

Instructional Leadership in Action: A Case Study on the Role of Teacher Leader in Improving Learning Quality

Ruslan¹, Muhammad Kristiawan¹, Asti Putri Kartiwi¹

¹Universitas Bengkulu, Bengkulu, Indonesia

Corresponding author e-mail: ruslanseginim@gmail.com

Article History: Received on 19 September 2025, Revised on 4 October 2025,
Published on 2 February 2026

Abstract: While the Indonesian Teacher Leader program is a key policy initiative, empirical research on its direct impact on classroom learning quality is scarce. This qualitative case study at SMA Negeri 1 Bengkulu Selatan employed interviews, observations, and document analysis to explore the roles of Teacher Leaders. Findings reveal that Teacher Leaders perform five key roles: learning leader, coach, collaboration driver, promoter of student agency, and facilitator of professional communities. These roles significantly enhanced differentiated instruction, teacher collaboration, and student-centered learning. The study concludes that the Teacher Leader program, when implemented effectively, is a powerful lever for improving learning quality and fostering a collaborative school culture. The novelty of this study lies in its in-depth exploration of how Teacher Leaders translate policy into classroom practices in the Indonesian context. The practical implication is that schools should strengthen professional learning communities and student leadership programs to maximize the impact of Teacher Leaders. This research contributes to the limited body of literature on teacher leadership in Southeast Asia by providing empirical evidence of its role in enhancing instructional quality and collaborative culture.

Keywords: Instructional Leadership, Learning Quality, SMA Negeri 1 Bengkulu Selatan, Teacher Leader

A. Introduction

Education is pivotal in shaping high-quality and competitive human resources. Teachers are central to this endeavor, as their capacity and leadership significantly determine the success of the learning process. In response to evolving demands, the role of teachers has shifted from merely transmitting knowledge to facilitating the full development of student potential. Within this context, the Indonesian government launched the Teacher Leader (Teacher Mobilizer) Program in 2020 as part of its Merdeka Belajar (Freedom to Learn) initiative, aiming to cultivate teacher leaders who act as agents of change within schools. Recent international research underscores that teacher leadership has become a central focus of educational studies over the past decade. Studies indicate that teacher leadership positively

influences both instructional performance and teacher well-being (Torres & Labe, 2020) and is linked to educational entrepreneurial behaviors that foster pedagogical innovation (Emans et al., 2024). Furthermore, systematic reviews highlight a strong research emphasis on teacher collaboration and school development (Schott, van Roekel, et al., 2020). In contrast, Indonesian research on the Teacher Leader program has primarily focused on policy analysis and implementation (Damayanti & Asbari, 2024; Puspita & Kartiwi, 2023), with a scarcity of empirical studies examining these teacher leaders' direct contributions to classroom learning quality.

This research gap forms the basis for the present study. It aims to move beyond programmatic analysis by providing empirical evidence on how Teacher Leader enhance teaching and learning quality at SMA Negeri 1 Bengkulu Selatan. The central problem addressed is the suboptimal implementation of the Teacher Leader role; some leaders remain focused on their individual classrooms rather than fully functioning as change agents who influence the broader school culture. Consequently, this qualitative study seeks to answer the question: How do teacher leaders (Teacher Leader) contribute to improving the quality of teaching and learning at SMA Negeri 1 Bengkulu Selatan? Adopting a descriptive qualitative approach, this study employs interviews, observations, and document analysis to develop a comprehensive understanding of teacher leaders' roles in authentic classroom and school contexts. The findings are expected to contribute theoretically by enriching the literature on teacher leadership and practically by informing teachers, school administrators, and policymakers at the local and national levels.

B. Methods

This research employed a qualitative approach with a case study design, which is considered appropriate for obtaining a deep understanding of complex educational phenomena in their natural context (De Sordi, 2024; Okoko et al., 2023). The study focused on exploring the role of Teacher Leaders in enhancing the quality of learning at SMA Negeri 1 Bengkulu Selatan. A case study design was chosen to holistically and contextually analyze how the Teacher Leader's role is enacted and its impact on teaching, learning, and school quality.

Participants

Participants were selected using purposive sampling, focusing on individuals directly engaged in the Teacher Leader (Teacher Leader) program and learning improvement initiatives. The study involved one school principal, one vice principal, one Teacher Leader, five teachers, and ten students. The principal and vice principal were included because of their roles in supervising and supporting the Teacher Leader's activities. The Teacher Leader was the central subject, appointed officially through the Teacher Leader program. Teachers were chosen because they collaborated in mentoring and peer-learning activities, while students were included

due to their active involvement in student-centered learning guided by the Teacher Leader.

Data Collection

Data were collected using a triangulation strategy that included interviews, observations, and document analysis (Schott, Roekel, et al., 2020)(Jiazhi & Batool, 2024; Schott, Roekel, et al., 2020). Semi-structured interviews were conducted with all participants, totaling 18 interviews (one with the principal, one with the vice principal, one with the Teacher Leader, five with teachers, and ten with students). Each interview lasted approximately 40–60 minutes and followed a semi-structured protocol to provide consistency while allowing depth. Observations included six classroom sessions facilitated by the Teacher Leader and two professional learning community meetings, with field notes focusing on instructional strategies, student engagement, and collaborative practices. Document analysis included lesson plans, meeting minutes, teacher reflection journals, and student work, which were used to triangulate the findings.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed inductively and thematically, following qualitative data analysis procedures that emphasize coding, categorization, and thematic interpretation (De Sordi, 2024; Ghauri et al., 2020). Data analysis was carried out continuously from the initial data collection to the final interpretation through three iterative processes: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification.

C. Results and Discussion

Results

We described the research data based on the results of interviews, observations, and documentation with five research focuses: (1) The role of the driving teacher as a learning leader, (2) The role of the driving teacher as a coach for other teachers, (3) The role of the driving teacher as a motivator for collaboration, (4) The role of the driving teacher as an agent of student leadership (student agency), and (5) The role of the driving teacher as a motivator for the community of practice.

1. The Role of the Driving Teacher as a Learning Leader

Based on data found at SMA Negeri 1 Bengkulu Selatan and data reduction regarding the role of the driving teacher as a learning leader to improve learning quality, the data is then presented (data display) in tabular form.

Table 1. Interview Data Findings Regarding the Role of Leading Teachers as Learning Leaders

Focus	Data Findings
Designing learning according to student needs	Overall, these findings indicate that Leading Teachers at SMA Negeri 1 Bengkulu Selatan are highly committed to accommodating diverse student needs, optimizing individual potential, and creating relevant, participatory, and sustainable learning. This approach aligns with the principles of learner-centered learning, where differences in student readiness, interests, and learning profiles form the primary basis for designing learning activities.
Challenges faced when designing differentiated learning, and how to overcome them	Based on respondents' answers, the main challenges in designing differentiated learning include time constraints, difficulty identifying diverse student learning needs, limited facilities and resources, differences in student characteristics (passive, dominant, or less open), and resistance from some teachers who find this approach complicated. Furthermore, there is a mismatch between assessment results and the methods implemented in the classroom. To address this, the Leading Teacher implements various strategies such as forming collaborative teams among teachers, using diagnostic assessments, creating flexible lesson plan templates, modifying learning methods and media, and striving to continuously understand classroom dynamics.
Strategies for Building a Classroom Environment That Supports All Students	Research shows that Leading Teachers build a conducive classroom environment through the implementation of a positive culture, such as open communication, mutual respect, and student involvement in developing class agreements. The strategies used include creating a safe and comfortable atmosphere free from bullying, building positive relationships without discrimination, arranging a neat and attractive classroom, listening to student opinions, providing learning support, and using a variety of learning methods integrated with social-emotional learning (SEL). Furthermore, teachers utilize technology wisely, adapt learning activities to student needs (for example, using icebreakers when students start to get bored), and encourage active student participation to foster a sense of ownership and shared responsibility for the classroom learning climate.
Responding to differences in student abilities and backgrounds in classroom activities	Leading Teachers are able to understand and respond to differences in student abilities and backgrounds with a flexible, humanistic, and inclusive approach. Strategies used include recognizing individual student characteristics (learning styles, interests, abilities, and cultural backgrounds), adapting materials and assignments to their ability levels, using a variety of learning methods and media, and utilizing diverse technology and assessments.

Table 2. Observation Data Findings Regarding the Lead Teacher's Role as a Learning Leader

Focus	Data Findings
Implementation of Differentiated Learning	During the lesson, the Lead Teacher grouped students based on ability level, provided a variety of assignments based on their interests and learning readiness, and used visual and digital media to facilitate understanding. The teacher actively circulated the classroom to provide personalized guidance to students experiencing difficulties.

Classroom Management and Learning Climate	Observations revealed a conducive classroom atmosphere, with students enthusiastically participating in activities, and two-way interaction. The teacher provided opportunities for students to express their opinions, used icebreakers when the atmosphere became tense, and consistently enforced class agreements.
Responding to Student Diversity	The teacher responded to differences in ability by providing options for completing assignments, using heterogeneous group discussions, and providing praise and positive feedback. The teacher also appeared to value students' diverse backgrounds with an inclusive, non-discriminatory attitude.

Table 3. Documentation Data Findings Regarding the Lead Teacher's Role as a Learning Leader

Focus	Data Findings
Differentiated learning planning	The lesson plan/teaching module documents prepared by the Leading Teacher demonstrate differentiation based on student learning needs, as seen in the learning objectives, method variations, and the use of media tailored to student learning styles. Diagnostic assessment notes are also included, which serve as the basis for designing the learning.
Learning support products and resources	Documentation in the form of assessment sheets, teacher reflection notes, digital and manual teaching media (PowerPoint, videos, and Student Worksheets) demonstrate the Leading Teacher's efforts to create creative, interactive, and adaptive learning. The teaching modules demonstrate collaboration between teachers in developing learning materials.
Evidence of learning implementation and evaluation	Photos of classroom activities, learning community meeting schedules, and student learning outcome reports demonstrate the implementation of differentiated learning strategies. Assessment results also demonstrate adjustments to instruments to assess student abilities at varying levels of difficulty.

Overall, the results of interviews, observations, and documentation reinforce the importance of the Leading Teacher in improving the quality of learning through the implementation of differentiated learning, conducive classroom management, and inclusive responses to student diversity. This role focuses not only on academic success but also supports students' ongoing social, emotional, and character development.

2. The Role of the Leading Teacher as a Coach for Other Teachers

To examine the role of the leading teacher as a coach for other teachers, researchers also conducted interviews with the leading teacher, the principal, and teacher representatives. They also performed data reduction and will present the data (data reduction) in the following table.

Table 4. Interview Data Findings on the Role of Leading Teachers as Coaches for Other Teachers

Focus	Data Findings
Mentoring other teachers in the learning process	The research shows that Leading Teachers at SMA Negeri 1 Bengkulu Selatan not only serve as learning implementers but also as mentors and facilitators of professional development for other teachers, especially new teachers or those unfamiliar with differentiated learning and technology. This mentoring includes classroom observations, joint reflections, informal discussions, collaboration on lesson planning, sharing good practices, and encouraging participation in training, seminars, and learning communities.
Delivering feedback so that it is received positively by fellow teachers	The research shows that Leading Teachers at SMA Negeri 1 Bengkulu Selatan implement a positive feedback strategy, focusing on actions rather than personality. Feedback is delivered politely and constructively, beginning with appreciation for the positive actions of fellow teachers.
Types of coaching activities conducted for fellow teachers	Research shows that coaching activities conducted by Leading Teachers at SMA Negeri 1 Bengkulu Selatan include joint discussions and reflections, classroom supervision or observation, joint training, and sessions sharing good practices through learning communities. Furthermore, they also serve as mentors for new teachers, assisting them in lesson planning, creating teaching modules, and developing learning media. This approach helps improve teacher competency collaboratively and encourages a culture of mutual learning within the school environment
Measuring the success of professional development activities	The results of the study indicate that the success of coaching by the Leading Teacher at SMA Negeri 1 Bengkulu Selatan is measured not only from changes in learning methods and strategies, such as the use of more varied media, the implementation of ice breaking, social emotional learning, and increased teacher-student interaction, but also from changes in teacher attitudes who become more open, brave to try new approaches, and active in discussions.

Table 5. Observation Data Findings on the Role of Leading Teachers as Coaches for Other Teachers

Focus	Data Findings
The process of mentoring other teachers	Observations showed that the Leading Teacher conducted coaching in a dialogical manner. The teacher was seen providing space for fellow teachers to share their teaching experiences, then collaboratively sought solutions to the problems they encountered.
Providing feedback	Observations showed that the Leading Teacher delivered feedback by beginning with appreciation, then providing suggestions for improvement in a polite and constructive manner. This encouraged fellow teachers to be more open and not feel personally criticized.
Sharing good practices	During the learning community session, the Leading Teacher was seen actively sharing experiences and good practices in teaching and facilitating discussions among teachers. Fellow teachers appeared to be actively involved, discussing and responding to the shared experiences.

Table 6. Documentation Data Findings on the Role of Leading Teachers as Coaches for Other Teachers

Focus	Data Findings
Evidence of teacher mentoring	Documentation in the form of class supervision notes, minutes of joint reflections, and teacher mentoring schedules demonstrates that the Leading Teacher consistently provides coaching through observation, discussion, and follow-up on learning outcomes.
Collaborative products	Documents in the form of teaching modules, learning tools, and teaching media resulting from collaboration between the Leading Teacher and fellow teachers demonstrate coaching activities that produce tangible products as evidence of competency development.
Learning community activities	Documentation in the form of photos of learning community activities, reports of internal school training activities, and teacher attendance lists demonstrate the Leading Teacher's active involvement in initiating and facilitating collaborative learning forums.

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that the role of the Leading Teacher in mentoring other teachers is very real and has a positive impact. Dialogic coaching strategies, constructive feedback, and consistency within the learning community have successfully encouraged improved teaching skills and changed teachers' professional attitudes. Observation and documentation further reinforce that the interview findings are not mere statements but rather real practices implemented continuously in schools.

3. The Role of the Leading Teacher as a Driver of Collaboration

The following are the research results on the role of the leading teacher as a driver of collaboration after data reduction in tabular form (data display).

Table 7. Interview Data Findings on the Role of Leading Teachers as Drivers of Collaboration

Focus	Data Findings
Inviting other teachers to participate in learning communities	Leading teachers play a crucial role as driving forces behind learning communities (kombel) in schools by serving as role models, sharing personal experiences, and personally inviting other teachers to join. They create open, relevant, and supportive cross-subject discussion spaces, motivating teachers to participate. This approach has been proven effective in increasing participation, strengthening collaborative networks, and encouraging improvements in the quality of learning.
Benefits of involvement in teacher learning communities	Teacher involvement in learning communities provides significant benefits, both in improving professional competence and strengthening emotional bonds between teachers. By sharing experiences, ideas, and solutions to learning challenges, kombel becomes an effective collaborative platform for improving teaching quality, introducing innovation, and creating emotional support that makes teachers feel more confident and less isolated.
Involved in cross-	Teachers actively collaborate across schools through MGMP activities and

teacher or inter-school collaboration	learning communities, sharing ideas, experiences, and teaching materials. This collaboration includes developing learning methods, creating teaching modules, utilizing learning media, and even leading to joint projects between schools. These activities broaden teachers' horizons, enrich their teaching practices, and strengthen their professional networks.
The most memorable forms of collaborative activities	The most memorable collaborative activities for teachers include the creation and design of teaching modules, particularly the P5 module, thematic learning across subjects, and serving as resource persons in sharing good practices through learning communities. The Leading Teacher acts as a leader and catalyst for collaboration, ensuring effective activities, enhancing teachers' competence, creativity, and self-confidence. This collaboration not only enriches learning strategies but also strengthens professional relationships between teachers across subjects and classes, providing meaningful experiences that positively impact students.

Table 8. Observational Data Findings on the Role of Leading Teachers as Drivers of Collaboration

Focus	Data Findings
Learning community activities at school	The Leading Teacher initiated small group discussions, provided guidance, and facilitated experience-sharing sessions. Teachers were actively engaged in asking questions, providing input, and discussing differentiated learning strategies.
Teacher interaction in collaboration	In collaborative sessions, the Leading Teacher provided equal opportunities for all teachers to express their opinions. A conducive, collaborative, and open atmosphere was created, so teachers felt valued and motivated to contribute.
True results of collaborative activities	Observations revealed collaborative products in the form of cross-subject teaching module designs, learning media, and project learning ideas (P5). Teachers were enthusiastic about the collaborative development, and these products were immediately applied in classroom learning.

Table 9. Documentation Data Findings on the Role of Leading Teachers as Drivers of Collaboration

Focus	Data Findings
Documentation of learning community activities at school	Photos, minutes, and attendance lists of learning community activities led by the Leading Teacher are included. The documentation demonstrates the involvement of teachers across subject areas in discussions, presentations of good practices, and joint reflection sessions.
Teacher Collaboration Products	Several collaborative products are stored, such as P5 teaching modules, lesson plans, digital teaching media, and MGMP activity reports. These products are used in teaching and shared with other teachers as references for good practices.
Evidence of Inter-School Collaboration	Archives include invitations, certificates, and reports of inter-school collaborative activities in MGMP and teacher workshops. The documentation confirms the Leading Teacher's role as both facilitator and resource person in these activities.

From the findings, it can be concluded that the interview findings regarding the role of the Leading Teacher as a driver of collaboration are consistent, as they are reinforced by concrete evidence from observations and documentation. This role not only encourages teacher participation in learning communities but also produces innovative products, expands professional networks, and positively impacts the quality of learning in schools.

4. The Role of the Leading Teacher as an Agent of Student Leadership (Student Agency)

The following are the research results on the role of the leading teacher as a driver of collaboration after data reduction in tabular form (data display).

Table 10. Interview Data Findings on the Role of Leading Teachers as an Agent of Student Leadership (Student Agency)

Focus	Data Findings
Student Involvement in Classroom Decision-Making	Leading Teachers encourage active student involvement in classroom decision-making through various means, such as establishing class rules or beliefs, selecting learning methods and topics based on their interests, and participating in determining activities and assigning tasks. This approach fosters a sense of ownership, responsibility, and self-esteem in students, while creating a democratic, inclusive, and more meaningful learning environment.
Building Students' Confidence in Expressing Their Opinions	Leading Teachers foster student self-confidence by creating a safe, comfortable, and bullying-free learning environment, and providing ample opportunities for students to express their opinions, discuss issues, and take an active role in class activities. They consistently provide positive feedback, appreciation, and gentle, motivating challenges, so students feel valued, confident in their opinions, and gain confidence in the learning process.
Building Student Leadership in the Classroom	Leading Teachers develop student leadership by involving them in classroom decision-making, giving them responsibility for leading groups or projects, and giving them the opportunity to determine the form of assignments based on their creativity. Through roles such as group leader, discussion leader, and peer mentor, students learn responsibility, hone their self-confidence, and develop leadership skills in a safe and supportive environment.
Approaches Used to Train Student Independence in Learning	The Leading Teacher fosters student independence through a coaching approach, project-based learning, and assigning responsibility for school activities. Students are given the space to choose topics, methods, or learning resources, and to manage their own time and learning goals. This approach encourages students to find solutions independently, hone their reflection skills, increase their sense of responsibility, and build confidence in the learning process.

Table 11. Observational Data Findings on the Role of Leading Teachers as an Agent of Student Leadership (Student Agency)

Focus	Data Findings
Student Engagement in Class	Students were observed actively expressing their opinions when determining class rules, selecting learning methods, and participating in project activities. The teacher acted as a facilitator, providing space for dialogue.
Building Student Confidence	Students were seen confidently coming to the front of the class to express ideas, discuss with peers, and receive appreciation from the teacher. The classroom atmosphere was conducive, safe, and supportive, with no bullying.
Student Leadership and Independence	Students appointed as group leaders were able to lead discussions, assign roles to members, and take responsibility for the results of the group's work. Students also appeared to manage their own project study schedules.

Table 12. Documentation Data Findings on the Role of Leading Teachers as an Agent of Student Leadership (Student Agency)

Focus	Data Findings
Student involvement in class decision-making	Documents include photographs of class belief-building activities, minutes of class discussions, and signed learning rule agreements between students and teachers.
Building student self-confidence	Documentation includes video recordings of student presentations, portfolios of group discussion results, and notes of teacher appreciation of student opinions, presented in class journals.
Building student leadership and independence	Archives of P5 project activity reports, schedules for group leadership tasks, and photographs of students leading discussions, presenting group work, and organizing class activities.

The results of interviews, observations, and documentation complement and reinforce each other. The role of the Leading Teacher has proven effective in realizing student agency by creating a democratic learning environment, providing space for participation, and involving students in leadership and independent learning. This demonstrates that the presence of a Leading Teacher can foster students' self-confidence, responsibility, and leadership skills in a sustainable manner.

5. The Role of the Leading Teacher as a Community of Practice Driver

Based on the data found at SMA Negeri 1 Bengkulu Selatan and data reduction has been carried out regarding the role of the driving teacher as a driving force for the community of practitioners, the data is then presented (data display) in the form of a table.

Table 13. Interview Data Findings on the Role of Leading Teachers as a Community of Practice Driver

Focus	Data Findings
Independently Initiating Teacher Activities or Training	Teacher Leaders actively initiate teacher training independently, either through personal invitations or coordination with colleagues. The trainings they organize cover relevant topics such as project-based learning and the use of digital platforms (e.g., Canva and Google Forms), as well as sharing best practices. These initiatives have been proven to improve teacher skills, broaden their horizons, and foster a culture of continuous learning in schools.
Strategies to Enthusiastize Other Teachers to Participate in These Activities	Teacher Leaders' strategies for initiating teacher activities or training include a relaxed, trust-building personal approach, and offering topics relevant to learning needs. They serve as role models in teaching practices, share new methods or applications, and maintain good communication. Furthermore, the activities are designed to be simple yet meaningful, often accompanied by certificates or inviting external speakers to increase teacher engagement and participation.
Contributions within the teacher practice community	The contribution of Leading Teachers within the teacher practice community is realized through various roles, such as serving as resource persons for good practices, mentoring colleagues, compiling and sharing activity documentation, and collaborating on the creation of P5 teaching modules. They also play a role in motivating learning communities in schools and creating a positive learning environment. This contribution not only strengthens collaboration between teachers but also serves as inspiration and a source of shared learning to improve the quality of teaching practice.
Maintaining Sustainable Activities within the Teacher Professional Community	The sustainability of the learning community is maintained through regular agendas for sharing good practices, creating learning products (such as media or teaching modules), and implementing the results of activities in the classroom. Leading Teachers also ensure the availability of shared reflection spaces, flexible schedules, and communication support via platforms such as WhatsApp. Furthermore, a conducive atmosphere and the relevance of topics to teachers' needs are key to maintaining an active, beneficial, and sustainable community.

Table 14. Observational Data Findings on the Role of Leading Teachers as a Community of Practice Driver

Focus	Data Findings
Implementation of training/sharing of good practices	The Leading Teachers were seen guiding simple training sessions, providing examples of the use of digital media, and encouraging the active participation of other teachers.
Interaction between teachers within the community	The discussion atmosphere was open and collaborative, with teachers sharing experiences and demonstrating enthusiasm for trying new methods.
Community Activity Atmosphere	The meeting environment for the community of practitioners was conducive, warm, and supportive. The Leading Teachers provided space for appreciation and reflection, creating a positive culture of collaborative learning.

Table 15. Documentation Data Findings on the Role of Leading Teachers as a Community of Practice Driver

Focus	Data Findings
Evidence of teacher training activities	Photos, attendance lists, and materials from teacher training initiated by the Teacher Leaders were found, such as training on the use of Canva, Google Forms, and project-based learning workshops.
Practitioner Community Products	Documents included P5 teaching modules, activity reports, and documentation of good practices in the form of articles and digital posters shared with other teachers.
Evidence of Community Sustainability	A learning community activity agenda, a teacher WhatsApp group, and minutes of joint reflections demonstrated the sustainability and consistency of the community of practitioners' activities.

Overall, it can be concluded that the results of interviews, observations, and documentation are mutually reinforcing. Interviews provide an in-depth overview of the strategies, contributions, and sustainability of the Leading Teacher's role; observations provide concrete evidence of a conducive and collaborative activity atmosphere; while documentation confirms the existence of products and physical evidence of the activities. The combination of these three data points demonstrates that the Leading Teacher's role is truly real and significant in motivating the community of practitioners, creating a culture of sustainable learning, and improving the quality of learning at SMA Negeri 1 Bengkulu Selatan.

Discussion

Beyond the Classroom: Teacher Leaders as System Leaders

Teacher leadership should not be viewed as limited to classroom instruction but rather as a systemic force driving school-wide improvement. As (Wenner & Campbell, 2017) argue, teacher leadership is grounded in theory and evidence as a driver of change. (Schott, van Roekel, et al., 2020), through a systematic review, emphasize that teacher leaders strengthen professionalism and innovation across the school. These findings align with (Harris & Jones, 2019), who highlight teacher leadership as central to sustainable educational change. Within this study, teacher leaders served as coaches, collaborators, and drivers of professional communities, demonstrating the distributed nature of leadership (Mifsud, 2024). Through peer mentoring, strengthening learning communities, and facilitating cross-disciplinary collaboration, Teacher Leaders extended their influence beyond the classroom to build collective school capacity, echoing (Stoll et al., 2006) and (Ronfeldt et al., 2015) on the transformative role of professional learning communities.

Pedagogical Expertise and Coaching

One of the strongest findings of this research is the way Teacher Leaders enhanced

differentiated instruction and supported colleagues through coaching. Instructional coaching has been proven effective in strengthening teacher practice and student learning outcomes (Kraft et al., 2018). Similarly, (Desimone & Pak, 2017) argue that coaching is a form of professional development that is deeply relevant to teachers' day-to-day work. In this case study, Teacher Leaders engaged in peer coaching that not only improved individual classroom practices but also created a reflective climate for continuous improvement (Shal et al., 2024). This reflects (Gibbons & Cobb, 2016) findings that content-focused coaching develops deeper pedagogical knowledge. The evidence suggests that Teacher Leaders function as pedagogical experts, bridging theory and practice while amplifying instructional quality across the school.

Fostering Agency: in Students and Teachers

A significant contribution of Teacher Leaders lies in their ability to foster agency – both among students and teachers. For students, leadership practices emphasized independence, resilience, and participatory learning. This aligns with Charteris and Smardon (2019), who argue that empowering student agency creates more meaningful learning experiences. (Cook-Sather, 2020) similarly highlights that teacher-student pedagogical partnerships enhance engagement and ownership of learning. For teachers, the cultivation of professional agency through learning communities and shared decision-making echoes (Robertson et al., 2019), who demonstrate that teacher agency positively influences student agency. In this way, the roles of promoting student leadership and building teacher communities represent two sides of the same coin: both center on capacity-building, ownership, and empowerment.

Implications of the Findings

The findings of this study reinforce that the Teacher Leader program can serve as a powerful lever for systemic educational improvement when implemented effectively. Beyond strengthening individual teacher capacity, Teacher Leaders promote a collaborative culture that aligns with distributed leadership frameworks (Leithwood et al., 2020). At the policy level, this suggests that scaling Teacher Leader initiatives could accelerate the development of professional learning communities, create more sustainable instructional improvements, and empower students through agency-driven pedagogy. Practically, schools should provide structured opportunities for Teacher Leaders to coach peers, facilitate collaboration, and lead communities of practice, while also ensuring support from principals and policymakers. This ensures that teacher leadership is not isolated but embedded within the fabric of school development and reform.

D. Conclusions

This case study provides empirical evidence that the Teacher Leader at SMA Negeri 1 Bengkulu Selatan enacted a complex, multi-faceted leadership role that significantly improved learning quality through five domains: instructional leadership, coaching, collaboration, student agency, and professional community building. Theoretically, the study addresses the scarcity of empirical research on teacher leadership in Indonesia by demonstrating the direct connection between Teacher Leader activities and enhanced classroom practices, teacher collaboration, and student engagement, thereby contributing to the regional discourse on teacher leadership in Southeast Asia. Practically, the findings highlight that policymakers should sustain and expand the Teacher Leader program with a stronger focus on training in coaching and facilitation, while schools should allocate structured time for collaborative planning and professional learning communities to fully leverage the Teacher Leader's role. However, as a single-case study, the findings have limited generalizability. Future studies are encouraged to adopt comparative or quasi-experimental designs to examine the long-term impact of Teacher Leaders on student achievement, school transformation, and educational equity.

E. Acknowledgement

The researchers extend gratitude to the principals and all stakeholders of SMA Negeri 1 Bengkulu Selatan, for supporting these research findings. Their contributions have been invaluable in developing research on the role of leading teachers in improving the quality of learning.

References

- Cook-Sather, A. (2020). Student voice across contexts: Fostering student agency in today's schools. *Theory Into Practice*, 59(2), 182-191. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00405841.2019.1705091>
- De Sordi, J. O. (2024). *Overview of Qualitative Research BT - Qualitative Research Methods In Business: Techniques for Data Collection and Analysis* (J. O. De Sordi (ed.); hal. 3-21). Springer Nature Switzerland. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-50323-8_1
- Desimone, L. M., & Pak, K. (2017). Instructional Coaching as High-Quality Professional Development. *Theory Into Practice*, 56(1), 3-12. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00405841.2016.1241947>
- Emans, A., Oolbekkink-marchand, H., Bakker, C., & Bruijn, E. De. (2024). *Teacher agency in the dynamics of educational practices : a theory synthesis*.
- Ghuri, P., Grønhaug, K., & Strange, R. (2020). *Research Methods in Business Studies* (5

- ed.). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/DOI: 10.1017/9781108762427>
- Gibbons, L., & Cobb, P. (2016). Content-Focused Coaching: Five Key Practices. *The Elementary School Journal*, 117, 0. <https://doi.org/10.1086/688906>
- Harris, A., & Jones, M. (2019). Teacher leadership and educational change. *School Leadership & Management*, 39(2), 123–126. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13632434.2019.1574964>
- Jiazhi, Y., & Batool, H. (2024). A qualitative study on the components of teacher leadership based on the perspective of teacher behaviour. *Journal of Innovation and Entrepreneurship*, 13(1), 64. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13731-024-00423-2>
- Kraft, M. A., Blazar, D., & Hogan, D. (2018). The Effect of Teacher Coaching on Instruction and Achievement: A Meta-Analysis of the Causal Evidence. *Review of Educational Research*, 88(4), 547–588. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654318759268>
- Leithwood, K., Harris, A., & Hopkins, D. (2020). Seven strong claims about successful school leadership revisited. *School Leadership & Management*, 40(1), 5–22. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13632434.2019.1596077>
- Mifsud, D. (2024). A systematic review of school distributed leadership: exploring research purposes, concepts and approaches in the field between 2010 and 2022. *Journal of Educational Administration and History*, 56(2), 154–179. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220620.2022.2158181>
- Okoko, J. M., Tunison, S., & Walker, K. D. (2023). *Introduction to a Variety of Qualitative Research Methods BT - Varieties of Qualitative Research Methods: Selected Contextual Perspectives* (J. M. Okoko, S. Tunison, & K. D. Walker (ed.); hal. 1–8). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-04394-9_1
- Robertson, D., Padesky, L., & Brock, C. (2019). Cultivating Student Agency Through Teachers' Professional Learning. *Theory Into Practice*, 59. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00405841.2019.1705090>
- Ronfeldt, M., Farmer, S. O., McQueen, K., & Grissom, J. A. (2015). Teacher Collaboration in Instructional Teams and Student Achievement. *American Educational Research Journal*, 52(3), 475–514. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831215585562>
- Schott, C., Roekel, H. Van, & Tummers, L. G. (2020). Teacher leadership : A systematic review , methodological quality assessment and conceptual framework. *Educational Research Review*, 31(March), 100352. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.edurev.2020.100352>

- Schott, C., van Roekel, H., & Tummers, L. G. (2020). Teacher leadership: A systematic review, methodological quality assessment and conceptual framework. *Educational Research Review*, 31, 100352. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.edurev.2020.100352>
- Shal, T., Ghamrawi, N., & Abu, A. (2024). Teacher leadership and virtual communities: Unpacking teacher agency and distributed leadership. *Education and Information Technologies*, 29(12), 15025–15042. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-023-12446-5>
- Stoll, L., Bolam, R., McMahon, A., Wallace, M., & Thomas, S. (2006). Professional Learning Communities: A Review of the Literature. *Journal of Educational Change*, 7(4), 221–258. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10833-006-0001-8>
- Torres, J. L., & Labe, R. D. (2020). *The Impact of Leadership and Management on Teacher Performance and Well-Being: A Systematic Examination*. 2(6), 822–830. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15683182>
- Wenner, J. A., & Campbell, T. (2017). The Theoretical and Empirical Basis of Teacher Leadership: A Review of the Literature. *Review of Educational Research*, 87(1), 134–171. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654316653478>