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Principal Leadership and History Teacher Performance at Vocation High School

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Abstract

School leadership can support teachers through professional learning, instructional supervision, and the organization of everyday teaching responsibilities. This study examined principal leadership, efforts to develop history teacher performance, and the forms of support associated with teaching at SMK DDI Siendeng, Central Sulawesi, Indonesia. A qualitative design combined a phenomenological perspective with descriptive reporting. Five informants were selected purposively: the principal, the vice principal for curriculum, a history teacher, a general teacher, and a grade XI student. Data were collected through semistructured interviews, nonparticipant observation, and documentation, then analyzed through data collection, reduction, display, and conclusion verification. Triangulation compared participant accounts with classroom observations and documents. Findings identified support for training and subject teacher forums, shared planning, examination of teaching documents, classroom supervision, feedback, and reminders about professional responsibilities. The history teacher described preparing teaching modules, combining explanation with discussion and questioning, assessing students through several activities, and providing additional guidance or enrichment. However, one teacher reported that management coordination was concentrated at the beginning of the semester and needed strengthening afterward. An appended teaching module indicated planned opportunities for historical inquiry, although planning documents did not establish their implementation. Leadership therefore appeared to support the conditions under which teaching was organized, rather than demonstrate a measured improvement in performance or achievement. The study recommends continuous coordination, documented supervision follow-up, and professional learning connected to historical content and students' work. Further research should examine these practices over time and assess teaching through evidence of classroom practice as well as administrative readiness.

1. Introduction

Principals influence teachers' work through decisions about responsibilities, professional learning, and the support available during instruction. For a history teacher, that support may involve access to suitable materials, discussion of classroom difficulties, and feedback on how students engage with historical explanations. Nevertheless, the existence of leadership activities does not establish that teaching has improved. A completed lesson plan shows preparation, while a classroom observation or an example of students' reasoning provides different evidence about instruction. The research problem at SMK DDI Siendeng concerned how principal leadership supported the history teacher's everyday work and which aspects still required development. Examining these relationships calls for attention to specific practices and experiences rather than a judgment that leadership is either effective or ineffective.

The school is a private vocational institution in Siendeng, Parigi Moutong Regency, Central Sulawesi. The initial problem statement raised concerns about leadership decisions, professional support, and the suitability of teaching assignments. Subsequent interviews, however, described supportive practices, including opportunities for training, consultation, and feedback. These accounts require interpretation together. Support can be available while its continuity remains limited, and a favorable description of supervision can coexist with unresolved instructional needs. The present study therefore investigates leadership as it is experienced in an organizational setting. Its focus is the relationship between school arrangements and the history teacher's planning, classroom instruction, assessment, and professional responsibilities, rather than a statistical estimate of the principal's effect.

Research on successful leadership offers a useful starting point. Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins (2020) describe leadership as contributing to teaching and learning substantially through classroom and school conditions. This perspective directs attention toward the opportunities and constraints within which teachers work. A principal's encouragement may matter because it opens access to learning or helps a teacher act on feedback. Likewise, task allocation may clarify responsibilities without directly changing the quality of a historical explanation. For this study, the implication is to trace the reported forms of support and the practices with which participants associate them.

Hallinger (2018) emphasizes that leadership practices need to be understood in context. Common practices such as developing staff and setting goals take different forms under different institutional conditions. This is relevant to a private vocational school, where organizational priorities and staffing arrangements provide the setting for teaching a general academic subject. Findings from a larger school or another educational level cannot determine how support operates at SMK DDI Siendeng. Contextual inquiry can identify who participates in planning, how advice reaches the history teacher, and whether coordination continues after a program has been agreed. Such details help explain the meaning of leadership within the school rather than treating context as background information detached from teaching.

Within Indonesian educational management, Mulyasa (2022) considers the responsibilities of principals in organizing and developing schools. The present inquiry used seven role categories: educator, manager, administrator, supervisor, leader, innovator, and motivator. These categories provide questions for investigation rather than proof that each role is equally developed. The educator role concerns opportunities for professional learning; management concerns planning and responsibilities;

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administration concerns the organization of teaching documents; and supervision concerns attention to instruction and feedback. Leadership, innovation, and motivation can overlap with these practices. Keeping the categories connected to evidence avoids evaluating a principal solely through an inventory of expected duties. It also allows attention to practices that participants describe as helpful and those they consider incomplete.

Indonesian vocational school studies show the relevance of examining these connections. Gazali, Ridho, and Gistituati (2023) investigated leadership and teacher performance at SMK Negeri 1 Singkarak using questionnaire data and correlational analysis. Their findings support a relationship between the constructs, but correlation does not explain the processes experienced by an individual history teacher. Muharram, Purnamawati, Abdul Djawad, Darmawang, and Arfandi (2024), in qualitative research on vocational schools in Palopo, reported democratic, managerial, and collaborative leadership alongside supervision and teacher development. These studies establish relevant concerns while leaving room for an account situated in an institution. The issue is how particular practices are organized and experienced, not whether conclusions from other schools can be transferred directly to Siendeng.

Communication is one part of that process. Harsono and Prasetyo (2021), studying a vocational school in Balikpapan, emphasize communication among principals, teachers, and other school stakeholders. In everyday practice, communication can make responsibilities understandable and create opportunities to discuss emerging problems. However, a meeting at the beginning of a semester and continuing coordination throughout it are different arrangements. An analysis that records only the existence of consultation may overlook this distinction. Teacher accounts can clarify whether decisions are revisited when difficulties appear and whether feedback leads to further conversation. This makes the timing and continuity of communication relevant to understanding support for teacher performance, especially when formal planning is described positively but implementation remains uneven.

Supervision and professional learning also require careful interpretation. Kraft, Blazar, and Hogan (2018) found positive effects of teacher coaching on instruction and achievement in a meta-analysis of studies using causal designs. Much of their evidence concerned literacy coaching in early education in the United States. It therefore supports interest in feedback and professional support without supplying an effect estimate for principal supervision in an Indonesian vocational school. Coaching programs with specified procedures differ from a participant's general account of receiving advice. The distinction suggests examining what supervisors attend to, what feedback teachers receive, and how it relates to subsequent work. It also prevents the term supervision from standing in for evidence that instructional practice has changed.

Professional development cannot be assessed through participation alone. Gore et al. (2017) evaluated a collaborative, pedagogy-based development approach through a randomized trial, illustrating the possibility of examining teaching quality directly. Sims and Fletcher-Wood (2021), however, question simple conclusions about which general characteristics make professional development effective. Their critical review argues for stronger links between proposed mechanisms and rigorously evaluated interventions. Taken together, these studies support asking what teachers do with the learning opportunities available to them. Attending a seminar, sharing its content, and modifying

a lesson are distinct stages. A local qualitative inquiry can describe these stages where evidence exists and identify where records of implementation would be necessary before claiming an improvement in performance.

History teaching adds a disciplinary requirement to these organizational questions. Huijgen, van de Grift, van Boxtel, and Holthuis (2017) developed an observation instrument addressing teachers' promotion of historical contextualization. Their work demonstrates the value of examining subject-specific instructional practices rather than relying entirely on general classroom indicators. For a history teacher, preparing materials or maintaining order does not by itself show how students are helped to situate events, examine evidence, or construct explanations. These aims make the content of supervision important. Reviewing a module can establish whether a planned task exists, whereas observing that task and examining students' responses can clarify how it functions. The present study uses this distinction to interpret the scope of the available evidence, without claiming to have applied that observation instrument.

The literature also establishes limits on conclusions about leadership and outcomes. Liebowitz and Porter (2019) identify relationships between principal behaviors and several educational outcomes, while emphasizing the predominantly observational evidence available in their review. This cautions against converting a description of supportive leadership into a causal account of teacher improvement. In the current study, participants' experiences can explain how planning, feedback, and professional expectations are connected. They cannot show how the same teacher would have performed under different leadership. Similarly, a student's account can illuminate classroom experience without representing all students. The analytical task is to connect evidence appropriately, retain differences among perspectives, and distinguish reported benefits from outcomes that require additional measurement.

The contextual gap concerns how leadership responsibilities and history teaching practices intersect within one private vocational school. Existing studies discuss broad performance relationships, communication, coaching, and professional development, but do not describe this particular configuration of roles and experiences. The principal can explain institutional intentions, the curriculum vice principal can describe coordination, teachers can discuss support and difficulties, and a student can describe classroom activity. Considering these perspectives alongside observation and teaching documents can reveal both alignment and tension. A documented plan may be more ambitious than the classroom account, while a supportive supervisory relationship may still lack continuous coordination. Such differences are useful findings because they identify where further investigation and practical improvement should be directed.

Accordingly, this study asks how principal leadership is practiced at SMK DDI Siendeng, how the principal supports the development of history teacher performance, and how that support relates to teaching responsibilities. Its objectives are to describe leadership practices, examine professional guidance and supervision, and interpret their connection with planning, instruction, assessment, and discipline. The contribution is an account of the processes through which support is reported to operate, together with limits and areas requiring follow-up. A qualitative approach permits attention to participants' experiences while maintaining the distinction between institutional expectations and demonstrated practice. The findings are intended to inform school improvement and further research, rather than rank the principal, establish a universal leadership style, or claim a measured increase in teacher or student outcomes.

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2. Method

This qualitative study adopted a phenomenological perspective and descriptive reporting to examine experiences of principal leadership and history teacher performance at SMK DDI Siendeng, Parigi Moutong Regency, Central Sulawesi, Indonesia. The perspective directed attention to participants' understandings of leadership and teaching, while analysis followed an interactive qualitative procedure. The researcher served as the principal instrument for collecting and interpreting evidence in the school setting.

Five informants were selected purposively on the basis of their positions, relevant experience, and direct involvement: the principal, the vice principal for curriculum, a history teacher, a general teacher, and a grade XI student. The leadership and teacher accounts addressed organizational support, while the student supplied a classroom perspective. Interview extracts were dated June 8–12, 2026. The inquiry focused on one school and did not include a comparison institution or a representative teacher sample.

Data collection combined semistructured interviews, nonparticipant observation, and documentation. Interviews examined planning, task allocation, professional learning, supervision, feedback, teaching preparation, classroom practice, assessment, and discipline. Flexible questions allowed participants to explain their experiences. Interviews were recorded and transcribed. Observation addressed teaching methods, interactions, student responses, and leadership-related activities.

Documentary materials included teaching modules, learning assessment materials, school information, and records relevant to teacher responsibilities. The appended history module was treated as evidence of planning, distinct from evidence that every activity was implemented. The observation guide addressed the school environment, leadership processes, and classroom teaching. Separate interview guides for leadership and teacher performance helped connect organizational accounts with descriptions of teaching responsibilities and classroom experiences.

Analysis followed the interactive framework of Miles and Huberman (1994), connecting data collection, reduction, display, and conclusion verification. Relevant material was organized into categories concerning leadership practices, professional support, and teacher performance. The analysis considered planning, instructional implementation, assessment, and discipline as aspects of performance. Narrative displays connected participant accounts with observation and documentary evidence, while retaining differences such as the reported need for coordination after initial semester planning.

Triangulation compared interview accounts with classroom observations and documents and examined agreement or differences across participant roles. Conclusions were checked against the available records and interpreted within the school context. Short interview excerpts were translated from Indonesian into English, with participants identified by role. Statements about support or improvement were treated as experiential accounts, rather than numerical performance ratings. The study did not use baseline comparisons, standardized teaching scores, or student achievement measures to estimate a causal leadership effect.

3. Result

Professional learning and shared planning

The principal described providing opportunities to attend training, workshops, seminars, and subject teacher forums known as MGMP. The history teacher confirmed this support and described an expectation to share learning with colleagues:

> *"After participating, we are asked to share what we have learned with other teachers so that everyone can learn together." (History teacher, June 10, 2026; translated)*

Program planning involved consultation with the curriculum vice principal, teachers, and other staff. Participants associated open task allocation with clearer responsibilities. The principal described school programs as addressing learning quality, teacher development, discipline, student character, and facilities. Task allocation reportedly considered teaching fields, available hours, and school needs, with additional responsibilities assigned through staff meetings. However, the general teacher identified a limitation:

> *"However, management activities such as planning and evaluation are usually carried out only at the beginning of the semester, so coordination during the semester still needs improvement." (General teacher, June 11, 2026; translated)*

These accounts indicate participation in initial planning alongside a perceived need for continuing coordination. They do not establish that professional learning opportunities consistently resulted in changes to history instruction.

Teaching preparation and supervisory feedback

The principal and curriculum vice principal reported checking teaching documents, including modules, instructional materials, and assessment arrangements. The history teacher described preparing these materials before lessons and receiving advice when documents were incomplete. This checking supported organizational readiness, while supervision also involved observing classroom teaching and offering suggestions about explanation and classroom management. The teacher's account specified learning objectives, content, methods, and assessment within the module. The curriculum vice principal described checking these components against curriculum requirements and offering further guidance when instructional preparation was incomplete.

The history teacher associated supervisory feedback with efforts to improve instruction and help students understand the material. Other staff similarly described advice following supervision. The appended history module planned activities involving chronology, evaluation of historical sources, and local history investigation. It therefore indicated intended opportunities for historical inquiry, while remaining a planning document. The evidence did not demonstrate that all these activities had been observed or completed. The appended module also proposed comparing historical accounts and using local evidence in group projects. These activities expressed intended learning opportunities; the classroom descriptions concentrated on explanation, questioning, discussion, and assignments, leaving the extent of sustained inquiry implementation across lessons unresolved.

Instruction assessment and professional responsibilities

The history teacher reported combining explanation, questioning, and discussion, using textbooks, the board, and available supporting media. The grade XI student described teacher explanation, opportunities to ask questions, assignments, and

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occasional discussion. The student's account provided a classroom perspective consistent with several practices described by the teacher, without supplying an assessment of their quality across lessons.

Assessment reportedly included assignments, tests, and classroom participation. The history teacher and curriculum vice principal described additional guidance for learners experiencing difficulty and enrichment or further tasks for those who had understood the material. Regarding discipline, the principal emphasized attendance, punctuality, and responsibility; teachers described efforts to follow schedules and school rules. These were accounts of expectations and practice rather than verified rates of attendance or performance gains.

4. Discussion

Leadership as support for teaching conditions

The findings identify leadership practices that organize teachers' work through consultation, professional opportunities, supervisory attention, and reminders about responsibilities. This is consistent with Leithwood et al.'s (2020) emphasis on school and classroom conditions through which leadership contributes to teaching. Mulyasa's (2022) account of principal responsibilities provides a complementary organizational perspective. However, the detailed evidence supports particular practices rather than an equally strong judgment across all seven role categories.

The general teacher's concern about coordination qualifies the positive descriptions of shared planning. Participation in a semester meeting does not ensure continuing dialogue when instructional problems arise. This distinction extends the communication concerns discussed by Harsono and Prasetyo (2021). A practical response would be to revisit agreed responsibilities and unresolved issues during the semester, with records showing what assistance was provided and whether it addressed the teacher's needs.

Following a supervisory visit, the teacher and principal could agree on one instructional priority, record the proposed change, and review an example of its classroom use. This would give continuing coordination a concrete purpose and provide evidence for distinguishing completed administrative tasks from changes in teaching practice.

Professional support and the content of history teaching

Training access and knowledge sharing provide opportunities for professional learning, but their instructional consequences require further evidence. Sims and Fletcher-Wood (2021) caution against assuming effectiveness from general features of professional development. Gore et al. (2017) illustrate an approach that evaluates teaching quality, while Kraft et al. (2018) show the potential of structured coaching under studied conditions. The present accounts do not establish that the school's supervision reproduced those programs or their effects. They instead indicate a basis for developing more explicit feedback and examining subsequent practice.

A disciplinary focus could make that feedback more useful. Huijgen et al. (2017) demonstrate how observation can attend to historical contextualization. At Siendeng, reviewing a task on chronology or source evaluation could begin a conversation about how students explain their reasoning. Classroom observation and samples of student work would then help distinguish an intended activity from its implementation. The

appended module provides possible starting points, but it cannot establish that inquiry was consistently taught or that historical reasoning improved.

Interpreting the scope of the findings

The reported support resembles concerns in Indonesian vocational school research by Gazali et al. (2023) and Muharram et al. (2024). These comparisons situate the findings without demonstrating identical relationships across institutions. Hallinger's (2018) emphasis on context supports examining how responsibilities and support are enacted locally. In this case, the distinction between initial planning and continuing coordination is particularly useful for identifying improvement priorities.

The design nevertheless limits attribution. As Liebowitz and Porter (2019) emphasize in their review, relationships involving principal behavior require careful attention to research design. Five informants provide several perspectives, but one student cannot represent classroom experience generally. Positive accounts of feedback do not establish changes in observed teaching quality or student achievement. Future inquiry should follow specific supervisory recommendations across lessons and compare plans, classroom activity, and students' work. This would clarify how reported support becomes instructional change while preserving attention to experiences that diverge from favorable institutional descriptions.

5. Conclusion

Principal leadership at SMK DDI Siendeng was described through professional learning opportunities, consultation, teaching document review, classroom supervision, feedback, and expectations concerning professional responsibilities. These practices supported the organization of the history teacher's work across planning, instruction, assessment, and discipline. Participants associated guidance with efforts to improve teaching, while the evidence established reported support rather than a measured increase in performance or achievement. The study therefore identifies processes through which leadership may assist instruction within this school.

A central qualification concerns continuity. Although program planning involved teachers and other staff, one teacher reported that coordination was concentrated at the start of the semester. The principal and curriculum vice principal should revisit agreed programs during implementation and clarify how unresolved instructional needs will be addressed. Supervision can become more informative when feedback identifies a specific teaching issue, proposes a feasible response, and returns to examine subsequent practice. Administrative checking can contribute to this work while remaining distinct from evaluating the quality of classroom learning.

Professional development should also connect organizational support with the disciplinary demands of history. Opportunities to attend training and share knowledge can be followed by joint examination of tasks, historical explanations, and students' responses. The teaching module's plans for chronology, source evaluation, and local investigation offer possible material for such discussion. Further implementation should be documented rather than assumed. Teachers can use evidence from student work and from subsequent classroom observations to identify difficulties and adapt guidance or enrichment, while school leaders help secure the time and resources needed for this process.

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The findings are limited by the single-school setting, purposive selection, and small number of informants. Participant accounts and documents cannot establish how teaching would differ under another principal, and no standardized comparisons were available. Future research should document leadership support and classroom practice over time, include additional student perspectives, and examine how particular recommendations are implemented. Observations focused on historical reasoning would complement general indicators of professional responsibility. The practical implication is to connect supportive leadership with continuing coordination and concrete evidence of teaching, so that claims of improvement rest on changes demonstrated in the classroom.

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