Principal Supervision Management to Enhance Teacher Professional Competence

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Abstract. The principal's role as an instructional supervisor is critical for fostering teacher professional competence, a key determinant of educational quality. However, a significant gap often exists between the policy mandate for supervision and its effective implementation. This study aims to analyze the management of principal supervision in enhancing the professional competence of elementary school teachers. This research employed a qualitative approach with a multiple-case study design at two Indonesian public elementary schools, SDN Padamamur and SDN Jambudipa 1. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with principals and teachers, non-participant observations of supervisory activities, and analysis of institutional documents. Data credibility was ensured through source and technique triangulation, and the analysis followed the interactive model of Miles and Huberman. The findings reveal that both principals managed supervision through systematic planning, organization, implementation, and evaluation. Planning was based on teacher needs assessments and school quality targets. Implementation utilized a clinical supervision model (pre-conference, observation, post-conference) with developmental and humanistic approaches. Evaluation was integrated with the formal Teacher Performance Appraisal (PKG) system and followed by targeted professional development. The management approach directly contributed to measurable improvements in teachers' professional competence. The effective management of supervision is a powerful mechanism for improving teacher competence. This study concludes that a structured, developmental, and collaborative supervisory process, managed systematically by the principal, is essential for translating policy into impactful practice. It recommends strengthening principals' capacity to lead supervision as a continuous cycle of professional learning rather than an administrative compliance task.

Keywords: principal supervision, instructional leadership, teacher professional competence.

1   Introduction

In the global pursuit of educational excellence, the quality of teachers has been consistently identified as the most significant school-based factor influencing student learning outcomes [1]. Consequently, the cultivation of teacher professional competence is not merely a desirable goal but a fundamental imperative for any educational system

aspiring to prepare students for the complexities of the 21st century. Professional competence is a multidimensional construct, encompassing not only deep subject matter knowledge and pedagogical skill but also the capacity for reflective practice, continuous learning, and adaptation to evolving student needs [2]. In Indonesia, this is formally articulated in Law No. 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers, which outlines four core competencies: pedagogical, personal, social, and professional. Among these, professional competence—the mastery of content and curriculum—is the bedrock upon which effective teaching is built [3]. However, the development of this competence cannot be left to chance or the isolated efforts of individual teachers; it requires systematic, school-based support.

Within the school ecosystem, the principal occupies a pivotal role, transitioning from a traditional building manager to a dynamic instructional leader [4]. A primary vehicle for enacting this leadership is through supervision. Modern educational discourse has redefined supervision, moving away from the historical paradigm of inspection—characterized by fault-finding and administrative control—towards a developmental and collaborative model [5]. This contemporary view frames supervision as a process of professional support, dialogue, and guided reflection aimed at fostering teacher growth and improving instructional practice. As Glickman et al. argue, effective supervision is not about ensuring compliance but about nurturing a culture of inquiry and continuous improvement [6]. The principal, acting as the primary supervisor, is therefore tasked with creating a supportive and professionally stimulating environment where teachers feel safe to take risks, reflect on their practice, and collaboratively enhance their craft. This mandate is explicitly reinforced by Indonesian regulations, such as Ministry of National Education Regulation No. 13 of 2007, which requires principals to possess supervisory competence, and Ministry of Education and Culture Regulation No. 15 of 2018, which obligates them to conduct supervision as part of their core responsibilities.

Despite this clear theoretical and policy consensus, a persistent "implementation gap" plagues the practice of principal supervision in many contexts. Research indicates that supervision often devolves into a perfunctory administrative ritual, reduced to a checklist-driven classroom visit that offers little substantive feedback or opportunity for professional dialogue [7]. Teachers may perceive it as an evaluative threat rather than a supportive process, leading to defensive postures that inhibit genuine reflection and growth. This disconnect is often rooted in a lack of managerial acumen on the part of principals, who may be well-versed in administration but lack the skills to manage a complex process of professional development [8]. The challenge, therefore, is not a lack of policy but a lack of effective management [9], [10].

This issue is brought into sharp focus by preliminary observations in Cianjur Regency, where many elementary schools, including the sites of this study, demonstrate an inconsistent application of effective supervisory practices. While principals fulfill the formal requirement of conducting supervision, the process often lacks the systematic management needed to drive meaningful improvement in teacher competence. This raises a critical question: How can supervision be managed as a coherent process to achieve its intended goal of enhancing professional competence? This question shifts the focus from the act of supervision to the management of supervision. Drawing upon the classic management framework of George R. Terry—comprising the functions of

Planning, Organizing, Actuating, and Controlling (POAC)—this study conceptualizes supervision not as a series of isolated events, but as an integrated management cycle [11]. This framework provides a robust analytical lens to deconstruct the supervisory process and understand how each stage contributes to the overall goal.

This research, therefore, undertakes a qualitative, multiple-case study at two distinct public elementary schools, SDN Padamamur and SDN Jambudipa 1. These schools were selected because they represent different contexts and strategies in managing principal supervision, offering a rich ground for comparative analysis. By examining the entire management cycle—from how supervision is planned based on needs, organized in terms of structure and resources, implemented through specific techniques, and evaluated for impact and follow-up—this study aims to provide a thick, descriptive narrative of supervision management in action. The findings are intended to contribute both to the scholarly literature on instructional leadership and to the practical knowledge base of school principals. By illuminating the specific managerial practices that connect supervision to tangible improvements in teacher professional competence, this research seeks to offer a model for transforming supervision from a bureaucratic obligation into a powerful engine for school improvement.

2   Method

This research employed a qualitative methodology with a multiple-case study design to conduct an in-depth, holistic investigation of the principal supervision management process in its natural context [12]. This approach was selected for its capacity to explore the complex, real-world dynamics of leadership, interaction, and professional development that are central to the phenomenon under study [13]. The research was situated at two public elementary schools in Cianjur Regency, SDN Padamamur and SDN Jambudipa 1, which were chosen through purposive sampling to represent varied approaches to supervision management, thus enabling rich comparative analysis.

Data were collected over a seven-month period using a triangulated methodology to ensure the depth and credibility of the findings. The primary data collection techniques were: (1) in-depth, semi-structured interviews with the principals and six experienced teachers (three from each school) to capture their perspectives, experiences, and interpretations of the supervision process; (2) direct, non-participant observations of the complete supervisory cycle, including planning meetings, pre-observation conferences, classroom observations, and post-observation feedback sessions; and (3) a systematic review of relevant documents, such as annual supervision programs, observation instruments, Teacher Performance Appraisal (PKG) reports, and follow-up action plans.

Data analysis followed the interactive model developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña [14], which consists of three concurrent streams: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Verbatim transcripts and field notes were systematically coded and condensed, with themes emerging from the data being organized around the a priori framework of the four management functions (Planning, Organizing, Actuating, Controlling). The condensed data were then organized into narrative summaries and comparative matrices to display patterns and variations between

the two cases. Conclusions were drawn and continually verified throughout the analysis process, ensuring that the final interpretations were robustly grounded in the empirical evidence.

3 Result

3.1 Crafting a Purposeful Supervisory Roadmap

The foundation of effective supervision at both schools was a systematic and data-informed planning process. Principals did not approach supervision as a random series of classroom visits but as a strategic initiative guided by a clear roadmap. The planning phase was characterized by its diagnostic nature, beginning with a comprehensive needs assessment to ensure that the supervisory focus was relevant and targeted. At both SDN Padamamur and SDN Jambudipa 1, the primary data sources for this assessment were the results of the previous year's formal Teacher Performance Appraisal (PKG), the school's annual Quality Report Card (*Rapor Mutu*), and informal dialogues with teachers. This diagnostic step allowed the principals to move beyond generic observation criteria and identify specific, school-wide areas for improvement as well as individual teacher needs. For instance, the principal at SDN Jambudipa 1 noted, "Last year's PKG data showed that while our teachers were strong in classroom management, several struggled with implementing higher-order thinking activities. This became a key focus for this year's supervision plan."

This needs analysis culminated in the development of a formal Annual Supervision Program, which was integrated into the school's overall Annual Work Plan (RKT) and budget (RAKS). This integration ensured that supervision was not an isolated activity but a core component of the school's improvement strategy, with allocated time and resources. The program document was comprehensive, outlining the goals of supervision, the specific focus areas (e.g., mastery of subject matter, use of innovative teaching methods), a detailed schedule of observations for each teacher throughout the academic year, and the instruments to be used. A crucial element of the planning process was its transparency. Both principals socialized the supervision schedule and focus areas with all teachers at the beginning of the school year. This proactive communication was vital in framing supervision as a supportive and predictable process rather than a surprise inspection. As one teacher at SDN Padamamur commented, "Knowing the schedule and what the principal will be looking for far in advance helps me prepare. It feels less like being judged and more like a planned opportunity to get feedback on a specific skill I want to improve." While both schools followed this systematic process, a subtle difference was observed: the plan at SDN Jambudipa 1 was more granular, with specific indicators tied directly to national standards, whereas the plan at SDN Padamamur was more flexible, allowing for adjustments based on emergent needs throughout the year. Nonetheless, in both cases, the meticulous planning phase established a clear sense of purpose, transparency, and strategic direction, setting a professional tone for the entire supervisory cycle.

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3.2 Structuring the Supervisory Process for Efficiency

With a clear plan in place, the next management function involved organizing the resources and structures necessary for its effective execution. The organization of supervision at both schools was designed to ensure clarity of roles, efficient workflow, and a clear division of labor, transforming the written plan into an operational reality. At both SDN Padamamur and SDN Jambudipa 1, the principal was the designated primary supervisor. However, to enhance the process's efficiency and depth, they both adopted a distributed approach. They established a small supervisory support team, typically consisting of the principal, a senior teacher with a strong pedagogical track record, and the school operator who handled the administrative aspects. This structure allowed for a more manageable process. The principal led the core supervisory activities (conferences and observations), the senior teacher often acted as a peer mentor to provide follow-up support, and the operator was responsible for scheduling, preparing documentation, and managing the data entry for the PKG system.

A key organizational element at SDN Jambudipa 1 was the development of a detailed organizational chart for the supervision program. This chart, displayed in the teachers' lounge, visually clarified the roles, responsibilities, and communication flows within the supervisory team. It specified who was responsible for scheduling pre-observation conferences, who would conduct the observation, and who was tasked with compiling the final evaluation reports. This formal structure minimized ambiguity and ensured that every step of the process was clearly assigned and accounted for. As the principal of SDN Jambudipa 1 explained, "The chart is not just bureaucracy. It makes the process transparent and professional. Everyone knows their role, and it ensures that no steps are missed. It reinforces the idea that supervision is a serious, well-managed school program."

In contrast, the organization at SDN Padamamur was slightly less formal but equally effective. While a clear division of tasks existed, it was communicated through regular team meetings rather than a formal chart. Both schools meticulously organized the logistical aspects of supervision. Schedules for pre-observation conferences, classroom visits, and post-observation meetings were prepared and distributed a month in advance, allowing teachers ample time to prepare. The necessary instruments, including pre-observation questionnaires, structured observation sheets aligned with the PKG standards, and post-observation reflection guides, were compiled into a "supervision kit" for each teacher. This level of organization demonstrated a respect for the teachers' time and professionalism. It communicated that supervision was not an impromptu event but a well-orchestrated professional engagement. By establishing clear structures, roles, and procedures, the principals ensured that the implementation phase could proceed smoothly, efficiently, and with a shared understanding of the process among all participants.

3.3 Implementing a Developmental and Collaborative Process

The implementation, or "actuation," phase was the core of the supervisory process, where the principal and teacher engaged in direct professional dialogue and

observation. At both SDN Padamamur and SDN Jambudipa 1, the implementation of supervision was deliberately structured around the three-stage clinical supervision model: a pre-observation conference, the classroom observation, and a post-observation conference. This model transformed supervision from a single evaluative event into a collaborative and reflective cycle. A defining characteristic of the implementation at both schools was the adoption of a humanistic and developmental approach, where the principal's role was framed as that of a "critical friend" rather than an inspector.

The cycle began with the pre-observation conference. This was a crucial, one-on-one meeting where the principal and teacher established a shared understanding of the upcoming observation. The dialogue was collaborative, focusing on the teacher's own goals for the lesson. The principal would ask probing questions such as, "What is the main learning objective for this lesson? What specific teaching strategy are you planning to use, and why? What should I pay particular attention to during the observation?" At SDN Jambudipa 1, this conversation was highly structured, with the teacher completing a pre-observation form that guided the discussion. This stage was vital for reducing teacher anxiety and establishing a focus for the observation that was co-constructed and relevant to the teacher's own professional growth needs.

The second stage was the classroom observation. The principal would sit unobtrusively in the classroom, using the structured observation instrument discussed during the pre-conference. The instrument was aligned with the four domains of the PKG (pedagogical, personality, social, and professional competence), but the principal's note-taking focused specifically on the areas identified by the teacher. The observation was not about catching mistakes but about gathering objective, non-judgmental evidence of teaching and learning in action. Principals in both schools were observed taking detailed, descriptive notes rather than simply ticking boxes, capturing specific examples of teacher questions, student responses, and classroom interactions.

The final and most critical stage was the post-observation conference. This meeting, held promptly after the lesson, was a reflective and dialogic feedback session. Both principals skillfully avoided a one-way, judgmental critique. Instead, they began by asking the teacher to reflect on the lesson first, using questions like, "How do you feel the lesson went? What aspects were most successful? If you were to teach this lesson again, what might you do differently?" Only after the teacher had shared their own reflections did the principal offer their observations, always framing them with specific evidence from their notes. For example, instead of saying "Your questions were not engaging," the principal at SDN Padamamur noted, "I observed that when you asked the question about photosynthesis, five students raised their hands. Later, when you asked a 'why' question about the importance of the process, only two students responded. What do you think might account for that difference?" This evidence-based, non-evaluative approach fostered a sense of psychological safety, allowing for an honest and constructive conversation about practice. The implementation of this collaborative, three-stage cycle was the primary mechanism through which supervision became a genuine tool for professional learning, promoting teacher reflection and a growth mindset.

3.4   Evaluation, Follow-up, and Continuous Improvement

The final management function, controlling, involved evaluating the outcomes of supervision and implementing a systematic follow-up to ensure that the process led to tangible improvements in teacher competence. This phase transformed supervision from a one-off event into a continuous cycle of professional growth. At both schools, the evaluation process was tightly integrated with the formal Teacher Performance Appraisal (PKG) system, providing a standardized and transparent framework for assessing competence. Immediately following the post-observation conference, the principal would formalize the observation data by scoring the relevant indicators on the PKG instrument. This was not done in isolation; the scores were discussed with the teacher, and the evidence supporting each rating was made explicit. This process demystified the PKG, making it a clear and evidence-based summary of the supervisory process rather than an opaque, subjective judgment.

The evaluation produced a comprehensive report for each teacher, highlighting areas of strength and identifying specific areas for development. This report became the basis for the crucial follow-up stage. The follow-up was not generic but was differentiated based on the individual teacher's needs. For a teacher who demonstrated excellence, the follow-up might involve inviting them to lead a workshop for their peers. For a teacher who needed support in a specific area, such as classroom technology integration, the follow-up might involve targeted individual coaching from the principal, peer observation of a master teacher, or enrollment in a relevant external training program. The principal at SDN Jambudipa 1 maintained a "Professional Development Log" for each teacher, tracking the supervisory feedback and the corresponding follow-up actions taken throughout the year. This created a clear record of growth and accountability.

Furthermore, the evaluation was not limited to individual teachers; the principals also evaluated the supervision program itself. At the end of the academic year, aggregated data from all teacher supervisions were analyzed to identify school-wide trends. For example, if the data revealed that a majority of teachers struggled with formative assessment techniques, this would inform the planning for the next year's supervision focus and school-wide professional development agenda. This collective data analysis was discussed in end-of-year faculty meetings, making the evaluation process transparent and collaborative. The results from the PKG, which showed consistently high scores in professional competence at both schools—with SDN Jambudipa 1 scoring slightly higher due to its more structured follow-up—provided concrete evidence of the program's effectiveness. This robust evaluation and follow-up mechanism closed the management loop, ensuring that supervision was not just an activity to be completed, but a dynamic, data-driven engine for both individual teacher growth and whole-school improvement.

4   Discussion

he findings of this study offer a detailed, process-oriented view of principal supervision, providing significant implications for both theory and practice in instructional leadership and teacher professional development. By deconstructing supervision

through the POAC management lens, this research illuminates the specific managerial actions that transform a mandated activity into a powerful mechanism for professional growth. First, this study provides strong empirical support for the shift from an inspectorial to a developmental and collaborative model of supervision. The practices observed at both SDN Padamamur and SDN Jambudipa 1, particularly the implementation of the three-stage clinical supervision cycle, align closely with the developmental supervision framework proposed by Glickman et al. [6]. The emphasis on pre-conference goal setting, evidence-based observation, and reflective post-conference dialogue demonstrates a fundamental respect for the teacher as a professional. This approach fosters psychological safety and intrinsic motivation, conditions that are essential for genuine learning and behavioral change [15]. The study's finding that this approach led to increased teacher confidence and willingness to experiment with new strategies confirms that when supervision is managed as a supportive partnership rather than a judgmental evaluation, it can effectively catalyze professional growth [16].

Second, the research highlights the critical importance of viewing supervision not as a standalone activity but as an integrated management system. The success at both schools was contingent on the tight coupling of the four management functions. Planning was not arbitrary but was diagnostically driven by data from the previous year's evaluations (PKG). The organization provided the necessary structure and resources to execute the plan efficiently. The implementation was the collaborative enactment of the plan, and the evaluation fed directly back into the planning for the next cycle. This cyclical, integrated approach is a practical manifestation of Deming's Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycle of continuous improvement [17]. It suggests that the effectiveness of supervision is less about the brilliance of any single component and more about the coherence of the entire system. This systemic perspective is a crucial contribution, challenging school leaders to move beyond simply "doing supervision" to strategically "managing a system of supervision."

Third, this study underscores the indispensable role of the principal as an active and skilled instructional leader. The principals in this study were not passive administrators who delegated the task of supervision; they were deeply involved in every stage, from planning to follow-up. Their effectiveness stemmed from a combination of managerial and pedagogical expertise. They demonstrated managerial competence in their ability to plan systematically and organize resources, and pedagogical competence in their ability to provide specific, credible, and actionable feedback on instruction. This dual competence aligns with the instructional leadership models proposed by scholars like Hallinger and Heck [18], who argue that effective principals are able to both manage the school's instructional program and actively participate in the professional learning of their staff. The findings powerfully suggest that policies aimed at improving teacher quality must be paired with robust professional development for principals, specifically focused on the skills needed to lead a developmental supervision system.

Finally, the study contributes a nuanced understanding of how formal evaluation systems, such as the PKG in Indonesia, can be leveraged for developmental purposes. Often, such systems are perceived by teachers as purely bureaucratic and punitive. However, this study demonstrates that when the PKG is integrated into a broader, supportive supervisory process, it can become a meaningful tool for professional growth.

By using the PKG instrument as the basis for observation and by discussing the scores and evidence collaboratively, the principals transformed it from a top-down evaluation into a shared framework for defining and assessing effective teaching. This practice of "developmental evaluation" [16] offers a powerful model for reconciling the often-conflicting demands of accountability and professional learning. In sum, this study synthesizes these themes to argue that effective principal supervision is a complex craft that requires a blend of systematic management, deep pedagogical knowledge, and strong interpersonal skills, all orchestrated within a culture of trust and continuous improvement.

5   Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate the role of principal leadership in managing resources and enhancing the quality of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) at SDN Ciawi and SDN 4 Pakemitan. Based on the findings, it can be concluded that the principal's leadership is a paramount factor in improving the quality of PAI learning. The principals in this study function not only as administrators but as dynamic in-structional and spiritual leaders who actively motivate, direct, and mentor PAI teachers while cultivating a religious and supportive school environment. The inte-grated and effective application of managerial functions—planning, organizing, actuating, and controlling—is crucial for creating a conducive learning atmosphere. Furthermore, by embedding religious values into both formal and informal school activities, these principals ensure that PAI learning transcends cognitive knowledge to encompass the formation of student character and morals.

The adoption of a transformational leadership style—characterized by inspiration, individualized attention, and encouragement of innovation—was found to significantly boost teacher motivation and foster synergy among all school elements. This, in turn, positively impacted student learning outcomes across cognitive, affective, and practical domains. The success of this leadership is amplified by supportive factors such as collaboration with the school committee, parental involvement, and an established religious culture. Nevertheless, challenges such as limited instruc-tional time and resources persist, highlighting the need for broader systemic support.

Overall, this research concludes that effective, collaborative, and value-oriented principal leadership management is the primary key to enhancing the quality of PAI in elementary schools. A principal who can create a religious environment and champion the reinforcement of students' character will have a lasting positive im-pact on their personal development and the achievement of national educational goals.

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