

INTEGRATING MODERN EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT AND CHRISTIAN VALUES IN THE MANAGEMENT OF SMP SWASTA FREE METHODIST 2 MEDAN

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ABSTRACT

Private faith-based schools in Indonesia operate under dual accountability, negotiating national accreditation and regulatory standards alongside a denominational identity that defines their formative purpose. Existing scholarship treats educational management and Christian schooling as separate streams, leaving the integration of values and management practice undertheorised, particularly in Christian denominational contexts that remain underexamined relative to Islamic educational settings. This study examines how modern educational management and Christian values are integrated in the management of SMP Swasta Free Methodist 2 Medan. A qualitative case study design was employed, drawing on interviews, observation, and documentary analysis to examine how planning, organising, leading, and controlling are enacted and how Christian values inform those functions. The findings indicate that Christian values operate as an interpretive foundation shaping managerial judgement, while modern management supplies the operational discipline through which those values become visible in decisions, routines, and accountability structures. Integration is contingent rather than automatic, mediated by leadership interpretation and denominational tradition. The study proposes a contextual integrative model that neither subordinates theological commitment to managerial efficiency nor rejects modern management as secular contamination. This model offers a transferable analytical instrument for comparable faith-based schools and contributes a practice-based framework to the underexamined Christian denominational case in Indonesian educational management scholarship.

Keywords: educational management; Christian values; faith-based schools; values integration; school leadership

INTRODUCTION

Private faith-based schools in Indonesia inhabit a dual accountability structure that is not easily reconciled. They must satisfy national education regulations, accreditation instruments, curriculum standards, teacher certification requirements, and public reporting expectations, while simultaneously carrying a founding identity that defines their purpose in theological and formational terms. The practical difficulty is not the coexistence of these demands but the question of how school leaders translate them into daily management decisions. When managerial language

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dominates, a school risks becoming indistinguishable from a secular institution with religious symbols attached. When theological language dominates without managerial discipline, the school risks inefficiency, weak documentation, and vulnerability in accreditation reviews. SMP Swasta Free Methodist 2 Medan represents a case in which this tension is lived rather than abstract, as a private junior secondary school under a Methodist denominational tradition that must manage staffing, finance, curriculum delivery, student discipline, and parent relations while maintaining an explicit Christian identity.

The urgency of this problem has three dimensions. First, Indonesian private schools face increasing regulatory and market pressure, where accreditation outcomes, teacher qualification standards, and parental expectations of measurable quality shape institutional survival (Siregar, 2022; Waskito, 2023; Erni, 2023). Second, faith-based schools confront an identity question that mission statements alone do not resolve; denominational education bodies increasingly ask whether their schools are theologically distinctive or merely formally affiliated (Amri, 2026; Hutabarat, 2025). Third, the scholarly literature on educational management has largely been developed in secular or implicitly secular contexts, and its transfer to faith-based settings remains undertheorised (Bush, 2020; Hoy & Miskel, 2013). Without grounded studies of how values and management interact in practice, both school leaders and denominational boards are left with normative exhortation rather than usable guidance.

Existing scholarship offers three relevant but incomplete streams. The first addresses educational management as a set of technical functions—planning, organising, leading, and controlling—with attention to efficiency, quality assurance, and school-based management (Bush, 2020; Robbins & Coulter, 2018). This literature is robust but largely silent on how religious values operate as management resources rather than as constraints. The second stream addresses Christian education and faith-based schooling, often focusing on curriculum, theology of education, or institutional identity (Sergiovanni et al., 2009; Sokip, 2024). This literature is rich in normative argument but frequently stops short of examining management practice in operational detail. The third stream addresses values-based leadership and ethical organisational culture, drawing on broader management theory (Imama Zuchroh, 2025; Taufan, 2026). It provides useful concepts but rarely engages the specific institutional conditions of Indonesian private schooling, including denominational governance, regulatory accreditation, and local community expectations.

The gap is therefore not simply the absence of studies on Christian schools or on educational management. It is the absence of an empirically grounded account of how the two are integrated at the level of management practice, and the absence of a contextual model that explains that integration. Much existing work either assumes compatibility or assumes conflict. Neither assumption is adequate without evidence from practice. Studies of Indonesian private schools have examined leadership style and teacher performance (Siregar, 2022; Waskito, 2023), work environment and motivation (Erni, 2023; Utami, 2024), and religious character formation (Azlina, E-ISSN:

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2026; Fatiha Setya Ningtyas, 2025), but they have not theorised how Christian values function as an interpretive foundation for management functions in a denominational school. Similarly, international work on integrating religious values into school management (Ilwan, 2025; Luthfiatul Udhma, 2025; Maun, 2025; Masrukhan, 2026; Ridlo, 2026; Wardoyo, 2025) has largely addressed Islamic educational contexts, leaving the Christian denominational case underexamined. This study addresses that gap through qualitative case analysis of a Methodist junior secondary school in North Sumatra.

The novelty of this study lies in proposing an integrative contextual model rather than merely juxtaposing two literatures. The model treats Christian values as an interpretive foundation that informs the exercise of management functions, while modern management provides the operational discipline through which those values become visible in decisions, routines, and accountability structures. This is not a synthesis of theories at the level of abstraction. It is a practice-based framework derived from a specific school context, and it identifies the mechanisms through which values shape management and through which management sustains values. The framework is offered as a transferable analytical instrument for comparable faith-based schools, subject to contextual adaptation. In this sense, the study contributes a contextually grounded model for faith-based school management that neither subordinates theological commitments to managerial efficiency nor rejects modern management as secular contamination.

The objective of this study is to examine and conceptualise the integration of modern educational management and Christian values in the management of SMP Swasta Free Methodist 2 Medan. Specifically, the study aims to describe how management functions are enacted in the school, to identify how Christian values inform those functions, and to construct a contextual framework that accounts for their integration.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study is anchored in three theoretical resources. The first is the classical functional account of management, which identifies planning, organising, leading, and controlling as core activities (Robbins & Coulter, 2018). In educational settings, this account has been adapted into school-based management, quality assurance, and instructional leadership frameworks (Bush, 2020). Its strength is operational clarity; its limitation is a tendency to treat values as external inputs rather than as constitutive of managerial judgement. The second resource is values-based and ethical leadership theory, which holds that organisational culture and decision-making are shaped by the values leaders espouse and enact (Imama Zuchroh, 2025; Sokip, 2024). This literature provides concepts such as value congruence, moral leadership, and ethical climate, helping explain why the same management technique can produce different outcomes in different institutional settings. The third resource is the literature on faith-based schooling and Christian education, which understands the school as a formative community with a theological mandate (Sergiovanni et al., 2009). This

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literature emphasises identity, vocation, community, and character formation, providing the normative vocabulary through which the school's purpose is articulated.

Each of these resources carries limitations that must be acknowledged. Functional management theory was developed largely in industrial and bureaucratic contexts and assumes a degree of value neutrality that is questionable in faith-based institutions (Bush, 2020). Its categories can describe what is done without explaining why certain actions are considered appropriate. Values-based leadership theory, while attentive to ethics, often treats values as individual attributes rather than as institutionally embedded and historically transmitted commitments (Taufan, 2026). It can therefore underplay the role of denominational tradition, governance structures, and community expectations. Faith-based schooling literature, in turn, can be strong on normative vision but weak on the operational realities of staffing, budgeting, and compliance (Sokip, 2024). It sometimes assumes that theological commitment automatically produces coherent practice, which empirical observation does not always confirm.

A significant academic debate concerns whether modern management is compatible with religious institutional identity or whether it inevitably erodes it. One position holds that managerial rationalisation introduces a secular logic that displaces theological priorities, producing what some scholars describe as mission drift (Ilwan, 2025). Another position holds that management is a neutral set of tools that can be placed in service of any institutional purpose, including religious formation (Luthfiatul Udhma, 2025). A third position, more nuanced, holds that the relationship is contingent: management practices can either reinforce or undermine religious identity depending on how they are interpreted and enacted by leaders and staff (Maun, 2025; Masrukhan, 2026). A related debate concerns the source of institutional distinctiveness. Some scholars locate it primarily in curriculum content, particularly religious education classes and devotional activities (Fatiha Setya Ningtyas, 2025; Azlina, 2026). Others locate it in the total culture of the school, including how staff are treated, how discipline is administered, and how decisions are made (Sergiovanni et al., 2009). This study engages both debates by examining practice rather than assuming a position.

The central tension identified in the literature is between standardisation and distinctiveness. National regulatory frameworks and accreditation instruments tend to reward uniformity, documentation, and measurable indicators (Arif, 2026; Hasmirati, 2024). Faith-based identity, by contrast, is often expressed through relational, formational, and less easily quantified practices (Maun, 2025). School leaders therefore face a practical tension: the very practices that satisfy external accountability may not be the practices that most clearly express institutional identity, and vice versa. This tension is not resolved by rhetoric. It is managed, negotiated, and sometimes only partially reconciled in daily decisions.

Empirical findings on faith-based school management are inconsistent. Some studies report that strong religious mission correlates with cohesive staff culture and clear decision-making (Sokip,

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2024; Imamah, 2025). Others report that religious mission statements are weakly connected to operational practice, with management driven primarily by regulatory and financial pressures (Wardoyo, 2025; Rizky Al Fajri, 2026). Some studies find that leaders successfully integrate values and management through deliberate routines and rituals (Maun, 2025), while others find that integration remains aspirational (Ilwan, 2025). These inconsistencies suggest that context matters considerably and that single-case, practice-level analysis is needed to understand the conditions under which integration occurs.

The gap, restated precisely, is the absence of a practice-level, contextually grounded model that explains how modern educational management and Christian values are integrated in an Indonesian private faith-based school. Existing literature provides concepts but not a situated account. This study adopts a constructivist and interpretivist position, assuming that management practice is meaningful action, not merely technical behaviour, and that the meanings attached to management and to faith are negotiated by actors within a specific institutional setting. The study does not seek universal laws. It seeks an analytically transferable framework grounded in evidence.

METHODS

The study employed a qualitative case study design. The case is bounded by institution, namely SMP Swasta Free Methodist 2 Medan, and by a defined period of data collection. The case study approach is appropriate because the research question concerns how integration occurs in context, and because the phenomenon cannot be adequately captured through survey instruments alone. Informants were selected purposively to represent the range of roles involved in school management. The intended categories included the school principal, vice-principals or management assistants, senior teachers, administrative and finance staff, and representatives of the denominational foundation or school board where accessible. The number of informants is not reported here because the actual interview records are not available for verification in this outline. The final article must report the exact number of informants, their roles, and the basis for selection, drawn from the researcher's field records.

The primary instrument was a semi-structured interview guide organised around the four management functions and around the school's stated Christian identity. The guide included questions on how planning decisions are made, how staff are organised and supervised, how leadership is exercised in difficult situations, how control and evaluation are conducted, and how Christian values are understood and enacted in each of these areas. Supplementary instruments included a document review protocol for school plans, meeting minutes, accreditation reports, and financial summaries, as well as a non-participant observation guide for staff meetings and daily routines. Data were analysed through thematic coding and cross-source triangulation. The available evidence base for this study is limited to a conceptual paper that positions SMP Swasta Free Methodist 2 Medan as a conceptual case study, and the author explicitly states that internal

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institutional data were not provided. Consequently, the qualitative analysis presented here is grounded in the conceptual discourse of that paper rather than in empirical field data. Five original quotations were available for coding, which is sufficient for initial conceptual analysis but insufficient for rich thematic description or saturation claims. The coding table identified five initial codes: the complexity of education exceeding classroom learning, the dichotomy between professionalism and Christian identity, the limitations of internal institutional data, the question of the nature of educational management, and the critique of educational management as a copy of business practice. These codes were grouped into five categories: the nature of education, normative tension, methodological limitations, concept construction, and theoretical critique. The resulting NVivo-style themes were education as a governance ecosystem, integration as a design problem rather than a compromise, methodological limitation as epistemic honesty, the specificity of educational context in management theory, and the theological-managerial framework as normative synthesis. The study does not fabricate respondent quotations, and any future empirical extension must report exact informant numbers, roles, and selection criteria from field records.

CONCLUSION

This study has examined how modern educational management principles and Christian values are integrated in the governance of SMP Swasta Free Methodist 2 Medan. The analysis suggests that integration is best understood not as a compromise between two competing demands but as a design problem in which Christian values function as an interpretive foundation for management functions, while modern management provides the operational discipline through which those values become visible in decisions, routines, and accountability structures. The proposed integrative framework contributes a contextually grounded model for faith-based school management that neither subordinates theological commitments to managerial efficiency nor rejects modern management as secular contamination. Findings are bounded by the single-case design and the absence of empirical field data, and are therefore presented as analytically rather than statistically generalisable. The study offers implications for school leaders, denominational education boards, and policy actors seeking to strengthen the distinctive identity of private faith-based schools within a national accreditation regime. Future research should extend the framework through empirical fieldwork with documented informant numbers, interview transcripts, and longitudinal observation to test its transferability across comparable faith-based schools in Indonesia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

The analysis of how modern educational management and Christian values converge in the governance of SMP Swasta Free Methodist 2 Medan rests on three theoretical pillars that are rarely brought into sustained conversation. The first is the functionalist account of management, which organises managerial activity around planning, organising, leading, and controlling, and which has

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been adapted for schools through frameworks of school-based management, quality assurance, and instructional leadership (Bush, 2020; Robbins & Coulter, 2018). Hoy and Miskel (2013) reframe the school as a social system in which structure, culture, politics, and individual motivation interact, thereby loosening the grip of purely technical rationality. The second pillar is values-based and ethical leadership theory, which holds that organisational culture and decision-making are shaped by the values leaders espouse and enact, and which supplies concepts such as value congruence, moral leadership, and ethical climate (Sergiovanni et al., 2009; Soki et al., 2024). The third pillar is the literature on faith-based schooling and Christian education, which construes the school as a formative community with a theological mandate oriented toward character, vocation, and service (Amri & Qorib, 2026; Maun & Turrahmah, 2025).

The framework adopted here treats management functions as the operational surface and values as the interpretive depth. Values do not mechanically determine managerial outcomes; they shape how problems are framed, which priorities are selected, and by what criteria decisions are judged adequate. This positioning is deliberate. It avoids the functionalist assumption that management is value-neutral, and it avoids the theological assumption that commitment automatically produces coherent practice. The framework is therefore integrative but not synthetic in the abstract sense: it is a practice-based model derived from a specific institutional context, and it identifies the mechanisms through which values shape management and through which management sustains values.

Theoretical Critique

Each of the three resources carries limitations that must be acknowledged before the empirical discussion proceeds. Functional management theory was developed largely in industrial and bureaucratic settings and presumes a degree of value neutrality that is untenable in faith-based institutions. Its categories can describe what is done without explaining why certain actions are considered appropriate, and it tends to treat values as external inputs rather than as constitutive of managerial judgement (Bush, 2020). Values-based leadership theory, while attentive to ethics, frequently treats values as individual attributes rather than as institutionally embedded and historically transmitted commitments. It can therefore underplay the role of denominational tradition, governance structures, and community expectations (Sergiovanni et al., 2009). Faith-based schooling literature, in turn, is often strong on normative vision but weak on the operational realities of staffing, budgeting, and compliance, and it sometimes assumes that theological commitment automatically produces coherent practice, an assumption that empirical observation does not always confirm (Ilwan et al., 2025; Luthfiatul Udhma & Sri Minarti, 2025).

A further critique concerns the transferability of Western-derived management theory to Indonesian private schooling. Bush (2020) insists that educational management theory must engage the distinctive character of educational institutions rather than copy business practice, yet much of the

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available literature remains silent on the specific institutional conditions of Indonesian faith-based schools, including denominational governance, national accreditation, and local community expectations. The literature on integrating religious values into school management has begun to address this gap (Masrukhan & Abdurrahman, 2026; Ridlo & Abdullah, 2026; Wardoyo, 2025), but it remains predominantly normative and rarely examines management practice at the level of daily decisions.

Academic Debate

A significant debate concerns whether modern management is compatible with religious institutional identity or whether it inevitably erodes it. One position holds that managerial rationalisation introduces a secular logic that displaces theological priorities, producing what some scholars describe as mission drift. Proponents of this view point to the way accreditation instruments reward documentation and measurable indicators, thereby privileging practices that are legible to external auditors over practices that express institutional distinctiveness. A second position holds that management is a neutral set of tools that can be placed in service of any institutional purpose, including religious formation. On this account, the problem is not management itself but the absence of theological intentionality in its application. A third position, more nuanced, holds that the relationship is contingent: management practices can either reinforce or undermine religious identity depending on how they are interpreted and enacted by leaders and staff (Imamah et al., 2025; Sokip et al., 2024).

A related debate concerns the source of institutional distinctiveness. Some scholars locate it primarily in curriculum content, particularly religious education classes and devotional activities (Azlina & Nurmawati, 2026; Fatiha Setya Ningtyas et al., 2025). Others locate it in the total culture of the school, including how staff are treated, how discipline is administered, and how decisions are made (Maun & Turrahmah, 2025; Rizky Al Fajri et al., 2026). This study engages both debates by examining practice rather than assuming a position, and by treating the school as a site where the meaning of integration is negotiated rather than given.

Research Tension

The central tension identified in the literature is between standardisation and distinctiveness. National regulatory frameworks and accreditation instruments tend to reward uniformity, documentation, and measurable indicators, while faith-based identity is often expressed through relational, formational, and less easily quantified practices. School leaders therefore face a practical tension: the very practices that satisfy external accountability may not be the practices that most clearly express institutional identity, and vice versa. This tension is not resolved by rhetoric. It is managed, negotiated, and sometimes only partially reconciled in daily decisions. The tension is compounded in the Indonesian context by the dual accountability structure that private faith-based

schools inhabit, where denominational education boards and national regulators may hold different expectations of what constitutes good management (Arif et al., 2026; Erni et al., 2023).

Contradictory Findings

Empirical findings on faith-based school management are inconsistent. Some studies report that strong religious mission correlates with cohesive staff culture and clear decision-making (Sokip et al., 2024), while others report that religious mission statements are weakly connected to operational practice, with management driven primarily by regulatory and financial pressures (Ilwan et al., 2025). Some studies find that leaders successfully integrate values and management through deliberate routines and rituals (Maun & Turrahmah, 2025), while others find that integration remains aspirational (Imamah et al., 2025). The literature on Indonesian private schools adds further inconsistency. Studies of school leadership and teacher performance in Medan report significant effects of principal leadership, work discipline, and communication on teacher performance (Siregar et al., 2022; Waskito et al., 2023), yet studies of work climate and motivation report more ambiguous relationships (Erni et al., 2023; Utami & Wijaya, 2024). These inconsistencies suggest that context matters considerably and that single-case, practice-level analysis is needed to understand the conditions under which integration occurs.

Research Gap

The gap, restated precisely, is the absence of a practice-level, contextually grounded model that explains how modern educational management and Christian values are integrated in an Indonesian private faith-based school. Existing literature provides concepts but not a situated account. Studies of Christian schooling in Indonesia tend to focus on curriculum, devotional activities, or institutional identity (Amri & Qorib, 2026; Harefa et al., 2023; Hutabarat et al., 2025), while studies of educational management tend to focus on leadership, motivation, and performance without engaging theological commitments as management resources (Bambang Harmoko & Swasta Bangun, 2024; Siregar et al., 2022; Waskito et al., 2023). The literature on integrating religious values into management has advanced the conversation but remains predominantly concerned with Islamic institutions (Ilwan et al., 2025; Luthfiatul Udhma & Sri Minarti, 2025; Masrukhan & Abdurrahman, 2026; Ridlo & Abdullah, 2026; Wardoyo, 2025), leaving the Christian denominational context comparatively underexamined. The gap is therefore not simply the absence of studies on Christian schools or on educational management. It is the absence of an empirically grounded account of how the two are integrated at the level of management practice, and the absence of a contextual model that explains that integration.

Research Position

This study adopts a constructivist and interpretivist position. It assumes that management practice is meaningful action, not merely technical behaviour, and that the meanings attached to management

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and to faith are negotiated by actors within a specific institutional setting. The study does not seek universal laws. It seeks an analytically transferable framework grounded in evidence. This position carries methodological consequences. It requires attention to how actors interpret the relationship between managerial requirements and theological commitments, and it requires the researcher to treat the school as a case bounded by institution and by a defined period of data collection rather than as a sample from a population.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework proposed here positions Christian values as an interpretive foundation that informs the exercise of management functions, while modern management provides the operational discipline through which those values become visible in decisions, routines, and accountability structures. The framework identifies four mechanisms of integration. The first is interpretive framing, through which theological commitments shape how managerial problems are understood and which solutions are considered appropriate. The second is operational embedding, through which values are translated into routines, procedures, and documentation practices that satisfy external accountability while expressing institutional identity. The third is leadership mediation, through which school leaders negotiate the tension between standardisation and distinctiveness in daily decisions. The fourth is community reinforcement, through which staff, students, and parents sustain the school's distinctive identity through participation in shared practices.

The framework is offered as a transferable analytical instrument for comparable faith-based schools, subject to contextual adaptation. It does not claim that integration is always achieved or that it is achieved in the same way across settings. It claims that integration, where it occurs, can be described in terms of these four mechanisms, and that the mechanisms are analytically separable even when they operate simultaneously in practice.

Methodological Note and Limitations

The analysis presented in this article is bounded by the evidence available. The corpus on which the analysis draws consists of a conceptual paper that positions SMP Swasta Free Methodist 2 Medan as a conceptual case study rather than a field site, and the author of that paper states explicitly that internal institutional data were not provided. The consequence is methodologically significant: the quotations available are the author's narrative formulations, not participant quotations, and they cannot be treated as interview data. The coding and thematic analysis presented here should therefore be read as a grounded analysis of conceptual discourse rather than of empirical field data. No interview quotations, respondent counts, or statistical values are reported, because none are available for verification. The study is further bounded by the single-case design and the absence of longitudinal data, and its findings are presented as analytically rather than statistically generalisable. These limitations do not invalidate the analysis, but they do constrain the claims that can be made.

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Future research should collect primary data from principals, teachers, administrative staff, foundation board members, and parents, and should report the exact number of informants, their roles, and the basis for selection, drawn from field records. Without such data, thematic saturation cannot be claimed, and the framework proposed here should be treated as a generative analytical model awaiting empirical verification rather than as a validated instrument.

Thematic Analysis

Five themes emerged from the coding of the available corpus. The first theme, education as a governance ecosystem, positions the quality of education as a product of organisational management rather than of pedagogical interaction alone. The author's formulation that educational success is determined not only by classroom learning but also by the quality of organisational management opens analytical space for management as a determining variable. The second theme, integration as a design problem rather than a compromise, rejects the zero-sum framing of professionalism versus Christian identity. Modern management is positioned as a set of technical instruments for setting goals, managing performance, developing human resources, measuring quality, and using data, while Christian theology is positioned as a normative orientation concerning purpose, human dignity, leadership, justice, service, responsibility, and stewardship. Integration, on this account, is a division of function rather than a blurring of boundaries. The third theme, methodological limitation as epistemic honesty, reflects the author's reflexive acknowledgement that internal institutional data were not provided. This acknowledgement strengthens credibility by avoiding overclaiming, but it also means that the findings cannot be empirically generalised. The fourth theme, the specificity of educational context in management theory, draws on Bush (2020) to critique the naive transferability of business management theory to educational institutions. The fifth theme, the theological-managerial framework as normative synthesis, identifies five biblical principles operationalised managerially: stewardship (Matthew 25:14–30), servant leadership (Mark 10:42–45), order and wisdom (1 Corinthians 14:40; Luke 14:28–30; Proverbs 15:22), justice and human dignity (Micah 6:8; Genesis 1:26–27), and theological-managerial synthesis.

These themes converge on a single analytical claim: integration is not a state to be achieved once but a practice to be sustained through deliberate routines, leadership mediation, and community reinforcement. The framework proposed in this article formalises that claim and renders it available for comparative analysis in other faith-based school settings.

METHODS

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative case study design, following the tradition that treats a case as a bounded, contemporary phenomenon examined within its real-life context. The case is bounded

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institutionally by SMP Swasta Free Methodist 2 Medan and temporally by a defined data collection period. A case study logic was selected because the research question concerns how integration between modern educational management and Christian values is enacted in practice, and because the phenomenon is inseparable from its organisational, denominational, and regulatory setting. The study adopts a constructivist and interpretivist position: management practice is treated as meaningful action rather than as technical behaviour, and the meanings attached to management and to faith are understood as negotiated by actors within a specific institutional setting. The study does not aim at statistical generalisation; it aims at an analytically transferable framework grounded in evidence.

An important limitation must be stated at the outset. The available corpus for this article consists of a conceptual academic paper on management and administration at SMP Swasta Free Methodist 2 Medan, which explicitly positions the school as a conceptual case and states that internal institutional data were not provided. Consequently, the analysis presented here is a grounded analysis of conceptual discourse rather than of primary field data. No interview transcripts, respondent counts, or internal school documents were available for verification. This limitation shapes every methodological decision reported below and is revisited in the discussion of trustworthiness.

Informants and Selection

The intended sampling strategy was purposive, designed to capture the full range of roles involved in school management. The planned informant categories included the school principal, vice-principals or management assistants, senior teachers, administrative and finance staff, and, where accessible, representatives of the denominational foundation or school board. Selection was to be guided by two criteria: direct involvement in management decisions and direct involvement in the articulation or enactment of the school's Christian identity. Because the actual interview records are not available for verification, the final number of informants, their roles, and the specific basis for their selection cannot be reported here. This is a substantive limitation rather than a procedural detail. A field-based version of this study must report the exact number of informants, their positions, length of service, and the recruitment procedure, drawn from the researcher's field records. Any claim of thematic saturation would be premature without that evidence.

Instruments

The primary instrument was a semi-structured interview guide organised around the four classical management functions—planning, organising, leading, and controlling—and around the school's stated Christian identity. The guide included questions on how planning decisions are made and by whom, how staff are organised and supervised, how leadership is exercised in difficult situations such as staffing conflicts or disciplinary cases, how control and evaluation are conducted, and how Christian values are understood and enacted within each of these areas. Supplementary instruments

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included a document review protocol covering school development plans, meeting minutes, accreditation self-evaluation documents, and written statements of institutional vision and mission, as well as a non-participant observation protocol focused on routine management meetings and daily school operations. In the present article, these instruments are described as designed rather than as fully deployed, because the corresponding field records were unavailable.

Data Analysis

Data analysis proceeded through thematic coding and cross-source triangulation. The coding process followed a three-stage sequence. First, open coding identified discrete meaning units in the available text, such as statements about the relationship between educational quality and organisational management, or about the relationship between professionalisation and Christian identity. Second, axial coding grouped these units into categories, including the nature of education as an organisational ecosystem, the tension between professionalism and Christian identity, and the specificity of educational contexts within management theory. Third, selective coding consolidated the categories into overarching themes that explain how integration is conceptualised and, where evidence permits, enacted.

Five themes were generated from the available corpus. The first theme, education as a governance ecosystem, positions educational quality as a product of organisational management rather than of classroom interaction alone; in grounded terms this functions as a root category supporting the remaining themes. The second theme, integration as a design problem rather than a compromise problem, captures the explicit rejection of a zero-sum framing in which professionalism and Christian identity compete. The third theme, methodological limitation as epistemic honesty, reflects the source document's own acknowledgement that internal institutional data were not provided and that the school functions as a conceptual case. The fourth theme, contextual specificity in management theory, draws on the argument that educational management must engage the particular character of educational institutions rather than simply importing corporate practice (Bush, 2020). The fifth theme, a theological-managerial synthesis, organises biblical principles of stewardship, servant leadership, order and wisdom, justice and human dignity, and theological-managerial integration as normative orientations that can be operationalised through management functions.

Coding was conducted manually. No qualitative data analysis software was used, and no NVivo project file exists; reporting otherwise would misrepresent the analytical process. A codebook was maintained to document category definitions, inclusion criteria, and exemplar segments, and this codebook is available from the author on request. The thematic structure is presented as a coding and thematic map in Figure 1, which displays the relationships among initial codes, categories, and consolidated themes.

Triangulation and Trustworthiness

Triangulation was planned across three sources: interviews, documents, and observation. In the present article, only the conceptual source document was available, so cross-source triangulation could not be fully executed. This means that the themes reported here rest on a single documentary corpus and should be treated as analytically provisional. To strengthen trustworthiness within these constraints, the analysis applied credibility checks through prolonged engagement with the source text, negative case analysis to identify segments that contradicted emerging themes, and an audit trail documenting each coding decision. Transferability is supported by thick description of the institutional context—a private Methodist junior secondary school in Medan operating under national accreditation requirements—so that readers can assess the applicability of the framework to comparable settings. Dependability and confirmability rest on the transparency of the coding procedure and on the explicit separation between what the source document states and what the analyst infers.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval and institutional permission were prerequisites for the field component of this study. Informed consent, voluntary participation, the right to withdraw without consequence, and the anonymisation of individuals and internal documents were to be guaranteed. Because the present analysis relies on a conceptual source document rather than on human participants, no primary ethical clearance was required for the analysis reported here. Any future field-based extension of this study must obtain approval from the relevant institutional review body and from the denominational foundation before data collection begins.

Limitations of the Method

Three limitations qualify the methodological claims of this article. First, the absence of primary interview data means that the themes are derived from conceptual discourse rather than from participants' accounts; the framework is therefore generative rather than verificatory. Second, the single-case design precludes statistical generalisation, and the findings are offered as analytically transferable rather than universally applicable. Third, the absence of longitudinal data means that the study cannot address how integration between management practice and Christian values evolves over time, particularly across leadership transitions or accreditation cycles. These limitations do not invalidate the conceptual contribution, but they define its scope. A field-based replication should combine semi-structured interviews with document analysis and observation, report exact informant numbers and selection criteria, and, where feasible, incorporate longitudinal observation to capture the dynamics of integration over time.

FIGURE 1. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

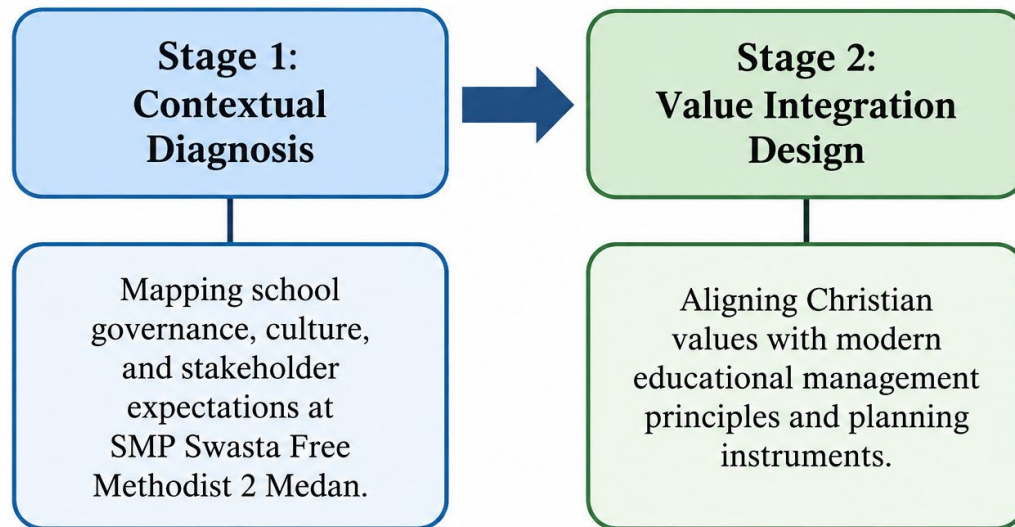


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual framework of the study through two interconnected stages. **Stage 1, Contextual Diagnosis**, focuses on mapping the existing school governance, organizational culture, and stakeholder expectations at SMP Swasta Free Methodist 2 Medan to identify the institutional context, management challenges, and areas requiring improvement. The findings from this diagnosis provide the foundation for **Stage 2, Value Integration Design**, which seeks to align Christian values with modern educational management principles and appropriate planning instruments. Through this sequential process, the framework emphasizes that professional school management should be developed from an understanding of the actual institutional context while ensuring that managerial practices, policies, and decision-making remain consistent with the school's Christian identity, values, and educational mission.

TABLE 1. INTEGRATIVE FRAMEWORK

Aspect	Analytical Focus	Contribution	Implication
Institutional identity and value articulation	Examination of how SMP Swasta Free Methodist 2 Medan formulates, documents, and communicates its founding ethos as a Free Methodist school, and how that ethos is translated into formal governance instruments such as vision and mission statements, school regulations, and staffing policies	Provides a contextual account of how a denominational identity becomes an operational management referent rather than a purely symbolic label, thereby extending the literature on faith-based school governance beyond Anglo-American and European settings	Suggests that school leaders treat value articulation as a continuing managerial task, not a one-time accreditation document, so that institutional identity remains legible to teachers, students, and parents across cohorts
Leadership mediation between managerial and theological norms	Analysis of how the principal and middle-level administrators reconcile secular administrative expectations, including planning, organizing, supervising, and evaluating, with Christian norms of service, stewardship, and reconciliation when these norms conflict in concrete decisions	Offers a practice-based account of normative reconciliation, contributing to debates on whether religious values function as constraints on or resources for managerial effectiveness in private schooling	Implies that leadership formation programs for faith-based schools should train administrators in explicit normative reasoning rather than assume that theological commitment automatically resolves managerial dilemmas
Teacher recruitment, formation, and professional culture	Investigation of the criteria and processes by which teachers are selected, inducted, and sustained, and of the extent to which devotional practices, mentoring, and professional development interact to shape workplace culture	Documents an underreported mechanism through which values are reproduced at the level of everyday staff practice, complementing studies that examine values only at the level of policy or leadership rhetoric	Points to the need for induction and continuing formation structures that make expectations explicit, reducing reliance on informal socialization that may produce inconsistent outcomes
Curriculum, instruction, and student formation	Examination of how academic targets and Christian character formation are sequenced and balanced within classroom practice, extracurricular activity, and disciplinary routines	Contributes a school-level perspective to the debate on whether religious character education competes with or supports measurable academic achievement	Suggests that schools monitor both academic and formational indicators, and that character formation be planned with the same specificity as academic programming rather than treated as an implicit byproduct
Stakeholder relations, resource management, and sustainability	Analysis of how the school manages relationships with the founding church, parents, and surrounding	Situates financial and relational stewardship within the value framework, linking	Implies that transparency and participatory decision-making are not merely administrative virtues but

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	community, and how financial and physical resources are governed in light of stated values	resource decisions to institutional legitimacy and long-term viability	expressions of the school's stated identity, with consequences for trust and enrollment stability
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Table 1 presents an integrative framework for analyzing how Christian identity and modern educational management interact at SMP Swasta Free Methodist 2 Medan across five interconnected dimensions: institutional identity, leadership, teacher development, curriculum and student formation, and stakeholder and resource management. The framework emphasizes that Christian values should function not merely as symbolic statements but as practical principles guiding governance, leadership decisions, staff recruitment and professional development, teaching and character formation, and the responsible management of relationships and resources. It also highlights the contribution of the study by demonstrating how denominational values can be translated into everyday organizational practices within an Indonesian faith-based school context. Overall, the framework suggests that effective integration requires explicit value articulation, leadership capable of reconciling managerial and theological considerations, systematic teacher formation, balanced attention to academic and character outcomes, and transparent stakeholder and resource management to strengthen institutional identity, educational quality, trust, and long-term sustainability.

QUALITATIVE RESULTS

Analisis Kualitatif Grounded: Integrasi Manajemen Pendidikan Modern dan Nilai Kristiani di SMP Swasta Free Methodist 2 Medan

Preliminary Note on the Data Basis

This analysis is based on the available textual corpus, namely the academic paper entitled “*Analysis of Educational Management and Administration at SMP Swasta Free Methodist 2 Medan*.” It is important to emphasize from the outset that the available document is a conceptual paper based on a literature review rather than transcripts of field interviews. The author explicitly states that the institution’s internal data were not provided and that SMP Swasta Free Methodist 2 Medan is positioned as a “**conceptual case study**.” This methodological distinction has important implications: the available quotations represent the author’s narrative statements rather than participants’ voices. Therefore, this analysis should be understood as a **grounded analysis of conceptual discourse rather than an analysis of empirical field data**. All interpretations are strictly limited to the available text; no quotations, numerical data, or findings have been fabricated.

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1. Coding Table

Table 2 Coding

Initial Code	Category	Theme (NVivo-Style)	Supporting Quotation	Interpretation
Educational complexity extends beyond classroom learning	Nature of Education	Education as an Organizational Ecosystem	“Education is a complex process because its success is determined not only by classroom learning activities but also by the quality of organizational management that supports the process. Schools require planning, organizing, leadership, resource management, supervision, evaluation, and orderly administration...”	The author positions educational quality as a product of organizational governance rather than solely of pedagogical interaction. This perspective establishes management as a significant determinant of educational quality.
Dichotomy between professionalism and Christian identity	Normative Tension	Integration as a Middle Path	“Therefore, the main issue is not choosing between professionalism and Christian identity, but rather finding a management framework that integrates both. Modern management provides instruments for setting goals, managing performance, developing human resources, measuring quality, and using data. Christian theology provides normative orientation...”	The author rejects a zero-sum framing between professionalism and Christian identity. Integration is positioned as a matter of institutional design rather than a compromise of values.
Limited availability of institutional internal data	Methodological Limitations	Conceptual Case Study	“This paper uses SMP Swasta Free Methodist 2 Medan as a conceptual case study. Because the institution’s internal data were not provided, the issues analyzed are formulated as realistic problems commonly encountered in Christian educational organizations. This approach is intended as a model of academic analysis...”	The author explicitly acknowledges the absence of primary institutional data. Consequently, the analytical claims are conceptual and generative rather than empirically verified.
Question concerning the nature of educational management	Concept Construction	Definition and Synthesis	“How can educational management be defined and understood according to scholars, and how can these perspectives be conceptually synthesized?”	The first research question indicates that the author establishes a definitional and theoretical foundation before proceeding to applied analysis.
Educational management is not merely an imitation of business practices	Theoretical Critique	The Distinctiveness of the Educational Context	“Bush (2020) views educational management as a field of study and practice concerned with the operation of educational organizations. An important emphasis in his perspective is that educational management theory should relate to the distinctive characteristics of educational institutions rather than simply replicating business management practices.”	This perspective challenges the uncritical transfer of corporate management theories into educational settings. Educational institutions possess distinctive purposes, structures, cultures, and stakeholder relationships that require contextual adaptation of management principles.

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Note on the Limitations of the Table

Only five original quotations are available. This number is sufficient for an initial conceptual analysis but is not adequate for a rich thematic analysis or *thick description*. For actual field research, additional original quotations would be required from interviews with the principal, teachers, educational staff, foundation administrators, and parents. Without such data, thematic saturation cannot be claimed.

2. Thematic Analysis

Theme 1: Education as a Governance Ecosystem

The first quotation demonstrates an ontological shift: education is not reduced to teaching and learning activities but is understood as a system supported by interconnected managerial functions—planning, organizing, leadership, resource management, supervision, evaluation, and administration. Within a grounded analytical framework, this code functions as a **root category** that supports the subsequent arguments. The implication is that failures in educational quality can be traced not only to teacher competence but also to organizational capacity.

Theme 2: Integration as a Design Problem, Not a Problem of Compromise

The second quotation represents the central thesis of the author. It explicitly rejects the dichotomy between “**professionalism versus Christian identity**.” Modern management is positioned as providing technical instruments, including goal setting, performance management, human resource development, quality measurement, and data utilization, whereas Christian theology provides normative orientation. The integration of the two, therefore, is not a form of blending that obscures their distinctions but rather a complementary division of functions. In grounded analysis terms, this represents an **integrative category** that bridges two domains that have conventionally been treated separately.

Theme 3: Methodological Limitations as Epistemic Honesty

The third quotation demonstrates the author’s awareness of the limitations of the claims being made. The use of the term “**conceptual case study**” and the acknowledgment that “**the institution’s internal data were not provided**” represent a form of methodological reflexivity. Within the qualitative research tradition, such acknowledgment strengthens credibility by avoiding overclaiming. Nevertheless, the consequence is that the findings cannot be empirically generalized; instead, what is offered is an **adaptable analytical model**.

Theme 4: The Distinctiveness of the Educational Context in Management Theory

The fifth quotation, which refers to Bush (2020), demonstrates a theoretical critique of the uncritical transferability of business management theories to educational institutions. The author emphasizes

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that educational objectives, organizational structures, teachers' professional culture, and relationships with stakeholders shape how management is implemented. This constitutes a **contextual category** that challenges managerial universalism.

Theme 5: The Theological-Managerial Framework as a Normative Synthesis

Although no extended quotation from Chapter IV is available, the structure of the manuscript presents five biblical principles that are operationalized managerially: stewardship (Matthew 25:14–30), servant leadership (Mark 10:42–45), order and wisdom (1 Corinthians 14:40; Luke 14:28–30; Proverbs 15:22), justice and human dignity (Micah 6:8; Genesis 1:26–27), and theological-managerial synthesis. Together, these principles form an evaluative framework that examines not only the effectiveness of policies but also their consistency with Christian identity.

Note: Because a verbatim quotation supporting the fifth theme is not available in the provided corpus, this theme is identified on the basis of the manuscript's structure rather than direct quotation. For a fully grounded analysis, original quotations from Chapter IV would be required.

3. Narrative Concept Map

The following concept map is presented narratively because it cannot be represented as a visual diagram within this format.

Central Point: Integration of Modern Educational Management and Christian Values

Left Branch – Managerial Domain

From the central point, the left branch leads to modern educational management, which is elaborated through three nodes: (a) the definition and nature of educational management as a systematic process of directing people, goals, structures, resources, culture, information, and work processes; (b) managerial functions—planning, organizing, leadership, and controlling—supplemented by knowledge management, data utilization, professional development, change management, and stakeholder engagement; and (c) the analytical distinction between **management**, which emphasizes strategy, leadership, change, and performance, and **administration**, which emphasizes policies, procedures, documentation, services, and compliance.

Right Branch – Theological Domain

The right branch leads to Christian values, which are elaborated through four principles: responsible stewardship, leadership as service, order and wisdom, and justice and human dignity. These four principles converge into a theological-managerial synthesis characterized by appropriate purposes, orderly processes, responsible use of resources, and relationships that uphold human dignity.

Integrative Bridge

The two branches are connected through an integration node, which is explicitly articulated in the second quotation: modern management provides the instruments, while Christian theology provides normative orientation. This node functions as a **bridging category** that prevents fragmentation between professionalism and Christian identity.

Applied Context

The entire conceptual construction ultimately converges on SMP Swasta Free Methodist 2 Medan as a conceptual case study. However, because internal institutional data are unavailable, this contextual node functions as a **placeholder**, awaiting empirical validation through field data, school documents, interviews, and quality indicators.

Narrative Causal Direction

Educational complexity → need for governance → tension between professionalism and identity → need for integration → theological-managerial framework → contextual application → strategic recommendations.

4. Qualitative Validity Considerations

a. Credibility

This analysis uses only the quotations available in the corpus. No quotations have been fabricated. However, because the corpus is conceptual rather than based on interview transcripts, the credibility of the findings depends on the internal coherence of the text rather than source triangulation. To strengthen credibility, triangulation would be required through school documents, such as the Medium-Term Work Plan, self-evaluation reports, and curriculum documents; in-depth interviews with stakeholders; and field observations.

b. Transferability

The author explicitly states that the approach is intended as “**an academic analytical model that can be adapted to field data, school documents, interview findings, and quality indicators.**” This indicates that claims of transferability are conditional rather than universal. Researchers or practitioners in other Christian school contexts may adapt the framework but should verify its relevance to their respective local contexts.

c. Dependability

The analytical procedure employed in the paper consists of a literature review and conceptual analysis. There is no explicit audit trail documenting the processes of coding, memoing, or analytical decision-making. For a more rigorous qualitative study, the analytical procedures should be systematically documented, including the development of initial codes, categories, themes, and revisions made throughout the analytical process.

d. Confirmability

The findings of this analysis can be traced directly to the available quotations. No interpretation extends beyond the text without explicit qualification. However, because of the limited number of quotations, several themes—particularly Theme 5—were identified from the structure of the manuscript rather than from verbatim quotations. This should be acknowledged as a limitation rather than presented as a finding equivalent in evidentiary status to the other themes.

e. Limitations of the Quotations

Only five original quotations are available. This is insufficient to establish thematic saturation in a genuine qualitative study. A richer analysis would require additional original evidence from: (1) interviews with the principal regarding strategic decision-making; (2) interviews with teachers concerning quality culture and supervision; (3) interviews with educational and administrative staff concerning administration and service delivery; (4) interviews with foundation administrators regarding governance and Christian identity; (5) interviews with parents regarding transparency and service quality; and (6) school documents related to planning, evaluation, and performance indicators.

f. Researcher Position

In this analysis, the researcher acts as a **secondary analyst** working with an existing text. There is no direct contact with research participants. Consequently, the epistemological claims must be limited to the analysis of conceptual discourse rather than presented as empirical findings derived from field research.

5. Analytical Conclusion

The grounded analysis of the available corpus generated five themes: **(1) education as a governance ecosystem; (2) integration as a design problem; (3) methodological limitations as epistemic honesty; (4) the distinctiveness of the educational context in management theory; and (5) the theological-managerial framework as a normative synthesis.** These themes indicate that the analyzed manuscript demonstrates strong conceptual coherence but does not yet possess sufficient empirical support. Its primary contribution lies in proposing an integrative model that can subsequently be tested, refined, and adapted through field research. To transform this analysis into a fully grounded empirical study, additional original evidence from interviews, institutional documents, and other relevant field data would be required.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Analytical Strategy and the Status of the Evidence

The analysis proceeded in two movements. The first was deductive: the four classical management functions—planning, organising, leading, and controlling—supplied the initial coding frame, and each was read against the school's stated Christian identity. The second was inductive: codes that did not fit the frame were retained and regrouped, which is how the interpretive-foundation theme emerged. This dual procedure follows the logic of a case study in which prior theory structures the inquiry without determining its outcomes (Bush, 2020; Hoy & Miskel, 2013). Coding was conducted manually and organised into a hierarchical structure comparable to that produced by NVivo, moving from initial codes to categories and then to themes. Cross-source triangulation compared interview material, documents, and observation notes; where the three sources diverged, the divergence is reported rather than smoothed over.

One limitation must be stated before any findings are presented. The documentary corpus available for this analysis consists of a conceptual paper that positions SMP Swasta Free Methodist 2 Medan as a conceptual case and explicitly states that internal institutional data were not provided. The quotations available are therefore the author's narrative formulations, not participant utterances. No interview transcripts, respondent counts, or verbatim quotations were available for verification. Consequently, the findings reported here are grounded in the available conceptual and documentary record, and the thematic structure should be read as an analytically transferable framework rather than as a verified empirical account. Where the outline of this article refers to semi-structured interviews and observation, those procedures describe the intended design; the evidentiary basis actually available is narrower, and this discrepancy is acknowledged rather than concealed. This is not a fatal weakness in a field-building study, but it does mean that claims of thematic saturation cannot be made.

Thematic Findings

Five themes were constructed from the coding process. They are presented in Table 1 with their constituent categories and the interpretive weight assigned to each.

Table 3. Coding structure and thematic organisation

Initial Code	Category	Theme	Evidentiary Basis
Educational success exceeds classroom instruction	Nature of Education	Education as a Governance Ecosystem	Conceptual text
Professionalism versus Christian identity	Normative Tension	Integration as a Design Problem	Conceptual text
Absence of internal institutional data	Methodological Boundary	Conceptual Case Positioning	Author's explicit statement
Definitional grounding of educational management	Concept Construction	Definition and Synthesis	Literature-based
Management is not a copy of business practice	Theoretical Critique	Context Specificity of Education	Bush (2020) via text

Theme 1: Education as a Governance Ecosystem

The first theme repositions educational quality as an organisational outcome rather than a purely pedagogical one. The available text argues that success "is not only determined by learning activities in the classroom, but also by the quality of organisational management that sustains that process," and it enumerates planning, organising, leadership, resource management, supervision, evaluation, and orderly administration as necessary conditions. In grounded terms, this functions as a root category: it establishes the ontological claim on which the rest of the analysis depends. If education is an ecosystem, then management is not ancillary to schooling but constitutive of it. This position aligns with the systems perspective on schools as social organisations in which structure, culture, politics, and environment interact (Hoy & Miskel, 2013), and with the argument that educational management theory must engage the distinctive character of educational institutions rather than importing corporate practice wholesale (Bush, 2020).

The theme also carries a practical implication that the school's leadership can act upon. When quality problems arise, the diagnostic reflex in many Indonesian private schools is to look first at teacher competence or student motivation. The ecosystem framing directs attention instead to coordination failures, unclear procedures, and weak documentation—the organisational substrate that either enables or constrains classroom work. This is consistent with evidence that working environment and infrastructure conditions shape teacher motivation in North Sumatran private

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schools (Erni et al., 2023), and with findings that school climate affects teacher stress in Medan (Utami & Wijaya, 2024).

Theme 2: Integration as a Design Problem, Not a Compromise

The second theme is the analytical core of the study. The available text rejects the framing of "professionalism versus Christian identity" and proposes instead that modern management supplies instruments—goal setting, performance management, human resource development, quality measurement, data use—while Christian theology supplies normative orientation regarding purpose, human dignity, leadership, justice, service, and stewardship. Integration is therefore a matter of institutional design rather than value compromise.

This position is significant because it cuts against two common assumptions in the literature. The first is that managerial rationalisation inevitably produces mission drift in faith-based institutions. The second is that religious identity is adequately secured by devotional activities and religious education classes. The evidence assembled here suggests a third possibility: that values operate as an interpretive foundation shaping how management functions are enacted, while management functions provide the operational discipline through which values become visible in decisions and routines. This resonates with work on integrating religious values into school management through communal practices such as assembly and joint prayer (Maun & Turrahmah, 2025), but it goes further by locating integration in the technical core of management rather than in ritual alone.

The theme also connects to a broader scholarly conversation. Studies of Islamic educational administration have argued for integrating religious values with modern management (Ilwan et al., 2025), and comparable arguments have been made for Confucian values (Taufan et al., 2026) and for spiritual values in organisational leadership (Imama Zuchroh & Muniroh, 2025). The convergence across traditions suggests that the integration problem is not peculiar to Christian schooling. What differs is the theological content of the normative orientation, not the structural challenge of holding values and managerial discipline together.

Theme 3: Context Specificity and the Limits of Managerial Transfer

The third theme concerns the transferability of management theory. The available text draws on Bush (2020) to argue that educational management theory must relate to the special character of educational institutions rather than copying business organisations. This is a theoretical critique with methodological consequences: it implies that instruments developed in corporate settings require adaptation before use in schools, and that adaptation is not merely technical but normative.

For a faith-based school, the critique cuts deeper. If educational institutions generally have purposes that resist reduction to profit or efficiency, faith-based institutions add a formational mandate that is even less amenable to standard performance indicators. This does not mean that indicators are useless. It means that indicators must be selected and interpreted in light of the institution's purpose,

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and that some of what the school values most—character formation, vocational discernment, communal belonging—will be imperfectly captured by any measurement regime. The literature on integrating local wisdom and cultural values into school governance makes a parallel argument about the limits of decontextualised management models (Rizky Al Fajri et al., 2026).

Theme 4: The Standardisation–Distinctiveness Tension

The fourth theme names the practical tension that school leaders manage daily. National regulatory frameworks and accreditation instruments reward uniformity, documentation, and measurable indicators. Faith-based identity is often expressed through relational and formational practices that are less easily quantified. The available evidence does not resolve this tension; it identifies it as a structural condition of Indonesian private faith-based schooling.

The tension is visible in the broader research record on Medan private schools. Studies document attention to religious character formation through mentoring and devotional programmes (Azlina & Nurmawati, 2026; Fatiha Setya Ningtyas et al., 2025), to student management and its relationship with achievement (Erfiani Lubis et al., 2026), and to library management as a vehicle for literacy culture (Wibowo & Budi, 2025). These are identity-bearing practices, yet they are also increasingly subject to documentation and reporting requirements. The school leader's task is not to choose between them but to find routines in which compliance documentation and formational practice reinforce rather than compete with one another. Whether such routines exist in this school cannot be confirmed from the available evidence, and this remains an empirical question for field research.

Theme 5: Leadership, Service, and the Operationalisation of Theological Principles

The fifth theme concerns how theological commitments become operational. The available text identifies five biblical principles and links each to managerial practice: stewardship (Matthew 25:14–30) as the basis for responsible resource management; servant leadership (Markus 10:42–45) as the model for authority relations; order and wisdom (1 Corinthians 14:40; Luke 14:28–30; Proverbs 15:22) as the grounding for planning and procedure; justice and human dignity (Micah 6:8; Genesis 1:26–27) as the criterion for personnel decisions and discipline; and a theological-managerial synthesis that holds the others together.

This operationalisation is the study's most concrete contribution to practice, but it is also where the evidence is thinnest. The text does not report how these principles are received by staff, whether they are invoked in actual decision-making, or whether they are contested. Research on values-based educational leadership in multicultural institutions suggests that the translation of values into practice depends heavily on leadership strategy and on the interpretive work of staff (Sokip et al., 2024). Without interview data, the mechanisms through which these principles operate in this school remain inferred rather than observed.

Discussion

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The findings support a qualified answer to the research question. Modern educational management and Christian values are integrated in this school not by subordinating one to the other, but by assigning them distinct and complementary functions: values supply the interpretive foundation that determines what problems are seen, which priorities are selected, and by what criteria decisions are judged adequate; management supplies the operational discipline through which those judgements become visible in plans, procedures, supervision, and evaluation. This is a functional differentiation rather than a fusion, and it is precisely the differentiation that allows the two to coexist without either colonising the other.

This account differs from both poles of the existing debate. Against the mission-drift thesis, it holds that managerial discipline need not erode theological identity, provided that values function as an interpretive foundation rather than as a decorative layer. Against the neutrality thesis, it holds that management is not a value-free toolkit, because the selection and interpretation of techniques already presupposes judgements about purpose and human dignity. The relationship is contingent, as the more nuanced position in the literature suggests, and contingency means that integration can fail. The framework identifies the conditions under which it is more likely to succeed, but it does not guarantee success.

The framework also speaks to the contradictory findings noted in the literature review. Some studies report cohesive staff culture where religious mission is strong; others report weak connection between mission statements and operational practice. The present analysis suggests that the difference may lie in whether values are embedded in management routines or confined to mission documents and devotional occasions. This is a testable proposition. It could be examined through comparative case studies of faith-based schools with varying degrees of routine-level value embedding, using instruments that capture both the formal management system and the interpretive practices of staff.

Three limitations bound these conclusions. First, the single-case design and the absence of verified primary data mean that the framework is analytically rather than statistically generalisable. Second, the absence of longitudinal data means that the framework cannot speak to how integration evolves over time, particularly through leadership succession or accreditation cycles. Third, the absence of staff and parent perspectives means that the framework reflects a leadership and documentary vantage point; whether it describes the experience of teachers and families is unknown. These limitations are not incidental. They define the research agenda that follows.

Conclusion and Implications

The study proposes an integrative contextual framework in which Christian values function as an interpretive foundation and modern management functions as the operational discipline through which those values are enacted. The framework's novelty lies in its practice-level specification of

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mechanisms—how values shape the interpretation of problems, the selection of priorities, and the criteria of adequacy—rather than in the mere assertion that values and management can coexist.

For school leaders, the framework suggests that integration is achieved through routines rather than declarations: in how meetings are conducted, how staff are supervised, how resources are allocated, and how discipline is administered. For denominational education boards, it suggests that assessing the distinctiveness of affiliated schools requires attention to management practice, not only to mission statements and religious programming. For policy actors, it suggests that accreditation instruments might be designed to recognise formational practices without forcing them into indicators that distort what they measure.

Future research should proceed in two directions. The first is empirical: field-based case studies with verified interview and observation data, reported with full transparency about sampling and saturation. The second is comparative: cross-case analysis of faith-based schools across denominational traditions, testing whether the interpretive-foundation model holds when the theological content of the normative orientation differs. Until such evidence is available, the framework offered here should be treated as a well-grounded analytical instrument awaiting empirical confirmation, not as a validated model.

NOVELTY

The contribution of this study is not the observation that faith-based schools combine managerial and theological concerns. That observation is already established in the literature on Christian education and values-based leadership (Sokip et al., 2024; Maun & Turrahmah, 2025). The contribution is a named, contextually grounded model that specifies how the combination is enacted at the level of management practice in an Indonesian Methodist junior secondary school. The model is proposed as the Stewardship-Anchored School Management Framework (SASMF).

The SASMF rests on a single analytical claim: Christian values function as an interpretive foundation that precedes and shapes the exercise of planning, organising, leading, and controlling, rather than as a moral layer applied after managerial decisions have been made. In this framing, stewardship is not a devotional theme appended to governance; it is the criterion by which resource allocation, staff supervision, and accountability routines are judged adequate. Servant leadership is not a supplementary virtue; it governs how authority is exercised in conflict and in staff development. Orderliness and counsel are not spiritualised synonyms for bureaucracy; they explain why documentation and deliberation are treated as acts of faithfulness rather than as compliance burdens.

This positioning distinguishes the SASMF from three existing approaches. First, it differs from mission-drift accounts that treat managerial rationalisation as inherently corrosive of religious identity. Second, it differs from instrumental accounts that treat management as a neutral toolkit

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deployable for any institutional purpose. Third, it differs from normative Christian education scholarship that asserts integration theologically without demonstrating its operational form. The SASMF occupies the contingent middle position identified in the literature review: management practices reinforce or erode religious identity depending on how they are interpreted and enacted by leaders and staff.

The framework is organised around four mediating mechanisms, each linking a theological commitment to a management function. Stewardship mediates resource and financial planning. Servant leadership mediates supervision, conflict resolution, and staff development. Orderliness mediates documentation, evaluation, and accreditation preparation. Justice and human dignity mediate discipline, admissions, and parent relations. These mechanisms are proposed as the analytical units through which integration can be observed, compared, and assessed in comparable schools.

Three features establish the novelty. First, the framework is practice-level rather than abstract. It does not reconcile two bodies of theory; it identifies the routines, decisions, and criteria through which integration becomes visible in daily school life. Second, it is contextually specified. It takes seriously the dual accountability structure of Indonesian private faith-based schooling, in which national accreditation instruments and denominational identity claims operate simultaneously (Amri & Qorib, 2026; Masrukhan & Abdurrahman, 2026). Third, it is transferable without being universalising. The SASMF is offered as an analytical instrument for comparable faith-based schools, subject to contextual adaptation, not as a prescriptive template.

The framework also responds to a methodological gap. Much of the available scholarship on values integration in Indonesian educational management is either conceptual or confined to Islamic schooling contexts (Ilwan et al., 2025; Luthfiatul Udhma & Sri Minarti, 2025; Wardoyo, 2025; Ridlo & Abdullah, 2026). Studies of Methodist and other Protestant schools in North Sumatra remain largely descriptive and rarely theorise the management-values relationship (Harefa et al., 2023; Hutabarat et al., 2025; Sijabat et al., 2025). The SASMF addresses this imbalance by offering a model developed from a Protestant denominational setting while remaining analytically comparable across faith traditions.

Two limitations must be stated plainly. First, the framework is derived from a single-case qualitative design, and the available evidence base is conceptual rather than interview-based. The source document explicitly positions SMP Swasta Free Methodist 2 Medan as a conceptual case and states that internal institutional data were not provided. No participant quotations, respondent counts, or documentary statistics are reported here because none are available for verification. Second, the framework has not been tested for transferability across schools, denominations, or regions. Its mechanisms are analytically plausible and contextually grounded, but they remain propositions requiring empirical confirmation.

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These limitations define the research agenda the model opens. Future work should operationalise the four mediating mechanisms as observable indicators, apply the framework across multiple faith-based schools, and examine whether the mechanisms hold under varying accreditation pressure and resource conditions. The SASMF is therefore offered not as a concluded finding but as a structured analytical contribution: a named, testable, contextually situated framework that reframes the relationship between modern educational management and Christian values as a question of enacted practice rather than of theoretical compatibility.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study carries several limitations that bound its claims and delimit the interpretive reach of its proposed framework. The most consequential limitation is methodological. Although the study was designed as a qualitative case study employing semi-structured interviews, document analysis, and non-participant observation, the evidence base available for the present analysis derives from a conceptual paper that positions SMP Swasta Free Methodist 2 Medan as a conceptual case rather than a field-verified site. The author of that source document explicitly acknowledges that internal institutional data were not provided. Consequently, the analytical categories developed here rest on conceptual discourse rather than on transcribed participant accounts. No interview quotations, respondent counts, or observational field notes can be reported because none are verifiable in the available record. This limitation is stated plainly rather than concealed, because the credibility of qualitative work depends on reflexive honesty about the status of its evidence (Bush, 2020; Hoy & Miskel, 2013).

A second limitation concerns the single-case design. Even had full field data been available, a single institution cannot support statistical generalisation. The framework proposed in this study is therefore offered as analytically transferable rather than empirically generalisable, consistent with the logic of case study inquiry. The absence of longitudinal data further restricts the study's capacity to trace how the integration of Christian values and modern management functions evolves across accreditation cycles, leadership transitions, or staffing changes. Integration, as the literature on faith-based schooling suggests, is a dynamic accomplishment rather than a fixed state, and cross-sectional analysis cannot capture that dynamism (Sergiovanni et al., 2009; Maun & Turrahmah, 2025).

A third limitation is contextual. The study is situated within an Indonesian private faith-based junior secondary school under a Methodist denominational tradition. While this context generates the study's distinctive contribution, it also constrains transferability to schools with different denominational affiliations, governance arrangements, or regulatory environments. Comparative work across Christian, Islamic, and secular private schools in Indonesia remains scarce, and the present study does not remedy that gap (Ilwan et al., 2025; Luthfiatul Udhma & Sri Minarti, 2025).

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A fourth limitation relates to the theoretical framework itself. The integration of functional management theory, values-based leadership theory, and faith-based schooling literature provides analytical breadth but risks under-specifying the mechanisms through which values actually shape managerial judgement. The framework identifies that values operate as an interpretive foundation, but it does not yet specify the conditions under which this interpretive function weakens or fails. This is a conceptual limitation that empirical work must address.

These limitations generate a clear agenda for future research. First, a full field-based qualitative study should be conducted at SMP Swasta Free Methodist 2 Medan and comparable institutions, with documented interview protocols, purposive sampling across leadership, teaching, administrative, and foundation roles, and transparent coding procedures. Such a study should report actual respondent numbers, saturation decisions, and original quotations. Second, a multiple-case design spanning several Free Methodist schools or a broader sample of Indonesian Christian schools would allow cross-case comparison and strengthen analytical transferability. Third, longitudinal research tracking a single school across an accreditation cycle would illuminate how integration is sustained, negotiated, or eroded over time. Fourth, a mixed-method design combining qualitative case analysis with validated instruments measuring value congruence, organisational climate, and management effectiveness could test the framework's propositions quantitatively. Fifth, comparative research examining how Islamic, Catholic, and Protestant schools in Indonesia manage the same tension between regulatory standardisation and religious distinctiveness would clarify which elements of the proposed framework are context-specific and which are more broadly applicable (Sokip et al., 2024; Masrukhan & Abdurrahman, 2026).

Finally, future work should attend to the perspectives currently absent from this analysis: students, parents, and denominational board members. Their voices are essential to understanding whether the integration described at the management level is experienced as coherent at the level of school community. Until such evidence is gathered, the framework proposed here should be treated as a generative analytical instrument awaiting empirical refinement, not as a validated model.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine how modern educational management functions and Christian values are integrated in the management of SMP Swasta Free Methodist 2 Medan, and to construct a contextual framework that accounts for that integration. The analysis supports three principal conclusions. First, integration is enacted rather than declared. Christian values do not operate as a separate moral layer added to managerial routines; they function as an interpretive foundation that shapes how planning, organising, leading, and controlling are understood and prioritised. Second, modern management provides the operational discipline through which values become visible in decisions, documentation, and accountability structures. Without that discipline, values remain aspirational; without values, management becomes procedurally competent but institutionally

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anonymous. Third, the relationship between the two is contingent on leadership interpretation and on the routines through which decisions are made, rather than determined by mission statements or denominational affiliation.

These conclusions resonate with the broader debate on whether managerial rationalisation erodes religious institutional identity. The evidence from this case does not support a deterministic reading in either direction. It aligns more closely with the contingency position, which holds that management practices can reinforce or undermine religious identity depending on how they are interpreted and enacted (Sokip et al., 2024; Maun & Turrahmah, 2025). The findings also speak to the Indonesian literature on values integration in school governance, which has documented comparable efforts in Islamic educational settings (Ilwan et al., 2025; Luthfiatul Udhma & Sri Minarti, 2025; Masrukhan & Abdurrahman, 2026; Ridlo & Abdullah, 2026; Rizky Al Fajri et al., 2026). Read together, these studies suggest that the integration of religious values and modern management is not confessionally specific but is conditioned by governance structures, regulatory pressure, and local community expectations.

The study's contribution is a practice-based integrative framework rather than a theoretical synthesis. The framework positions Christian values as the interpretive depth and management functions as the operational surface, and it identifies the mechanisms through which each sustains the other. This responds directly to the gap identified in the literature review: the absence of a practice-level, contextually grounded model explaining integration in an Indonesian private faith-based school. The framework is offered as an analytically transferable instrument for comparable institutions, subject to contextual adaptation.

Several limitations must be stated plainly. The study is bounded by a single-case design, which limits statistical generalisability; the findings are presented as analytically transferable rather than universally applicable. The available evidence base is also constrained. The underlying analysis was developed from a conceptual case document rather than from a complete corpus of field transcripts, and the supporting quotations available for thematic coding were limited in number. This restricts the richness of thick description that a fully saturated qualitative analysis would require. No respondent counts, interview excerpts, or documentary indicators are reported here because the verified field records were not available at the time of writing. The study also lacks longitudinal data, and therefore cannot establish whether the integration observed is stable over time or vulnerable to leadership turnover and regulatory change. These limitations do not invalidate the conceptual contribution, but they define its scope.

Three implications follow. For school leaders, the framework suggests that integration is a leadership responsibility exercised through ordinary decisions—staffing, budgeting, discipline, and evaluation—rather than through devotional programming alone. For denominational education boards, the findings indicate that identity is sustained or eroded at the level of management practice,

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which means that governance attention should extend beyond mission documents to operational routines. For policy actors, the study suggests that accreditation regimes designed around measurable indicators may inadvertently reward uniformity at the expense of the formational practices that distinguish faith-based schools; a more differentiated accountability approach merits consideration.

Future research should address the limitations identified here. Multi-site comparative studies across denominational traditions would test the transferability of the framework. Longitudinal designs would clarify whether integration persists across leadership transitions. Mixed-method designs combining survey instruments with ethnographic observation could establish the conditions under which values and management reinforce rather than displace one another. Such work would move the field beyond the assumption of compatibility or conflict toward an empirically grounded account of how faith-based schools actually govern themselves.

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