

NGGUSU WARU-BASED SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND LEARNING QUALITY IN INDONESIAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the essence of the life experience of school principals in applying the values of local wisdom of *Nggusu Waru* to strengthen the quality of learning in elementary schools in Bima Regency. Using a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design that refers to Miles and Huberman's interactive model, data were collected through triangulation of methods and sources, including semi-structured in-depth interviews with five principals, participatory observation, and documentation studies. Participants were selected through purposive techniques and snowball sampling. Data analysis uses a combination of thematic analysis and phenomenological processes, as well as the preparation of textual and structural descriptions. The findings show five main themes: (1) spirituality (*nggolo*) as an ethical foundation; (2) multidimensional intelligence (smart) in contextual decision-making; (3) courage and patience as a motor for gradual transformation; (4) consistency and social relationships (*nggahi-groba-groba-groba*) in building collaboration; and (5) adequacy (ability) in the management of creative resources. The five themes form a holistic and contextual *Nggusu Waru*-based leadership model. Theoretically, this research enriches the literature on transformational leadership and values-based leadership through a locality perspective, broadens the understanding of spirituality intelligence in educational leadership, integrates the ontological and epistemological dimensions of local wisdom as a theoretical foundation, and develops a conceptual framework responsive to cultural plurality. Practically, these findings serve as a reference in designing an educational leadership training curriculum that integrates the values of spirituality, multidimensional intelligence, and social collaboration as core competencies, providing an empirical foundation for the implementation of an Independent Curriculum that emphasizes learning based on local contexts, and enabling the development of learning models that are oriented towards the formation of students' character and spiritual intelligence. Longitudinal and comparative research between regions is recommended to strengthen the empirical basis of the model.

Keywords: School Principal Leadership, Local Wisdom, *Nggusu Waru*, Quality Of Learning

INTRODUCTION

Educational leadership in Indonesia faces a fundamental challenge in bridging rapidly growing global leadership theory with a local context rich in traditional wisdom. In recent decades, the educational leadership literature has been colored by various theoretical frameworks born from the Western context, such as transformational leadership, instructional leadership, and values-based leadership. However, the relevance of these theories is often questioned when applied in the context of Indonesian education, which has a complex cultural diversity and local traditions. This condition creates a significant epistemological gap, where the

practice of educational leadership in the field runs without a theoretical foundation that truly reflects the values and ways of thinking of the local community (Aminullah, 2018).

In Bima Regency, West Nusa Tenggara, there is a concept of local wisdom that has been the foundation of the ethics of community life for centuries, namely *Nggusu Waru*. This concept refers to five core values that the people of Bima firmly hold: *nggolo* (spirituality), smart (multidimensional intelligence), courage (courage and patience), *nggahi-groba-groba-groba-groba* (consistency and social relations), and ability (adequacy in resource management). These values are not just traditions that are maintained, but an ethical system that regulates how individuals position themselves in the social order, how leaders lead, and how society builds collaboration for common prosperity. (Salam, 2022). However, the conceptual richness of *Nggusu Waru* has not been fully explored in the context of formal education leadership, especially at the elementary school level.

A review of the previous research literature reveals several significant gaps. First, previous research on *Nggusu Waru* focuses more on universities or the general public, with research subjects in the form of lecturers or community leaders, not elementary school principals. (Syarifuddin Syarifuddin et al., 2025), For example, analyzing the implementation of *Nggusu Waru* on lecturers in Bima with a descriptive quantitative approach, while other studies such as (Kulsum et al., 2024) focus on leadership ethics from the perspective of Bima culture in general. The gap also lies in the methodology used in previous studies, which are dominated by quantitative approaches based on questionnaires or literature studies, with the lack of research that uses a qualitative-phenomenological approach to reveal the deep meaning of the life experiences of the research subjects. As a result, the ontological and epistemological dimensions of the principal's experience in implementing the values of *Nggusu Waru* have not been comprehensively revealed. (Lestari & Abadi, 2025).

Previous research has mostly discussed *Nggusu Waru* as a concept of leadership ethics or community character, but rarely systematically connects it with the quality of learning in schools. In fact, the principal's leadership plays a central role in determining the quality of learning that occurs in classrooms. Existing research is cross-sectional and limited to a single location, with no cross-regional comparative studies or longitudinal studies that track the dynamics of leadership transformation in the long term. Although there is research on the integration of local wisdom in learning, no one has specifically formulated how the *Nggusu Waru*-based leadership model can be the basis for the implementation of the Independent Curriculum in elementary schools, especially in the aspect of character development and spiritual intelligence of students. Sixth, the dimension of spirituality (*nggolo*), which is the foundation of *Nggusu Waru*,

has not been explored in depth within the framework of educational leadership theory, even though spirituality is a crucial element in the formation of the character of educational leaders with integrity (Syarifuddin Syarifuddin et al., 2025).

These gaps open up space for this research to make an original contribution to the development of educational leadership science. This research seeks to fill this gap by examining the essence of the life experiences of school principals in applying the values of local wisdom of *Nggusu Waru* to strengthen the quality of learning in elementary schools in Bima Regency. (Nofutri et al., 2025). Using a phenomenological qualitative approach, this study not only describes what the principals do, but also reveals the profound meaning of their experience in bringing *Nggusu Waru's* values to life in their daily leadership practice. The results of this study are expected to enrich the educational leadership literature with a local perspective, develop a leadership conceptual framework that is responsive to cultural plurality, and provide an empirical basis for implementing the Independent Curriculum that emphasizes learning based on local contexts.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative approach with a phenomenological study to examine in depth the lived experience of school principals in implementing the values of local wisdom of *Nggusu Waru* in the practice of learning leadership. The phenomenological approach was chosen because it allows researchers to explore the essence of the subjective experiences of the actors and the meaning they give to the phenomena experienced (CRESWELL, 2014). Phenomenological research seeks to uncover the essential structure of human experience through phenomenological reduction, which is the process of suspending (bracketing) the researcher's prejudice to gain a pure understanding of the participant's experience. In the context of this study, phenomenology is relevant because the focus is on how the principal interprets and actualizes the values of *Nggusu Waru*. This phenomenon is subjective, contextual, and cannot be reduced to a quantitative variable. (Raharjo et al., 2024) Affirming that the phenomenological approach is effective in exploring the meaning that individuals give to a phenomenon, the strategies they use, and the challenges and opportunities they face.

Data collection is carried out through triangulation of sources and methods to strengthen the credibility and validity of the data. Triangulation is a strategy of using various methods or data sources in qualitative research to develop a comprehensive understanding of phenomena. (Carter et al., 2014). (Spradley, 1978) Identify four types of triangulation: (a) method triangulation, the use of multiple methods; (b) investigator triangulation, the involvement of two or more researchers; (c) theoretical triangulation, the use of various theoretical perspectives; and

(d) triangulation of data sources, the use of a variety of independent data sources. In this study, triangulation of methods and data sources was applied. Data collection techniques include: (1) semi-structured in-depth interviews with interview guidelines that contain open-ended questions about participants' understanding of *Nggusu Waru* values, integration processes in leadership, academic supervision strategies, supporting and inhibiting factors, and impacts on learning quality—interviews are recorded audio with the participant's permission and transcribed verbatim to ensure data accuracy; (2) participatory observation in which the researcher acts as an observer-as-participant to observe the principal's leadership activities directly, interaction with teachers and students, the implementation of academic supervision, and learning activities in the classroom, by making field notes that pay attention to the aspects of thick description including contextual description, verbal and non-verbal behavior, and reflection of the researcher. (Miles, 2014).

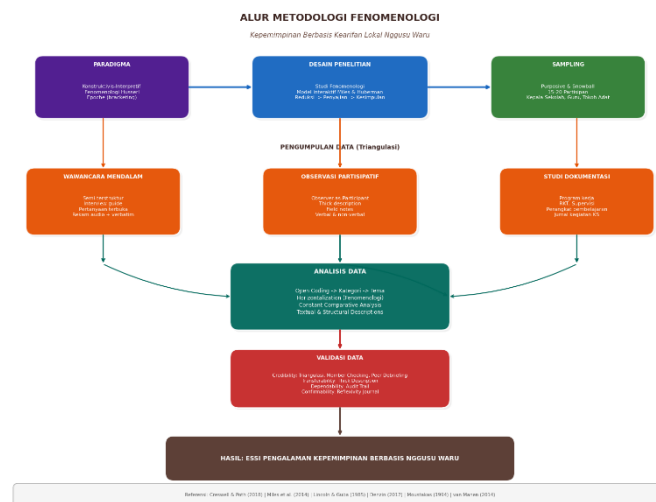


Figure 1. Phenomenological Methodology Flow

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Meaning of Nggusu Waru in the Perspective of Transformational Leadership Theory

Nggusu Waru, as a concept of local wisdom of the Bima community, is essentially a leadership ethics system that has been historically tested in regulating the social order of society. In (Khalifa et al., 2016), associated with the transformational leadership theory put forward by James MacGregor Burns (1978) and developed by Bernard M. Bass (1985), there is a fundamental compatibility between *Nggusu Waru's* values and the four pillars of transformational leadership, namely idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration.

Burns views transformational leadership as a process in which leaders and followers elevate each other to higher levels of morality and motivation. In this context, the value of *nggolo* (spirituality) in *Nggusu Waru* serves as the foundation of idealized influence, where the principal becomes an ethical role model who holds high moral standards and inspires respect and trust from teachers and school staff. Spirituality is not just a religious ritual, but an ontological awareness of the human position in the cosmos that encourages leaders to act with integrity and wisdom. This is in line with Bass's thinking that transformational leaders must have ideal behavior and a good image in their environment, so that they become role models who build followers' trust to act according to the leader's direction. (Lestari & Abadi, 2025).

The value of smart (multidimensional intelligence) in *Nggusu Waru* reflects the dimension of intellectual stimulation in Bass theory. Principals who apply this value do not just give orders, but encourage teachers to think critically, question old assumptions, and find innovative solutions to learning problems. Multidimensional intelligence here is not limited to the purely cognitive aspect, but rather includes emotional and spiritual intelligence, so decision-making always takes into account the social, cultural, and local value context. (Bass & Riggio, 2006) emphasizes that transformational leaders can mobilize followers to have higher-level needs, where the interests of the organization or team are prioritized over personal interests.

Furthermore, the value of courage (courage and patience) acts as an inspirational motivation that motivates teachers and school staff to commit to a greater educational vision. Courage in *Nggusu Waru* is not an impulsive action, but courage formed by patience and fortitude in facing the challenges of transformation. This is in line with Burns' thinking that transformational leaders can stimulate and inspire their followers to achieve extraordinary results, even beyond reasonable expectations.

Meanwhile, the value of *nggahi-groba-groba-groba-groba* (consistency and social relationships) reflects the dimension of individualized consideration, where the principal pays attention to the unique needs and aspirations of each individual in the team. This value emphasizes the importance of building trust-based collaboration and behavioral consistency, so that each team member feels valued and supported in developing their potential. Thus, *Nggusu Waru* can be understood not as an antithesis of modern leadership theory, but as a form of locality of transformational leadership that has lived and developed in the context of Bima culture.

Spirituality (Nggolo) in the Perspective of Spiritual Intelligence Theory

The dimension of spirituality in *Nggusu Waru*, known as *nggolo*, is strongly relevant to the theory of spiritual intelligence (SQ) proposed by Danah Zohar and Ian Marshall (2000).

According to Zohar and Marshall, spiritual intelligence is the ultimate intelligence used to face and solve problems of meaning and value, placing behavior and life in a broader and meaningful context.

In the context of educational leadership, *nggolo* serves as the ethical foundation that guides every decision of the principal. Zohar and Marshall argue that spiritual intelligence can heal and build oneself as a whole, both intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually. This is in line with the function of *nggolo* in *Nggusu Waru*, which not only directs the leader's outward behavior, but also shapes his inner character. School principals who have high spiritual intelligence will be able to maintain harmony in their daily lives, as well as be humanistic towards others.

This research was carried out in several elementary schools located in three different geographical zones in Bima Regency, namely the coastal zone (SD Negeri 1 Bima and SD Negeri 3 Bima), the lowland zone (SD Negeri 5 Bima and SD Negeri 7 Bima), and the mountainous zone (SD Negeri 10 Bima). The five principals who were the main informants in this study had served for a range of 3 to 8 years and explicitly recognized *Nggusu Waru's* values as the foundation in their leadership practices. From the results of in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and documentation studies, it was found that the implementation of *Nggusu Waru* values in the leadership of school principals is not uniform, but is influenced by the socio-cultural context, characteristics of the community around the school, and the experience and educational background of each principal. Based on the thematic analysis carried out, five main themes emerged that describe how school principals interpret and implement *Nggusu Waru* values in leadership practice to strengthen the quality of learning.

The first result that emerged from the data analysis was the role of spirituality as the main foundation in the principal's leadership. The first value of *Nggusu Waru*, namely "fear and shame of Allah" (*nggolo*), is interpreted by all informants not only as a personal religious dimension, but as an ethical principle that underlies all decision-making and leadership actions. The Principal of SD Negeri 1 Bima (Informant K-1), who has been in office for 7 years, revealed that spirituality is a compass in dealing with various ethical dilemmas that often arise in school management:

"Nggolo is not just fear of Allah, but shame if we do something that is not right. As a school principal, I have to be an example. If I myself am not consistent with what I ask of the teacher, how can the teacher believe it? Shame on me in front of God, in front of teachers, in front of the community." (Interview with K-1, March 15, 2026).

These findings align with this view. (Aminullah, 2018) This view explains that the value of *nggolo* in *Nggusu Waru* is a spiritual foundation that requires leaders always to maintain integrity

and consistency between words and actions. In the context of educational leadership, spirituality serves as a self-regulation mechanism that prevents the abuse of power and ensures that decisions taken are always oriented to the interests of students and teachers. Observations conducted at SD Negeri 1 Bima show that K-1 routinely holds reflection meetings with teachers at the beginning of each semester, where spiritual and ethical values are discussed openly as the foundation of the semester's learning planning.

Based on the documentation study, it was found that the school work program prepared by K-1 explicitly listed the spiritual dimension as one of the pillars of character development of students and teachers. This differs from school work programs in general, which focus more on academic and administrative aspects. The Annual Work Plan (RKT) document of SD Negeri 1 Bima for 2025/2026 includes the activity "Strengthening *Nggusu Waru* Values in School Culture" as a flagship program that is carried out sustainably. These findings confirm that spirituality in *Nggusu Waru* is not only theoretically understood, but has been actualized in concrete educational management practices.

Compared to research (Rustan Effendi et al., 2020) about transformational leadership based on Lonto Leok's local wisdom in Lombok, these findings show similarities in terms of emphasis on the spiritual dimension as the foundation of leadership. However, what makes it different is that in the context of *Nggusu Waru*, spirituality is emphasized more as a mechanism of "shame" (social shyness) that functions as a control of behavior in the public space, not just as a personal religious practice. This is relevant to the characteristics of the collective culture of the Mbojo people who pay close attention to social judgment and community reputation.

The second finding that emerged was the role of intelligence and broad insight (smart) in decision-making related to learning. The second value of *Nggusu Waru* requires leaders to be not only intellectually intelligent, but also to have a broad insight into various aspects of life. In the context of school leadership, this value is interpreted as the need for comprehensive pedagogical and managerial competence. The Principal of SD Negeri 5 Bima (Informant K-3), who has a master's education background in educational management, explained that intelligence in *Nggusu Waru* is not only about academic knowledge, but also the ability to understand and manage the complexity of the school:

"Smart people here are not just smart in class or S2 graduates. Smart people know when to be firm, when to be soft. Smart can read the teacher's character, read the classroom situation, read the needs of the community around the school. I have to be smart at managing conflicts between teachers, smart at motivating teachers who are bored, smart at finding solutions when the budget is limited." (Interview with K-3, dated March 22, 2026).

Data analysis shows that intelligence in the context of *Nggusu Waru* is multidimensional and includes: (1) pedagogical intelligence a deep understanding of the learning process and the development of students' competencies; (2) emotional intelligence the ability to manage one's emotions and understand the emotions of others; (3) cultural intelligence understanding of the values and norms of the local community; and (4) political intelligence the ability to establish relationships with various stakeholders. Observations at SD Negeri 5 Bima revealed that K-3 routinely follows the development of national education policies through digital literacy, but always links it to the local context before communicating it to teachers. This practice reflects cultural intelligence that can bridge the gap between national policy demands and local realities.

The third finding that emerged from the data analysis was the role of courage (courage) and patience (patience) as a motor in transforming learning. These two values often appear simultaneously in informant narratives, indicating that in the context of educational leadership, courage without patience can result in impulsive decisions. In contrast, patience without courage can result in inaction in the face of change. The principal of SD Negeri 10 Bima (Informant K-5), who serves in a remote school with very limited access, explained his personal experience in encouraging changes in learning methods in his school:

"Being brave does not mean being reckless. Brave is brave to start even if there is no one to support it. Courage must be accompanied by patience. I want the teachers here to use more active learning methods, not just lectures. But I know change can't be instantaneous. Teachers here have been teaching in the same way for decades. If I insist, they will refuse. So I was patient, slowly, one by one, I accompanyd. From one teacher who wants to try, then another sees the results, then they want to join." (Interview with K-5, dated April 5, 2026).

The above narrative describes the learning transformation process that takes place gradually and is based on empirical evidence. K-5 does not use an authoritarian top-down approach, but rather a bottom-up approach that allows teachers to see and feel the benefits of change before deciding to follow it. Observations at SD Negeri 10 Bima confirmed that K-5 spent most of its time doing individual coaching with teachers, not for administrative activities in the principal's room. The K-5 activity journal document shows that in one semester, he conducted academic supervision 24 times, which far exceeded the minimum standards set by the Bima Regency Education Office.

These findings are in line with transformational leadership theory. (Bass & Riggio, 2006) This emphasizes that transformational leaders can inspire change through intellectual stimulation and individual consideration. However, these findings add nuance: in the context of education in remote areas, change requires more time and a more personalized approach. Research (Ikram et al., 2026) at SD Negeri 26 Muara Sugihan also found that adaptive and

patient leadership is a key factor in improving teacher performance in remote schools. What distinguishes the findings of this study is that the value of patience in *Nggusu Waru* is not only understood as a personal trait, but also as a principle of systematic and planned leadership.

CONCLUSION

This study examines in depth the phenomenon of the leadership of school principals based on local wisdom *Nggusu Waru* in strengthening the quality of learning in elementary schools in Bima Regency. Through a qualitative approach with a multiple case study design, this study explored the meaning, experiences, and processes of five school principals in actualizing the values of *Nggusu Waru* in daily learning leadership practice. Based on thematic analysis of in-depth interview data, participatory observation, and documentation studies, five main themes were found that form the *Nggusu Waru*-based leadership model.

Spirituality in the context of *Nggusu Waru* functions as a self-regulation mechanism that prevents abuse of power and ensures that decisions are oriented toward the interests of students and teachers. Second, smart values (intelligent and insightful) are actualized in the form of multidimensional intelligence that includes pedagogical, emotional, cultural, and political dimensions, allowing principals to make contextual and adaptive decisions. Third, the values of courage and patience serve as a motor for learning transformation that takes place gradually and is based on empirical evidence, through an individualized coaching approach and intensive academic supervision. Fourth, the value of *nggahi* (consistency between speech and action) and *groba-vaba* (good social relationships) form the foundation of trust that allows for distributed leadership practices and collaborative cultures in schools. Fifth, the value of being able (adequate) is interpreted as the ability to manage resources creatively and build strategic partnerships with the community to support quality learning.

Theoretically, this research contributes by constructing an educational leadership model that is rooted in the traditional values of the Mbojo community. This model enriches the educational leadership literature, which has been dominated by Western theoretical frameworks, by showing that effective leadership must bridge the gap between the demands of educational modernization and the preservation of traditional values. Practically, this model can serve as a reference for the Bima Regency Education Office and other regions with similar characteristics in formulating contextual leadership development programs for school principals. In terms of policy, these findings provide input for implementing the Independent Curriculum and strengthening the Pancasila Student Profile, where local wisdom is not only integrated into learning content but also in school leadership practices.

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