

# Leadership, Competence, and Dedication of Christian Education Teachers in the Remote Area of Seko

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## Abstract

Disparities in the quality and equity of education remain evident in remote areas such as Seko, where teachers perform their professional roles under extreme constraints. This study highlighted the paradox between national demands for teacher professionalism and the reality of challenging geography, limited facilities, and policy inequities faced by teachers in Seko. This research aimed to analyze in depth how teacher leadership contributes to the development and maintenance of competence and dedication amid these limitations, within the framework of inclusive education and educational justice. The study was set in the 3T (*tertinggal, terdepan, dan terluar* – disadvantaged, frontier, and remote) region of Seko. A qualitative descriptive approach using an action research design was employed. Data was collected through in-depth interviews, field observations, and document analysis. Results: The findings revealed that teachers in Seko adopt transformational, adaptive, and service-oriented leadership styles. Their professional and pedagogical competence was shaped by their adaptability, creativity in utilizing local resources, and strong commitment to delivering culturally relevant learning. Their dedication was reflected in their physical, moral, and spiritual sacrifices. In conclusion, teacher leadership, competence, and dedication were intertwined, forming the foundation of the educational ecosystem in Seko. Teachers function not only as educators but also as social leaders and symbols of resilience, safeguarding educational justice and sustainability in remote areas.

Keywords: Christian Education, Remote Area, Teacher Competence, Teacher Dedication, Teacher Leadership

## Article History

Received: November 16, 2025

Revised: June 22, 2026

Accepted: June 29, 2026

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## How to cite this article:

Patandung, Y., Panggua, S., Sukito, A., & Yoon, Y.H. (2026). Leadership, Competence, and Dedication of Christian Education Teachers in the Remote Area of Seko. *Didache: Journal of Christian Education*, 7(1), 95-120. <https://doi.org/10.46445/djce.v7i1.1154>

## **Introduction**

Amid the government's efforts to achieve equitable national education, the reality of education in remote regions such as Seko continues to present significant structural and pedagogical challenges. National education policies, particularly teacher certification, have been positioned as key indicators of professionalism expected to improve the quality of education (Fachrani & Rosdiana, 2025). However, various studies have shown that these administrative indicators do not fully reflect the complexity of teachers' professional practices in disadvantaged, frontier, and remote (3T – *tertinggal, terdepan, dan terluar*) areas, where limitations in infrastructure, access to technology, teacher distribution, and policy support remain fundamental issues (D. A. P. Dewi et al., 2025). This situation demonstrates a profound gap between government policy and the realities on the ground. It therefore requires greater attention and more concrete actions to ensure the equitable distribution of educational quality throughout the country and to realize national educational equity in Indonesia.

Government policies that fail to adequately support these regions are reflected in severely damaged roads, extremely limited learning facilities, and, at times, a lack of proper recognition of teachers' dedication in remote areas. This paradox challenges the very meaning of the teaching profession: can educational quality be measured solely by technical and administrative competencies, or is it defined instead by the leadership and sincere dedication that emerge amid adversity? In the Seko region, the role of teachers extends beyond that of instructor and educator; they also serve as social leaders striving to realize inclusive education amid geographical isolation and policy disparities. From this perspective, the present study seeks to examine the leadership, competence, and dedication of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers, who represent the tangible face of educational struggle in 3T areas (Tirtana, 2025). The term 3T refers to regions characterized as remote areas located far from centers of development and, in many cases, directly bordering other countries. Therefore, government attention to 3T regions must be prioritized, particularly regarding social development and access to education.

Various studies on education in remote areas have generally emphasized issues related to teacher distribution, educational facilities, and disparities in access (R. Ananda et al., 2025; Sari & Jasiah, 2025). However, there remains a lack of studies that comprehensively explore how teachers in 3T areas practice educational leadership in informal and contextual ways, and how such

leadership is intertwined with the meaning of teacher dedication in sustaining inclusive education. In other words, the relationship between teacher leadership and professional dedication in highly isolated geographic contexts remains underexplored, particularly through qualitative approaches that center teachers' voices and experiences in the analysis.

The Seko region is one of the remote areas in North Luwu Regency, South Sulawesi Province. The Seko region is divided into three areas: Seko Padang, Seko Tengah, and Seko Lemo. The distance between the capital city of North Luwu Regency and Seko District is approximately 120 kilometers, with a travel time of around 11-12 hours by motorcycle. Poor road conditions lead to exceptionally long travel times for two-wheeled vehicles reaching Seko. Geographically, Seko is a mountainous region that is relatively difficult to access. For a long period, access to this region was dominated by land routes that could only be traversed by trail motorcycles, while pioneer air transportation became one of the alternative means of mobility for the local community (Antony, 2019; Mappong, 2025). Seko is categorized as a geographically isolated area, requiring extraordinary effort and dedication from various stakeholders, particularly educators who continue to serve despite significant limitations.

Field observations indicate that nearly all schools in Seko continue to experience shortages of basic facilities, including adequate classrooms, libraries, laboratories, and stable internet access. In fact, there are no adequate laboratory facilities available to support practical learning activities. The role of teachers as the primary actors in determining the quality of education in Seko has encouraged the researchers to investigate and examine in depth how teachers in such highly remote areas are able to develop and sustain their professional and pedagogical competencies.

This study also seeks to explore in depth how teachers interpret their dedication within these conditions of severe limitation. In public discourse, teacher dedication is often narrowly understood as merely loyalty or perseverance. However, in contexts such as Seko, teacher dedication carries a much broader and more complex meaning. This dedication encompasses the ability to persevere despite inadequate infrastructure and facilities, social concern, and a commitment to the values of humanity and justice in education. Teachers in Seko must integrate their roles as educators with broader social responsibilities, namely as agents of change striving to provide equitable education for all children in remote areas. Under such circumstances, teachers are required to develop adaptive pedagogical

practices while simultaneously maintaining their professional and pedagogical competencies despite limited systemic support. This finding reinforces the argument that teacher dedication in 3T areas cannot be understood merely as individual loyalty or perseverance, but rather as a form of contextual leadership practice oriented toward service and social transformation.

Within this framework of inclusive education, attention to geographically marginalized regions and communities becomes imperative. Inclusive education, as explained by Booth and Ainscow (2011), does not refer solely to students with special educational needs but also encompasses the broader principle of equitable access to education and the participation of all students in quality education, without discrimination based on geographical location, socioeconomic status, or physical condition. Therefore, the presence of competent, highly dedicated teachers in remote areas such as Seko is an important indicator of the success of inclusive education policies at the national level.

Teacher competency standards in Indonesia are based on four main dimensions: professional, pedagogical, social, and personal competence, as stipulated in Law Number 14 of 2005. In practice, however, these four core teacher competencies often cannot be fully realized in remote areas and therefore require contextual adaptation. Accordingly, this study aims to explore how teachers in Seko construct and interpret their competencies and dedication as forms of educational leadership practice within the context of extreme geographical isolation. This perspective aligns with studies on rural education and contextual pedagogy, which emphasize the importance of adapting educational approaches to social realities (Wargo & Hoke, 2022).

This qualitative study addresses a gap in research on education in Indonesia's 3T regions by examining how teacher leadership is enacted in context through dedication and professional competence amid geographical isolation. Unlike previous studies that emphasize educational access, infrastructure, or teacher distribution, this research focuses on teacher's lived experiences as educational and social leaders who sustain inclusive education despite structural constraints.

The uniqueness of this study lies in its context within the Seko region, which is characterized by high geographical isolation, severely limited transportation access, and minimal educational and technological infrastructure. These conditions position teachers not only as educators but also as key actors who construct leadership practices, competencies, and dedication in adaptive

ways grounded in local values. To date, empirical studies that integrate these three dimensions within a single analytical framework in regions with extreme characteristics, such as Seko, remain very limited. Therefore, this study aims to analyze in depth how teachers in Seko develop and interpret their leadership, competencies, and dedication in realizing inclusive education in 3T areas. The findings of this study are expected to contribute theoretically to the development of more contextual teacher competency models and to serve as a practical reference for formulating educational policies that are more equitable and responsive to the realities of education in remote regions of Indonesia.

Furthermore, this study positions teacher leadership as a key element in linking the principles of inclusive education to competency practices in the field. In this regard, the perspective of servant leadership, as proposed by Greenleaf (2002), is used to analyze how teachers demonstrate dedication through service, empathy, and commitment to the needs of students and the broader community. Teachers in remote areas serve not only as educators but also as community servants, striving to ensure that every child has access to adequate education.

On the other hand, the perspective of transformational leadership, as developed by Burns (2008) and Bass (1985), is employed to understand how teachers are able to inspire, motivate, and promote positive change despite existing limitations (W. C. Dewi et al., 2026; Juhro, 2020). This transformational leadership is reflected in teachers' ability to develop an educational vision, increase students' motivation to learn, and create educational innovations relevant to the local context. Therefore, the integration of inclusive education theory, national teacher competency standards, and leadership perspectives provides a comprehensive conceptual framework for analyzing how CRE teachers in remote regions such as Seko develop competencies that are not only aligned with established standards but are also contextual, adaptive, and transformative in supporting inclusive and equitable education.

Based on the field phenomena described above, the primary objective of this study is to qualitatively examine teacher competence and dedication within the context of education in 3T regions. This study focuses on how teachers in Seko develop their dedication in order to realize inclusive education amid challenging geographical conditions and limited educational facilities. From a theoretical perspective, this study has the potential to develop or identify a contextual model of teacher competence in remote areas, which may serve as a reference for educational policies in other regions with similar characteristics.

The findings of this study are expected to make a significant contribution to understanding the role of teachers in 3T regions and to provide policy recommendations to support the development of teacher competencies, particularly professional teacher competence, in geographically isolated areas. Consequently, it is hoped that education in remote regions such as Seko can improve meaningfully and that the educational disparities between urban and remote areas can be progressively reduced.

### **Research Method**

This study adopts a descriptive qualitative case study approach to explore in depth the competence and dedication of teachers in the remote Seko region within the context of inclusive education. This approach was selected because it provides a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomena occurring in the field and enables researchers to engage in continuous reflection and refinement throughout the research process.

The primary informants in this study consisted of two (2) school principals and four (4) teachers serving at SDN 088 Pokappaang and SMP Negeri 1 Seko. Both schools are located in Seko District, North Luwu Regency, South Sulawesi Province. The selection of these two schools was based on their representation as educational institutions situated in 3T areas and their experience of significant challenges related to infrastructure, educational facilities, and the quality of learning. The school principals and teachers were selected as informants because they possess direct experience and a deep understanding of teaching dynamics and the challenges involved in improving educational quality in the region.

Primary data were collected through in-depth interviews with teachers and principals, as well as direct classroom observations, to explore educators' perspectives, experiences, professional competencies, and dedication, and to validate teaching practices. Secondary data were obtained from school profiles, curricula, teacher performance reports, and relevant educational policies. Integrating these sources enabled data triangulation and provided a comprehensive understanding of educational leadership and policy implementation in the geographically constrained schools studied.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the data, this study uses data triangulation involving three main aspects. The first aspect was source triangulation, which involved comparing information from various sources, including interviews with school principals and teachers and field observations.

The second aspect was method triangulation, which combined in-depth interviews and direct observation as two complementary data collection methods. The third aspect was investigator triangulation, which involved more than one researcher in data collection and analysis to reduce bias and enhance objectivity.

Data analysis used the interactive analysis model of Miles and Huberman (1994), which includes data reduction, data presentation, and the drawing and verification of conclusions. Reduction was achieved by selecting relevant data and systematically presenting it to facilitate interpretation. Conclusions were formulated and continuously verified to identify patterns, themes, and research findings. Through this approach and methodology, the study is expected to provide an in-depth understanding of the challenges and roles of teachers in inclusive education in remote areas, as well as offer more targeted and relevant educational policy recommendations to field conditions. This study is also expected to contribute to the development of theories concerning teacher competence and dedication within the context of education in 3T regions.

## **Results and Discussion**

### *Teacher Leadership in the Seko Region*

Very limited geographical conditions and infrastructure position teachers not only as educators but also as educational leaders, requiring them to carry out various roles in the teaching process. Teachers in Seko face real and severe constraints, including classroom shortages, limited learning facilities, limited access to transportation, unreliable internet connectivity, and inadequate technological resources. In this condition, the effectiveness of learning is highly dependent on the teacher's leadership capacity in managing limited resources while simultaneously fostering students' motivation and enthusiasm for learning, as illustrated by the following interview findings:

Seko has extremely challenging geographical conditions because of its distance from the regency center and the very poor road access. As teachers, we must continue to carry out our responsibilities with full commitment. We not only teach in the classroom but also serve as motivators and role models for students and the school community. Amid limitations in facilities and infrastructure, we are required to be independent, consistent, and possess leadership qualities to ensure that the educational process continues. (Interview with Teacher 1)

Under the remote conditions of Seko, with its limited access and facilities, teacher leadership plays a crucial role in sustaining education within schools. Teachers demonstrate a high level of dedication, are able to collaborate effectively with the school administration, and take the initiative to find solutions to various existing limitations in order to support the learning process. (Interview with the School Principal)

These findings indicate that teacher leadership plays a crucial role in sustaining the educational process amid geographical constraints. The conditions in Seko, which is far from the regency center and has severely damaged road infrastructure, require teachers to possess strong leadership qualities, independence, and a high level of dedication. Teachers serve not only as educators but also as motivators and role models for students and the broader school community. Under such challenging circumstances, teacher leadership is evident in their ability to consistently fulfill their responsibilities, establish collaborative relationships with school principals, and take the initiative to address various limitations in educational facilities and infrastructure.

This study also found that teachers in the Seko region frequently adopt a transformational leadership style, inspiring and motivating students and colleagues to overcome physical and structural limitations. They serve as role models who cultivate hope and self-confidence, reinforcing the belief that education can bring about social change, as expressed by Teacher 2:

As teachers, we not only teach our students, but we also continuously motivate them to remain diligent and attend school regularly, even though the conditions of the roads they must travel to and from school are extremely poor. In addition, students must be continuously stimulated and encouraged to recognize their potential and abilities, which need to be developed and enhanced. (Interview with Teacher 2)

This finding is consistent with the theory proposed by Bass and Riggio (2006), which explains that transformational leadership emphasizes four dimensions: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. In the context of Seko, teachers frequently apply these approaches to enhance students' motivation to learn, develop innovative learning methods despite limited facilities, and encourage collaboration among students and local communities to establish a conducive learning environment.

Effective leadership must adapt to the level of readiness and environmental conditions (Hersey et al., 2013). Teachers in Seko naturally apply adaptive principles in their practice by adjusting their teaching methods, communication

approaches, and decision-making processes in response to students' conditions, facility limitations, and levels of community support. For example, when digital resources are unavailable, they utilize materials from the surrounding environment or students' life experiences as contextual learning resources.

Under challenging conditions, many teachers in the Seko region demonstrate leadership grounded in moral values and service-oriented principles (servant leadership). As one teacher explained: "We do not only teach our students, but we also strive to be listeners, helpers, friends, and role models by demonstrating perseverance and commitment in carrying out our responsibilities as teachers." (Interview with Teacher 2).

These findings demonstrate teachers' willingness and dedication to prioritize students' needs over their personal interests, to provide guidance, and to serve the school community with sincerity. Teachers fulfill not only the role of educators but also serve as listeners, helpers, and moral role models for children and the surrounding community. This finding emphasizes that true leaders are those who "serve first," and this characteristic is clearly reflected in the way teachers in Seko confront limitations with a strong spirit of service and dedication. This is consistent with Greenleaf's (2002) perspective, which emphasizes that true leadership is not about power, position, or authority but about serving others' needs and helping them grow.

In their daily practice, teachers exercise service-based leadership through simple yet meaningful actions. They are willing to travel long distances from Masamba to Seko, even in adverse weather, solely to ensure that the teaching and learning process continues. For them, student success is a primary priority that transcends their own personal comfort.

Teachers also serve as mentors and motivators within the community (Hargreaves, 2001). This is evident in Seko, where, amid limited facilities and geographical isolation, the presence of teachers often becomes a source of inspiration and encouragement for the local community. They not only teach in classrooms but also become individuals to whom community members turn for advice, discussion, and solutions to various social challenges they encounter.

Teacher leadership is also reflected in their ability to establish harmonious social relationships with colleagues, parents, and the local community. The friendly, open, and empathetic attitudes demonstrated by teachers foster mutual trust and strengthen solidarity within the school environment. Therefore, teacher leadership in Seko is not merely about the ability to direct and teach, but also

represents a tangible form of leadership rooted in the values of humanity, morality, and service. This form of leadership serves as the foundation for creating an inclusive learning environment that is open to and accepting of diversity, where every child is given the opportunity to grow according to their individual potential and uniqueness.

An inclusive learning environment is an atmosphere that provides equal opportunities for all students to participate actively, without discrimination based on social background, economic status, ability, or geographical location. This concept emphasizes that every child, regardless of their circumstances, has the right to receive meaningful learning experiences and to be valued within the school environment (Booth & Ainscow, 2011). In remote areas such as Seko, implementing an inclusive learning environment is both a challenge and a moral calling for teachers who continue to serve despite limited educational facilities and infrastructure.

Despite limited resources, teachers in Seko demonstrate inclusive leadership in several ways: first, by providing special attention to students experiencing learning difficulties; second, by adapting instruction to students' contexts; and third, by employing humanistic and social approaches. This finding is consistent with Ryan's (2006) argument that inclusive leaders promote social justice and equity within learning environments. Teachers focus not only on academic achievement but also strive to ensure that every child feels valued, accepted, and provided with equal opportunities to develop. Given the limited access to resources and the diverse socioeconomic backgrounds of students, teachers practice leadership that is sensitive to individual differences and oriented toward student empowerment. This approach reflects a genuine commitment to creating an equitable learning environment in which students are regarded as valuable individuals with unique potential.

Efforts to create a conducive, inclusive, and collaborative learning environment are evident in the various adaptive strategies implemented by teachers. They serve as facilitators and social agents who seek to bridge gaps in educational access. Contextual learning based on the local environment, utilizing gardens, rivers, and community activities as learning resources, makes learning more meaningful and easier to understand while simultaneously fostering appreciation for the environment and local wisdom. When access to schools becomes difficult, teachers are willing to visit students' homes and conduct learning activities within their residential communities. This practice

demonstrates a level of dedication and leadership that places children's education above all existing limitations.

Inclusivity is also reflected in multi-age learning activities, where students from different grade levels learn together in the same classroom. This approach fosters mutual assistance, tolerance, and solidarity among students. Teachers organize small learning groups so that students who are shy or experience learning difficulties can participate more actively and feel more comfortable. Outside the classroom, teachers emphasize the importance of empathetic communication with students and parents. Relationships built on trust, openness, and mutual respect enable teachers to gain a more comprehensive understanding of families' circumstances and each child's learning needs, while also encouraging parental participation in supporting their children's education. Through these practices, teachers in Seko have successfully created an inclusive and collaborative learning environment in which every student has the opportunity to grow and actively participate in the educational community.

The findings of this study indicate that national teacher competency standards need to be understood more contextually and adaptively, particularly in evaluating teacher performance and professionalism in 3T areas. Teacher competence in remote regions is not always reflected in administrative and technical indicators; rather, it is evident in practices of servant leadership, contextual pedagogy, and moral dedication that enable inclusive education to continue despite extreme limitations.

### ***Professional and Pedagogical Competencies in Inclusive Education***

Teacher competence refers to the set of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that teachers possess to carry out their professional duties effectively and efficiently. According to Law No. 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers, there are four core teacher competencies: pedagogical, professional, social, and personal competencies. However, within the 3T field, two competencies are most prominent and analyzed in depth in this study.

#### **Teachers' Professional Competence in Seko**

This study found that teachers in Seko possess professional competencies that remain relatively limited, as reflected in their subject-matter mastery and creativity in managing contextual learning, both of which remain very basic. Nevertheless, their ability to adapt to the limitations of educational facilities and

infrastructure has yielded fairly positive outcomes, as evidenced by learning processes adjusted to existing environmental conditions. Despite limited access to formal training, digital learning resources, and internet connectivity, teachers continue to demonstrate initiative in developing their competencies through self-study, use of printed materials, and sharing practices with colleagues.

In classroom practice, teachers at SMP Negeri 1 Seko consistently integrate local cultural values into Social Studies and Civic Education instruction. Concrete examples such as mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*), deliberation (*mukobo*), and the customs and traditions of the Seko community are used to clarify social and civic concepts (Interview with Teacher 1). This integration not only enhances the relevance of the learning materials but also strengthens students' internalization of character values and local wisdom. Thus, teachers serve not only as providers of knowledge but also as agents of cultural preservation.

Teacher dedication is reflected in their commitment to continuing the teaching and learning process despite challenging geographical conditions and adverse weather. When access to schools is disrupted, teachers take the initiative to teach in residents' homes or establish temporary classrooms. This practice demonstrates that teacher professionalism is determined not only by academic competence, but also by integrity, responsibility, and a spirit of service in ensuring that students' right to education continues to be fulfilled.

When examined in relation to the Regulation of the Minister of National Education No. 16 of 2007, teachers in Seko have demonstrated the essential elements of professional competence: mastery of subject matter, understanding of the curriculum, the ability to develop learning materials creatively, and professional conduct consistent with ethical standards. Three important findings can be highlighted. First, teachers demonstrate strong Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) by connecting learning materials to students' lived contexts (Shulman, 1986). The use of local culture as a learning medium indicates that PCK can develop significantly through experience, even in the absence of intensive formal training. Second, the practice of local culture-based learning aligns with the theories of Contextual Teaching and Learning and the Merdeka Belajar policy, both of which emphasize flexibility and local relevance in strengthening students' character and competencies. Third, the dimensions of professional morality, such as integrity, perseverance, and a service orientation, are clearly evident, thereby reinforcing Siregar et al. (2025) findings that teacher professionalism encompasses ethical dimensions inseparable from educational practice.

The findings of this study are consistent with several previous studies on teacher professionalism in 3T regions. Lumbu et al. (2025) argue that teachers in remote areas generally demonstrate a high level of dedication despite working under highly constrained conditions. However, this study makes a new contribution by demonstrating how teachers in Seko use local culture not merely as an illustration of learning content but also as a core pedagogical strategy. Although limited access to formal training may hinder the development of teachers' professional competence, the findings of this study indicate that teachers can compensate for these limitations through adaptive strategies, namely by maximizing local resources and community experiences (Priyatno & Pambudi, 2025).

D.A.P. Dewi et al. (2025) found in his study that learning based on local wisdom enhances the relevance of education for indigenous communities. This study complements those findings by demonstrating how integrating cultural values, such as *mukobo*, enriches the teaching and learning process in Social Studies and Civic Education while strengthening students' character development.

In addition, these findings reinforce the understanding that teachers' PCK in remote areas is developed through direct experience and adaptation to local contexts (Ismayadi, 2023). Therefore, professionalism in 3T areas cannot be fully measured using the same standards applied to teachers in urban regions, but rather must be understood through the perspective of context-responsive professionalism.

#### Teachers' Pedagogical Competence in Seko

The findings of this study indicate that teachers in Seko demonstrate pedagogical competence by adapting the learning process to the social, cultural, and environmental contexts of the local community. Under conditions of limited educational facilities, teachers do not rely on conventional methods based on digital media; instead, they develop contextual learning approaches rooted in students' real-life experiences. Based on interviews with teachers at SDN 088 Pokappaang Seko, learning activities are frequently conducted outside the classroom—such as in gardens, fields, or along riverbanks—to help students understand scientific and environmental concepts directly. In addition, teachers use natural materials and community experiences as learning resources, enabling students to develop a more concrete, relevant conceptual understanding of their daily lives (Interview with Teacher 2).

Teachers in Seko also demonstrate pedagogical competence by designing learning activities that are responsive to students' individual needs. Limitations in language proficiency, differences in socioeconomic backgrounds, and the lack of formal learning experiences at home are key considerations in developing collaborative strategies and differentiated instruction. Teachers implement differentiated learning in simple forms, such as organizing students into small groups to provide opportunities for participation among students who are shy, academically behind, or in need of additional guidance. This approach helps create an inclusive learning environment and encourages more intensive interaction between teachers and students.

In addition, learning assessment is conducted flexibly, depending on the limitations of the available materials. Under conditions of limited writing materials and standard assessment tools, teachers employ observation-based assessments of students' behavior, participation, and practical abilities in everyday activities. Assessment is conducted in accordance with the principles of objectivity and fairness, even though the format does not always involve written tests. This practice demonstrates teachers' ability to adapt the assessment process to remain meaningful and relevant to the learning context in remote areas.

These findings are consistent with the concept of pedagogical competence as stipulated in the Regulation of the Minister of National Education No. 16 of 2007, which emphasizes the importance of teachers' ability to design, implement, and evaluate learning effectively in line with students' characteristics. Teachers in Seko meet these indicators by implementing contextual learning, differentiated instruction, and adaptive assessment.

First, the practice of learning grounded in environmental and community experiences reflects the paradigm of experiential learning, which emphasizes direct experience as the foundation for knowledge construction (Hayati, 2020). Learning activities conducted in gardens, fields, and along rivers demonstrate the application of concrete experience cycles to deepen students' understanding.

Second, strategies are designed to accommodate diverse student characteristics in line with differentiated learning theory (Purba et al., 2021). Although implemented without modern educational resources, teachers can provide individualized support and organize learning groups according to students' needs, which constitutes the core of differentiated learning practices.

Third, observation and practice-based assessment aligns with the principles of authentic assessment, which, according to Wiggins, evaluates

students' abilities through real-world tasks relevant to their lives (Hidayati et al., 2025). Teachers in Seko naturally use this form of assessment in response to limited educational resources.

Several previous studies on education in 3T regions have emphasized that teachers in remote areas generally demonstrate a high level of dedication despite working under constrained conditions. The study by Murah and Mashur (2025) found that teachers in remote areas frequently employ experience-based methods due to limited facilities. This study extends those findings by demonstrating that nature-based learning in Seko is not merely a consequence of resource limitations but is also pedagogically designed to strengthen students' understanding.

In contrast to the findings of S. Ananda (2025), which suggest that differentiated instruction in remote areas is often implemented intuitively, the findings of this study provide concrete evidence that teachers in Seko consciously organize small groups and provide special attention to students who are shy or academically behind, indicating the development of pedagogical awareness despite minimal formal training.

Meanwhile, D.A.P. Dewi et al. (2025) emphasized that alternative assessment methods are necessary in areas with limited educational resources. The observation-based assessment practices implemented by teachers in Seko are consistent with these recommendations; however, this study adds value by demonstrating how observation is framed within the context of local culture and community life activities.

### ***Forms and Meanings of Teacher Dedication in Facing Geographical Challenges***

Teacher dedication is a commitment by educators to serve their students and communities, regardless of the challenges they face. Dedication does not merely reflect a work ethic but also embodies the moral, spiritual, and social calling of teachers to continue striving amid limitations (Suryaningrum, 2023). In the context of remote areas, teacher dedication becomes a key indicator of educational sustainability because, in such regions, the teaching profession requires not only academic competence but also communication skills, emotional management abilities, a deep commitment to the teaching vocation, and a high level of empathy toward students (Sanoto et al., 2021).

Teacher dedication in Seko can be observed through various concrete actions that demonstrate their commitment to the profession and the community,

including: (1) teachers continue to demonstrate readiness and determination to teach despite severely limited facilities and infrastructure, such as inadequate classrooms, limited learning resources, restricted internet access, and even the absence of electricity supply to school buildings; (2) a willingness to remain and serve in 3T areas; (3) teachers demonstrate a willingness to remain and serve in remote regions despite having to live with limited facilities and extremely difficult road access that is often inaccessible by motor vehicles; (4) creativity in overcoming technological limitations; (5) a willingness to demonstrate high levels of creativity in addressing limitations in technology and access to learning resources; (6) the role of teachers as agents of social change; and (7) teachers in Seko serve as agents of social change through character education by instilling moral values, discipline, cooperation, and social responsibility toward others and the surrounding community.

Teacher dedication is reflected not only through observable actions but also through the inner experiences and personal meanings that teachers derive from carrying out their duties. This dedication encompasses spiritual motivation, a sense of moral responsibility, and the belief that the teaching profession represents a form of service to society, the nation, and the state. From this perspective, dedication can be understood as a form of professional resilience that enables teachers to persevere, adapt, and make meaningful contributions despite working under severe limitations.

Teacher dedication and the principles of inclusive education in Seko are educational approaches that emphasize justice, equality, access, and active participation for all learners, without discrimination based on social, economic, cultural, or ability backgrounds or geographical location. In the context of 3T areas such as Seko, inclusive education means ensuring that every child, including those living in isolated regions, has equal rights and opportunities to receive quality education delivered by competent, highly dedicated teachers (Lestari et al., 2024).

The fundamental principles of inclusive education encompass three important aspects: (1) responding to student diversity by addressing individual learning needs; (2) reducing all forms of exclusion and marginalization within the education system; and (3) ensuring learning success for all students (Booth & Ainscow, 2011). In this context, teacher dedication and competence constitute the primary foundation for the successful implementation of inclusive education in remote areas. Teachers in Seko perform not only instructional functions but also

serve as guardians of the values of humanity and justice in education. They ensure that every student, regardless of background or socioeconomic status, has the opportunity to learn and develop to their full potential. Thus, teacher dedication in regions such as Seko reflects a combination of professionalism, social empathy, and moral commitment that constitutes the very essence of inclusive education.

Teachers in Seko are willing to endure arduous journeys and social isolation in order to fulfill their calling as educators. Some teachers must travel for 10–12 hours on trail motorcycles and modified motorbikes to navigate muddy roads, small rivers, and steep, high-risk terrain, especially during the rainy season. Nevertheless, their commitment remains unwavering. Limited communication signals, unstable electricity, and very basic living facilities have become part of the daily realities that these teachers must face. Under such conditions, teachers often have to take personal initiative to ensure that the learning process continues uninterrupted. They use their own financial resources to purchase stationery for students, print teaching materials, repair damaged classroom facilities, and even help meet the needs of disadvantaged students. These actions are not merely the result of professional obligations but arise from a sense of vocation and a moral commitment to the future of children in remote areas. This situation reflects the sacrifice dimension, in which teachers are willing to place their students' interests and well-being above their own (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011). This dedication is reflected in teachers' willingness to sacrifice their time, energy, comfort, and even personal resources to ensure that every child, regardless of geographical location, has an equal right to receive meaningful education.

Teacher dedication in Seko is also influenced by spirituality in the teaching profession. They perceive teaching not merely as a profession, but as a calling. Spirituality plays an important role in strengthening psychological resilience and the spirit of service, despite facing structural and economic pressures (Interview with Teacher 2). One teacher stated that teaching in remote areas represents a form of worship and service to God and society; therefore, various hardships are regarded as part of a noble mission (Interview with Teacher 3). These spiritual values cultivate gratitude, sincerity, and steadfastness in carrying out their responsibilities, so that their dedication stems not only from professional obligations but also from deep moral commitment and faith.

According to Palmer (1998), teacher spirituality means bringing wholeness

of heart and values into teaching practice and integrating knowledge, love, and service. In this context, teaching is not merely about transferring knowledge, but also about being fully present with empathy, love, and sincerity before students. Teachers with strong spirituality are motivated not solely by material incentives, but by an inner calling to shape the character and lives of their students. Teacher dedication in Seko also functions as a form of social agency, namely the capacity of individuals to act and bring about change within limited social systems. In this context, teachers are not merely implementers of policy, but also drivers of the sustainability of local education (Giddens, 1984). Referring to Giddens (1984), teachers build a culture of learning within the community. They foster awareness that education is the right of every student, thereby encouraging communities to support the continuity of schooling. Teachers also play mentoring roles among fellow teachers and students. They help students adapt and create a mutually supportive learning ecosystem. Teachers also serve as symbols of social resilience. Their dedication fosters hope amidst limitations, ensuring that education can survive even in extreme conditions.

The forms of teacher dedication not only sustain the continuity and implementation of education but also serve as a symbolic and moral force that motivates communities to continue striving for the right to equitable education.

#### Teacher Leadership, Competence, and Dedication in Seko

In the context of remote areas such as Seko, teacher leadership functions not only as the management of the learning process but also as a moral and social driving force that integrates professional competence, pedagogical competence, and the values of dedication. The transformational leadership style demonstrated by teachers, as previously described, fosters intrinsic motivation among both teachers and students to continue learning despite limited facilities and geographical conditions that remain significantly underdeveloped compared to surrounding regions (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

Teachers in Seko enact leadership by modeling responsibility, empathy, integrity, and a strong commitment to serving their communities. This leadership nurtures dedication, reflected in their willingness to remain in geographically isolated areas and fulfill educational responsibilities despite limited resources. Their professional competence is demonstrated through contextual adaptation, pedagogical innovation, and the effective use of local resources as learning media while connecting instruction to students' daily experiences. Consequently, teacher

leadership represents the integration of professionalism and dedication, strengthening motivation, resilience, and long-term commitment to educational service. Consistent with Evans (2008), teachers’ competence and dedication are expressed through their capacity to adapt learning environments and instructional resources to the local social and cultural context. Reflective and creative leadership enables teachers to translate pedagogical and professional competencies into meaningful educational practices, including nature-based learning, the integration of local wisdom, and the incorporation of community values. The interrelationship among these dimensions is presented in Table 1.

Aspect	Main Purpose	Impact
<b>Leadership</b>	Becoming a driver of change and inspiration	Improving teacher dedication and competence
<b>Competence</b>	Becoming a professional platform for realizing leadership values	Strengthening teacher dedication and leadership
<b>Dedication</b>	Becoming a driving force for fostering leadership and teacher competency values	Maintaining consistent leadership and competence

Table 1. Relational Model of Leadership, Competence, and Dedication

The relationship between these three aspects can be depicted as a synergistic triangle, as shown in Figure 1.

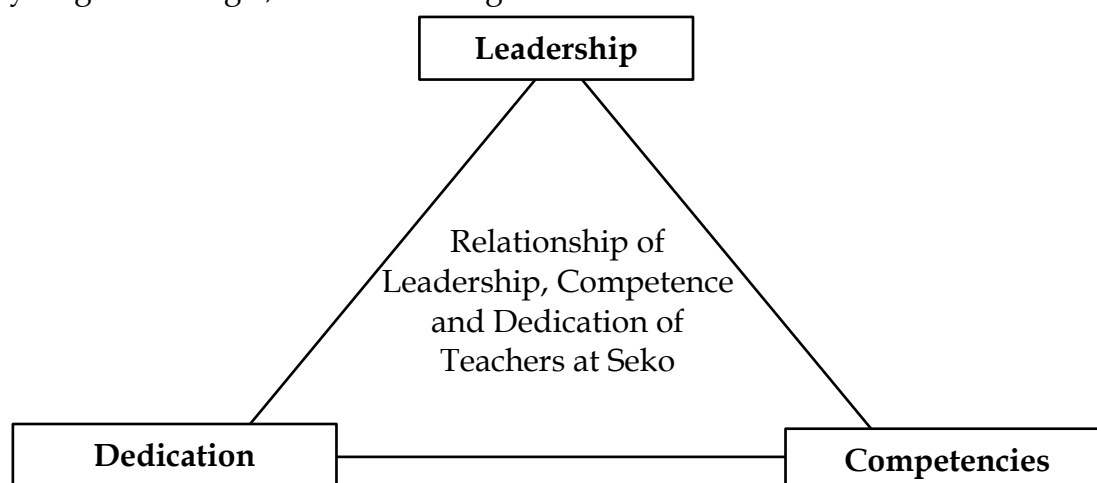


Figure 1. Synergy of Leadership, Competence, and Teacher Dedication Aspects

### *Strengths and Limitations of the Research Method*

This study employed a qualitative case study method. The strength of this method lies in its ability to help researchers understand phenomena comprehensively under real-world field conditions, including the social, cultural, and geographical contexts of the research site. Researchers were also directly

involved in obtaining information from participants in a more honest, detailed, and meaningful manner through interviews and observations. However, a limitation of this method is that the number of participants was small, making it difficult to generalize the findings to broader contexts or populations, given the study's focus on a specific case. In addition, the researcher's subjectivity may be a limitation of this study.

### **Implications**

The findings highlight important implications for education in 3T regions. Teacher leadership in Seko is characterized by transformational, adaptive, and service-oriented practices that effectively sustain learning, motivate students, and strengthen community relationships. Accordingly, educational policies should integrate context-based leadership models into teacher professional development programs for geographically remote areas.

Second, the findings regarding teachers' professional and pedagogical competencies imply the need for a context-responsive approach to professionalism. Teachers' ability to connect learning with local social, cultural, and environmental realities demonstrates that teacher competence cannot always be measured using uniform national standards. Professional development programs for teachers in remote areas should be designed flexibly, integrating contextual learning approaches and utilizing local wisdom as primary learning media and resources.

Third, from a pedagogical perspective, this study highlights the importance of experiential learning and authentic assessment under conditions of limited educational facilities. This finding implies that curricula and teacher training programs need to provide greater opportunities for alternative pedagogical approaches that are less dependent on technology or digital media.

Fourth, the findings related to teacher dedication affirm that moral values, spirituality, and personal sacrifice play a significant role in the success of education in 3T areas. Governments and educational institutions need to recognize this moral dimension as an integral part of professional competence and provide adequate incentives and psychosocial support to sustain teacher motivation. Affirmative policy programs for teachers in remote areas should emphasize recognition of teachers' dedication, including improvements in welfare, mental health support services, access to offline training, and enhancements to basic facilities.

Overall, this study implies the need for educational strategies that are holistic, adaptive, and grounded in local contexts. Teachers in Seko have demonstrated that professionalism rooted in dedication and moral leadership can serve as a strong foundation for achieving inclusive education, even under extreme conditions. These implications provide an important contribution to the development of more humane, responsive, and relevant teacher development models for remote areas in Indonesia.

In addition, the findings of this study provide a new perspective on the interpretation of "Teacher Competency Standards" as stipulated in Law No. 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers. The standards, which have traditionally been general and normative, need to be reconsidered, particularly in the context of their implementation in 3T areas. Field realities indicate that teacher competence in remote regions is not limited to pedagogical, professional, social, and personal dimensions, but also encompasses contextual and adaptive leadership capacities.

In this regard, it is important to consider the dimension of leadership as an integral component of teacher competence, particularly Servant Leadership, as proposed by Greenleaf (2002, 2003), and Transformational Leadership, as developed by Burns (2008) and Bass (1985). Teachers in 3T areas are required not only to possess teaching capabilities but also to serve as leaders who address the needs of students and communities, while simultaneously acting as agents of change who are able to inspire, motivate, and transform limitations into meaningful learning opportunities.

Therefore, the findings of this study indicate the need to reconstruct teacher competency standards to make them more contextual by incorporating leadership dimensions as an essential component of teacher competence, particularly for teachers serving in remote areas. This approach is expected to produce a competency framework that is more relevant, adaptive, and responsive to the geographical, social, and cultural challenges encountered in 3T regions.

### **Recommendation for future research**

Recommendations for future research arising from this study may deepen the understanding of teacher leadership dynamics by examining the psychological, social, and spiritual factors that shape teacher dedication in remote areas. Ethnographic studies or life-history approaches may provide a more comprehensive understanding of teachers' personal experiences in facing

geographical and social challenges. In addition, comparative studies across 3T regions may be conducted to examine variations in leadership practices and pedagogical competencies across differing cultural and geographical contexts. Future research should also broaden its focus to investigate the long-term impacts of teacher leadership and dedication on student learning outcomes, character development, and social change within local communities. Finally, subsequent studies may develop community-based intervention models to strengthen teacher professionalism as a sustainable strategy to improve the quality of education in remote areas.

### **Conclusion**

This study concludes that leadership, competence, and teacher dedication are three interrelated elements that form the primary foundation for educational success in remote regions such as Seko. Teachers serve not only as educators but also as transformative leaders, social agents, and community servants, capable of motivating students and sustaining the learning process despite various limitations. The transformative and adaptive leadership demonstrated by these teachers is evident in their ability to inspire, serve as exemplary role models, create contextual learning experiences, and foster harmonious social relationships.

The professional and pedagogical competencies of teachers in Seko are evident not only in their mastery of subject matter but also in their ability to utilize the environment, local culture, and life experiences as learning resources. Teachers have successfully implemented contextual learning, authentic assessment, and differentiated instructional strategies despite limited facilities and resources. These findings indicate that teacher professionalism in remote areas is context-responsive and develops through experience, reflection, and adaptation.

Teacher dedication emerges as a key factor in sustaining education in Seko. Spiritual motivation, moral values, and a commitment to children's future enable teachers to persevere in the face of geographical challenges, social isolation, and limited resources. This dedication reflects a dimension of sacrifice that extends beyond the formal demands of the profession.

Overall, this study confirms that educational success in 3T regions depends heavily on the synergy among leadership, professional-pedagogical competence, and teacher dedication. Together, these elements form a model of inclusive education that is relevant, humanistic, and firmly rooted in the local context.

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