

Strengthening Teacher Professionalism through Academic Supervision Strategies and Democratic Principal Leadership at SD Negeri 167 Palembang

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini dilaksanakan di SD Negeri 167 Palembang dengan tujuan menganalisis strategi supervisi akademik dan gaya kepemimpinan kepala sekolah dalam meningkatkan profesionalisme guru. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif melalui wawancara, observasi, dan studi dokumentasi. Analisis data dilakukan melalui reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa supervisi akademik dilaksanakan secara terencana dan sistematis, dimulai dari penyusunan program supervisi, penelaahan perangkat pembelajaran, observasi kelas, hingga evaluasi. Kepala sekolah memberikan umpan balik konstruktif, dialogis, dan solutif yang membantu guru melakukan refleksi dan perbaikan pembelajaran secara berkelanjutan. Kepala sekolah menerapkan gaya kepemimpinan demokratis dan partisipatif dengan melibatkan guru dalam pengambilan keputusan, memberikan motivasi, serta mendukung pengembangan profesional melalui pelatihan dan kegiatan kolaboratif. Faktor pendukung meliputi komitmen kepala sekolah, budaya kerja kolaboratif, sarana memadai, dan komunikasi efektif. Faktor penghambat meliputi keterbatasan waktu dan resistensi sebagian guru. Kesimpulannya, supervisi akademik yang terstruktur dan kepemimpinan yang partisipatif berkontribusi signifikan terhadap peningkatan kompetensi guru dan mutu pembelajaran.

Kata kunci: Supervisi Akademik, Kepemimpinan Kepala Sekolah, Profesionalisme Guru, Kepemimpinan Demokratis, Sekolah Dasar.

Abstract

This study was conducted at SD Negeri 167 Palembang to examine how academic supervision strategies and the principal's leadership style contribute to improving teacher professionalism. This research employed a qualitative descriptive approach using in-depth interviews, classroom observations, and documentation analysis. Data were analyzed through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings revealed that academic supervision was implemented in a structured and systematic manner, beginning with annual and semester supervision planning, review of lesson plans, classroom observations, and evaluation. The principal provided constructive, dialogic, and solution-oriented feedback, enabling teachers to reflect on and improve their instructional practices. The principal applied a democratic and participatory leadership style by involving teachers in decision-making, encouraging collaboration, and supporting professional development through training and group activities. Supporting factors included strong leadership commitment, collaborative work culture, adequate facilities, and effective communication, while time constraints and limited teacher openness were identified as challenges.

Keywords: Academic Supervision, Principal Leadership, Tacher Professionalism, Democratic Leadership, Primary school.

1. INTRODUCTION

Primary education represents the initial and most fundamental stage in shaping learners' intellectual capacity, character formation, and lifelong learning attitudes. The quality of education at this level significantly influences students' readiness to progress into higher

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stages of schooling. In the Indonesian educational context, improving primary education quality is closely related to strengthening teacher competence and professionalism. Teachers serve as the central figures in instructional delivery, classroom management, and student character development. Therefore, sustainable efforts to enhance teacher professionalism remain a strategic priority in educational reform (Hasibuan et al., 2023).

Teacher professionalism refers to the integration of pedagogical competence, subject-matter mastery, social awareness, and personal integrity. These competencies are not static; rather, they require continuous development through reflection, training, and professional guidance. Professional growth does not occur automatically but must be supported by structured institutional mechanisms. One such mechanism is academic supervision, which is designed to assist teachers in improving instructional quality through systematic guidance and evaluation (Maulidiyatul & Supriyanto, 2021).

Academic supervision is often misunderstood as a purely evaluative or administrative activity. However, contemporary perspectives emphasize that supervision should function as a developmental process aimed at strengthening teachers' instructional capacity. Constructive supervision encourages dialogue, reflection, and collaborative problem-solving between principals and teachers. When implemented effectively, supervision becomes a professional learning opportunity rather than a form of control (Mediatati & Jati, 2022).

The role of the principal is central in ensuring that supervision is implemented meaningfully. Principals are not only administrative leaders but also instructional leaders who shape the direction of teaching and learning processes within schools. Leadership that prioritizes academic development fosters a culture of continuous improvement and accountability. Studies indicate that school leadership significantly affects teacher performance and overall school effectiveness (Robinson et al., 2019).

In addition to instructional leadership, democratic leadership practices have been shown to positively influence teacher motivation and engagement. A leadership style that values participation, open communication, and shared decision-making creates an atmosphere of trust and collaboration. Teachers who feel respected and involved are more likely to embrace supervision as a supportive professional process rather than an evaluative burden (Wiryasana, 2022).

Furthermore, collaborative leadership strengthens school improvement initiatives by encouraging collective responsibility among staff members. Effective collaboration between principals and teachers contributes to the development of a professional learning community within the school environment (Setyorini & Khuriyah, 2023). In such an environment, supervision is integrated into daily professional practice and becomes part of the school's culture.

Despite its potential benefits, the implementation of academic supervision is not without challenges. Limited time allocation, administrative workload, and teacher resistance often reduce the effectiveness of supervision programs. Some teachers may perceive supervision as an additional pressure rather than a supportive activity. Addressing these challenges requires adaptive strategies and effective communication to ensure that supervision maintains its developmental purpose (Kiptiyah, 2023).

Change management strategies are also essential in sustaining supervision practices. Schools that successfully implement professional development programs typically apply

gradual, persuasive approaches to minimize resistance and encourage participation (Rifky & Farihin, 2024). This indicates that leadership style and communication patterns play a significant role in determining supervision outcomes.

Recent research also emphasizes that instructional leadership contributes directly to teacher professional growth by aligning supervision with curriculum implementation and classroom practice (Hallinger, 2020). Similarly, transformational leadership elements—such as inspiration, vision-building, and professional encouragement—strengthen teachers' intrinsic motivation to improve their competencies (Bass & Riggio, 2019).

Moreover, continuous professional development supported by school leadership improves instructional quality and student learning outcomes. Empirical findings demonstrate that schools with strong academic leadership structures tend to show better teaching performance and institutional progress (Leithwood et al., 2020). This reinforces the argument that supervision and leadership are interconnected components of educational improvement.

Considering these perspectives, it becomes evident that academic supervision strategies and leadership style are inseparable factors in promoting teacher professionalism. Effective supervision requires planning, implementation, and evaluation processes that are supported by participatory and visionary leadership. Therefore, this study focuses on examining how academic supervision strategies and principal leadership practices contribute to improving teacher professionalism at SD Negeri 167 Palembang. The research also seeks to identify supporting and inhibiting factors influencing supervision effectiveness in order to provide contextual insights for strengthening primary education management.

2. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to explore the implementation of academic supervision strategies and principal leadership practices in improving teacher professionalism at SD Negeri 167 Palembang. A qualitative approach was selected because it enables an in-depth understanding of social phenomena within their natural context, particularly when examining leadership behavior and professional interactions in school settings (Creswell & Poth, 2019). The descriptive orientation of this research focuses on portraying existing conditions systematically without manipulating variables (Sugiyono, 2020). The research was conducted from September to October 2025 at SD Negeri 167 Palembang. The school was selected purposively based on its active implementation of structured academic supervision programs and its commitment to teacher professional development. Site selection in qualitative research is generally determined by the relevance of the setting to the research objectives (Yin, 2020).

Participants were determined through purposive sampling, which allows researchers to select informants who possess direct knowledge and experience related to the phenomenon under investigation (Etikan & Bala, 2020). Three key informants were involved: the principal, the vice principal for curriculum, and one teacher. These participants were chosen because they are directly engaged in the planning, execution, and evaluation of supervision activities. Purposive sampling ensures that data obtained are rich, relevant, and contextually meaningful (Ames et al., 2019). Data were collected through three primary techniques: in-depth interviews, observation, and document analysis. In-depth interviews were conducted using semi-structured guidelines to provide flexibility while maintaining focus on the research questions. Semi-structured interviews enable participants to express their

experiences openly while allowing the researcher to explore emerging themes (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

Observation was conducted to examine supervision practices, leadership interactions, and classroom activities directly. Observational data provide valuable contextual insights that may not be fully captured through interviews alone (Merriam & Tisdell, 2019). Field notes were systematically recorded to document behaviors, communication patterns, and supervision processes observed during the research period. Document analysis was also employed to review relevant materials such as lesson plans (RPP), supervision reports, school programs, and evaluation records. Document analysis strengthens data credibility by providing written evidence that supports interview and observation findings (Bowen, 2019). The integration of multiple data sources enhances the depth and validity of qualitative research outcomes.

To ensure trustworthiness, this study applied credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability criteria as recommended in qualitative research standards (Nowell et al., 2020). Triangulation of sources and methods was used to compare data obtained from different participants and collection techniques. This process helps reduce bias and strengthen interpretative accuracy (Flick, 2022). Member checking was also conducted by sharing preliminary findings with participants to confirm the accuracy of interpretations. This step enhances credibility and ensures that participants' perspectives are represented faithfully (Birt et al., 2019). Additionally, prolonged engagement in the field allowed the researcher to develop familiarity with the school environment, thereby increasing data reliability.

Data analysis followed an interactive model involving three stages: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data condensation refers to selecting and simplifying relevant information from raw data. Data display involves organizing findings into structured categories or themes. Finally, conclusions are drawn based on recurring patterns and verified continuously throughout the research process (Miles et al., 2020). Thematic analysis was applied to identify key patterns related to supervision strategies, leadership style, supporting factors, and inhibiting factors. Thematic analysis is effective for systematically interpreting qualitative data and generating meaningful insights from participants' narratives (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). Codes were developed inductively from interview transcripts and field notes, then grouped into broader themes reflecting the research focus.

Ethical considerations were strictly observed throughout the research process. Participants were informed about the study objectives, and their consent was obtained prior to data collection. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained to protect participants' identities and professional positions. Ethical transparency is fundamental in qualitative research involving human subjects (Resnik, 2020). Through these procedures, this study aims to produce comprehensive and contextually grounded findings regarding how academic supervision strategies and principal leadership practices influence teacher professionalism at SD Negeri 167 Palembang.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that academic supervision at SD Negeri 167 Palembang is implemented in a structured, continuous, and professionally oriented manner, contributing significantly to strengthening teacher professionalism and instructional quality. At the beginning of each semester, the principal prepares a supervision schedule and coordinates it with teachers to ensure transparency, readiness, and shared understanding of supervision objectives. This systematic planning reduces teacher anxiety and encourages them to perceive supervision as an integral component of professional development rather than evaluative inspection. Clear, organized, and transparent supervision planning has been recognized as a key factor in promoting instructional consistency and professional growth (Glickman et al., 2020).

During the implementation phase, the principal conducts classroom observations focusing on key aspects of teaching, including lesson delivery, classroom management, student engagement, and the effective use of instructional media. These observations are followed by reflective discussions in which teachers are encouraged to evaluate their own instructional practices before receiving feedback. This reflective process enhances teachers' self-awareness, accountability, and commitment to professional improvement (Hattie, 2020). Constructive and dialogic feedback emphasizes teachers' strengths while identifying areas for improvement and offering practical solutions. Such formative feedback plays a critical role in enhancing instructional competence, reinforcing supervision as a professional mentoring and coaching process rather than mere monitoring (Sergiovanni, 2021; Goldring et al., 2019).

Supervision activities also include guidance in developing lesson plans (RPP), aligning instructional objectives with curriculum standards, and designing effective assessment strategies. The vice principal for curriculum supports this process by ensuring that supervision outcomes are integrated into broader curriculum planning and development. This alignment between supervision and curriculum planning enhances instructional coherence, consistency, and effectiveness (Darling-Hammond et al., 2019). Furthermore, professional development initiatives such as internal workshops, peer-sharing sessions, and collaborative learning forums complement supervision practices. These activities foster professional learning communities that encourage knowledge sharing, reflective practice, and continuous instructional improvement (DuFour & Fullan, 2020; Avalos, 2019; Harris, 2021).

The principal's leadership approach reflects key elements of instructional and participatory leadership. By involving teachers and the vice principal in supervision processes and decision-making, the principal promotes shared responsibility, collective accountability, and organizational commitment (Spillane & Diamond, 2019). This distributed leadership approach strengthens teacher motivation, enhances professional engagement, and encourages openness to instructional innovation (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Professional dialogue during supervision sessions also promotes a shared understanding of instructional standards, improving teaching consistency across classrooms (Marzano, 2021). Additionally, supportive leadership contributes to the development of teacher self-efficacy, as constructive feedback increases teachers' confidence in their instructional abilities and improves classroom performance (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2020).

Despite these strengths, several challenges were identified. Limited time for supervision due to administrative responsibilities reduces the frequency and depth of classroom

observations, a constraint commonly reported in school supervision systems (Bush, 2020). Some teachers initially perceived supervision as evaluative, leading to hesitation and resistance. However, consistent communication, supportive leadership, and constructive feedback gradually reduced these concerns and fostered greater acceptance. Teachers acknowledged that supervision improved their lesson planning, classroom interaction, and assessment practices. They also emphasized that leadership openness created a supportive environment where instructional challenges could be discussed openly. School climates characterized by trust, collaboration, and psychological safety have been shown to significantly enhance teacher performance and professional growth (Bryk & Schneider, 2020).

These findings align with contemporary perspectives that position academic supervision as a professional coaching and mentoring process rather than inspection (Knight, 2022). Effective supervision encourages reflective practice, continuous learning, and instructional improvement, reinforcing its role as a key strategy in enhancing teaching quality. Moreover, leadership quality remains a strong predictor of school effectiveness, particularly when supervision is integrated into long-term school improvement planning (Grissom et al., 2021; Pont, 2020). Adaptive and participatory leadership practices help address institutional challenges, build trust, and strengthen school culture (Northouse, 2021; Deal & Peterson, 2019). Leaders who promote reflective practice, collaboration, and instructional innovation contribute to sustainable professional development while maintaining accountability and instructional excellence (OECD, 2020; Day et al., 2020).

Overall, the integration of structured academic supervision, constructive feedback, collaborative professional learning, and participatory leadership creates a sustainable framework for enhancing teacher professionalism, improving instructional quality, and strengthening institutional effectiveness. Academic supervision at SD Negeri 167 Palembang functions not only as a monitoring mechanism but as a comprehensive professional development system that supports continuous teacher growth and long-term school improvement.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the implementation of structured and continuous academic supervision at SD Negeri 167 Palembang plays a significant role in improving teacher professionalism. Supervision activities such as lesson planning guidance, classroom observation, and constructive feedback contribute to strengthening teachers' pedagogical competence and instructional quality. The principal's participatory and supportive leadership approach creates a positive professional climate that encourages collaboration, openness, and continuous improvement. Although challenges such as limited time and initial resistance were identified, effective communication and adaptive strategies helped address these obstacles. Overall, the integration of systematic supervision and effective leadership supports sustainable professional development and enhances the quality of primary education.

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