

Academic Supervision Management: Enhancing Teacher Professional Competence in Elementary Schools

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Abstract. The professional competence of teachers is a primary determinant of educational quality. Effective academic supervision, managed by the school principal, is a key mechanism for enhancing this competence. However, a significant gap often exists between the policy mandate for supervision and its practical implementation. This study aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the management of academic supervision in improving teacher professional competence within elementary schools. This research employed a qualitative methodology with a comparative case study design at two Indonesian elementary schools, SDN Buniwangi and SDN Cimaja. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with principals and teachers, non-participant observation of supervisory processes, and a systematic review of institutional documents. Data credibility was ensured through triangulation, with the analysis following the interactive model of Miles and Huberman. The findings reveal that a systematic management approach yielded superior outcomes. At SDN Buniwangi, supervision was managed through a structured cycle: data-driven, participatory planning; clear organization of roles and resources; consistent implementation using standardized tools; and a multi-source, dialogic evaluation process. This contrasted with the more informal, less structured approach at SDN Cimaja. Consequently, SDN Buniwangi demonstrated more significant and measurable improvements in teacher competence. The effective management of academic supervision is a powerful strategy for enhancing teacher professional competence. This study concludes that a systematic, cyclical, and collaborative management model is essential for transforming supervision from an administrative formality into a dynamic process of professional learning.

Keywords: Academic Supervision, Management, Teacher Competence.

1 Introduction

Education stands as a foundational pillar for the development of high-quality human capital, a principle enshrined in Indonesia's Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System, which mandates the holistic development of student potential. At the heart of this endeavor is the teacher, who serves not merely as a purveyor of knowledge but as a guide, motivator, and role model. The professional competence of teachers is, therefore, the most critical in-school factor influencing educational quality and student outcomes [1]. Consequently, the continuous enhancement of this competence is an urgent national priority. Recognizing this, the Indonesian government, through Ministry

of Education and Culture Regulation No. 15 of 2018, has strategically positioned the school principal as an educational manager with the explicit responsibility of conducting academic supervision. This modern conception of supervision moves beyond historical notions of inspection and control, reframing it as a developmental process of coaching and support aimed at fostering sustained professional growth [2]. This aligns with a global call for a more transformative education that emphasizes 21st-century skills and competencies [3].

This normative stance is strongly supported by a deep body of educational theory. Glickman was among the first to define supervision as a series of supportive activities designed to enhance a teacher's capacity to manage the learning process effectively [4]. This developmental perspective was further elaborated by Daresh, who emphasized that the core focus of supervision should be on improving teacher quality through professional dialogue, guided reflection, and collaborative coaching [5]. The process is not merely conversational; it must be grounded in best practices and responsive to the real-world challenges teachers face. As Guskey notes, effective professional development, a key component of supervision, must be well-organized and include discussions of exemplary practices to help teachers overcome instructional hurdles [8]. Such organized efforts are crucial for navigating the complexities of modern education, including the integration of digital innovations and the cultivation of an environment that supports deep learning [6], [7].

Within the Indonesian context, scholars have echoed and adapted these principles. Mulyasa argues that for supervision to be effective, it must be implemented systematically and continuously, becoming an integral part of the school's professional culture [8]. Similarly, Sahertian posits that supervision is fundamentally a service of assistance, providing teachers with the support they need to refine their teaching quality and grow professionally [9]. However, the technical aspects of supervision are only one part of the equation. The psychological and emotional well-being of teachers is a critical, often overlooked, factor. The seminal work of John Hattie has shown a strong correlation between teacher well-being, motivation, and instructional effectiveness [2]. This is supported by Linda Darling-Hammond and Andy Hargreaves, who have demonstrated that a positive, collaborative, and supportive school climate reduces teacher stress and creates an environment conducive to pedagogical innovation and risk-taking [10].

Despite this robust normative and theoretical foundation, a significant and persistent "implementation gap" exists in practice. Numerous studies have revealed that academic supervision in many schools often devolves into a perfunctory administrative ritual, focused more on compliance and paperwork than on genuine capacity building [11], [12]. This aligns with Sergiovanni's early critique that supervision oriented solely toward administrative compliance will fail to improve the quality of learning [13]. Glatthorn further observed that supervision in the field tends to be incidental and lacks the structure of a continuous professional development program. This gap is often more pronounced in rural or resource-limited contexts, such as the Cianjur regency where this study is located. Here, challenges like limited facilities, low utilization of technology, and a lack of a supportive professional environment can hinder the implementation of ideal supervisory practices [14].

Bridging this gap requires a profound shift in the role of the principal, from that of an administrator to a strategic manager and instructional leader [15]. Effective supervision management demands that principals create an environment that actively supports teacher professional growth. This involves not only conducting classroom observations but also orchestrating a comprehensive system of support, including facilitating regular professional discussions, differentiating supervisory approaches based on teacher needs, and ensuring access to relevant training and workshops [16]. Most importantly, the principal must be the chief architect of a school culture centered on reflection and collaboration, where teachers are empowered to share knowledge and collectively enhance their instructional practice, a hallmark of effective educational leadership.

Given the reality that academic supervision often remains a formality with limited impact [17], this research is both relevant and crucial. It aims to explore how the management of academic supervision can be optimized to genuinely enhance the professional competence of teachers, particularly in the challenging context of rural elementary schools. Therefore, this study, a comparative case study of SDN Buniwangi and SDN Cimaja, seeks to provide a deep, narrative account of supervision management in action. By dissecting the planning, organization, implementation, and evaluation of supervision at these two schools, the research aims to identify effective managerial practices and contribute both theoretical and practical insights for the improvement of elementary education quality. The ultimate goal is to offer a model for transforming supervision from a bureaucratic obligation into a powerful engine for school improvement and the professional liberation of educators [18].

2 Method

This research employed a qualitative methodology with a comparative, multiple-case study design to gain an in-depth, holistic understanding of the management of academic supervision. This approach was selected for its strength in exploring complex social phenomena within their natural settings, allowing the researcher to construct a rich, contextualized meaning of the supervisory process from the participants' perspectives [19]. The study was conducted at two public elementary schools in Cianjur Regency, SDN Buniwangi and SDN Cimaja, which were purposively selected to represent different approaches to supervision management.

Data were collected over a six-month period using a triangulation of three primary techniques to ensure the credibility and richness of the findings. These techniques were: (1) in-depth, semi-structured interviews with the principals and six senior teachers (three from each school) to explore their perceptions, strategies, and experiences related to the planning, implementation, and evaluation of academic supervision [20]; (2) direct, non-participant observation of the entire supervisory cycle, including planning meetings, classroom observations, and post-observation feedback sessions, to capture authentic interactions and processes; and (3) document analysis of relevant institutional records, such as annual supervision programs, observation instruments, teacher performance reports, and student learning outcomes.

Data analysis was conducted using the interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman [21], which involves three concurrent activities: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Data from transcripts and field notes were systematically coded and condensed into thematic categories aligned with the management functions. The validity of the data was confirmed through technique triangulation, cross-checking findings from interviews against observations and documents to ensure their trustworthiness.

3 Result

3.1 The Management of Planning and Organization in Academic Supervision

The initial phases of planning and organization set the stage for the entire supervisory process and were where the most significant differences between the two schools emerged. At SDN Buniwangi, the management of these phases was systematic, data-driven, and participatory, reflecting a strategic approach to professional development. The planning process began with a comprehensive needs analysis. The principal did not rely on assumptions but triangulated data from multiple sources: the previous year's student achievement data (*rapor pendidikan*), formal teacher performance evaluations, and, crucially, direct input from the teachers themselves through surveys and focus group discussions. This diagnostic approach ensured that the supervisory plan was not a generic template but was tailored to the specific, identified needs of the faculty. This practice strongly aligns with the principle that effective professional development must be relevant to teachers' classroom realities [22], [23]. This collaborative planning, consistent with Meredith's emphasis on listening to teacher input, not only enhanced the relevance of the program but also fostered a sense of ownership and reduced potential resistance among the teachers. The resulting plan was a formal, written document integrated into the school's annual work plan, detailing specific goals, a clear schedule, and the instruments to be used.

The organization phase at SDN Buniwangi was equally deliberate. It involved more than just creating a schedule; it was about orchestrating all human and material resources to ensure a smooth and effective process. A clear structure of roles and responsibilities was established. While the principal was the lead supervisor, senior teachers were designated as peer mentors, and specific administrative staff were tasked with managing documentation. This distributed leadership model aligns with the supervisor's role as a coordinator of the entire instructional program [24]. A systematic schedule was developed based on the needs analysis, ensuring adequate time for each teacher without disrupting instruction. The school also proactively coordinated with the district's external supervisor (*pengawas pendamping*), integrating their visits into the overall plan to provide an external perspective. Finally, all necessary documentation was prepared and standardized in advance, including observation instruments, self-reflection forms for teachers, and feedback protocols. This meticulous preparation reflects the supervisor's role as a facilitator, ensuring that all professional resources are readily

accessible. This comprehensive planning and organization phase created a robust and professional framework for the entire supervisory cycle.

In stark contrast, the management of planning and organization at SDN Cimaja was largely informal and less structured. The supervision plan was typically discussed orally during a faculty meeting at the beginning of the school year, but it was not based on a systematic needs analysis. The focus was primarily on fulfilling the administrative requirement of conducting observations rather than on strategic professional development. The organization was similarly minimalist, focusing almost exclusively on creating and distributing a schedule of classroom visits. There was no clear division of tasks, no formal coordination with external parties, and, most importantly, no standardized system for documentation. The instruments used often varied, and preparation was left to the last minute. This approach runs the risk of supervision becoming a mere formality, an "inspection" rather than a developmental process. As prior research has shown, supervision that consists only of a principal observing with an instrument, without a collaborative process of improvement, fails to enhance teacher performance [25]. The difference between the two schools in these foundational stages was profound. SDN Buniwangi's approach embodied the essence of the Planning and Organizing functions of management theory, creating a solid, purposeful foundation. SDN Cimaja's approach, while fulfilling the basic requirement, lacked the strategic depth and structural integrity needed to make supervision a powerful tool for professional growth.

3.2 The Implementation of Academic Supervision in Practice

The implementation, or actuating, phase is where the planned supervisory process is put into action. It is the core of the interaction between the principal and the teacher, and the differences in management between SDN Buniwangi and SDN Cimaja were vividly apparent in this stage, particularly in the use of instruments and the system of documentation.

At SDN Buniwangi, the implementation of supervision was consistent, measured, and deeply integrated with a systematic documentation process that supported reflection and continuous improvement. The entire process was framed by the clinical supervision model, involving a pre-observation conference, the classroom observation, and a post-observation conference. A key element was the consistent use of standardized instruments. Before the observation, the teacher and principal would review the formal lesson plan (RPP) together, agreeing on the specific focus areas for the observation. During the observation, the principal used a structured observation sheet aligned with national competency standards, allowing for objective and evidence-based data collection. Following the observation, teachers were encouraged to complete a reflective journal, a tool that prompted them to critically analyze their own practice before the feedback session. This aligns with the views of Glickman and Daresh, who emphasize that supervision should be a process of assistance, dialogue, and reflection [4].

A defining feature of the implementation at SDN Buniwangi was the integration of a digital management system. All documents—from the initial plan and observation notes to the teacher's reflective journal and the final feedback report—were digitized and stored in a shared, secure folder. This system provided several key advantages. It

ensured that all supervisory data was organized, safe, and easily accessible for future reference. It allowed the principal and teachers to track professional growth over time, creating a longitudinal record of development. This systematic use of documentation is crucial for effective supervision, as it provides the concrete evidence needed for meaningful feedback and planning. This approach reflects Danielson's framework, which emphasizes the use of multiple forms of evidence, including classroom observations and reflective dialogue, to accurately assess teacher competence and identify areas for growth [26].

At SDN Cimaja, while the three stages of clinical supervision were generally followed, the implementation was more informal and was significantly hampered by a lack of structured documentation. Feedback was often delivered orally, and teacher development was tracked through the principal's handwritten notes or informal conversations. While direct, immediate feedback can be beneficial, this approach had several major drawbacks. Without objective, evidence-based records from a structured observation, feedback could be perceived as subjective and was difficult to connect to specific competency standards. The absence of a systematic record-keeping process made it nearly impossible to track a teacher's progress over the long term. This informal approach risks turning supervision into a series of disconnected events rather than a coherent, continuous process of development. The contrast between the two schools in this phase is stark. SDN Buniwangi's managed approach—combining the clinical supervision model with standardized instruments and a digital documentation system—created a professional, transparent, and data-rich process that actively promoted teacher reflection and growth. It transformed supervision from an evaluation event into an ongoing professional conversation grounded in evidence. SDN Cimaja's informal approach, while perhaps less intimidating for teachers, lacked the structure and rigor needed to drive significant and sustainable improvement in professional competence [27].

3.3 Management of Evaluation, Constraints, and Adaptive Solutions

The final phase of the management cycle, encompassing evaluation (Controlling) and the response to challenges, is where the system's capacity for continuous improvement is truly tested. It is in this stage that the effectiveness of the program is measured and refined. Here again, the managerial approaches at SDN Buniwangi and SDN Cimaja differed fundamentally, leading to different outcomes in terms of program sustainability and impact.

At SDN Buniwangi, the evaluation process was as structured and multi-faceted as the preceding stages. The principal did not rely on a single data point but employed a triangulated evaluation method to gain a comprehensive picture of the supervision's impact. This method, consistent with Danielson's framework for teacher evaluation, included: (1) analysis of the principal's structured observation notes, (2) review of the teacher's own self-reflections from their journals, and (3) collection of informal feedback from students about their learning experiences. This multi-source approach ensured that the evaluation was balanced, incorporating the supervisor's perspective, the teacher's self-assessment, and the ultimate "customer's" experience. The evaluation was

managed as a dialogic and collaborative process. In the post-observation conference, the principal and teacher would review all the data together, collaboratively identifying areas of strength and co-constructing a plan for the next steps. This practice aligns with the core function of the Controlling phase in Terry's management theory, which involves not just measuring performance but also taking corrective action [28].

This structured management system also proved more resilient in addressing common constraints. When faced with teacher resistance or anxiety, the principal at SDN Buniwangi used the collaborative, evidence-based nature of the process to build trust. As the approach was framed as supportive and developmental, rather than judgmental, teachers gradually became more open to feedback. This aligns with Meredith's view that listening to teacher input is key to reducing resistance [29]. To address skill gaps, such as a lack of proficiency in IT for learning, the evaluation data allowed the principal to identify these needs precisely. The school's solution was to provide targeted, in-house training sessions, a strategy directly supported by Guskey's research on effective professional development [22].

In contrast, the evaluation process at SDN Cimaja was predominantly informal, relying on the principal's general impressions and post-observation discussions without structured data. While these conversations provided some feedback, the lack of concrete evidence made it difficult to measure progress objectively or to hold teachers accountable for improvement. The evaluation was subjective and lacked a clear connection to a follow-up plan. This informal approach also struggled to effectively manage constraints. Without a formal process for dialogue and needs assessment, teacher resistance was harder to overcome, and skill gaps were not systematically identified or addressed. The process lacked a clear feedback loop for program improvement.

The difference in management here is critical. The systematic, data-driven, and dialogic evaluation at SDN Buniwangi created a powerful engine for continuous improvement, consistent with the principles of effective management. It not only assessed the impact on individual teachers but also provided data to refine the supervision program itself. Furthermore, by managing the process in a supportive and collaborative manner, the principal fostered a positive professional climate, which is known to enhance teacher well-being, motivation, and effectiveness [1], [30], [31]. The informal approach at SDN Cimaja, while well-intentioned, failed to create this virtuous cycle, leaving supervision as a less impactful, standalone event rather than a driver of systemic improvement [32].

4 Discussion

The findings of this comparative case study offer a nuanced and compelling narrative about the pivotal role of management in determining the efficacy of academic supervision. The stark contrast between the outcomes at SDN Buniwangi and SDN Cimaja provides a clear illustration that the mere existence of a supervision program is insufficient; its success is contingent upon the systematic and deliberate management of the entire process. This study's primary contribution is its detailed articulation of how a structured management cycle, such as the one implicitly following the POAC

framework, transforms supervision from a bureaucratic ritual into a powerful engine for professional growth.

First, this research provides strong empirical support for a systematic, integrated management approach to supervision. The success at SDN Buniwangi was not due to a single "magic bullet" but to the coherence and interconnectedness of its management functions. The data-driven Planning phase ensured that the program was relevant. The clear Organization of roles and resources ensured efficiency. The consistent Implementation with standardized tools ensured objectivity. And the multi-source Evaluation and follow-up ensured accountability and continuous improvement. This aligns perfectly with management theories that view organizations as systems where the effectiveness of the whole depends on the synergy of its parts [33]. SDN Cimaja's fragmented and informal approach, which lacked this systemic coherence, predictably yielded less impactful results. This finding challenges the common practice of treating supervision as a series of isolated events and instead advocates for its conception as a fully integrated management system that is central to the school's strategy for quality improvement.

Second, the study highlights the critical distinction between administrative supervision and developmental supervision. SDN Cimaja's approach, while fulfilling the basic requirement to conduct supervision, leaned towards an administrative model focused on compliance. In contrast, SDN Buniwangi's approach embodied a developmental model. By incorporating participatory planning, reflective journaling, and collaborative, evidence-based feedback, the principal shifted the focus from inspection to professional learning. This is the exact transition advocated by decades of supervision scholarship, from the foundational ideas of Glickman and Daresh to contemporary models of instructional leadership [4], [5]. The findings demonstrate that it is this developmental focus that unlocks the true potential of supervision to improve practice. When teachers perceive the process as a supportive opportunity to grow, rather than a judgmental evaluation, they are more likely to engage in the kind of honest self-reflection that leads to real change [15]. This has profound implications for the training of school principals, who must be equipped not just as administrators but as skilled coaches and facilitators of adult learning.

Third, the research underscores the power of a managed supervisory process to cultivate a positive professional culture. The systematic, transparent, and fair process at SDN Buniwangi did more than just improve individual teacher skills; it helped to build a school-wide culture of professionalism, accountability, and continuous improvement. The collaborative nature of the process reduced teacher isolation and fostered a sense of collective responsibility for instructional quality. This aligns with a vast body of research showing that a positive and collaborative school culture is strongly linked to teacher motivation, well-being, and, ultimately, student achievement [10], [34]. The management of supervision, therefore, is not just a technical task but a powerful act of cultural leadership. The principal, by managing the process with integrity and a focus on growth, models the very professionalism they wish to see in their staff, creating a virtuous cycle that elevates the entire school community. The inability of the informal model at SDN Cimaja to foster this cultural shift further emphasizes the importance of intentional management. The process itself becomes a curriculum for professionalism, driven by a leadership strategy based on kindness and support.

5 Conclusion

This study concludes that the management of academic supervision by the school principal is a critical determinant of its effectiveness in enhancing the professional competence of elementary school teachers. The comparative analysis reveals that a systematic, structured, and collaborative management approach, as demonstrated at SDN Buniwangi, yields significantly more impactful results than an informal, fragmented process. The successful model integrated all functions of management: data-driven planning with teacher participation, clear organization of roles and resources, consistent implementation using standardized tools for reflection and documentation, and a multi-source, dialogic evaluation process that fueled continuous improvement. This comprehensive management transformed supervision from a mere administrative requirement into a dynamic and authentic system for professional learning.

The key finding is that the process of supervision is as important as its content. A well-managed process that prioritizes collaboration, evidence-based dialogue, and developmental feedback is essential for building teacher trust, fostering a positive professional culture, and driving meaningful improvements in classroom practice. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that school principals receive targeted training in the management of developmental supervision. Furthermore, schools, particularly those with less formal systems like SDN Cimaja, should focus on developing structured planning and evaluation mechanisms to ensure their supervisory efforts are both effective and sustainable. Future research could conduct longitudinal studies to quantitatively measure the impact of such well-managed supervision systems on long-term teacher retention and student academic growth.

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