Meurunoe: Jurnal Pendidikan dan Pengajaran
e-ISSN: 3163-5245
DOI: https://doi.org/10.33059/
Vol. 1, No. 3, September 2026, pp. 154-164

Principal Leadership in Supporting Teachers' Pedagogical Competence Development at SMP Negeri 2 Wolowaru

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Article History	Received	Revised	Accepted	Published
	October 18, 2026	October 22, 2026	October 22, 2026	October 22, 2026

News Article

Keyword:

Pedagogical Competence; Instructional Leadership; School Principal; Academic Supervision; Teacher Professional Development.

Abstract

Teachers' pedagogical competence is essential for designing, implementing, and evaluating learning that responds to students' diverse needs. At SMP Negeri 2 Wolowaru, Ende Regency, East Nusa Tenggara, instructional challenges were identified including the dominance of lecture-based teaching, limited variation in learning media, and the need to strengthen teachers' competence. This study describes how principal leadership supports teachers' pedagogical competence development. A qualitative approach with a descriptive design was employed. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews, observation, and documentation involving the school principal and teachers as informants. Data analysis followed the reduction, display, and conclusion-drawing procedures of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014). Trustworthiness was addressed through source and method triangulation. The findings indicate that the principal's role was expressed through planning teacher-development programs, facilitating training and workshops, encouraging peer mentoring, conducting academic supervision, providing constructive feedback, organizing professional-learning activities, and motivating teachers. Teachers reported that training-needs assessments and follow-up discussions after supervision supported reflection on instructional practice. However, professional-development activities sometimes competed with administrative responsibilities. The study concludes that principal leadership can support pedagogical competence when development is planned, collaborative, and sustained. Schools are recommended to strengthen supervision follow-up and align professional-learning schedules with teachers' workloads. These findings should be interpreted within the scope of a single-school descriptive case study.

Kata Kunci:

Kompetensi Pedagogik; Kepemimpinan Instruksional; Kepala Sekolah; Supervisi Akademik; Pengembangan Profesional Guru.

Abstrak

Kompetensi pedagogik guru berperan penting dalam merancang, melaksanakan, dan mengevaluasi pembelajaran yang sesuai dengan kebutuhan peserta didik. Di SMP Negeri 2 Wolowaru, Kabupaten Ende, Nusa Tenggara Timur, ditemukan sejumlah tantangan pembelajaran, antara lain dominasi metode ceramah, terbatasnya variasi media pembelajaran, dan perlunya penguatan kompetensi guru. Penelitian ini bertujuan mendeskripsikan peran kepemimpinan kepala sekolah dalam mendukung pengembangan kompetensi pedagogik guru. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain deskriptif. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur, observasi, dan dokumentasi dengan melibatkan kepala sekolah dan guru sebagai informan. Analisis data mengikuti tahapan reduksi, penyajian, dan penarikan kesimpulan/verifikasi dari Miles, Huberman, dan Saldaña (2014). Keabsahan data diperiksa melalui triangulasi sumber dan teknik. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa peran kepala sekolah tercermin dalam perencanaan program pengembangan guru, fasilitasi pelatihan dan lokakarya, pendampingan antarguru, pelaksanaan supervisi akademik, pemberian umpan balik konstruktif, pengorganisasian kegiatan belajar profesional, serta pemberian motivasi. Guru menyatakan bahwa evaluasi kebutuhan pelatihan dan diskusi tindak lanjut pascasupervisi membantu mereka merefleksikan praktik pembelajaran. Namun demikian, kegiatan pengembangan profesional kadang berbenturan dengan tanggung jawab administratif. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa kepemimpinan kepala sekolah dapat mendukung pengembangan kompetensi pedagogik apabila dilaksanakan secara terencana, kolaboratif, dan berkelanjutan. Sekolah disarankan memperkuat tindak lanjut supervisi dan menyelaraskan jadwal pengembangan guru dengan beban kerja. Temuan perlu diinterpretasikan dalam batas lingkup studi kasus deskriptif pada satu sekolah.

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INTRODUCTION

Teachers' pedagogical competence is central to the quality of classroom practice because it encompasses understanding learners, planning instruction, selecting appropriate strategies, managing learning activities, and assessing learning outcomes. At the school level, these capacities do not develop in isolation: they are shaped by leadership priorities, professional-learning opportunities, collegial relationships, and the resources available to teachers (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). Educational leadership therefore matters not only as an administrative function but also as a means of creating the conditions in which teachers can examine and improve their practice (Fullan, 2014).

Instructional-leadership scholarship emphasizes the principal's role in setting learning goals, coordinating instructional programs, and supporting teachers' professional growth. Hallinger and

Murphy (1985) operationalized instructional management through dimensions associated with school mission, instructional program management, and the creation of a positive learning climate. Subsequent reviews have continued to emphasize that leadership influences teaching and learning through both direct instructional practices and the organizational conditions that enable improvement (Hallinger, 2005, 2011; Leithwood et al., 2020). Robinson et al. (2008) further demonstrated that leadership focused on promoting and participating in teacher learning and development had the strongest effect on student outcomes among the five leadership dimensions they examined, a finding elaborated in Robinson's (2011) framework of student-centered leadership. Pont et al. (2008) similarly identified improving teaching and learning as the core function of school leadership across OECD member systems, reinforcing the view that leadership should be examined through concrete practices — such as classroom observation, feedback, collaborative planning, and professional development — rather than through formal authority alone. Leithwood and Jantzi (2006) further demonstrated that transformational leadership practices influenced teachers' classroom practices through both motivational and capacity-building pathways, underscoring the importance of sustained leadership engagement with teachers' professional development.

Professional development that is effective in improving pedagogical competence shares several characteristics: it is content-focused, incorporates active learning, supports collaboration, uses models of effective practice, provides coaching and expert support, offers feedback and reflection, and is sustained in duration (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Guskey (2000) further emphasized that professional development should be evaluated not only at the level of participant satisfaction but at the level of changes in practice and, ultimately, student learning outcomes. Day and Gu (2010) demonstrated that teachers' professional lives are shaped by the interaction between personal identity, institutional context, and the quality of leadership support — findings that highlight the relational dimension of principal leadership in sustaining teachers' commitment to pedagogical improvement. Schön's (1983) concept of the reflective practitioner provides a further theoretical anchor: when supervision and feedback create opportunities for teachers to reflect on their practice, they are more likely to develop adaptive, context-sensitive instructional responses rather than simply implementing prescribed techniques.

In the Indonesian context, teachers' pedagogical competence is formally defined and regulated through national policy. Undang-Undang Nomor 14 Tahun 2005 tentang Guru dan Dosen establishes that pedagogical competence constitutes one of four core teacher competencies required for professional certification. Peraturan Menteri Pendidikan Nasional Nomor 16 Tahun 2007 specifies the indicators of pedagogical competence across ten dimensions, including understanding learner characteristics, designing instruction, implementing learning, and assessing outcomes. Peraturan Menteri Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Nomor 15 Tahun 2018 further specifies the professional workload of teachers, school principals, and school supervisors, including the expectation that principals conduct academic supervision to support instructional improvement. Sagala (2013) and Mulyasa (2013, 2019) have documented in the Indonesian context that pedagogical competence is developed through a combination of formal certification, in-service training, and school-level professional guidance — positioning the principal as a key facilitator of ongoing competence development. These regulatory and scholarly frameworks position the principal not merely as an administrative manager but as an instructional leader whose responsibilities include facilitating teachers' ongoing professional development.

The research site, SMP Negeri 2 Wolowaru, is located in Kelurahan Lisedetu, Kecamatan Wolowaru, Kabupaten Ende, East Nusa Tenggara. Initial observations at the school identified instructional challenges, including the continued use of lecture-based teaching by some teachers, limited variation in learning media beyond textbooks, and student experiences of repetitive note-taking with few opportunities for group discussion. Some teachers were also noted to teach outside their field of study. These conditions indicate a gap between the expectation of responsive, varied,

learner-centred instruction consistent with the OECD's (2020) findings on effective teaching environments and the instructional practices observed in the local context, and point to the importance of examining how principal leadership is enacted to address such challenges.

Research on school leadership has examined the relationship between leadership, teacher development, and school improvement across diverse contexts. However, descriptive, context-specific accounts of how leadership practices are enacted in schools located outside major urban centres — particularly in eastern Indonesian provinces such as East Nusa Tenggara — remain limited in the published literature. UNESCO (2022) has emphasized that educational transformation requires context-sensitive approaches that attend to local conditions and institutional capacities rather than applying generic improvement models uniformly. The contribution of this article is therefore descriptive and contextual: it organizes the reported evidence around planning, organizing, implementation, and supervision, and interprets these practices through instructional-leadership and professional-learning perspectives. The article does not claim causal effects or measured improvement in student achievement, as the study does not provide a before-and-after measure or a quantified assessment of pedagogical competence.

This study aims to describe the principal's role in supporting teachers' pedagogical competence development at SMP Negeri 2 Wolowaru. It addresses three connected questions: (1) how the principal plans and organizes teacher development; (2) how training, mentoring, motivation, and academic supervision are implemented; and (3) what opportunities and constraints are reported by the principal and teachers. The article first explains the method, then presents the findings by thematic category, discusses their relationship to the educational-leadership literature, and concludes with practical recommendations.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive design. Qualitative research is used to examine phenomena in their natural setting, with emphasis placed on meaning, context, and the perspectives of participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moleong, 2017). A descriptive design was selected because the study aims to describe and document the principal's leadership practices in supporting teachers' pedagogical competence development, rather than to test hypotheses or establish causal relationships (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The research was conducted at SMP Negeri 2 Wolowaru, Jalan Trans Ende–Maumere (Km. 64), Kelurahan Lisedetu, Kecamatan Wolowaru, Kabupaten Ende, Nusa Tenggara Timur, Indonesia. This school was selected as the research site because it represents a public junior secondary school operating outside a major urban centre in East Nusa Tenggara, a context in which descriptive documentation of principal leadership practices contributes to the limited literature on school improvement in eastern Indonesia.

The research participants were selected purposively. The principal was included as the primary participant given her central role in planning, organizing, and implementing teacher development activities. Teachers were included as additional participants to provide complementary accounts of how leadership practices were experienced from the classroom perspective (Sergiovanni, 2001). The participants identified in the research include the principal, Maria Yasintha Yosefina Suku, and teachers Juliana, Jos Sudarso, Sukarno Putra, Sri Sunarti, and Fitria. Participant consent for involvement in the research and for the use of their accounts in this publication was obtained prior to data collection.

Data were collected through three complementary techniques. Semi-structured interviews were the primary data source, allowing participants to describe their experiences of professional development planning, supervision, mentoring, and motivation in their own terms (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Interview questions addressed the principal's approach to identifying teachers'

development needs, organizing professional-learning activities, conducting classroom supervision, and following up on supervisory feedback. Observation was conducted to document instructional and school-level practices as they occurred, providing a check on interview accounts. Documentation — including school programs, supervision records, and professional-development schedules — provided supplementary evidence to corroborate findings from interviews and observation.

Data were analyzed through three iterative stages following Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014): data reduction, in which interview transcripts, observation notes, and documentary evidence were reviewed and coded according to themes relevant to the research questions; data display, in which coded data were organized into thematic categories covering planning, organizing, implementation, and local challenges; and conclusion drawing and verification, in which patterns across data sources were interpreted and cross-checked. Trustworthiness was supported through source triangulation — comparing information provided by the principal and teachers — and method triangulation, checking interview accounts against observation notes and documentary evidence (Moleong, 2017). Member checking was conducted by returning key findings to participants for confirmation prior to finalizing the analysis.

This research was conducted with the knowledge and permission of the school principal and teachers. Participants were informed of the research purpose, their right to withdraw, and the confidentiality of their responses. All participant names appear in this article with explicit consent from the individuals concerned.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

1. Planning Teacher Development

The principal described the need to observe teaching, provide feedback, and prepare training programs to help teachers design effective learning. At the beginning of each semester, teachers complete a self-evaluation and indicate their training needs. This information is then used to plan professional-development activities and, where possible, to connect the school with the education office or university-based resource persons. Teachers' accounts confirmed that planning included both internal and external opportunities. Internal workshops covered instructional strategies, assessment, and classroom management, while external opportunities included training, seminars, and further education. A mentoring arrangement was also identified in which more experienced teachers support newer colleagues with lesson planning and implementation. These accounts indicate that planning was understood not simply as scheduling activities but as identifying needs and matching support to those needs.

2. Organizing Collaborative Professional Learning

The principal's organizing role was expressed through the arrangement of training schedules, distribution of responsibilities, and formation of small teams or forums for discussing instructional strategies. Teachers reported opportunities to exchange ideas, review teaching practices, and participate in curriculum-related work. The principal was also described as encouraging collaboration with external parties, including education-office personnel and university resource persons.

A practical constraint emerged in the timing of professional-development activities. One teacher noted that training schedules could coincide with administrative responsibilities, limiting full participation. This observation suggests that the availability of training alone may not be sufficient: the school also needs workable schedules and clear workload arrangements so teachers can participate without undermining routine teaching duties.

3. Implementation: Supervision, Feedback, and Motivation

Academic supervision was a recurring feature of the reported leadership practices. The principal described classroom observation, feedback, and assistance with instructional planning as central ways to improve teaching. Teachers similarly reported periodic classroom supervision and constructive suggestions concerning teaching techniques and learning media. Supervision was described as intended not only to assess performance but also to provide guidance and follow-up discussions.

The reported practices also included encouragement and recognition. The principal was presented as a motivator who sought to maintain teachers' commitment to professional growth. Teacher statements indicated that structured development plans and supervisory follow-up could support their willingness to reflect on and improve their practice. The evidence, however, is primarily descriptive and based on participants' accounts; the study does not provide standardized measures that would establish the magnitude of change in pedagogical competence.

4. Reported Pedagogical Practices and Local Challenges

The findings link principal leadership support to several dimensions of pedagogical competence as formally defined in Peraturan Menteri Pendidikan Nasional Nomor 16 Tahun 2007: understanding students' characteristics, planning instruction, varying teaching methods, using learning media, managing classroom activity, and assessing learning. One teacher described efforts to understand students' social and psychological backgrounds, vary instructional methods, and use interactive media. At the same time, initial observations at the school identified lecture-dominated lessons, reliance on textbooks, and limited group discussion in some classes. Read together, these accounts indicate both existing development efforts and continuing areas for instructional improvement.

The school is identified as a public junior secondary school in Ende Regency, East Nusa Tenggara, serving students in a semi-rural area located along the Trans Ende–Maumere corridor. This contextual profile is noted only to locate the case geographically and to clarify the resource and access conditions that shape professional-development opportunities, not as evidence of leadership effectiveness.

Discussion

1. Planning Teacher Development

The principal's practice of collecting teacher self-evaluations as the basis for development planning is consistent with the characteristics of effective professional development identified by Darling-Hammond et al. (2017), who found that development activities are most effective when they are content-focused and directly connected to teachers' actual instructional challenges. When planning begins with an assessment of need rather than a fixed calendar of activities, it is more likely to address the specific gaps that affect classroom practice. Hallinger and Murphy (1985) similarly identify the coordination of the instructional program as a core dimension of instructional management, and the practices described here reflect that coordination function in a context where resources and access to external training are constrained by distance and geography. Guskey (2000) further emphasized that effective professional development begins with a clear diagnosis of the gap between current practice and desired outcomes — a principle directly reflected in the principal's needs-based approach to planning. Mulyasa (2019) notes that in the Indonesian context, needs-based planning is a foundational competency of professional school principals, and that generic, undifferentiated development activities that are not connected to diagnosed needs tend to have limited impact on classroom practice. The mentoring arrangement described by participants further extends the planning function: by connecting less experienced teachers to colleagues who

can model effective practice and provide day-to-day guidance, the principal distributes professional support beyond what any individual training event can sustain (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012).

2. Organizing Collaborative Professional Learning

The organizing arrangements described by participants — including small discussion groups, internal forums, and collaborative curriculum review — reflect what Wenger (1998) describes as communities of practice: contexts in which practitioners develop shared understanding through ongoing participation in collaborative work, rather than through isolated individual learning events. Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) describe the accumulation of such collaborative professional knowledge and relational trust as professional capital — a school-level resource that appreciates over time when leadership consistently invests in collegial support structures. The scheduling constraint reported by participants is consistent with OECD (2020) data from the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS), which identifies time constraints as among the most consistently reported barriers to teacher participation in professional development across participating systems, suggesting that this is a systemic challenge rather than a local anomaly. Leithwood et al. (2020) note that effective school leadership involves creating the organizational conditions that enable improvement, and the management of time and workload is among the most tangible of those conditions. For this school, coordinating the annual calendar to protect dedicated time for collaborative planning and integrating supervision feedback into existing teacher meeting structures may reduce scheduling conflicts without requiring additional working hours or external resources. These are practical organizational adjustments that fall within the principal's existing role rather than requiring additional institutional investment.

3. Implementation: Supervision, Feedback, and Motivation

The distinction participants drew between supervision for guidance and supervision for administrative compliance is theoretically significant. Sergiovanni (2001) identifies developmental supervision — in which classroom observation is followed by constructive feedback and collaborative goal-setting — as fundamentally different from evaluative supervision that merely checks compliance with administrative standards. Teachers in this study described supervision in developmental terms, emphasizing the guidance and follow-up discussion dimensions over assessment, which indicates that the principal's supervisory practice is oriented toward professional learning rather than performance management. Schön's (1983) concept of the reflective practitioner provides a complementary theoretical lens: when supervision creates structured opportunities for teachers to reflect critically on their practice in light of observed outcomes, they are more likely to develop adaptive, context-sensitive instructional responses rather than simply replicating prescribed techniques. Timperley (2008) further emphasizes that the most effective forms of professional development create opportunities for teachers to apply new learning in their classrooms and to receive feedback on the results, closing the loop between professional learning and instructional change. The post-observation discussions described by participants represent exactly this kind of feedback loop, provided they are conducted with specificity and followed by concrete classroom application.

Robinson et al.'s (2008) finding that leadership focused on promoting and participating in teacher learning had the strongest effect on student outcomes among the five leadership dimensions they examined reinforces the primacy of the developmental supervisory orientation described in this study. Robinson (2011) further elaborated that student-centered leadership is enacted when principals consistently prioritize activities that directly support teachers' instructional capacity — a characterization that fits the supervisory and motivational practices described by participants. Day and Gu (2010) demonstrate that teachers' sense of professional identity and sustained motivation is significantly shaped by the quality of relational support from school leadership, suggesting that the motivational role of the principal described by participants is not merely affective but constitutes a structural condition of sustained professional engagement. For

the principal's supervisory and motivational practices to consistently function as professional-learning tools, feedback must be specific, timely, respectful, and connected to actionable improvement steps that teachers can pursue before the next observation cycle.

4. Reported Pedagogical Practices and Local Challenges

The coexistence of reported improvement efforts and observed instructional challenges reflects a pattern widely recognized in the school improvement literature: change in classroom practice is gradual, uneven, and requires sustained leadership support over time (Hallinger, 2011; Fullan, 2014). Professional-development planning that identifies needs and organizes support is a necessary condition for improvement, but it is not sufficient on its own. Peer mentoring, collaborative lesson reflection, and follow-up observation after feedback are the kinds of sustained, practice-focused activities that can help teachers move from attending workshops to actually changing what happens in their classrooms (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Timperley, 2008). Sagala (2013) notes that in Indonesian schools, peer mentoring and internal discussion forums are among the most accessible and sustainable forms of professional development available to schools in rural or resource-constrained contexts, and that their effectiveness depends on the degree to which they are connected to identifiable instructional goals rather than conducted as informal social events.

The national policy framework — particularly the competence indicators specified in Peraturan Menteri Pendidikan Nasional Nomor 16 Tahun 2007 — provides a useful reference point for connecting the pedagogical dimensions observed in this study to formal professional standards. Mulyasa (2013) emphasizes that the ten pedagogical competence indicators in this regulation serve not merely as certification criteria but as a structured framework within which school-level supervision and feedback can be organized, enabling principals to frame their observations and suggestions in terms that teachers can connect to recognized professional expectations. The observed gap between this framework and some classroom practices identified in this study — including the dominance of lecture-based methods and limited use of varied media — reinforces the importance of connecting professional development to specific, observable competence dimensions rather than addressing pedagogical development in general terms.

From a broader policy perspective, pedagogical development in schools such as SMP Negeri 2 Wolowaru — located in a rural district with constrained access to external training — depends heavily on the quality of internal leadership and collegial support structures. UNESCO (2022) emphasizes that educational transformation in diverse and under-resourced contexts requires approaches that build local capacity and institutional resilience rather than relying on externally driven programs that may not be sustained beyond project cycles. Pont et al. (2008) similarly found that school leadership has its greatest impact on teaching and learning when principals concentrate on building internal professional-learning capacity rather than primarily managing external compliance requirements. The practices described in this article are largely resource-light, relying on the principal's relational capacity, planning consistency, and organizational skill rather than on costly external interventions. This is consistent with Leithwood and Jantzi's (2006) finding that transformational leadership practices influence teachers' classroom practices through motivational and capacity-building pathways that operate within existing institutional arrangements — a finding particularly relevant in contexts where resource constraints limit the availability of externally organized professional development.

Professional development in this context should focus not only on enabling teachers to attend workshops but on helping them design learning tasks that activate student thinking, select media appropriate to learning objectives, check understanding, and adapt instruction to students' diverse characteristics. The study did not measure student outcomes, so no claim is made that the reported leadership practices improved student achievement. Rather, the findings identify plausible

school-level processes through which sustained, internally organized, and relationally grounded principal leadership may support more responsive and varied teaching practice over time.

Several limitations of this study should be acknowledged. First, the study is a single-school descriptive case and its findings cannot be generalized statistically to other schools or districts. Second, the study does not specify the total number of interviewees or the exact dates and duration of fieldwork, which limits the precision with which the methodological scope can be assessed. Third, the evidence relies primarily on participants' self-reported accounts; independent classroom observation data and longitudinal records of instructional change were not available to corroborate or qualify participant descriptions. Fourth, the participants whose accounts are reported may reflect perspectives that are more engaged with professional development than those of teachers who did not participate in interviews. These limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings and when planning future research in similar contexts.

CONCLUSION

This study describes principal leadership at SMP Negeri 2 Wolowaru as comprising five interconnected practices: planning teacher development through needs-based assessment, organizing collaborative professional learning, implementing academic supervision with constructive feedback, providing mentoring and peer-learning opportunities, and sustaining teacher motivation. The findings indicate that these practices, when enacted in a planned, collaborative, and sustained manner, can support the development of teachers' pedagogical competence in dimensions including instructional planning, method variation, use of learning media, and classroom management. A recurring practical constraint is the overlap between professional-development schedules and teachers' administrative responsibilities, which limits consistent participation in development activities.

The study contributes a contextual description of instructional leadership practices in a rural public junior secondary school in Ende Regency, East Nusa Tenggara — a setting that is underrepresented in the Indonesian educational leadership literature. The findings suggest that resource-light, internally organized professional-learning arrangements — including peer mentoring, collaborative discussion, and supervisory follow-up — may be particularly relevant in schools where access to external training is constrained by distance and limited institutional resources. These arrangements do not require large external investments; they depend primarily on the principal's relational capacity, planning consistency, and commitment to sustaining a professional-learning culture within the school.

For school practitioners, the findings support three practical recommendations. First, academic supervision should consistently include specific, timely, and actionable feedback followed by a structured follow-up discussion, so that classroom observation functions as a professional-learning tool rather than an administrative compliance exercise. Second, professional-development schedules should be coordinated with the school's annual calendar and integrated with existing teacher meetings to reduce conflicts with administrative workload. Third, peer mentoring arrangements should be formalized with agreed goals and periodic reflection, so that the knowledge of experienced teachers is systematically shared across the teaching workforce.

For local education authorities, the findings suggest that supporting principals' instructional leadership capacity — through training in supervision techniques, needs assessment, and professional-learning facilitation — may be a cost-effective means of strengthening pedagogical competence in schools where external training access is limited. Future research should employ systematic classroom observation alongside interview data, follow changes in instructional practice over time through longitudinal designs, and extend the scope to multiple schools to examine

whether the leadership patterns described here are characteristic of similar rural school contexts in East Nusa Tenggara and comparable regions.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors thank the principal and teachers of SMP Negeri 2 Wolowaru for their willingness to participate in this research and for the time they dedicated to interviews and observation. The authors also acknowledge the support of the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Riau, in the preparation of this manuscript.

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