collective leadership, with operational practices outweighing strategic reflection. Qualitative results show that shared vision aligns meaning and guides action, while collective leadership strengthens accountability, trust, and collaboration. PLCs contribute to organizational learning when enacted meaningfully at the management level. The study highlights the importance of institutionalizing PLC practices to enhance school effectiveness in Malaysian primary schools.

KEYWORDS: Professional Learning Communities. School Management Committees. Shared vision. Collective leadership. Organizational learning.

RESUMO: Em um cenário educacional cada vez mais complexo e orientado pela responsabilização, espera-se que as escolas funcionem como organizações de aprendizagem adaptativas, capazes de desenvolver a capacidade de liderança coletiva. Embora as Comunidades Profissionais de Aprendizagem (CPAs) sejam amplamente reconhecidas como mecanismos de desenvolvimento profissional, pouca atenção tem sido dada aos Comitês de Gestão Escolar (CGEs) como agentes de aprendizagem organizacional. Este estudo examina a implementação de práticas de CPAs nos CGEs de escolas primárias, com foco na visão compartilhada e na liderança coletiva. Foi adotado um desenho de métodos mistos sequencial explicativo, integrando dados de questionários e entrevistas semiestruturadas. Os resultados indicam altos níveis de visão compartilhada e níveis moderados a altos de liderança coletiva, com as práticas operacionais superando a reflexão estratégica. Os achados qualitativos mostram que a visão compartilhada alinha significados e orienta ações, enquanto a liderança coletiva fortalece a responsabilização, a confiança e a colaboração. As CPAs contribuem para a aprendizagem organizacional quando implementadas de forma significativa no nível da gestão. O estudo destaca a importância de institucionalizar as práticas de CPAs para aprimorar a eficácia escolar nas escolas primárias da Malásia.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Comunidades Profissionais de Aprendizagem. Comitês de Gestão Escolar. Visão compartilhada. Liderança coletiva. Aprendizagem organizacional.

RESUMEN: En un entorno educativo cada vez más complejo y orientado a la rendición de cuentas, se espera que las escuelas funcionen como organizaciones de aprendizaje adaptativas, capaces de desarrollar la capacidad de liderazgo colectivo. Aunque las Comunidades Profesionales de Aprendizaje (CPA) son ampliamente reconocidas como mecanismos de desarrollo profesional, se ha prestado poca atención a los Comitês de Gestión Escolar (CGE) como agentes de aprendizaje organizacional. Este estudio examina la implementación de prácticas de CPA en los CGE de escuelas primarias, centrándose en la visión compartida y el liderazgo colectivo. Se empleó un diseño de métodos mixtos secuencial explicativo, integrando datos de encuestas y entrevistas semiestruturadas. Los resultados indican altos niveles de visión compartida y niveles moderados a altos de liderazgo colectivo, con las prácticas operativas superando la reflexión estratégica. Los hallazgos cualitativos muestran que la visión

compartida alinea significados y orienta la acción, mientras que el liderazgo colectivo fortalece la rendición de cuentas, la confianza y la colaboración. Las CPA contribuyen al aprendizaje organizacional cuando se implementan de manera significativa a nivel de gestión. El estudio destaca la importancia de institucionalizar las prácticas de CPA para mejorar la eficacia escolar en las escuelas primarias de Malasia.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Comunidades Profesionales de Aprendizaje. Comités de Gestión Escolar. Visión compartida. Liderazgo colectivo. Aprendizaje organizacional.

INTRODUCTION

In an increasingly complex, uncertain, and accountability-oriented global educational landscape, schools are expected to function not merely as administrative institutions but as adaptive learning organizations capable of continuous improvement. Contemporary educational reforms emphasize that the effectiveness of schools is no longer dependent solely on individual leadership or managerial efficiency, but on the collective capacity of leadership teams to engage in shared learning, sense-making, and coordinated action (Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2018; Leithwood et al., 2020; OECD, 2020). Within this context, organizational learning has become a central concern in educational policy and school management research.

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) have been widely promoted as a strategic mechanism for fostering professional development and enhancing school effectiveness (DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Stoll et al., 2006; Vescio et al., 2008). However, much of the existing literature conceptualizes PLCs primarily as pedagogical collaboration structures among teachers, with a predominant focus on classroom practices and instructional improvement. This prevailing interpretation has constrained the understanding of PLCs as a broader organizational learning process and has resulted in limited empirical attention to strategic leadership groups within schools, particularly School Management Committees (SMCs), as active agents of collective learning and leadership (Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Harris, 2020).

In the Malaysian context, research on PLC implementation reflects a similar pattern. Empirical studies have largely concentrated on teachers' professional practices, collaborative teaching cultures, and instructional outcomes, while the role of school management and leadership structures in sustaining PLCs remains underexplored (Zuraidah Abdullah & Rahimah Haji Ahmad, 2017; Sujariah Jano et al., 2021). This gap persists despite national education policies, including the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013–2025, which explicitly emphasize distributed leadership, shared vision, and organizational learning as key drivers of school improvement (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013; Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 2020b). Consequently, there remains insufficient empirical understanding of how PLC principles are operationalized at the level of strategic school management.

This lack of conceptual and empirical clarity raises critical questions regarding the enactment of PLCs within school management structures, particularly in relation to vision sharing as a process of collective sense-making and collective leadership as a mechanism for shared responsibility and learning. Without a deeper examination of how these dimensions interact at the management level, PLC implementation risks remaining symbolic or procedural,

rather than contributing meaningfully to leadership transformation and sustainable organizational learning (Senge, 2006; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012).

Against this backdrop, this article examines how Professional Learning Community practices are enacted within School Management Committees in primary schools, with a specific focus on the roles of vision sharing and collective leadership in shaping organizational learning processes. Employing a mixed-methods research design, the study integrates quantitative and qualitative data to explore how these dimensions function as interconnected leadership learning mechanisms at the school management level. By positioning SMCs as the primary unit of analysis, this study extends existing PLC scholarship beyond the classroom and contributes to international discussions on collective leadership, organizational learning, and school management within primary education contexts.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Professional learning communities in the context of school management

The concept of PLCs is rooted in organizational learning theory, which emphasizes collective knowledge construction, continuous reflection, and learning embedded in authentic organizational practice (Senge, 2006; Garvin et al., 2008). Within educational settings, PLCs are commonly defined as structured forms of professional collaboration in which school members share vision, responsibility, and accountability for the continuous improvement of educational quality (DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Stoll et al., 2006; Vescio et al., 2008). Despite this broad theoretical foundation, the empirical literature has predominantly conceptualized PLCs as mechanisms for pedagogical collaboration among teachers, thereby constraining their potential as instruments of organizational learning at the strategic leadership level.

From a school management perspective, PLCs may be more productively understood as organizational learning mechanisms operating among leadership teams, particularly SMCs. At this level, organizational learning extends beyond instructional improvement to include collective decision-making, alignment of strategic priorities, programme evaluation, and reflective assessment of school policies. This perspective aligns with research emphasizing that schools' adaptive capacity is contingent upon leadership's ability to cultivate collective learning and sustain organizational capability over time (Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2018; Leithwood et al., 2020; Harris, 2020).

In the Malaysian context, PLC-related studies similarly reveal a strong emphasis on teachers' classroom practices and collaborative pedagogy, while empirical attention to school management and leadership processes remains limited (Zuraidah Abdullah & Rahimah Haji Ahmad, 2017; Sujariah Jano et al., 2021). This gap persists despite policy initiatives such as the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013–2025, which explicitly position school management as a central driver of organizational learning and systemic improvement (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013; Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 2020b). Consequently, how PLCs function as organizational learning processes within strategic school management structures remains insufficiently theorized and empirically examined.

Reconceptualizing PLCs at the level of school management necessitates a corresponding shift in leadership paradigms, from hierarchical and individually centred models toward collective leadership grounded in collaboration, trust, and shared responsibility. Within this framework, leadership is understood not as the exclusive domain of formal leaders, but as a distributed process through which influence and expertise are mobilized across management members to support reciprocal learning and informed decision-making. Empirical evidence suggests that such collective leadership arrangements enhance schools' capacity for organizational learning and strategic improvement (Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Spillane, 2012).

Viewed through this lens, School Management Committees function not merely as administrative bodies, but as reflective professional learning communities oriented toward organizational improvement. The effectiveness of PLCs at the management level depends largely on the extent to which vision sharing and collective leadership are enacted as lived practices rather than formal structures. Without substantive engagement and shared ownership, PLCs risk becoming procedural rituals that comply with policy expectations but fail to generate meaningful organizational learning and transformation.

VISION SHARING AS THE FOUNDATION OF COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP

Vision sharing constitutes a central element in the development of collective leadership and organizational learning within schools. Within the PLC framework, a shared vision functions not merely as an aspirational statement, but as a mechanism for aligning meaning, guiding collective action, and shaping strategic decision-making among school leaders. When substantively shared, vision enables members of SMCs to develop a common understanding of

organizational purposes, priorities, and values that inform both policy interpretation and operational practice (Senge, 2006; Garvin et al., 2008; Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2018).

From a collective leadership perspective, shared vision operates as an integrative mechanism that coordinates diverse roles, expertise, and responsibilities within the organization. Rather than relying on hierarchical control, a collectively endorsed vision provides a normative reference that guides action through shared understanding and mutual commitment. In this sense, vision sharing supports collective sense-making by enabling management members to interpret challenges, evaluate competing priorities, and respond coherently to complex organizational demands (Leithwood et al., 2020; Weick et al., 2005).

The literature cautions, however, that the mere existence of formal vision statements does not guarantee effective collective leadership. Vision that remains symbolic or rhetorical, without being internalized and enacted in daily practices, risks becoming disconnected from managerial realities. Under such conditions, vision fails to function as a catalyst for learning and instead operates as institutional rhetoric with limited influence on professional behaviour or decision-making (Stoll et al., 2006; Robinson et al., 2008).

In contrast, genuinely shared vision emerges through ongoing professional dialogue, collective reflection, and continuous negotiation of meaning within leadership teams. These processes require openness, trust, and the distribution of symbolic power, enabling diverse perspectives to contribute to shaping organizational direction. Through such practices, vision evolves from a static declaration into a dynamic collective resource that is continually interpreted and adapted to contextual realities (Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2018; Harris & Jones, 2018).

Within PLCs, substantively enacted vision sharing provides a critical foundation for the emergence of collective leadership. It enables SMCs to function as learning-oriented leadership communities in which strategic actions are guided by shared understanding rather than procedural compliance.

COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING

Collective leadership constitutes a foundational condition for organizational learning in school management, particularly in environments characterized by complexity and uncertainty. In contrast to traditional leadership models that centralize authority within individual roles, collective leadership emphasizes the distribution of responsibility, recognition of diverse expertise, and cultivation of professional interdependence among leadership teams. Through this approach, organizational learning is socially constructed through sustained interaction, shared reflection, and collective action (Leithwood et al., 2020; Spillane, 2012; Harris, 2020).

The educational leadership literature consistently identifies professional cohesion, trust, and shared accountability as key enablers of effective collective leadership. Professional cohesion reflects the quality of relationships characterized by openness and mutual respect; trust facilitates the exchange of perspectives and the questioning of established assumptions; and shared accountability ensures that decisions and outcomes are understood as collective responsibilities. Together, these conditions create an organizational environment conducive to continuous learning and strategic improvement, consistent with concepts of collaborative professionalism and professional capital (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2018).

Within school systems, SMCs serve as strategic decision-making communities that shape organizational direction. When SMCs operate as professional learning communities, decision-making processes shift from linear or authoritative models toward collective deliberation informed by data, professional judgment, and reflective practice. This approach not only enhances the quality of decisions but also strengthens collective ownership and commitment to implementation (Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Robinson et al., 2008).

The role of SMCs as learning-oriented leadership communities extends organizational learning beyond operational routines to the strategic and conceptual domains. Through sustained interaction, management members are able to critically examine underlying assumptions, assess the effectiveness of interventions, and adapt strategies in alignment with organizational goals. In this sense, collective leadership functions as a mechanism of double-loop learning, enabling both action and underlying frames of reference to be continuously refined (Argyris, 1999; Senge, 2006).

Nevertheless, collective leadership does not emerge automatically through formal structures or role allocation alone. In the absence of genuine trust, cohesion, and shared

accountability, SMCs risk operating symbolically, thereby constraining the potential of PLCs as mechanisms for meaningful organizational learning.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

Drawing on the literature reviewed, this study develops a conceptual framework to explain how PLCs function as organizational learning mechanisms within SMCs. The framework integrates two core constructs, vision sharing and collective leadership, to elucidate the processes through which organizational learning is enacted at the level of school management.

Within this framework, PLCs are conceptualized as the social and organizational context that enables professional dialogue, collective reflection, and shared learning among management teams. Unlike teacher-centred interpretations of PLCs, this study positions PLCs as strategic learning processes that inform leadership decision-making and organizational direction.

Vision sharing is conceptualized as the foundational process through which organizational meaning is aligned and collective action is guided. A shared vision enables SMC members to develop common interpretive frameworks that inform strategic planning and decision-making, thereby creating conditions for the emergence of collective leadership.

Collective leadership is subsequently positioned as a process that develops through the internalization of shared vision and sustained professional interaction within PLCs. Characterized by professional cohesion, trust, and shared accountability, collective leadership facilitates the distribution of influence and responsibility, transforming decision-making into a reflective organizational learning process.

The interaction between vision sharing and collective leadership contributes to organizational learning within SMCs, defined as the capacity to interpret challenges, evaluate actions, and adapt strategies through continuous reflection. This framework informs the methodological design of the study and guides the analysis of the quantitative and qualitative findings presented in subsequent sections.

METHODOLOGY

Research design

This study employs a mixed methods approach using an explanatory sequential design, in which quantitative data collection and analysis are conducted in the initial phase, followed by qualitative inquiry to further explain and contextualize the quantitative results. This design is particularly appropriate when numerical patterns require deeper exploration to understand the underlying processes, meanings, and contextual dynamics that shape social phenomena (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010).

The adoption of a mixed methods approach enables a more comprehensive examination of PLC practices within school management, particularly in relation to complex and relational constructs such as shared vision and collective leadership. By integrating quantitative breadth with qualitative depth, the study responds to calls for methodologically plural approaches in educational leadership research that seek to capture both structural patterns and lived experiences (Johnson et al., 2007).

In this study, the quantitative phase was designed to assess the overall level and distribution of PLC practices within SMCs. The subsequent qualitative phase was conducted to elaborate on these findings by exploring how shared vision and collective leadership are interpreted and enacted in practice. This explanatory sequential design aligns closely with the objectives of the study, which aim not only to identify the extent of PLC practices, but also to understand how these practices function within the authentic organizational context of school management.

PARTICIPANTS AND RESEARCH CONTEXT

The study was conducted within the context of primary schools, with the SMC serving as the primary unit of analysis. Participants comprised members of the SMC who were directly involved in school planning, decision-making, and the implementation of school programmes. These roles positioned participants as key actors in shaping organizational direction and leadership practices at the school level.

The selection of the SMC as the focal group is theoretically and empirically grounded in educational leadership literature that highlights the importance of strategic leadership teams in influencing organizational learning and school improvement (Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Harris, 2020). Examining PLC practices at the management level enables the study to extend

existing PLC research beyond classroom-based teacher collaboration to include leadership processes that operate at the organizational core.

Within the Malaysian education system, the SMC functions as a formal governance structure responsible for coordinating school policies, strategic initiatives, and programme implementation. National education policies emphasise distributed leadership, shared responsibility, and collaborative decision-making as key mechanisms for enhancing school effectiveness (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013; Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 2020b). Accordingly, focusing on the SMC provides a relevant and policy-aligned context for examining how professional learning and collective leadership are developed and sustained within primary school management.

Instruments and data collection procedures

Quantitative data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed to measure the level of PLC practices within the SMCs. The instrument focused on two core constructs central to the study: shared vision and collective leadership. Questionnaire items were designed to capture participants' perceptions of vision clarity, alignment of organizational goals, distribution of leadership roles, and levels of professional cohesion, trust, and collective accountability within school management practices.

The development of the questionnaire was informed by established PLC and educational leadership literature that conceptualizes organizational learning as a function of shared meaning-making and strategic collaboration (DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Leithwood et al., 2020). The instrument was structured to enable descriptive analysis of PLC practice levels across the SMC.

Following the quantitative phase, qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews with selected participants. Participant selection and interview foci were informed by the quantitative findings, consistent with the principles of an explanatory sequential design. The semi-structured interview format allowed for systematic exploration of participants' experiences while providing flexibility to probe emerging issues related to shared vision and collective leadership.

Semi-structured interviews are widely recognized as appropriate for educational leadership research, particularly when the aim is to generate rich, contextualized insights into organizational processes, professional relationships, and leadership practices (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Braun & Clarke, 2021).

DATA ANALYSIS AND DATA INTEGRATION PROCEDURES

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques to identify the levels and distribution patterns of PLC practices within the SMC. These analyses provided an empirical overview of shared vision and collective leadership practices and informed the subsequent qualitative phase, including the selection of interview participants and focal areas for deeper exploration (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis, following a systematic and reflexive process of familiarization, coding, theme development, and refinement. This approach enabled the identification of key themes and subthemes that explain how shared vision and collective leadership are enacted, interpreted, and negotiated within school management practices (Braun & Clarke, 2021). The analysis was guided by theoretical perspectives on organizational learning and collective leadership to ensure analytical coherence and interpretive rigour.

Integration of quantitative and qualitative data occurred at the interpretive stage, in line with established mixed methods integration frameworks that emphasize triangulation, complementarity, and explanatory enrichment (Fetters et al., 2013). Quantitative findings provided the structural patterns of PLC practices, while qualitative insights offered contextual explanations for these patterns. This integrative process facilitated a more holistic and nuanced understanding of organizational learning and collective leadership at the school management level.

FINDINGS

Level of shared vision practices

The quantitative analysis indicates that shared vision practices within the SMC are perceived at a generally positive and encouraging level. Respondents reported favourable perceptions regarding the clarity of the school vision and the efforts of the management team to align organizational direction through collective discussion and joint planning. These findings suggest the presence of a foundational shared vision that is broadly understood and endorsed among SMC members.

However, item-level analysis reveals an important distinction between conceptual alignment and practical enactment. While respondents demonstrated strong agreement with items related to goal alignment and strategic planning, lower levels of agreement were observed for items related to the consistent translation of the shared vision into daily management practices. This indicates that although the vision is structurally and cognitively acknowledged, its operational influence on routine professional actions varies across management members.

Taken together, these findings suggest that shared vision within the SMC is established primarily at a structural and conceptual level, but has yet to be fully embedded as a sustained and reflective practice that consistently guides managerial behaviour. This pattern points to an opportunity to strengthen shared vision as a deeper form of collective learning that more directly supports continuous organizational learning at the school management level.

Level of collective leadership within the school management committee

For the dimension of collective leadership, the quantitative findings indicate a moderate to high level of practice, particularly in relation to professional collaboration, shared responsibility, and joint participation in decision-making processes. Most respondents acknowledged that leadership within the SMC is not concentrated in a single individual, but is distributed among members according to roles, expertise, and functional responsibilities.

Nevertheless, further analysis reveals that collective leadership practices are more evident in task execution and programme implementation than in strategic reflection and collective evaluation of decision outcomes. Items related to collaborative planning and shared implementation recorded higher mean scores compared to those associated with reflective assessment and strategic review. This pattern suggests that collective leadership within the SMC is currently more operational than strategic in nature.

Overall, the quantitative findings indicate that while collective leadership is substantively present within the SMC, its enactment remains uneven across leadership functions. Similar to shared vision practices, collective leadership appears to be more firmly embedded in routine management activities than in higher-order reflective and evaluative processes that are central to organizational learning.

Analysis of the semi-structured interview data reveals that the enactment of PLCs within the SMC is reflected through two interrelated themes:

- (i) Shared vision as a guide for collective action, and
- (ii) Collective leadership and professional accountability.

These themes provide contextual explanations for the quantitative patterns reported in Section 4.1 and illuminate how PLC principles are interpreted, negotiated, and enacted within school management practices.

Theme 1: shared vision as a guide for collective action

The qualitative findings indicate that SMC members perceive the school vision not merely as a formal or symbolic statement, but as a central reference point for collective planning and management action. Participants described the vision as a framework that informs programme prioritization, resource allocation, and performance monitoring, thereby contributing to greater coherence and alignment in management decisions.

At the same time, the findings suggest that the effectiveness of the vision as a guide for action is highly contingent on the quality and frequency of professional dialogue among management members. When the vision is actively referenced during meetings and used as a basis for reflective discussion, it functions as a mechanism for aligning meaning and action. Conversely, when the vision is invoked only rhetorically or procedurally, its influence on management practices becomes limited.

Overall, this theme demonstrates that shared vision has the potential to function as a catalyst for collective learning within the SMC, particularly when it is enacted as a living reference embedded in reflective dialogue and strategic deliberation. In such conditions, the vision supports more purposeful and coherent management practices.

Theme 2: collective leadership and professional accountability

This theme illustrates how collective leadership within the SMC is enacted through the distribution of roles, recognition of expertise, and the cultivation of professional accountability. Participants described school management as a shared endeavour, where leadership responsibilities are collectively negotiated rather than individually imposed.

The findings further reveal that professional accountability is strengthened when trust and collegial relationships are established within the management team. Participants reported a stronger sense of ownership over decisions when they were actively involved in collaborative planning and professional dialogue. In this context, accountability is experienced not as

hierarchical control, but as a shared moral and professional commitment to implementing collectively agreed decisions.

However, the enactment of collective leadership was found to be context-dependent. In situations involving urgent issues or external pressures, decision-making tended to become more centralized, temporarily constraining collective processes. This suggests that collective leadership within the SMC is dynamic and shaped by situational demands rather than uniformly applied across all management contexts.

Overall, this theme underscores that collective leadership contributes meaningfully to organizational learning when supported by collegiality, trust, and shared responsibility. Under these conditions, the SMC functions not only as an administrative body, but as a strategic learning community.

INTEGRATION OF FINDINGS

The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings provides a multi-layered understanding of the enactment of PLC practices within the SMC. Consistent with mixed methods integration principles, this process moves beyond confirmation to explain how quantitative patterns are interpreted and enacted within the lived realities of school management practice (Fetters et al., 2013; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

With respect to shared vision, the positive levels reported in the quantitative findings are reinforced by qualitative accounts that portray the vision as a central mechanism for aligning management actions. Survey-based perceptions of vision clarity are elaborated through interview narratives describing how the vision guides programme planning and strategic prioritization. This convergence indicates that shared vision functions as a sense-making and action-alignment mechanism within the SMC.

At the same time, the qualitative findings reveal nuances not fully captured by quantitative measures. Although shared vision is widely endorsed, its consistent enactment depends on sustained professional dialogue and reflective spaces within decision-making processes. This explains why high levels of agreement do not necessarily translate into uniform practice across all management contexts.

Similarly, quantitative findings indicating positive levels of collective leadership are substantiated by qualitative evidence highlighting collegiality, trust, and shared accountability. However, qualitative data also refine these findings by demonstrating that collective leadership

is more prominent in implementation than in strategic reflection and evaluation, indicating a developmental rather than fully mature form of collective leadership.

Overall, the integrated findings confirm that PLC practices within the SMC are substantively present but remain dynamic and developmental in nature. Shared vision and collective leadership function as key drivers of organizational learning at the school management level, while also highlighting the need to strengthen reflective dialogue, strategic evaluation, and collective accountability to deepen PLC enactment within Malaysian primary schools.

Table 1.
Integration of Findings on Shared Vision and Collective Leadership

Dimension	Quantitative Findings	Qualitative Findings	Integrative Interpretation
Shared Vision	High level of practice	Vision enacted as a guide for collective action	Shared vision functions as a mechanism for aligning meaning, priorities, and management actions
Collective Leadership	Moderate to high level of practice	Collegiality, trust, and professional accountability	Collective leadership operates as a dynamic and context-dependent process supporting organizational learning

Note. The authors.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study affirm that shared vision constitutes a central organizing mechanism through which SMCs construct collective understanding and strategic direction in the enactment of collective leadership. Rather than functioning merely as an aspirational statement, shared vision operates as a cognitive and interpretive framework that enables committee members to align priorities, coordinate actions, and make sense of complex managerial challenges. This supports organizational sense-making perspectives, which emphasize that leadership effectiveness is grounded in the shared interpretation of goals and meanings rather than in formal authority alone (Senge, 2006; Weick et al., 2005). Within the Malaysian primary school context, this finding corroborates recent empirical evidence highlighting the role of shared vision in strengthening strategic coherence and decision-making alignment at the school leadership level (Ismail et al., 2022; Rahman & Ahmad, 2024).

Positioned within the framework of PLCs, the study extends existing scholarship by demonstrating that shared vision at the management committee level functions as a catalyst for organizational learning. When vision is collectively negotiated and internalized, it provides a

stable foundation for reflective professional dialogue and collaborative inquiry among SMC members. This process enables leadership practices to move beyond administrative coordination towards shared learning and collective problem-solving. Such findings are consistent with international literature emphasizing that sustainable organizational learning depends on the alignment between shared purposes, professional values, and everyday leadership practices (Garvin et al., 2008; Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2018). In the Malaysian setting, these findings reinforce evidence that PLC practices at the leadership level contribute meaningfully to the development of organizational capacity and adaptive school management (Abdullah & Ahmad, 2022; Jamil & Razak, 2023).

Furthermore, the findings indicate that collective leadership enacted through PLC practices enhances decision-making quality by distributing influence and responsibility across SMC members. Collective deliberation allows diverse professional perspectives to be integrated into planning and problem-solving processes, thereby strengthening both the legitimacy and effectiveness of decisions. Importantly, this shared engagement fosters a sense of collective ownership and accountability for implementation outcomes. This supports conceptualizations of collective leadership as a form of social and distributed learning, whereby leadership capacity emerges from interactions among actors rather than from individual roles alone (Spillane, 2012; Leithwood et al., 2020).

Crucially, the study highlights that collective leadership does not arise automatically from formal governance arrangements or committee structures. Instead, it develops through sustained professional trust, collegial relationships, and ongoing reflective practices embedded within PLC routines. In this respect, the SMC operates as an active learning community in which leadership practices become sites of organizational inquiry. Decision-making processes thus enable not only action improvement but also critical examination of underlying assumptions, values, and strategies. This pattern reflects principles of double-loop learning, where organizations refine both practices and the cognitive frameworks that shape those practices (Argyris, 1999; Senge, 2006).

Nevertheless, the findings also reveal that the effectiveness of shared vision and collective leadership is contingent upon their consistent enactment as lived organizational practices. When PLCs are institutionalized only at a structural or symbolic level, their capacity to influence learning and leadership practices remains limited. In such cases, PLC activities risk becoming ritualistic, fulfilling procedural expectations without generating meaningful organizational change. This observation aligns with critiques in both international and local

literature that emphasize the importance of a strong culture of professional dialogue, reflective inquiry, and shared accountability to sustain PLC effectiveness over time (Stoll et al., 2006; Harris & Jones, 2018; Abdullah & Ahmad, 2022).

Overall, this discussion underscores the potential of PLC practices within School Management Committees to strengthen collective leadership and organizational learning at the school management level. By conceptualizing shared vision as the foundation for aligning meaning and action, and collective leadership as the mechanism through which organizational learning is enacted, this study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of how PLCs operate within primary school leadership contexts. These insights are particularly salient for the Malaysian education system, where increasing demands for accountability, adaptability, and sustained improvement necessitate leadership models grounded in collaboration, shared meaning, and continuous learning.

IMPLICATIONS, CONTRIBUTIONS, AND CONCLUSION

This study offers significant contributions to the educational leadership literature by positioning the SMC as an active site for the enactment of PLCs at the strategic organizational level. Whereas prior studies have predominantly focused on teacher-based PLCs and classroom pedagogy, the present study demonstrates that professional learning occurs substantively within school management teams who are directly involved in strategic decision-making, organizational direction-setting, and policy implementation. These findings align with international scholarship that conceptualizes school leadership as a collective learning process extending beyond classroom boundaries (Harris & Jones, 2023; Leithwood et al., 2020).

THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

From a theoretical standpoint, the study reinforces the conceptualization of PLCs as mechanisms for organizational learning rather than merely as models for pedagogical collaboration. By highlighting the interrelated roles of shared vision and collective leadership, the findings elucidate how organizational learning is constructed through sustained professional dialogue, distributed influence, and shared accountability within formal management structures. This evidence strengthens the literature on collective leadership by demonstrating that leadership and learning are mutually constitutive processes, particularly at the strategic management level of primary schools (Spillane, 2021; Harris & Jones, 2023).

Additionally, the study contributes to organizational learning theory by showing that learning processes are embedded not only in operational practices but also in strategic reflection and collective decision-making. This extends the application of learning organization theory to educational settings and underscores the role of strategic leadership in building sustained organizational capacity in schools (Garvin et al., 2008; Senge, 2006). Within the Malaysian context, these findings complement recent empirical research highlighting the importance of fostering collective learning among school leaders to enhance organizational effectiveness (Abdullah & Ahmad, 2022; Jamil & Razak, 2023).

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Practically, this study informs leadership development initiatives by emphasizing the need to institutionalize PLCs at the school management level. The findings indicate that such institutionalization enhances decision-making quality, fosters collective ownership, and supports the development of a learning-oriented organizational culture. This aligns with international evidence suggesting that collective leadership grounded in shared vision strengthens school effectiveness in complex, high-accountability environments (Leithwood et al., 2020; Harris, 2022).

Accordingly, leadership development strategies should move beyond individual capacity-building to prioritise strategic dialogue, collective reflection, and shared accountability among SMC members. Such approaches not only facilitate more meaningful enactments of collective leadership but also address the evolving needs of the Malaysian education system, which increasingly demands adaptive, collaborative, and learning-oriented school leaders (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2023; Institut Aminuddin Baki, 2022). Consequently, PLCs can be reconceptualized as strategic leadership development mechanisms rather than solely pedagogical support initiatives.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In conclusion, the study confirms that the effectiveness of PLCs extends beyond classroom implementation and is strongly influenced by the extent to which PLC principles are enacted within school management structures. By recognizing the SMC as an active professional learning community, this research provides both conceptual and empirical

foundations for strengthening collective leadership and organizational learning in primary schools.

Finally, the study offers new directions for research and practice by emphasizing the importance of collective learning at the strategic management level. In an increasingly complex and uncertain educational landscape, these findings support the cultivation of school leadership that is collaborative, reflective, and oriented towards the sustainable development of organizational capacity. This contributes to national and global educational priorities for effective, accountable, and adaptive school leadership in the 21st century.

REFERENCES

- Abdullah, Z., & Ahmad, R. H. (2017). Kepimpinan sekolah dan budaya pembelajaran. *Jurnal Pendidikan Malaysia*, 42(1), 1–12.
- Abdullah, Z., & Ahmad, R. H. (2022). Kepimpinan kolektif dan pembelajaran organisasi sekolah. *Jurnal Pendidikan Malaysia*, 47(2), 15–28.
- Argyris, C. (1999). *On organizational learning* (2nd ed.). Blackwell.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2021). *Thematic analysis: A practical guide*. SAGE.
- Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2018). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research* (3rd ed.). SAGE.
- DuFour, R., & Eaker, R. (1998). *Professional learning communities at work: Best practices for enhancing student achievement*. Solution Tree.
- Fetters, M. D., Curry, L. A., & Creswell, J. W. (2013). Achieving integration in mixed methods designs: Principles and practices. *Health Services Research*, 48(6), 2134–2156. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6773.12117>
- Garvin, D. A., Edmondson, A. C., & Gino, F. (2008). Is yours a learning organization? *Harvard Business Review*, 86(3), 109–116.
- Hallinger, P., & Heck, R. H. (2010). Collaborative leadership and school improvement: Understanding the impact on school capacity and student learning. *School Leadership & Management*, 30(2), 95–110. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13632431003663214>
- Hargreaves, A., & Fullan, M. (2012). *Professional capital: Transforming teaching in every school*. Teachers College Press.
- Hargreaves, A., & O'Connor, M. T. (2018). *Collaborative professionalism: When teaching together means learning for all*. Corwin.
- Harris, A. (2020). COVID-19: School leadership in crisis? *Journal of Professional Capital and Community*, 5(3–4), 321–326.
- Harris, A. (2022). Leading system improvement through collective capacity. *School Leadership & Management*, 42(4), 351–366.
- Harris, A., & Jones, M. (2018). Leading schools as learning organizations. *School Leadership & Management*, 38(4), 351–354.
- Harris, A., & Jones, M. (2023). Exploring professional learning communities as organizational learning systems. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 51(2), 167–182.
- Institut Aminuddin Baki. (2022). *Amalan kepimpinan berkesan sekolah Malaysia*.
- Jamil, H., & Razak, N. A. (2023). Professional learning communities and leadership capacity in Malaysian schools. *Asian Journal of University Education*, 19(1), 33–46.

- Johnson, R. B., Onwuegbuzie, A. J., & Turner, L. A. (2007). Toward a definition of mixed methods research. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 1(2), 112–133.
- Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia. (2013). *Pelan pembangunan pendidikan Malaysia 2013–2025*.
- Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia. (2020a). *Laporan pelaksanaan TS25*.
- Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia. (2020b). *Laporan tahunan 2020 pelan pembangunan pendidikan Malaysia (PPPM) 2013–2025*. <https://www.moe.gov.my/storage/files/shares/Dasar/PPPM/PPPM%20Laporan%20Tahunan%202020.pdf>
- Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia. (2023). *Laporan kemajuan pelan pembangunan pendidikan Malaysia*.
- Leithwood, K., Harris, A., & Hopkins, D. (2020). Seven strong claims about successful school leadership revisited. *School Leadership & Management*, 40(1), 5–22. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13632434.2019.1596077>
- Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2016). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation* (4th ed.). Jossey-Bass.
- Ministry of Education Malaysia. (2013). *Malaysia education blueprint 2013–2025 (Preschool to post-secondary education): Executive summary*. <https://www.pmo.gov.my/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Malaysia-Education-Blueprint-2013-2025.pdf>
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2020). *Education responses to COVID-19: Embracing digital learning and online collaboration*. OECD Publishing.
- Robinson, V. M. J., Lloyd, C. A., & Rowe, K. J. (2008). The impact of leadership on student outcomes. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 44(5), 635–674.
- Senge, P. M. (2006). *The fifth discipline: The art and practice of the learning organization* (Rev. ed.). Doubleday.
- Spillane, J. P. (2012). *Distributed leadership*. Jossey-Bass.
- Spillane, J. P. (2021). *Distributed leadership in practice*. Teachers College Press.
- Stoll, L., Bolam, R., McMahon, A., Wallace, M., & Thomas, S. (2006). Professional learning communities: A review of the literature. *Journal of Educational Change*, 7(4), 221–258. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10833-006-0001-8>
- Sujariah Jano, Aziah Ismail, & Rorlinda Yusof. (2021). Amalan komuniti pembelajaran profesional dan kepimpinan sekolah. *Malaysian Journal of Learning and Instruction*, 18(2), 45–67.
- Tashakkori, A., & Teddlie, C. (2010). *SAGE handbook of mixed methods in social & behavioral research* (2nd ed.). SAGE.

- Vescio, V., Ross, D., & Adams, A. (2008). A review of research on the impact of professional learning communities on teaching practice and student learning. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 24(1), 80–91.
- Weick, K. E., Sutcliffe, K. M., & Obstfeld, D. (2005). Organizing and the process of sensemaking. *Organization Science*, 16(4), 409–421.

CRedit Author Statement

- **Acknowledgments:** The authors would like to express their sincere appreciation to the Ministry of Education Malaysia (MOE), Putrajaya – Malaysia, and all participating schools for their cooperation and support throughout the research process. Special thanks are extended to the colleagues, mentors, and experts from the Centre for Fundamental and Continuing Education (PPAL), Universiti Malaysia Terengganu (UMT), Kuala Nerus – Terengganu, Malaysia, whose collaborative guidance, constructive feedback, and academic support significantly contributed to the refinement and completion of this study. This research was conducted as part of the first author's doctoral (PhD) studies. The encouragement, expertise, and mentorship provided by all parties involved were invaluable in successfully completing this work.
 - **Funding:** This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors. All costs related to the study were self-funded by the authors.
 - **Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper. The research was conducted independently without any financial or personal relationships that could inappropriately influence the work.
 - **Ethical Approval:** This study was conducted in accordance with established ethical standards in educational research. All participants were informed about the purpose of the study, and their consent was obtained prior to data collection. Confidentiality and anonymity of participants were strictly maintained. Where applicable, the study adhered to institutional ethical guidelines.
 - **Data and Materials Availability:** The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request. Due to privacy and ethical considerations, the data are not publicly accessible.
 - **Author Contributions:** All authors contributed substantially to the conception and development of this study. Mamie Suhana binti Mohd Noor led the conceptualization of the study, research design, and initial manuscript drafting. Hailan Salamun supervised the overall research direction, contributed to the refinement of the research framework, and provided critical revisions to the manuscript. Azizan bin Harun was responsible for data collection and preliminary data analysis, while Asyraf Ab Rahman contributed to data interpretation and validation of findings. Firdaus Khairi Abdul Kadir played a key role in the literature review and theoretical integration of the study. Hamdan bin Aziz contributed to methodological structuring and final manuscript editing. All authors were actively involved in reviewing, revising, and approving the final version of the manuscript prior to submission.
-

Processing and editing: Editora Ibero-Americana de Educação
Review, formatting, standardization, and Translation

