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## ORIGINAL RESEARCH ARTICLE

# The Role of Principal's Pedagogical Leadership in Teacher Professional Development at SMKS 6 Muhammadiyah Lebong Utara

Valerian<sup>1\*</sup>, Adi Asmara<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Universitas Muhammadiyah Bengkulu, Indonesia*

**Correspondence:** [majelistabligh0@gmail.com](mailto:majelistabligh0@gmail.com)

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## ABSTRACT

The principal's pedagogical leadership is a strategic factor in teacher professional development and improving the quality of education. This article discusses the concept of pedagogical leadership, its role in teacher professional development, implementation strategies, challenges faced, and its implications for improving the quality of education at SMKS 6 Muhammadiyah Lebong Utara. This study uses a qualitative method in the form of a case study involving the principal, teachers, and educational staff as participants. Data were collected through structured interviews, observations, and document studies, then analyzed using the Miles and Huberman framework. The results show that the principal's pedagogical leadership plays a central role in teacher professional development through five main functions: as an academic vision formulator, academic supervisor, facilitator of teacher professional learning, builder of a school culture that supports continuous learning, and as a motivator and role model. Effective implementation strategies include data-based needs mapping, sustainable academic supervision, formation of professional learning communities, management of resources that support learning, and continuous evaluation. Challenges faced include the principal's administrative burden, teacher resistance to change, resource limitations, and mismatches between training programs and teacher needs. This study concludes that teacher professional development will be more effective when the principal implements systematic, sustainable pedagogical leadership based on teachers' actual needs. The implication is that strengthening the principal's pedagogical leadership needs to become a priority agenda in education policy, not only in administrative and managerial aspects, but also in academic supervision competence, facilitation of learning communities, learning data analysis, and instructional change leadership.

**Keywords:** Pedagogical Leadership, Teacher Professional Development, Quality of Education



## ABSTRAK

Kepemimpinan pedagogik kepala sekolah merupakan faktor strategis dalam pengembangan profesional guru dan peningkatan mutu pendidikan. Artikel ini membahas konsep kepemimpinan pedagogik, perannya dalam pengembangan profesional guru, strategi implementasi, tantangan yang dihadapi, serta implikasinya bagi peningkatan mutu pendidikan di SMKS 6 Muhammadiyah Lebong Utara. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif berbentuk kajian kasus dengan melibatkan kepala sekolah, guru, dan tenaga kependidikan sebagai partisipan. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara terstruktur, pengamatan, dan studi dokumen, kemudian dianalisis menggunakan kerangka Miles dan Huberman. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kepemimpinan pedagogik kepala sekolah berperan sentral dalam pengembangan profesional guru melalui lima fungsi utama: sebagai perumus visi akademik, supervisor akademik, fasilitator pembelajaran profesional guru, pembangun budaya sekolah yang mendukung pembelajaran berkelanjutan, serta motivator dan teladan. Strategi implementasi yang efektif mencakup pemetaan kebutuhan berbasis data, supervisi akademik berkelanjutan, pembentukan komunitas belajar profesional, pengelolaan sumber daya yang berpihak pada pembelajaran, dan evaluasi berkelanjutan. Tantangan yang dihadapi meliputi beban administratif kepala sekolah, resistensi guru terhadap perubahan, keterbatasan sumber daya, dan ketidaksesuaian program pelatihan dengan kebutuhan guru. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa pengembangan profesional guru akan lebih efektif ketika kepala sekolah menjalankan kepemimpinan pedagogik yang sistematis, berkelanjutan, dan berbasis pada kebutuhan nyata guru. Implikasinya, penguatan kepemimpinan pedagogik kepala sekolah perlu menjadi agenda prioritas dalam kebijakan pendidikan, tidak hanya pada aspek administratif dan manajerial, tetapi juga pada kompetensi supervisi akademik, fasilitasi komunitas belajar, analisis data pembelajaran, dan kepemimpinan perubahan instruksional.

**Kata Kunci:** Kepemimpinan Pedagogik, Pengembangan Profesional Guru, Mutu Pendidikan

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The principal's pedagogical leadership is a form of leadership that places the teaching and learning process as the center of all policies, guidance, and decision-making in schools. In international literature, the closest term is instructional leadership, which is leadership focused on the quality of learning, teacher capacity development, classroom monitoring, and creating a school culture that supports teacher professional learning. 21st-century teachers are required to have more complex skills, not only as conveyors of knowledge but also as facilitators, mentors, and lifelong learners. Essential skills that must be possessed include: Innovative pedagogical strategies: Teachers must be able to design contextual, participatory, and meaningful learning with approaches such as Problem-Based Learning (PBL). Technological literacy: Integration of technology in learning is no longer an option but a necessity to increase engagement and personalized learning. Social-emotional skills: Teachers must be able to build positive relationships with students to create an inclusive and supportive learning environment (Fatkhul Ibnu Prayoga, Nisau Masruroh, 2024).

In the context of Indonesian education, pedagogical leadership is also understood as the principal's ability to direct, guide, supervise, and facilitate teachers to continuously improve their professional, pedagogical, social, and personality competencies (Mizal & Hidayani, 2021). This topic is becoming increasingly important because improving the quality of education greatly depends on teacher quality, while teacher quality does not develop optimally without strong school

leadership support. A number of studies show that principals who play an active role in academic supervision, developing training programs, learning reflection, and strengthening collaborative culture are able to encourage teacher professionalism more concretely compared to principals who only focus on administration (Darwanti, 2024). Thus, pedagogical leadership can no longer be viewed as an additional function, but rather as the core of the principal's role.

This article discusses the concept of the principal's pedagogical leadership, its role in teacher professional development, implementation strategies in schools, challenges faced, and its implications for improving the quality of education. The discussion is structured to show that teacher professional development is not only an individual teacher's concern, but also the result of conscious, directed, and sustainable leadership design (Mizal & Hidayani, 2021).

## 2. RESEARCH METHODS

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This research applies a qualitative method in the form of a case study. The qualitative method is used so that researchers can comprehensively explore the role of leadership style and principal supervision in improving teacher professionalism. The case study is applied to understand this phenomenon in a specific setting, namely the elementary school that served as the research locus. Research participants include the principal, teachers, and educational staff.

Data collection was conducted using several methods, including: 1) Structured Interviews. Interviews were conducted with the principal, teachers, and educational staff to obtain data regarding leadership models, supervision implementation, and their views on the quality of education and teacher professionalism. 2) Observation. Observations were carried out to directly observe the implementation of the principal's leadership and supervision, including the dynamics of interaction between the principal, teachers, and students. 3) Document Study.

The research subjects consisted of teachers from SMKS 6 Muhammadiyah Lebong Utara. This research was conducted at SMKS 6 Muhammadiyah Lebong Utara located at Jalan Kampung Jawa No. 123, Pasar Muara Aman Village, Lebong Utara District, Lebong Regency - Bengkulu. The collected data were analyzed qualitatively using the Miles and Huberman framework, which includes the stages: Data Reduction, Data Presentation, and Conclusion Drawing. To ensure data validity and reliability, source and method triangulation was conducted. In addition, member checking was performed by requesting verification from research participants regarding interview and observation results to ensure data accuracy and credibility.

Research instruments are tools used by researchers to collect data so that research questions or objectives can be answered systematically and accountably. In this study, data were collected through structured interviews, observation, and document studies, then analyzed using the Miles and Huberman framework.

### 3. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

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#### Concept of Principal's Pedagogical Leadership

Pedagogical leadership is leadership that directly focuses on improving the quality of learning. In this role, the principal does not only act as an institutional manager but also as a learning leader who sets the school's academic direction, fosters teachers, oversees the curriculum, and ensures that every educational practice supports the achievement of student learning outcomes. Its primary focus lies on how teachers teach, how students learn, and how the school builds a system that supports continuous improvement in the quality of learning. Educational leadership is the ability of a school leader to influence and direct school members to achieve educational goals through an interactive process that emphasizes moral values, human development, and a productive academic culture. Various leadership theories, such as transformational, transactional, and participatory leadership, are explained as conceptual foundations in the practice of principal leadership. Pedagogical leadership is not just about managing an educational institution, but also about creating an environment that supports effective, high-quality, and inclusive learning. Pedagogical leaders play a key role in achieving educational goals and helping individuals reach their full potential.

In practice, pedagogical leadership is evident in several key actions. First, the principal establishes a clear academic vision so that all school members understand the quality standards of learning to be achieved. Second, the principal conducts academic supervision through classroom observations, providing feedback, and follow-up for improvement. Third, the principal facilitates teacher professional development through training, reflective discussions, learning communities, and the management of learning resources. Research in elementary schools shows that these strategies are implemented through supervision, learning resource management, leadership innovation, and facilitation of professional development. Recent research by Anggaraini, Kusumawati, and Nurlina (2026) at SD Negeri 226 Palembang shows that the principal's management strategy in encouraging teacher innovation in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum is carried out through four main functions. These strategies include planning oriented towards teacher innovation, organizing through the formation of learning innovation teams, implementing professional development through training and mentoring, and monitoring through academic supervision and reflective evaluation.

In other studies, effective principal leadership tends to be democratic and collaborative. Teachers are seen as partners who can provide input, not merely as policy implementers. This pattern encourages a sense of ownership of school programs, openness to evaluation, and active involvement in self-development. Therefore, pedagogical leadership is not synonymous with rigid control, but rather with clear direction accompanied by consistent professional support.

#### Teacher Professionalism and Its Needs

Teacher professionalism is the ability of teachers to carry out educational tasks based on competence, commitment, ethics, and professional responsibility. Professionalism does not stop at mastery of subject matter, but also includes the ability to plan learning, choose appropriate strategies, conduct assessments, reflect on teaching practices, and improve learning based on

student needs. Because curriculum demands, technology, and student characteristics are constantly changing, teacher professionalism must be understood as a lifelong learning process.

Teacher professional development usually takes place through formal training, workshops, peer discussions, academic supervision, classroom action research, and reflective learning in the workplace. However, the effectiveness of these various activities is strongly influenced by the school environment. Without the support of the principal, professional development activities often stop at the administrative level, are not connected to classroom needs, and do not result in changes in learning practices. Therefore, the principal acts as a bridge between teacher development policies and the daily work realities of teachers.

A study in Kenya found that the principal's instructional leadership has a positive impact on teacher professional development, including pedagogical skills, understanding of assessment and reporting, self-efficacy, and support for inclusive education. These findings reinforce the view that teacher professional development is not merely the result of individual training, but is also influenced by leadership that is able to create a professional learning climate in schools.

### **The Principal's Role in Teacher Professional Development**

The first role of the principal is as the formulator of the school's academic direction. The principal needs to establish a clear learning vision so that teacher development has measurable targets. When the academic vision is commonly understood, teachers more easily align their lesson planning, teaching strategies, and student achievement targets with school priorities. This vision also serves as the basis for determining training themes, supervision, and teacher evaluation.

The second role is as an academic supervisor. Supervision is not just a classroom visit to assess teachers, but a professional development process that includes observing learning, identifying strengths and weaknesses, reflective dialogue, and follow-up for improvement. Research at SMA Negeri 2 Simeulue Tengah shows that principals improve teacher professionalism by providing direction, solutions to learning problems, and opportunities to attend training and workshops. Other findings show that monitoring, supervision, evaluation, and training conducted regularly can motivate teachers, add to their experience, and broaden their professional horizons.

The third role is as a facilitator of teacher learning. Principals who practice pedagogical leadership do not only assess teachers but also provide conditions for teachers to learn. This can take the form of allocating time for professional discussions, encouraging lesson study, forming teacher learning communities, facilitating in-house training, and connecting teachers with relevant learning resources. In research on teacher leadership development, effective principal strategies include placing teachers according to their competence, developing continuous training programs, developing teacher leadership based on school vision, and developing a needs-based curriculum.

The fourth role is as a builder of a school culture that supports professional learning. A healthy school culture is characterized by collaboration, openness to criticism, collective reflection, and a commitment to continuous improvement. Research shows that democratic leadership styles and collaborative supervision help build harmonious work teams and encourage teachers to be more

open to professional development. With such a culture, teachers do not see evaluation as a threat, but as part of the growth process.

The fifth role is as a motivator and role model. Principals who are disciplined, open to learning, and consistently demonstrate commitment to quality will have a moral influence on teachers. A study at SMP Bhakti Pertiwi confirmed that training activities, morning meetings, monitoring, supervision, and evaluation not only improve teacher capabilities but also provide role models, motivation, and new experiences. This means that pedagogical leadership works not only through systems but also through the principal's personal example.

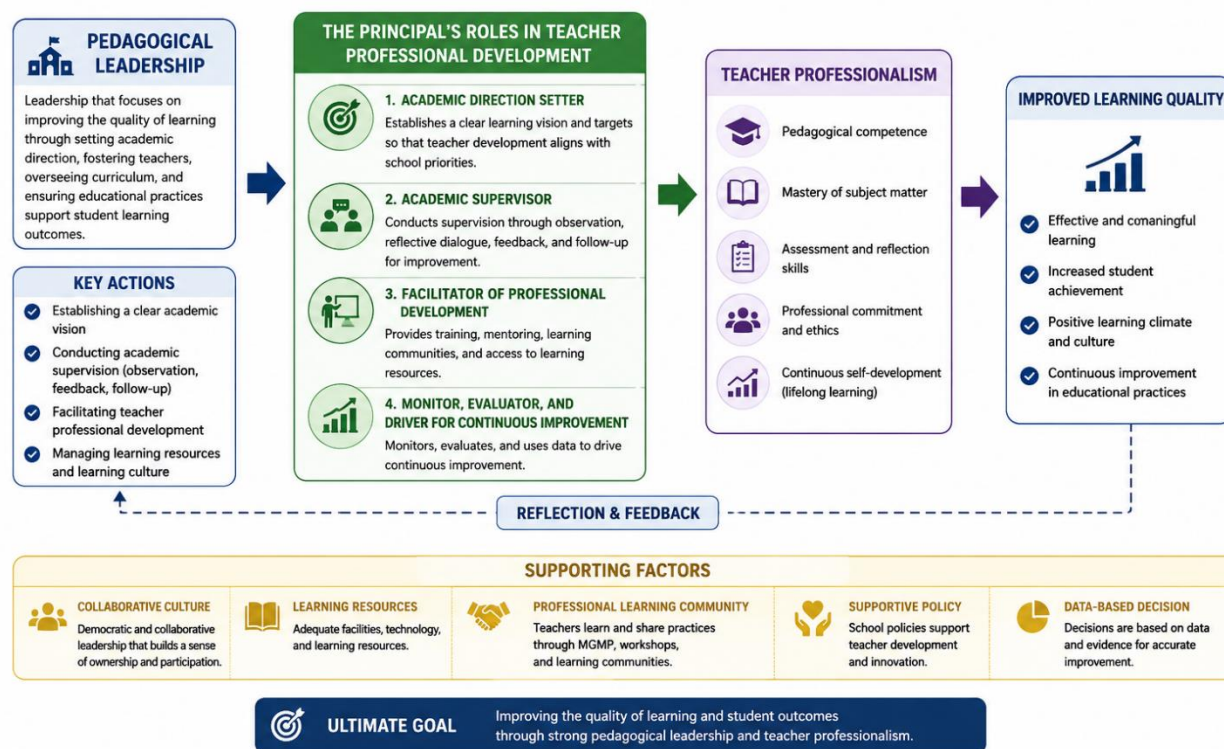
### **Strategies for Implementing Pedagogical Leadership**

The implementation of pedagogical leadership requires systematic steps. First, the principal needs to map teacher development needs based on real data, such as supervision results, evaluation of teaching tools, student learning outcomes, and teacher reflections. With this approach, professional development programs are not general in nature but truly target needs that arise in learning practice. The principal in this study acts as a learning leader and agent of change who creates a school environment that supports teacher creativity and independence in developing innovative learning practices. These strategies encourage the emergence of learning innovations such as the application of project-based learning, the use of learning technology, the use of interactive media, and the development of authentic assessments.

Second, the principal needs to make academic supervision a coaching cycle. Classroom observations should be followed by constructive feedback conferences, improvement agreements, and monitoring of follow-up actions. Research shows that leadership that supports continuous supervision and informal reflective discussions can improve teacher competence and the quality of learning. This practice is more effective than supervision that is merely administrative.

Third, schools need to build professional learning communities. Teachers are encouraged to share good practices, discuss teaching difficulties, examine student learning outcomes, and design solutions collectively. These findings are important because they show that the principal does not have to be the sole agent of change; they also need to foster leadership among teachers. Fourth, the principal must manage resources in a way that supports learning. This includes using the school budget for relevant training, procuring teaching materials, utilizing educational technology, and arranging schedules so that teachers have room for collaboration. Recent research on instructional leadership strategies in elementary schools confirms that the management of learning resources and leadership innovation are important parts of efforts to build meaningful learning and teacher professionalism.

Fifth, the evaluation of teacher professional development needs to be conducted continuously. The success of a program is not sufficiently measured by the number of activities carried out, but by changes in teacher competence, changes in learning practices, and improvements in student learning outcomes. In this way, the principal can ensure that every intervention truly has a pedagogical impact, not merely fulfills the school's agenda.



**Figure 1.** Concept of Principal's Pedagogical Leadership

### Challenges in Implementation

Although important, the implementation of pedagogical leadership faces various challenges. One of them is the administrative burden on principals, which often consumes time and energy, thereby reducing attention to academic development. In such conditions, principals tend to get caught up in routine management affairs and are less present in the classroom learning process. Yet, the essence of pedagogical leadership lies precisely in the principal's proximity to teaching and learning practices.

Another challenge is teacher resistance to supervision and change. Some teachers still view supervision as a threatening control or assessment, rather than as professional support. Research in Central Simeulue noted that one of the problems faced is the weak awareness of teachers in improving their professionalism, thus requiring improved management, coaching, and more intensive direction. This situation shows that changing school culture is a long-term endeavor. In addition, limited resources are also an obstacle. Not all schools have adequate budgets, access to quality training, or strong professional networks. In some contexts, teacher professional development is highly dependent on the principal's creativity in utilizing internal school resources through self-training, regular discussions, and collaborative supervision. Therefore, the effectiveness of pedagogical leadership is not always determined by the abundance of resources, but by the ability to manage existing resources strategically.

Another obstacle is the discrepancy between the substance of training programs and teachers' needs in the field. Training that is general, too theoretical, or does not address actual learning problems is often ineffective in changing teaching practices. Therefore, the principal needs to ensure that every professional development initiative is based on needs identification, relevant to school conditions, and accompanied by post-training monitoring and mentoring.

### **Implications for Education Quality**

The principal's pedagogical leadership has a direct implication on the quality of learning. When teachers receive targeted guidance, constructive feedback, and access to professional learning, the quality of planning and implementation of learning tends to improve. Ultimately, this change impacts student engagement, the effectiveness of the learning process, and better learning outcomes. The next implication is the formation of the school as a learning organization. The school is no longer just a place where teachers work, but also a place where teachers learn collectively. In such an environment, learning innovations are more likely to grow because teachers feel supported, valued, and have room to experiment professionally.

The implication for education policy shows the need to strengthen principal capacity, not only limited to administrative and managerial competence but also including pedagogical leadership. Principals must have skills in conducting academic supervision, forming learning communities, analyzing learning data, and directing instructional change in schools. Without this capacity, teacher quality improvement programs can run incompletely and be difficult to sustain. In the Indonesian context, teacher professional development will be more effective if the principal plays an active role as a coach, facilitator, motivator, and role model. The results of national research show that training, monitoring, supervision, evaluation, work discipline, and personal and group coaching are concrete steps that principals can take to improve teacher professionalism. Thus, pedagogical leadership is a strategic factor in educational renewal at the school level.

## **5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS**

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The role of the principal's pedagogical leadership in teacher professional development is very central because the principal determines the academic direction, guides learning practices, facilitates teacher learning, and builds a school culture that supports continuous improvement. Teacher professional development will be more effective when positioned as a process embedded in the daily life of the school through supervision, reflection, collaboration, and relevant training. Various studies show that principals who actively exercise pedagogical leadership are able to improve teacher motivation, capacity, and professionalism, although their success remains influenced by school culture, teacher awareness, and resource availability. Therefore, strengthening the principal's pedagogical leadership needs to be prioritized as a main agenda in improving the quality of education. Schools with leadership oriented toward pedagogical aspect.

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