

Organizational Dynamics in Educational Institutions: A PRISMA-Based Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract	Article Info
<p>This study aimed to analyze organizational dynamics in educational institutions using organizational theory and concepts, employing a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach based on the PRISMA framework. The review aimed to examine the evolution of organizational theories, their application in educational contexts, and their implications for the effectiveness of educational management. Literature searches were conducted using reputable databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and Garuda, encompassing publications from 2010 to 2024. The PRISMA stages consisted of identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and inclusion of relevant articles. From the total number of identified studies, selected articles were analyzed thematically to identify patterns, trends, and research gaps. The findings suggest that classical, contemporary, and modern organizational theories complement one another in explaining the dynamics of educational organizations. Systems theory, contingency theory, and learning organization theory emerged as dominant approaches in enhancing effectiveness, adaptability, and innovation in educational institutions. These findings confirm that a comprehensive understanding of organizational theory and concepts is a key factor in managing educational institutions that are responsive to social and technological change.</p>	<p>Article History <i>Received :</i> <i>October 04, 2025</i> <i>Revised :</i> <i>November 23, 2025</i> <i>Accepted :</i> <i>December 29, 2025</i></p> <p>Keywords: <i>Educational Management, Systematic Literature Review, Educational Organizations</i></p>

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INTRODUCTION

Educational institutions operate as complex, dynamic, and adaptive social systems that are continuously influenced by internal and external factors (Kools et al., 2020; Vlachopoulos, 2021). In the contemporary era, rapid developments in technology, globalization, and socio-cultural transformation have significantly reshaped how educational organizations are managed and evaluated. As a result, educational institutions are required not only to deliver academic outcomes but also to demonstrate organizational effectiveness, adaptability, and sustainability (Basten & Haamann, 2018). These demands place organizational theory at the center of educational management discourse, as it provides systematic frameworks for understanding how institutions function and evolve (Van de Ven, 2013).

Organizational theory provides conceptual and analytical tools for examining the structures, processes, power relations, and human behavior within organizations (Retna & Ng, 2016). In the context of education, organizational theory helps explain how schools, universities, and other educational

institutions coordinate resources, manage human capital, and achieve institutional goals. Educational organizations differ from business organizations due to their social mission, public accountability, and moral responsibilities, making the application of organizational theory both complex and essential (Cross, 2014).

Historically, organizational theory has evolved through several paradigmatic phases, including classical, human relations, contingency, and modern perspectives (Van de Ven, 2013). Classical theories emphasized efficiency, hierarchy, and formal rules, while later approaches highlighted human behavior, motivation, and social interaction. Contemporary and modern organizational theories further extend these perspectives by emphasizing systems thinking, learning organizations, networks, and adaptability (Basten & Haamann, 2018).

In educational settings, the relevance of organizational theory becomes increasingly evident as institutions face multifaceted challenges such as policy reforms, accountability pressures, digital transformation, and diverse stakeholder expectations (Kools et al., 2020; Retna & Ng, 2016). Schools and universities are expected to respond effectively to changes in curriculum standards, assessment systems, and governance models. Organizational theory provides a lens through which these challenges can be analyzed systematically, enabling educational institutions to align their structures and practices with environmental demands (Vlachopoulos, 2021).

Moreover, educational institutions function as open systems that interact continuously with their surrounding environments (Kools et al., 2020). Factors such as government regulations, community expectations, technological advancements, and global educational trends shape organizational behavior and performance. Systems theory and contingency theory are particularly relevant in this regard, as they emphasize the importance of contextual alignment and environmental responsiveness (Van de Ven, 2013).

Another critical dimension of organizational dynamics in education is organizational culture. Values, beliefs, norms, and shared meanings influence how members of educational institutions perceive their roles and responsibilities (Beycioglu & Kondakci, 2021). A positive organizational culture can foster collaboration, innovation, and professional commitment, whereas a dysfunctional culture may hinder change and performance. Organizational theory contributes to the understanding of how culture is formed, maintained, and transformed within educational settings (Retna & Ng, 2016).

In recent decades, the concept of the learning organization has gained prominence in educational research and practice. Academic institutions are increasingly viewed as organizations that must continually learn to improve teaching quality, professional competence, and student outcomes (Basten & Haamann, 2018; Kools et al., 2020). Learning organization theory emphasizes reflection, shared vision, teamwork, and continuous improvement, all of which are highly relevant to schools and universities operating in uncertain and rapidly changing environments.

This study offers a distinctive contribution to the field of educational management by providing an integrative and theory-driven synthesis of organizational dynamics in academic institutions through a PRISMA-based Systematic Literature Review. Unlike previous reviews that predominantly focus on single organizational perspectives, this study systematically integrates classical organizational theory, contingency and systems theory, and learning organization theory into a unified analytical framework, enabling a more comprehensive understanding of how structural, contextual, and learning-oriented dimensions interact to shape organizational effectiveness. Furthermore, this review explicitly maps organizational theories to key managerial functions and challenges in educational institutions—such as governance, leadership practices, organizational culture, adaptability, and continuous improvement—thereby moving beyond descriptive summarization toward a structured and applied theoretical synthesis. By identifying underexplored research gaps, including the limited integration of multiple organizational theories within single studies and the scarcity of longitudinal and non-Western context research, this study advances the theoretical agenda of organizational studies in education and provides clear directions for future research.

Despite the extensive body of literature on organizational theory and educational management, existing studies are often fragmented, context-specific, or focused on particular theoretical perspectives. There is a need for a comprehensive and systematic synthesis of research that integrates diverse organizational theories and examines their relevance to educational institutions. Such synthesis is essential to identify dominant trends, theoretical gaps, and emerging directions in the field.

Systematic Literature Review (SLR) has emerged as a rigorous methodological approach for synthesizing existing research in a transparent and replicable manner (Basten & Haamann, 2018). When combined with the PRISMA framework, SLR enables researchers to systematically identify, screen, and

analyze relevant studies while minimizing bias. This approach is particularly suitable for examining complex and multidisciplinary topics such as organizational dynamics in education.

Therefore, this study aims to systematically review and analyze the literature on organizational theory and its application in educational institutions using a PRISMA-based Systematic Literature Review. By synthesizing findings from reputable academic sources, this study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of organizational dynamics in education and to offer theoretical and practical insights for educational leaders, policymakers, and researchers.

This study conducted a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) following the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) framework to ensure methodological rigor, transparency, and reproducibility. To guide the review process and maintain analytical focus, the study was structured around three research questions (RQs): RQ1: What organizational theories are most frequently applied in research on educational institutions? RQ2: How are organizational theories utilized to explain management practices, leadership, and organizational culture in academic contexts? RQ3: What research gaps and future directions emerge from the existing literature on organizational dynamics in education? These research questions informed the search strategy, inclusion criteria, and analytical procedures throughout the review. A comprehensive search was performed across multiple databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and Garuda, covering peer-reviewed publications from 2010 to 2024, with keyword combinations refined using Boolean operators. Following the PRISMA stages—identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion—duplicates were removed, titles and abstracts were screened, and full texts were assessed using predefined inclusion criteria. Methodological quality was appraised using the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT). Selected studies were then synthesized through a six-phase thematic analysis to identify dominant themes, theoretical patterns, and research gaps, enabling an integrative understanding of organizational dynamics in educational contexts.

METHOD

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) using the PRISMA 2020 (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) framework to ensure transparency, methodological rigor, and reproducibility. The PRISMA approach was selected because it provides a structured procedure for identifying, screening, assessing eligibility, and including relevant studies, thereby minimizing selection bias and enhancing the reliability of the review process (Page et al., 2021). The review followed four sequential stages—identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion—which were documented using a PRISMA flow diagram and numerical summary.

Search Strategy and Data Sources

A comprehensive literature search was conducted across four major databases: Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and Garuda (Indonesian national database) to ensure broad coverage of both international and national publications. Keyword combinations such as *organizational theory*, *educational organization*, *educational management*, *school organization*, and *higher education organization* were applied using Boolean operators. The search was limited to peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2010 and 2024, written in English or Indonesian, to capture contemporary theoretical developments and empirical evidence in educational organizational studies.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

To ensure relevance and consistency, predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied during the screening and eligibility stages. Studies were included if they were peer-reviewed journal articles, explicitly discussed organizational theory or organizational concepts, focused on educational institutions, and provided clear methodological descriptions. Studies were excluded if they consisted of conference proceedings, books, theses, or reports; focused on non-educational organizations; lacked theoretical grounding; or did not present sufficient methodological information. The inclusion–exclusion process is summarized in Table 1, enhancing transparency and replicability in line with PRISMA standards.

Table 1. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Document type	Peer-reviewed journal articles	Proceedings, books, theses, reports
Research focus	Organizational theory/concepts	No theoretical grounding

Context	Educational institutions	Non-educational organizations
Research design	Qualitative, quantitative, mixed-methods	Editorials, opinion papers
Language	English, Indonesian	Other languages
Publication year	2010–2024	Before 2010
Methodological clarity	Clear methods and analysis	Unclear methodology

Screening, Eligibility, and Quality Appraisal

All retrieved records were imported into reference management software to remove duplicate entries. Titles and abstracts were screened to assess their relevance to the research objectives, followed by a full-text eligibility assessment based on predefined criteria. To strengthen methodological rigor, the quality of the included studies was appraised using the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT), which allows consistent evaluation across qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods research designs. Studies that did not meet minimum quality standards were excluded at this stage.

The numerical results of the PRISMA selection process are presented in Table 2, ensuring consistency across the abstract, method, and results sections.

Table 2. PRISMA Flow Summary

PRISMA Stage	Number of Records
Records identified through database searching	330
Records after duplicates removed	286
Records screened (title and abstract)	286
Records excluded	198
Full-text articles assessed for eligibility	88
Full-text articles excluded	52
Studies included in the final review	36

Data Extraction and Synthesis

Data extraction was conducted using a standardized extraction form that captured the author(s), year of publication, country or research context, organizational theory applied, research design, and key findings. The characteristics of the included studies are summarized in Table 3. The selected studies were synthesized using thematic analysis, following the six-phase procedure proposed by Braun & Clarke (2006), enabling the identification of dominant themes, theoretical patterns, and research gaps related to organizational dynamics in educational institutions.

Table 3. Characteristics of Included Studies (Excerpt)

Author(s) Year	Country / Context	Organizational Theory	Research Method	Key Findings
(Kools et al., 2020)	Europe	Learning Organization Theory	Quantitative	Learning organization practices enhance adaptability
(Beycioglu & Kondakci, 2021)	Turkey	Organizational Culture	Mixed-methods	Positive culture supports collaboration and innovation
(Ngo, 2024)	Indonesia	Organizational Culture	Qualitative	Leadership shapes school culture during a crisis
(Reynolds, 2024)	Global	Systems Thinking	Conceptual	Systems thinking supports sustainable change
(Vlachopoulos, 2021)	Global	Contingency Theory	Review	Organizational effectiveness depends on contextual alignment
(Stoll & Kools, 2017)	Europe	Learning Organization	Review	Schools as learning organizations improve reform capacity

Author(s) Year	Country / Context	Organizational Theory	Research Method	Key Findings
(Leithwood et al., 2020)	Global	Transformational Leadership	Review	Leadership influences strongly school improvement
(Bush & Heystek, 2021)	Global	Educational Management Theory	Conceptual	Theory-informed leadership improves governance
(Retna & Ng, 2016)	Singapore	Organizational Change	Qualitative	Context-sensitive reform enhances implementation
(Harris, 2020)	UK	Crisis Leadership	Conceptual	Adaptive leadership critical during disruption
(Fullan, 2021)	Global	Change Theory	Conceptual	System-wide change requires coherence and learning
(Schein & Schein, 2021)	Global	Organizational Culture	Conceptual	Culture shapes organizational behavior and performance
(Deal & Peterson, 2020)	USA	School Culture Theory	Review	Strong culture supports sustainability
(Bush & Ng, 2019)	Asia	Distributed Leadership	Mixed-methods	Shared leadership improves engagement
(Hong et al., 2018)	Global	Organizational Evaluation	Methodological	Mixed methods strengthen organizational analysis
(van de Werfhorst et al., 2022)	Global	Organizational Innovation	Conceptual	Innovation is a dynamic organizational process
(Elsawah et al., 2022)	Global	Systems Theory	Review	Systems thinking supports complex decision-making
(Spivack, 2021)	Global	Systems Thinking	Conceptual	Education systems require holistic perspectives
(Cross, 2014)	USA	Institutional Theory	Conceptual	Education shaped by political structures
(Stensaker et al., 2014)	Europe	Organizational Identity	Qualitative	Identity influences institutional change
(Chapman et al., 2010)	Global	School Effectiveness Theory	Review	Organizational capacity drives effectiveness
(Hallinger, 2011)	Global	Instructional Leadership	Review	Leadership impacts learning outcomes
(Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012)	Global	Professional Capital	Conceptual	Human and social capital enhance performance
(Mintzberg, 2015)	Global	Organizational Structure	Conceptual	Structure affects coordination and control
(Bryk et al., 2015)	USA	Improvement Science	Mixed-methods	Networked organizations improve outcomes
(Robinson, 2011)	Global	Leadership Theory	Meta-analysis	Leadership indirectly affects achievement
(Mulford, 2010)	Australia	Organizational Learning	Review	Learning culture supports school development
(Bush & Glover, 2016, 2022)	Global	Leadership Models	Review	Context determines leadership effectiveness
McLaughlin	USA	Organizational Change	Qualitative	Change depends on local capacity
(Stoll & Kools,	Europe	Learning	Review	Collaboration enhances

Author(s) Year	Country / Context	Organizational Theory	Research Method	Key Findings
2017)		Organization		school learning
(Ganon-Shilon & Schechter, 2017)	Israel	Organizational Trust	Qualitative	Trust enables change processes
(Day et al., 2017)	UK	Leadership Sustainability	Longitudinal	Leadership stability supports improvement
Nguyen et al.	Vietnam	Contingency Theory	Quantitative	Contextual fit predicts effectiveness
(Bush & Ng, 2019)	Asia	Educational Governance	Review	Governance reform needs cultural alignment
(Harris & Jones, 2022)	Global	Post-pandemic Leadership	Conceptual	Flexibility is key after COVID-19
(Reynolds & Kolsaker, 2023)	Global	Systems Leadership	Review	Systems leadership enables resilience

Thematic Mapping

To strengthen analytical depth, the findings were further synthesized through thematic mapping that links organizational theories to specific managerial dimensions in educational institutions. This mapping is presented in **Table 4**, demonstrating how different theoretical perspectives complement one another in explaining organizational dynamics.

Table 4. Thematic Mapping of Organizational Theories

Theme	Organizational Theory	Managerial Focus
Structural efficiency	Classical organizational theory	Governance and administrative control
Environmental adaptability	Contingency and systems theory	Change management and policy response
Organizational culture	Cultural theory	Values, norms, and collaboration
Leadership practices	Transformational leadership	Vision and participation
Continuous improvement	Learning organization theory	Professional development and innovation

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study employed a PRISMA-based Systematic Literature Review to examine organizational dynamics in educational institutions through the lens of organizational theory. The results of the literature selection process demonstrate a rigorous and transparent procedure, ensuring that only high-quality and theoretically grounded studies were included for analysis. A total of 330 records were identified through database searching across Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and Garuda. After removing duplicate records, 286 articles remained and were screened based on their titles and abstracts. At this stage, 198 records were excluded due to irrelevance to organizational theory in educational contexts or lack of empirical and theoretical rigor.

Subsequently, 88 full-text articles were assessed for eligibility. From these, 52 studies were excluded because they did not meet the predefined inclusion criteria, particularly in terms of methodological clarity, explicit use of organizational theory, or focus on non-educational settings. Ultimately, 36 peer-reviewed journal articles were included in the final review. This systematic filtering process aligns with PRISMA standards, enhancing the reliability and credibility of the synthesized findings (Moher et al., 2009; Page et al., 2021).

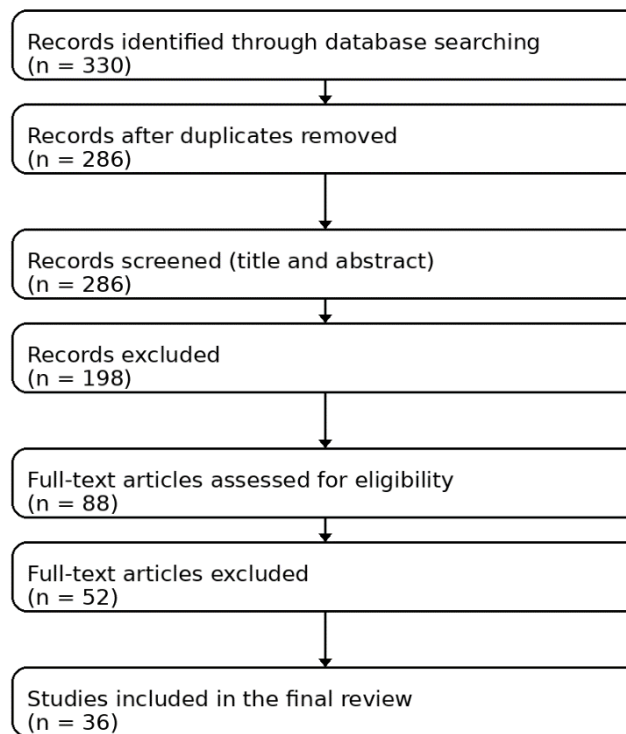


Figure 1. PRISMA Flow Diagram

A substantial proportion of studies were excluded during the screening and eligibility stages, indicating that many publications addressed organizational issues without sufficient theoretical grounding. Consequently, the final corpus of 36 studies represents a focused and analytically robust body of literature suitable for thematic synthesis of organizational dynamics in educational institutions.

Methodological Trends in the Reviewed Studies

The 36 included studies employed diverse methodological approaches, reflecting the multifaceted nature of organizational research in education. Qualitative studies were predominantly used to explore leadership practices, organizational culture, and institutional change processes through interviews, focus groups, and document analysis (Beycioglu & Kondakci, 2021; Ngo, 2024). Quantitative studies have focused on organizational effectiveness, adaptability, and performance indicators, utilizing surveys and statistical modeling techniques (Kools et al., 2020; Leithwood et al., 2019). Mixed-methods approaches integrated both qualitative and quantitative data to capture the complexity of educational organizations more comprehensively (Bush & Ng, 2019; Hong et al., 2018).

This methodological diversity strengthens the explanatory power of the review and supports the argument that organizational dynamics in education cannot be fully understood through a single research paradigm. Instead, a pluralistic methodological approach is necessary to capture both structural and human dimensions of educational organizations.

Dominant Organizational Theories in Educational Institutions

The thematic analysis revealed that research on educational organizations is primarily structured around three dominant theoretical perspectives: classical organizational theory, contingency and systems theory, and learning organization theory. Classical organizational theory remains influential in studies examining governance structures, administrative systems, and accountability mechanisms in schools and higher education institutions (Bush, 2020; Van de Ven, 2013). These studies emphasize hierarchy, formal rules, and efficiency as essential components for maintaining organizational stability, particularly in highly regulated educational systems.

However, contemporary educational research increasingly adopts contingency theory and systems theory to explain organizational effectiveness. These perspectives conceptualize educational institutions as open systems that interact dynamically with their external environments, including policy frameworks, technological developments, and socio-cultural expectations (Reynolds, 2024; Vlachopoulos, 2021). Empirical evidence consistently indicates that organizational effectiveness depends on contextual

alignment between internal structures and environmental demands, supporting earlier findings by (Kools et al., 2020) and (Elsawah et al., 2022) regarding adaptability in educational organizations.

Organizational Culture and Leadership Dynamics

Organizational culture emerged as a central theme influencing the effectiveness of educational institutions. The reviewed studies consistently report that shared values, norms, and beliefs shape teacher collaboration, professional commitment, and organizational resilience (Schein & Schein, 2021; Beycioglu & Kondakci, 2021). A positive organizational culture supports innovation, professional learning, and continuous improvement, whereas fragmented or hierarchical cultures often hinder reform initiatives (Deal & Peterson, 2020).

Leadership plays a pivotal role in shaping and sustaining organizational culture. Transformational and distributed leadership models are frequently associated with increased trust, shared vision, and participatory decision-making (Leithwood et al., 2020; Retna & Ng, 2016). Recent studies also highlight the importance of leadership responsiveness during periods of crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, in maintaining organizational stability and adaptability (Harris, 2020; Ngo, 2024). These findings reinforce the theoretical argument that leadership is a critical mechanism linking organizational structure, culture, and performance.

Learning Organization and Continuous Improvement

The concept of the learning organization represents one of the most prominent and evolving themes in educational management research. Learning organization theory emphasizes continuous professional development, reflective practice, collaboration, and systematic knowledge sharing as essential organizational processes (Kools et al., 2020; Basten & Haamann, 2018). The reviewed studies indicate that educational institutions functioning as learning organizations demonstrate greater capacity to implement curriculum reforms, integrate digital technologies, and improve instructional quality (Fullan, 2021).

Nevertheless, the findings also reveal that organizational learning does not occur automatically. Supportive leadership, collaborative culture, and enabling organizational structures are necessary conditions for sustained learning and innovation (Senge et al., 2019; Bush & Ng, 2019). These results underscore the importance of viewing learning organization theory as a long-term strategic framework rather than a short-term managerial intervention.

Integrative Implications for Educational Management

The synthesis of findings confirms that no single organizational theory sufficiently explains the complexity of educational institutions. Instead, the literature emphasizes the complementary nature of multiple theoretical perspectives. Classical organizational theory provides structural clarity and administrative order, contingency and systems theories offer contextual adaptability, and learning organization theory supports sustainability and innovation (Van de Ven, 2013; Vlachopoulos, 2021).

For educational leaders and policymakers, these findings highlight the importance of adopting an integrative, theory-informed approach to academic management. Aligning organizational structures, leadership practices, and cultural values enables institutions to strike a balance between stability and change, thereby enhancing their overall effectiveness in dynamic educational environments (Fullan, 2021; Reynolds, 2024).

Research Gaps and Future Directions

Despite the growing body of literature, several research gaps were identified. Empirical studies in non-Western and developing country contexts remain limited, indicating a need for more culturally sensitive research (Ngo, 2024). Longitudinal studies examining the long-term impact of organizational change and learning organization practices are scarce (Stoll & Kools, 2017). Additionally, few studies explicitly integrate multiple organizational theories within a single analytical framework.

Future research should therefore employ longitudinal and mixed-methods designs, expand investigations across diverse educational contexts, and develop integrative theoretical models that bridge structural, cultural, and learning-oriented perspectives. Addressing these gaps will strengthen both theoretical advancement and practical application of organizational theory in education.

CONCLUSIONS

This study applied a PRISMA-based Systematic Literature Review to examine the role of organizational theory in educational institutions. The findings suggest that organizational theory offers a crucial framework for understanding educational institutions as complex and dynamic systems. Classical organizational theories remain relevant in supporting structural clarity and administrative efficiency. In contrast, contemporary perspectives such as systems and contingency theories offer greater explanatory power in addressing contextual demands, environmental changes, and organizational adaptability within educational settings.

Moreover, the review highlights the growing importance of learning organization theory in enhancing institutional effectiveness and sustainability. Educational institutions that promote continuous learning, collaborative cultures, and supportive leadership are better equipped to manage change and foster innovation. This study highlights the importance of integrating multiple organizational theories to enhance educational management practices, and it suggests that future research should focus on longitudinal and context-sensitive investigations further to advance the understanding of organizational dynamics in education.

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