

# Institutional Leadership in Improving Teacher Performance in Remote Senior High Schools

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## ABSTRACT

This study examined institutional leadership in improving teacher performance in remote senior high schools. The problem addressed was the persistent gap between leadership policy and teachers' daily professional practice in schools with limited access, infrastructure, and supervisory support. A qualitative multi-site case study was conducted at SMAN 1 Singkup and SMAN 1 Marau through interviews, observation, and document analysis involving principals, vice principals, teachers, and school staff. The findings showed that institutional leadership improved teacher performance when the principal translated school vision into measurable routines, strengthened collegial supervision, protected instructional time, and mobilized local resources. The two schools demonstrated different emphases: SMAN 1 Singkup was stronger in discipline, attendance control, and structured lesson administration, whereas SMAN 1 Marau showed stronger collaborative problem solving and community-based support. The study concluded that teacher performance in remote schools was not determined only by individual competence, but by the quality of institutional arrangements that connected vision, supervision, professional learning, and contextual resource management.

## Article Information

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*Kepemimpinan institusional;  
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## ABSTRACT

Penelitian ini mengkaji kepemimpinan institusional dalam meningkatkan kinerja guru pada sekolah menengah atas di daerah pedalaman. Masalah yang dijawab adalah kesenjangan antara kebijakan kepemimpinan sekolah dan praktik profesional guru sehari-hari pada satuan pendidikan yang menghadapi keterbatasan akses, infrastruktur, dan pendampingan supervisi. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus multisitus di SMAN 1 Singkup dan SMAN 1 Marau melalui wawancara, observasi, serta telaah dokumen terhadap kepala sekolah, wakil kepala sekolah, guru, dan tenaga kependidikan. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa kepemimpinan institusional meningkatkan kinerja guru ketika kepala sekolah mampu menerjemahkan visi sekolah ke dalam rutinitas terukur, memperkuat supervisi kolegial, menjaga waktu pembelajaran, dan menggerakkan sumber daya lokal. SMAN 1 Singkup menonjol pada disiplin kehadiran dan tertib administrasi pembelajaran, sedangkan SMAN 1 Marau lebih kuat pada pemecahan masalah kolaboratif dan dukungan komunitas. Penelitian menyimpulkan bahwa kinerja guru di daerah pedalaman tidak hanya ditentukan oleh kompetensi individual, tetapi oleh mutu tata kelola institusional yang menghubungkan visi, supervisi, pembelajaran profesional, dan manajemen sumber daya kontekstual.

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## 1. Introduction

Teacher performance is a central determinant of school quality because all education policies are ultimately tested through the quality of planning, implementation, assessment, and reflection in classroom learning. In remote senior high schools, teacher performance problems cannot be understood merely as individual issues. Common challenges include limited transportation access, unstable internet networks, limited opportunities for professional development, high administrative workloads, and low intensity of continuous academic supervision. These conditions require teachers to work under dual pressure: meeting national curriculum standards while also adapting to the geographical and social realities of the school community.

In this context, institutional leadership becomes important because the principal does not only function as an administrative figure, but also as an architect of governance who builds school norms, routines, support systems, and accountability mechanisms. The educational leadership literature emphasizes that leadership has a stronger influence on learning outcomes and teacher performance when school leaders focus on learning, build shared goals, and develop teacher capacity [1]. Effective leadership does not stop at giving instructions; rather, it is present through institutional practices that connect vision, supervision, work culture, collaboration, and the use of school data [2].

The phenomena at SMAN 1 Singkup and SMAN 1 Marau show that remote schools have leadership needs that differ from those of schools in urban centers. Principals must simultaneously manage teacher attendance, the implementation of learning, limited facilities, and relationships with the community. At the same time, teachers are required to prepare teaching materials, use formative assessment, adapt learning to students' characteristics, and demonstrate professional commitment. This situation requires a form of leadership that is not only instructional but also institutional, namely leadership that organizes systems so that teachers' professional behavior becomes an organizational habit.

Previous studies have widely explained the relationship between principal leadership and teacher performance from transformational, instructional, or distributed perspectives. Instructional leadership emphasizes the principal's focus on the learning mission, supervision, and curriculum management [3]. Transformational leadership emphasizes inspiration, motivation, and organizational culture change [4]. Meanwhile, distributed leadership highlights the distribution of leadership responsibilities among school actors through shared practice [5]. Nevertheless, a research gap remains in the limited number of studies that position remote schools as institutional arenas with distinctive structural limitations, rather than merely as

geographically distant research locations.

Another research gap lies in the tendency of teacher performance studies to use general indicators without examining how those indicators are negotiated in school environments with limited access. In fact, teacher performance in remote areas is not sufficiently measured only by administrative completeness, but also by the ability to maintain continuity of learning, carry out simple innovations, build communication with students, and endure complex work pressures. [6] refers to this as professional capital, which is built through a combination of individual competence, collegial culture, and organizational decision making. Therefore, the leadership needed is leadership that institutionalizes support, not merely demands compliance.

The novelty of this study lies in formulating institutional leadership as a configuration of leadership practices that integrates school vision, academic supervision, work culture, professional learning, and the mobilization of local resources to improve teacher performance in remote areas. This study does not merely compare two schools, but identifies leadership patterns that transform school policies into teachers' professional routines. Thus, this study offers a contextual perspective on how remote schools build organizational resilience through governance-based leadership.

The importance of this study is related to the need to improve educational quality with equity. The quality gap between urban and remote schools will not be overcome solely through the distribution of facilities, but also through the strengthening of leadership capable of strategically managing limited resources. Global reports on educational leadership emphasize the importance of school leaders in creating inclusive, effective learning environments oriented toward improving teacher capacity [7]. Therefore, this study is important for strengthening the empirical basis for developing a school leadership model that is relevant to remote conditions in Indonesia.

Based on the discussion above, this study aims to describe and analyze how institutional leadership is implemented at SMAN 1 Singkup and SMAN 1 Marau, how these practices influence teacher performance, and what factors strengthen or hinder their success. The main focus of the study is directed at the relationship between leadership actions and changes in teachers' professional behavior, especially in the aspects of work discipline, lesson planning, learning implementation, evaluation, collaboration, and adaptation to the limitations of remote contexts.

## 2. Research Method

This study employed a qualitative approach with a multi-site case study design. This design was chosen because the study

sought to understand institutional leadership practices in depth in two school contexts with remote characteristics, namely SMAN 1 Singkup and SMAN 1 Marau. A case study enables researchers to trace the meanings, processes, and patterns of relationships between principal leadership and teacher performance in real situations [8].

The research subjects were selected purposively by considering the informants' involvement in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of teacher performance. The informants consisted of principals, vice principals for curriculum, subject teachers, homeroom teachers, and educational staff involved in learning documentation and administration. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, observation of school activities, and document analysis, including principals' work programs, teaching materials, attendance lists, supervision records, and evaluation meeting documents.

Data analysis was carried out through data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing as developed by [9]. Data validity was strengthened through source triangulation, technique triangulation, limited member checking with key informants, and discussions among researchers. In this study, the supporting field evidence was assumed to be complete and accurate according to the research documents; therefore, the analysis was directed toward academic interpretation of the patterns of findings rather than repeated administrative verification.

**Table 1. Research Interview Grid**

Focus	Informants	Main Questions	Data Explored
School vision and direction	Principal, vice principal	How is the school vision translated into teacher performance improvement programs?	Clarity of targets, program priorities, communication of vision.
Academic supervision	Principal, teachers	How is supervision conducted, and how is it followed up?	Frequency of supervision, feedback, mentoring, improvement notes.
Teacher work culture	Teachers, educational staff	What work habits are built to maintain discipline and learning quality?	Attendance, teaching responsibility, coordination, work ethic.
Professional collaboration	Teachers, homeroom teachers	How do teachers learn from one another and solve learning problems?	Internal MGMP, student case discussions, sharing teaching materials.
Resource support	Principal, committee,	How does the school	Community mobilization,

Teacher performance	Principal, teachers	educational staff	overcome limitations in facilities and access?	scheduling, use of local facilities.
			What indicators show improved teacher performance?	Planning, implementation, assessment, reflection, discipline, innovation.

Table 1 shows that the interviews were not only directed at general perceptions of leadership, but also at evidence of practices that could be linked to changes in teacher performance. The questions were designed to explore the relationship between institutional decisions, work routines, and teachers' professional behavior in each school.

### 3. Results and Discussion

#### 3.1. Leadership Context in the Two Schools

The findings show that SMAN 1 Singkup and SMAN 1 Marau face relatively similar problems, namely limited access, variations in teacher discipline, limited learning facilities, and the need to strengthen work culture. However, the two schools build different institutional responses. SMAN 1 Singkup places greater emphasis on strengthening control systems, administrative order, and the monitoring of learning discipline. In contrast, SMAN 1 Marau emphasizes a collaborative approach, joint problem solving, and the involvement of the school community.

These differences show that institutional leadership is not identical to a single leadership style. Principals in remote areas need to adapt strategies to teachers' characteristics, community support, and school resources. This finding is consistent with the view of [10] that educational leadership always operates within particular organizational structures and social contexts. In other words, leadership effectiveness is not only determined by the personal qualities of the leader, but also by the ability to build systems that enable teachers to work consistently.

**Table 2. Summary of Findings at SMAN 1 Singkup and SMAN 1 Marau**

Aspect	SMAN 1 Singkup	SMAN 1 Marau	Meaning of Findings
Leadership direction	The school vision is translated into discipline targets, teaching materials, and the implementation of lesson hours.	The school vision is translated into collegial work, community support, and local problem solving.	Institutional leadership works through translating vision into school routines.
Academic supervision	Supervision is more scheduled, emphasizing	Supervision is more dialogic through discussion of	Supervision is effective when followed up,

	administrative completeness and classroom observation.	learning problems and teacher reflection.	not merely when documents are checked.
Discipline culture	Teacher attendance and compliance with schedules are key indicators of change.	Discipline is built through shared commitment and mutual reminders among teachers.	Discipline in remote schools requires formal control and collegial norms.
Teacher collaboration	Collaboration begins to grow through evaluation meetings and joint preparation of teaching materials.	Collaboration is stronger through informal discussions and the sharing of strategies for dealing with limitations.	Collaboration bridges limited facilities and the demands of learning quality.
Teacher performance	Improved in administrative order, attendance, and learning implementation.	Improved in method adaptation, communication with students, and professional solidarity.	Teacher performance is the result of interaction between individual competence and institutional support.
Main constraints	Limited network access and variations in teacher commitment.	Limited learning facilities and teachers' travel distance.	Geographical constraints must be addressed through adaptive organizational design.

Table 2 shows that the two schools have different but complementary patterns of improvement. SMAN 1 Singkup demonstrates that strengthening discipline and administration can serve as an initial foundation for improving teacher performance. SMAN 1 Marau demonstrates that collaboration and community involvement can strengthen teachers' resilience in situations of limitation. Thus, institutional leadership cannot be reduced to the principal's leadership style; it needs to be understood as a design of organizational practices that shapes teachers' professional behavior.

### 3.2. Interview Findings in the Two Schools

Interviews with informants at SMAN 1 Singkup show that the principal positioned discipline and order as entry points for improving performance. Teachers stated that supervision schedules, checks of teaching materials, and routine evaluations made them better prepared to teach. One teacher emphasized that clear weekly targets helped teachers organize teaching materials even though internet access was not always stable. This finding shows that a consistent control system can reduce uncertainty in

teachers' work in remote schools.

At SMAN 1 Marau, the interviews showed a stronger emphasis on collegial support. Teachers stated that the principal encouraged small discussion forums to address student difficulties, limited media, and alternative teaching strategies. The vice principal explained that evaluation meetings did not only discuss administrative achievements, but also teachers' experiences in maintaining students' learning motivation. This pattern shows that institutional leadership can operate through mechanisms of dialogue and professional trust.

Interview findings in both schools also revealed that teachers felt more encouraged when the principal was present in real learning problems. This presence did not always take the form of formal instructions, but could involve assisting teachers in preparing teaching materials, helping arrange substitute schedules, facilitating communication with parents, or seeking solutions when learning facilities were unavailable. This strengthens the argument that effective school leaders do not only assess performance, but also provide the conditions that make performance possible [11].

**Table 3. Matrix of Interview Findings at SMAN 1 Singkup and SMAN 1 Marau**

Interview Theme	Findings at SMAN 1 Singkup	Findings at SMAN 1 Marau	Interpretation
Clarity of direction	Teachers understand work priorities through attendance targets, teaching materials, and weekly evaluations.	Teachers understand the school direction through dialogue on the vision and the distribution of responsibilities.	School direction is effective when translated into concrete tasks.
Supervision feedback	Feedback contains corrections to teaching materials and technical teaching suggestions.	Feedback is more reflective and linked to students' problems.	Supervision needs to combine quality control and professional development.
Teacher motivation	Motivation increases because teachers feel their performance is monitored fairly.	Motivation increases because teachers feel supported and trusted.	Motivation grows through accountability and trust.
Work barriers	Internet network, administrative workload, and distance for some teachers.	Limited learning facilities, transportation access, and heterogeneous student readiness.	Remote-area constraints are structural and require institutional responses.

Impact on performance	Teachers are more orderly in preparing materials and maintaining teaching hours.	Teachers are more adaptive in choosing methods and working together to solve problems.	Performance improves when the school system provides direction, support, and space for reflection.
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Performance indicators are not limited to the completeness of lesson plans or teaching modules, but also include punctual attendance, the ability to adapt teaching materials, the use of simple assessments, communication with students, and willingness to participate in collegial reflection. Therefore, teacher performance evaluation needs to combine administrative, pedagogical, social, and contextual indicators. This approach is fairer to teachers in remote areas because it takes into account the structural barriers they face.

The interview matrix in Table 3 confirms that teacher performance in the two schools did not improve because of a single intervention. Improvement occurred through a combination of clear direction, supervision with follow-up, a jointly maintained work culture, and support for practical constraints. At SMAN 1 Singkup, institutional strength was reflected in an orderly monitoring system. At SMAN 1 Marau, institutional strength was reflected in the ability to build professional solidarity. These two patterns show that school leadership needs to move from a supervision model toward a capacity-strengthening model.

When linked to the theory of professional capital, improvement in teacher performance occurs when schools are able to develop human capital, social capital, and decisional capital simultaneously [6]. Human capital is reflected in improved teaching competence. Social capital is reflected in collaboration among teachers. Decisional capital is reflected in teachers' ability to choose learning strategies according to students' conditions and the facilities available. Institutional leadership plays a role in connecting these three forms of capital through consistent school governance.

3.3. Institutional Leadership and Teacher Performance

The findings strengthen the view that institutional leadership improves teacher performance through three main mechanisms. First is the direction mechanism, namely the principal's ability to set priorities that teachers understand. Without clear direction, teachers in remote schools can easily become trapped in administrative routines without a quality orientation. Clear direction enables teachers to know what needs to be improved, when targets must be achieved, and how achievements are assessed.

The practical implication of these findings is the need for a remote school leadership model that emphasizes four agendas. First, principals need to formulate realistic and measurable teacher performance targets. Second, academic supervision needs to be implemented as a coaching cycle, not merely as an administrative activity. Third, schools need to build collaboration forums that are simple but routine. Fourth, principals need to develop networks with the community, school committees, and local governments to overcome resource limitations. This agenda is consistent with the idea of leadership for learning, which positions the school as a professional community [2].

Second is the professional support mechanism. Supervision in both schools became more meaningful when it did not stop at assessment but was followed by mentoring. This is consistent with [1], which shows that leadership directly involved in learning and teacher development has a strong influence on school outcomes. In remote contexts, professional support also includes practical assistance such as schedule adjustments, sharing offline teaching materials, and managing limited facilities.

4. Conclusion

Third is the mechanism of institutionalizing work culture. Effective principals build norms that teaching materials, attendance, evaluation, and collaboration are not temporary demands, but organizational habits. When these norms are institutionalized, teachers work not only because they are being monitored, but because there is a shared understanding of the school's professional standards. At this point, institutional leadership differs from personalistic leadership. What is maintained is not dependence on the figure of the principal, but a system that keeps quality functioning.

This study concludes that institutional leadership plays an important role in improving teacher performance at SMAN 1 Singkup and SMAN 1 Marau. This role operates through translating the school vision into measurable work routines, strengthening academic supervision with follow-up, institutionalizing a culture of discipline, developing teacher collaboration, and mobilizing local resources to address the limitations of remote schools.

This discussion also shows that teacher performance in remote schools must be viewed multidimensionally.

SMAN 1 Singkup demonstrates strengths in the system of disciplinary control, administrative order, and the monitoring of learning implementation. SMAN 1 Marau demonstrates strengths in collaboration, collegial support, and community-based problem solving. Both schools show that improving teacher performance does not depend only on teachers' personal abilities, but also on institutional design that provides direction, support, and accountability.

Academically, this study enriches the field of educational

leadership by positioning remote schools as contexts that have their own leadership logic. Practically, this study recommends that principals in remote areas develop leadership that does not merely supervise teachers, but builds work systems that enable teachers to grow, collaborate, and remain productive amid limitations. Future research can test this institutional leadership model using a mixed-methods approach so that the relationship between leadership practices and teacher performance indicators can be measured more broadly.

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