

## Principal Management in Enhancing the Work Discipline of Elementary School Teachers

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**Abstract.** Teacher work discipline is a critical determinant of educational quality, yet it remains a significant challenge in many schools. The principal's managerial role is central to fostering a culture of discipline. This study was prompted by the need to understand how systematic management can address issues of teacher indiscipline. The purpose of this research is to analyze how a principal's management, guided by the Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycle, enhances teacher work discipline. This study employed a qualitative approach with a single-case study design at Sukahegar Public Elementary School in Cianjur, Indonesia. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with the principal and teachers, non-participant observations of school operations, and an analysis of institutional documents. Data credibility was ensured through source and technique triangulation, with the analysis following the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña. The findings reveal that the principal's management systematically followed the PDCA cycle. The Plan phase involved data-driven problem identification and the collaborative development of a discipline program. The Do phase saw the consistent implementation of this plan through direct supervision, role modeling, and a reward system. The Check phase consisted of continuous monitoring and formal evaluation of teacher attendance and performance. The Act phase involved providing targeted coaching and making systemic policy adjustments based on evaluation data. The principal's systematic application of the PDCA management cycle proved highly effective in improving teacher work discipline, leading to enhanced punctuality, instructional readiness, and administrative compliance. This study concludes that a structured, continuous improvement approach to management is a powerful tool for principals to cultivate a professional and disciplined work culture, thereby elevating the overall quality of education.

**Keywords:** principal management, work discipline, teacher performance, elementary school, PDCA cycle.

### 1 Introduction

The school principal stands at the nexus of educational policy and classroom practice, serving as the primary architect of the school's culture, climate, and overall effectiveness. The quality of a school is inextricably linked to the quality of its leadership, and a principal's ability to manage the institution's human resources is arguably the most critical determinant of its success [1]. Within this context, teacher work discipline

emerges as a foundational pillar for achieving high-quality educational outcomes. Discipline, in a professional setting, transcends mere punctuality; it encompasses a comprehensive commitment to one's duties, including meticulous preparation for instruction, timely completion of administrative tasks, adherence to institutional regulations, and active engagement in the school community [2]. A disciplined teaching force is the engine that drives effective learning. When teachers are punctual, prepared, and professional, they create a stable, predictable, and respectful learning environment that is conducive to student achievement [3].

Conversely, a lack of teacher discipline can have corrosive effects on a school. Chronic tardiness, absenteeism, and a failure to complete administrative duties not only disrupt the educational process but also model a poor work ethic for students and erode parental and community trust [4]. This issue is not trivial; it represents a significant barrier to school improvement in many educational systems, including in Indonesia. Preliminary observations at the research site, Sukahegar Public Elementary School, indicated that while the institution was functional, it faced persistent challenges related to teacher work discipline. These included issues with punctuality, inconsistent adherence to instructional schedules, and delays in submitting required administrative reports. Such problems, if left unmanaged, can lead to a decline in instructional quality and ultimately impact student learning.

In response to such challenges, the role of the principal as a manager becomes paramount. Effective school management involves a systematic process of planning, organizing, implementing, and controlling all organizational resources to achieve established goals [5]. This is explicitly mandated in Indonesian educational policy. Government Regulation No. 28 of 1990 and Minister of National Education Regulation No. 13 of 2007 both stipulate that the principal is responsible for the overall administration of the school, including the supervision and development of all educational personnel [6]. The principal is tasked not only with enforcing rules but with creating a culture and climate that fosters professional responsibility and intrinsic motivation. This requires a leadership style that is both visionary and managerial, capable of setting high expectations while also providing the necessary support and structures for teachers to meet them [7], [8]. An effective principal, as Mulyasa argues, must be able to cultivate harmonious working relationships and build a collaborative culture focused on quality [9], [10].

To address the challenge of improving teacher discipline, a systematic and continuous approach is required. One of the most influential frameworks for quality management is the Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycle, developed by W. Edwards Deming [11]. Originally applied in industrial contexts, the PDCA cycle has been widely adopted in education as a powerful model for continuous quality improvement [12]. The framework provides a simple yet robust methodology for problem-solving and process enhancement: 1) Plan: Identify a problem, analyze data, and develop a plan for improvement. 2) Do: Implement the plan on a small scale. 3) Check: Monitor and evaluate the results of the implementation, comparing them against the expected outcomes. 4) Act: Based on the evaluation, standardize the improvement or revise the plan and repeat the cycle.

This iterative approach is particularly well-suited to the complex social environment of a school, as it allows for adaptive management and organizational learning. It aligns

with the principles of Total Quality Management (TQM) in education, which emphasizes that every member of the organization is responsible for quality and that improvement is an ongoing process [12]. The principal, acting as the lead manager, can use the PDCA cycle to move beyond reactive, punitive measures and instead build a proactive, data-informed system for managing and improving teacher work discipline. The performance of a teacher is a direct reflection of their skills, experience, and commitment, and a well-managed system can significantly enhance all three aspects [13].

This study was conceived out of a deep concern for the foundational role of teacher discipline and a particular interest in the principal's managerial capacity to cultivate it. The research aims to explore and analyze how the principal at Sukahegar Elementary School applies management principles, specifically through the lens of the PDCA cycle, to enhance the work discipline of teachers. The school was chosen as the research site because it presents a compelling case: it faces common disciplinary challenges but is also led by a principal who is actively engaged in implementing managerial strategies for improvement. By conducting an in-depth, qualitative case study, this research seeks to move beyond general prescriptions and provide a thick, descriptive narrative of management in action. The central research question is: How does the principal's management, framed by the PDCA cycle, contribute to improving the work discipline of teachers at Sukahegar Elementary School? The findings are expected to offer a practical, theoretically grounded model for school leaders on how to systematically manage and improve teacher discipline, thereby strengthening the foundation for quality education.

## 2 Method

This research employed a qualitative methodology with a single-case study design. This approach was chosen for its strength in providing an in-depth, holistic, and contextualized understanding of a specific phenomenon: the principal's management of teacher work discipline at Sukahegar Public Elementary School. A qualitative approach allows for the exploration of the meanings, actions, and social interactions within the natural setting of the school, providing a rich narrative that quantitative methods might miss [14]. The case study method is particularly appropriate for investigating "how" and "why" questions within a real-life context, enabling an intensive examination of the management processes and their perceived effects.

Data were collected over a seven-month period using a triangulated methodology to ensure the comprehensiveness and credibility of the findings. The primary data collection techniques were: (1) participant observation, where the researcher observed daily school operations, staff meetings, and informal interactions to understand the authentic behaviors related to teacher discipline and the principal's managerial actions [15]; (2) in-depth, semi-structured interviews with the principal, six senior teachers, and two administrative staff members to explore their perspectives, strategies, and experiences related to the management of work discipline [16]; and (3) document analysis of official records, including teacher attendance logs, lesson schedules, school regulations, meeting minutes, and performance evaluation reports, to provide a secondary source of objective data [17].

Data analysis was conducted using the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, which consists of three concurrent streams: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Verbatim transcripts and field notes were systematically coded and condensed into relevant themes aligned with the four stages of the PDCA cycle. These themes were then organized into narrative descriptions and thematic matrices to display patterns and relationships in the data. Conclusions were drawn iteratively and continually verified against the data to ensure the trustworthiness and objectivity of the interpretations [18].

### **3 Result**

#### **3.1 Planning: Establishing a Data-Driven Framework for Discipline**

The initial phase of the principal's management cycle was a deliberate and data-driven planning process. This stage was foundational, moving the issue of discipline from a vague concern to a clearly defined problem with a structured plan of action. The process began with problem identification and analysis. The principal did not rely on assumptions or anecdotes but initiated a systematic review of concrete data to understand the scope and nature of the discipline challenges. This involved a thorough analysis of teacher attendance logs from the previous semester, a review of past supervision reports, and direct, albeit informal, observations of daily school life. This data analysis revealed several specific, recurring issues: a pattern of tardiness among a small group of teachers, delays in entering the classroom after break times, and inconsistencies in the timely submission of administrative paperwork, such as lesson plans and student grade reports. This diagnostic step was crucial, as it allowed the principal to target the intervention precisely rather than implementing a generic, one-size-fits-all solution.

Based on this analysis, the principal formulated a set of clear and measurable planning objectives. The overarching goal was to improve teacher work discipline across three key domains: (1) punctuality in school attendance, (2) timeliness in conducting all instructional duties, and (3) compliance with administrative deadlines. To achieve these goals, a multi-faceted discipline improvement program was designed. This program was not merely a list of new rules but a comprehensive strategy that integrated both supportive and accountability measures. The key components of the program included: the formalization of monthly evaluation meetings focused on discipline and performance, the introduction of a clear reward and consequence system, and a school-wide campaign to reinforce a culture of professional discipline through role modeling and visual reminders.

A critical aspect of the planning phase was its participatory nature. The principal did not develop this program in isolation. Instead, the initial findings from the data analysis were presented and discussed at a faculty-wide meeting. This created a space for teachers to reflect on the issues and contribute to the development of the solutions. By involving the teachers in the planning process, the principal fostered a sense of shared ownership and collective responsibility for improving the school's professional culture. This collaborative approach transformed the initiative from a top-down mandate into a

shared commitment. This entire process perfectly reflects the Plan stage of the PDCA cycle: a problem was identified, data was analyzed, specific objectives were set, and a detailed strategy was developed to achieve them. This meticulous planning provided a solid and legitimate foundation for the actions that would follow.

### **3.2 Actuating the Discipline Program Through Consistent Action**

The "Do" phase of the management cycle was where the strategic plans were translated into consistent, daily actions. The principal at Sukahegar Elementary School understood that a plan is only as good as its implementation, and therefore focused on executing the discipline improvement program with diligence and consistency. The implementation was multifaceted, involving direct supervision, the consistent application of the reward and consequence system, and, most importantly, personal role modeling.

The most visible form of implementation was the direct supervision and monitoring of teacher presence and punctuality. The principal made it a point to be present at the school entrance every morning to greet teachers and students, a practice that served as an informal but highly effective monitoring mechanism. Teacher attendance was formally logged, and any instances of tardiness were noted immediately. This was followed by monitoring classroom transitions, with the principal making regular, brief walkthroughs after break times to ensure teachers were beginning their lessons promptly. This active presence signaled that punctuality was a high priority and was being taken seriously by the leadership.

The second key action was the implementation of formal supervision focused on professional responsibilities. The principal conducted scheduled classroom observations, but the focus was not solely on pedagogy. A key component of the supervision instrument was a check on the teacher's preparedness, including the availability and quality of their lesson plan for that day. Post-observation conferences included a discussion not only of teaching strategies but also of the teacher's adherence to their instructional schedule and their overall professionalism. This integrated supervision sent a clear message that discipline was an integral part of professional competence.

The reward and consequence system was implemented consistently and transparently. Positive reinforcement was a key strategy. Teachers who demonstrated exemplary discipline—perfect attendance for a month, consistently high-quality lesson plans submitted on time—were publicly acknowledged and praised during the monthly faculty meetings. The school also introduced a "Teacher of the Month" award, with work discipline being a primary criterion. This created positive peer pressure and motivated others to improve. Consequences for indiscipline were applied fairly and progressively. The first instance of tardiness would result in a private, supportive conversation with the principal. Repeated instances would lead to a formal verbal warning, followed by a written warning if the behavior persisted. The focus was always on coaching and improvement rather than punishment.

Perhaps the most powerful implementation strategy was the principal's commitment to leading by example. The principal consistently arrived at school earlier than anyone else, was meticulously organized, adhered strictly to schedules, and completed all administrative tasks promptly. This consistent role modeling was a non-verbal but highly

influential form of leadership. It demonstrated integrity and showed the teachers that the expectations for discipline applied to everyone, starting from the top. As one teacher noted, "It's hard to be late when you know the principal has been here for an hour already. His discipline inspires us to be more disciplined." This comprehensive and consistent execution of the plan reflects the essence of the Do phase of the PDCA cycle, ensuring that the designed strategies were actively and visibly put into practice throughout the school.

### **3.3 Monitoring and Reflecting on Disciplinary Growth**

The "Check" phase was a critical component of the principal's management cycle, designed to systematically evaluate the effectiveness of the implemented discipline program and to gather data for future improvements. This stage was not a one-time assessment but a continuous process of monitoring and reflection that ensured the management system was responsive and data-informed. The evaluation at Sukahegar Elementary School was conducted through several interconnected mechanisms.

The primary tool for evaluation was the systematic monitoring of key discipline indicators. The principal maintained a meticulous log of teacher attendance, tracking not only absences but also the frequency and duration of tardiness. This quantitative data provided an objective measure of the program's impact on punctuality. At the end of each month, this data was compiled and analyzed to identify individual and school-wide trends. In addition to attendance, the principal evaluated discipline through the formal supervision process. The supervision instruments included specific criteria related to instructional timeliness, preparedness (availability of lesson plans), and the completion of administrative duties (e.g., grading and reporting). The scores and notes from these supervisions provided rich qualitative data on the teachers' professional discipline.

The cornerstone of the evaluation process was the monthly faculty evaluation meeting. This meeting served as the formal forum for reviewing the data and discussing progress. The principal would present an anonymized summary of the monthly attendance data, highlighting overall improvements and any remaining areas of concern. This data-driven approach kept the conversation objective and focused on systemic issues rather than personal criticism. The forum also provided an opportunity for collective reflection. Teachers were encouraged to share their own experiences, discuss challenges they faced in maintaining discipline, and suggest potential improvements to the system. This participatory evaluation fostered a culture of shared accountability and professional dialogue. As one teacher described it, "In the meetings, we see the numbers. It's not just the principal's opinion. We can see if we are improving as a team. It makes us all want to do better."

The evaluation was also characterized by its constructive feedback loop. Following the collective meeting, the principal would hold brief, individual conferences with teachers who were identified in the data as needing support. The feedback provided in these meetings was always specific, evidence-based, and forward-looking. Instead of simply pointing out a problem, the principal would collaboratively problem-solve with the teacher, asking questions like, "I noticed from the log that arriving on time has been

a challenge this month. What are some of the barriers you're facing, and how can I support you in overcoming them?" This approach framed the evaluation not as a judgment, but as a supportive diagnostic process aimed at professional growth. This entire process aligns perfectly with the Check phase of the PDCA cycle. The principal systematically collected and analyzed data (monitoring attendance and supervision results) to compare the actual outcomes against the planned objectives. This rigorous evaluation provided the critical information needed to make informed decisions in the final stage of the cycle.

### **3.4 Taking Action for Continuous Improvement**

The "Act" phase was the culminating and most dynamic stage of the management cycle, where the insights gained from the evaluation were translated into concrete actions for improvement and institutionalization. This stage ensured that the management of discipline was a continuous improvement loop, not a static program. The follow-up actions at Sukahegar Elementary School were targeted, responsive, and aimed at both reinforcing success and addressing persistent challenges.

Based on the evaluation data, the principal implemented differentiated professional support. For teachers who consistently demonstrated high levels of work discipline, the follow-up action was positive reinforcement and empowerment. They were publicly praised, given the "Teacher of the Month" award, and often entrusted with greater responsibilities, such as mentoring a new teacher or leading a professional development session. This not only rewarded their professionalism but also leveraged their expertise to uplift the entire faculty. For teachers who continued to struggle with discipline despite initial support, the follow-up was more intensive. This involved developing a personalized improvement plan in collaboration with the teacher. The plan would include specific, achievable goals, a timeline for improvement, and a schedule for regular check-in meetings with the principal. This structured coaching provided a clear pathway for improvement and demonstrated the principal's commitment to the teacher's growth.

The "Act" phase also involved making systemic adjustments to school policies and procedures. The evaluation process sometimes revealed that the problem was not with the teacher but with the system itself. For example, the monthly evaluation meeting revealed that many teachers were late submitting their administrative reports because the deadline coincided with a particularly busy period of parent-teacher conferences. In response, the principal, in consultation with the teachers, adjusted the deadline to a more manageable time. This willingness to adapt the system based on feedback was a powerful demonstration of responsive leadership. It showed the teachers that their input was valued and that the goal was collective improvement, not rigid compliance. This type of systemic adjustment is a hallmark of a learning organization and a core principle of the "Act" phase, which involves either standardizing a successful process or making changes to improve it.

Finally, the follow-up process served to reinforce and institutionalize the culture of discipline. By consistently rewarding positive behavior, addressing negative behavior, and adapting the system based on data, the principal embedded the values of

punctuality, preparedness, and professionalism into the school's daily routines and expectations. The PDCA cycle was not a one-time project; it became the standard operating procedure for managing discipline. After several successful cycles, the need for intensive monitoring decreased as the new norms of professional conduct became self-regulating within the faculty. The "Act" phase, therefore, was the engine that drove both individual improvement and long-term cultural change. It ensured that the insights from the evaluation were not just discussed but were acted upon, creating a virtuous cycle of continuous improvement that steadily elevated the standard of teacher work discipline throughout the school.

#### **4 Discussion**

The findings of this study provide a rich, process-oriented account of principal management, offering significant implications for the theory and practice of educational leadership. By analyzing the principal's approach at Sukahegar Elementary School through the structured lens of the PDCA cycle, this research illuminates the specific, replicable managerial actions that can systematically enhance teacher work discipline.

First, this study provides compelling empirical validation for the application of a continuous quality improvement framework like PDCA to the management of human resources in a school setting. While Deming's cycle is often associated with industrial or business processes, this case study demonstrates its profound applicability to the complex social dynamics of a school [19], [20]. The principal did not treat discipline as a static personality trait to be judged, but as a performance behavior to be managed and improved over time. The systematic cycle of data-driven planning, consistent implementation, evidence-based evaluation, and responsive action transformed the school's approach to discipline from being reactive and punitive to proactive and developmental. This finding challenges a more traditional, authoritarian model of school management and supports a modern view of the principal as a leader of continuous improvement [21], a concept that resonates with the need for transformative educational approaches [22]. The implication for leadership training is significant: principals need to be equipped not just with administrative skills, but with competencies in process management and data analysis to lead effective school improvement.

Second, the research deepens our understanding of the principal's role in shaping professional culture. The findings show that the principal's actions went beyond the mere enforcement of rules; they were actively engaged in culture-building. The consistent role modeling, the public celebration of positive behavior, and the framing of discipline as a shared professional responsibility were all deliberate acts of cultural leadership. This aligns with theories of transformational leadership, which emphasize the leader's role in inspiring a shared vision and elevating the motivations and values of the followers [23]. The principal at Sukahegar did not just manage behavior; he managed the meaning of discipline, shifting it from a "have-to" (compliance) to a "want-to" (professional commitment). The participatory nature of the planning and evaluation phases was crucial in this regard, as it fostered a sense of collective ownership and professional accountability among the teachers. This suggests that sustainable

improvements in teacher discipline are less about having stricter rules and more about building a stronger professional culture where high standards are the norm.

Third, the study highlights the importance of balancing accountability with support. The principal's management approach was effective because it skillfully integrated both "hard" and "soft" tactics. The accountability mechanisms were clear and consistent: attendance was logged, performance was evaluated, and consequences were applied for non-compliance. However, this was always balanced with a strong element of support. The feedback was constructive, coaching was provided for struggling teachers, and the system itself was adapted based on teacher feedback. This balanced approach is critical for maintaining teacher morale and trust [24]. A purely accountability-driven system can create a climate of fear and resentment, while a purely supportive system can lack the structure needed to drive improvement. The principal's ability to navigate this tension—to be both a demanding and a supportive leader—was a key factor in the program's success. This provides a practical model for principals on how to hold teachers to high standards while simultaneously fostering a climate of professional respect and growth.

Finally, this study implicitly argues that effective management is itself a form of pedagogy. In managing the discipline program, the principal was teaching the teachers about professionalism, data use, and reflective practice. The transparent, data-driven, and cyclical nature of the PDCA process modeled a way of thinking and working that the teachers could, in turn, apply to their own instructional practice. By engaging teachers in analyzing data about their own performance and collectively solving problems, the principal was developing their capacity as reflective practitioners. In conclusion, the synthesis of these themes suggests that managing teacher work discipline effectively is a complex craft that requires a blend of systematic process management, strong cultural leadership, and a deep commitment to the professional growth of every teacher. The PDCA cycle provides a powerful, accessible framework for orchestrating this vital work.

## 5 Conclusion

This study concludes that the principal's systematic management, guided by the principles of the Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycle, is a highly effective framework for enhancing the work discipline of elementary school teachers. The findings from the case study at Sukahegar Elementary School demonstrate that a proactive, data-informed, and continuous improvement approach successfully transformed the school's professional culture and led to tangible improvements in teacher punctuality, instructional readiness, administrative compliance, and active participation in school programs. The success of this management system was not rooted in authoritarian control but in a skillful blend of clear expectations, consistent implementation, evidence-based evaluation, and supportive, action-oriented follow-up.

The principal's role as a dedicated manager and instructional leader was central to this success. By consistently modeling desired behaviors and involving teachers in a collaborative process of problem-solving and reflection, the principal fostered a sense

of shared ownership and professional accountability. This research provides a clear, replicable model for school leaders, confirming that a structured management cycle is a powerful tool for translating the abstract goal of discipline into a sustainable, lived reality. It is recommended that principal training programs incorporate explicit instruction on continuous improvement models like PDCA. Future research could explore the long-term impact of such improved teacher discipline on student academic and non-academic outcomes, further strengthening the case for investing in the managerial capacity of school leaders.

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