

## Managing Teacher Professionalism through Principal Leadership in Junior High Schools

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**Abstract.** This study examines principal management practices in improving teacher professionalism at the junior high school level. The research is motivated by persistent challenges related to teacher competence and instructional quality, despite the existence of national policies on teacher professional development. The study aims to analyze how school principals manage planning, organizing, implementation, and supervision and evaluation processes to enhance teacher professionalism. A qualitative approach with a descriptive case study design was employed. The research was conducted at SMPN 2 Agrabinta and SMPN 5 Cibinong in Cianjur Regency, Indonesia. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observations, and document analysis involving school principals, vice principals, and teachers. Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, while data trustworthiness was ensured through triangulation, member checking, and audit trails. The findings reveal that principal management in improving teacher professionalism is implemented systematically across four management functions. Planning is based on competency mapping and school needs, organizing involves structured role distribution and collaboration, implementation focuses on academic supervision, training, and mentoring, and supervision and evaluation emphasize reflective and developmental approaches. The study concludes that effective and participatory principal management contributes significantly to sustainable teacher professional development and improved instructional quality in junior high schools

**Keywords:** principal management, teacher professionalism, instructional leadership, educational management, junior high school

### 1 Introduction

In the context of 21st-century global challenges, education systems are required to continuously improve their quality to produce human resources who are competent, ethical, and adaptive to rapid social and technological changes[1]–[3]. Educational institutions are expected not only to develop students' cognitive abilities but also to cultivate character, professionalism, and lifelong learning capacities. Within this framework, teachers play a pivotal role as the main agents of learning, while school

principals serve as key educational leaders responsible for creating conditions that support teacher professionalism and instructional quality[4]–[6].

Teacher professionalism is widely recognized as one of the most critical factors influencing the quality of education. Professional teachers possess adequate pedagogical, professional, social, and personal competencies that enable them to design meaningful learning experiences and respond effectively to diverse student needs. In Indonesia, efforts to enhance teacher professionalism have been reinforced through various national policies, including teacher certification programs, competency standards, and continuous professional development initiatives. However, empirical evidence indicates that the implementation of these policies has not yet fully achieved the expected outcomes, particularly at the junior high school level [7].

National data reveal persistent challenges related to teacher competence and professionalism. Reports from the Directorate General of Teachers and Education Personnel indicate that a significant proportion of teachers do not yet meet qualification and competency standards[8]. Many teachers lack certification, and results of the Teacher Competency Test (UKG) show that a large number of teachers score below the expected proficiency threshold. International assessments such as PISA and TIMSS further highlight Indonesia's relatively low student achievement, suggesting systemic issues in teaching quality and instructional effectiveness. These conditions point to a gap between policy aspirations and educational realities at the school level.

In addressing this gap, the role of the school principal becomes increasingly crucial. Principals are not only administrative managers but also instructional leaders who influence teacher motivation, professional growth, and school culture. Effective principal management involves strategic planning, organizing human and material resources, implementing development programs, and conducting supervision and evaluation to ensure continuous improvement. Through these management functions, principals can facilitate teacher participation in professional development, encourage reflective teaching practices, and foster a culture of collaboration and learning within schools[9].

The legal foundation for strengthening teacher professionalism in Indonesia is clearly articulated in Law Number 20 of 2003 on the National Education System, which emphasizes the importance of qualified and competent educators. Furthermore, Government Regulation Number 28 of 1990 and the Regulation of the Minister of National Education Number 20 of 2007 outline the responsibilities of school principals in managing educational programs, supervising teachers, and developing educational personnel. These regulations provide a formal framework for principals to design and implement effective strategies aimed at improving teacher competence and professionalism.

Despite this strong regulatory framework, previous studies indicate that challenges persist in the practical implementation of teacher professional development programs. Constraints such as limited time, insufficient funding, resistance to change among teachers, and unequal access to training opportunities often hinder the effectiveness of professional development initiatives. Additionally, the introduction of digital platforms such as the Platform Merdeka Mengajar has not been optimally utilized due to technological limitations, lack of technical support, and varying levels of digital literacy

among teachers. These issues underscore the need for strong managerial leadership at the school level to bridge policy intentions and practical implementation[10].

Several previous studies have examined the role of principal management in improving teacher performance and professionalism. Research conducted in various educational settings has shown that effective leadership, supportive supervision, and collaborative school culture positively influence teacher competence and motivation. However, many of these studies focus on single institutions or specific aspects of management, limiting the generalizability and depth of understanding regarding comprehensive principal management practices. There remains a need for in-depth case studies that explore how principals manage teacher professionalism holistically within diverse school contexts[11]–[13].

The novelty of this study lies in its comprehensive examination of principal management in enhancing teacher professionalism through a case study approach at two junior high schools: SMPN 2 Agrabinta and SMPN 5 Cibinong, Kabupaten Cianjur. By analyzing planning, organizing, implementation, and supervisory practices, this research provides a systematic understanding of how principals exercise managerial functions to address challenges in teacher competence development. The study integrates management theory, particularly Henry Fayol's principles, with empirical evidence from school practices to offer a nuanced perspective on educational leadership.

Accordingly, this study aims to analyze how school principals manage efforts to improve teacher professionalism at the junior high school level. Specifically, it seeks to examine the strategies employed by principals, identify supporting and inhibiting factors, and explore solutions adopted to overcome implementation challenges. The findings of this study are expected to contribute theoretically to the field of educational management and practically to school leaders, policymakers, and educational stakeholders in developing effective strategies to enhance teacher professionalism and improve the quality of junior high school education in Indonesia..

## **2 Method**

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive case study design. The qualitative approach was selected to gain an in-depth understanding of school principals' management practices in improving teacher professionalism within real school contexts. Qualitative research enables researchers to explore complex social phenomena, managerial processes, and participants' perspectives holistically and contextually [14], [15]. The case study design was considered appropriate because it allows for an intensive examination of a bounded system, particularly when the boundaries between managerial practices and institutional contexts are not clearly separated [16], [17].

The research was conducted at two public junior high schools, namely SMPN 2 Agrabinta and SMPN 5 Cibinong, located in Cianjur Regency, West Java, Indonesia. These schools were purposively selected based on their relevance to the research objectives and their distinct characteristics in managing teacher professionalism. The

selection of two schools provided comparative insights into principal management practices across different institutional settings.

The research participants consisted of school principals, vice principals, and teachers from both schools. Principals and vice principals were selected as key informants due to their central roles in planning, organizing, implementing, and supervising teacher professional development programs. Teachers were included as supporting informants to capture experiences, perceptions, and responses to principal management practices related to professionalism improvement.

Data collection was carried out through methodological triangulation, including in-depth interviews, participant observations, and document analysis. In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore principals' management strategies, decision-making processes, and challenges in enhancing teacher professionalism. Participant observations were used to examine school activities related to professional development, supervision practices, and teacher–principal interactions. Document analysis involved reviewing school work plans, supervision programs, teacher professional development records, meeting minutes, and relevant policy documents to corroborate findings obtained from interviews and observations [18]–[21] (Patton, 2015).

In this qualitative study, the researcher served as the primary research instrument, as data collection and interpretation were closely connected to the researcher's engagement with participants and the research setting [22]. To support systematic data collection, supporting instruments were developed, including interview guidelines, observation checklists, and document review matrices. These instruments ensured consistency while allowing flexibility to capture emerging themes during the research process.

The trustworthiness of the data was ensured by applying four criteria proposed by Lincoln and Guba: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was established through triangulation of data sources and techniques, as well as member checking to verify the accuracy of participants' statements. Transferability was addressed by providing rich and detailed descriptions of the research context. Dependability and confirmability were strengthened through audit trails, systematic documentation of research procedures, and reflective notes to minimize researcher bias.

Data analysis followed the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña [23], which consists of three interrelated stages: (1) data reduction, involving the selection, coding, and condensation of raw data; (2) data display, where organized data were presented in narrative descriptions, matrices, and tables; and (3) conclusion drawing and verification, in which patterns and themes were identified and continuously validated throughout the research process. Data analysis was conducted concurrently with data collection, allowing the researcher to refine analytical focus in response to emerging findings.

The analytical framework of this study was guided by classical management theory, particularly Henry Fayol's management functions, including planning, organizing, implementation, and supervision. Through this methodological approach, the study

aims to provide a comprehensive and credible understanding of how school principals manage efforts to improve teacher professionalism in junior high schools..

3 Results

3.1 Planning of Principal Management in Improving Teacher Professionalism

The planning stage represents the initial and most strategic phase of principal management in improving teacher professionalism. Findings from interviews, observations, and document analysis at SMPN 2 Agrabinta and SMPN 5 Cibinong indicate that principals carried out systematic planning by aligning school vision, teacher needs, and national education policies.

Interview data reveal that principals perceived planning as a foundation for sustainable teacher professional development. Planning activities were initiated by identifying teachers’ competency gaps and professional needs. One principal stated:

*“Our planning for improving teacher professionalism begins with mapping teachers’ competencies, based on the results of supervision and performance evaluations.”* (Principal, interview, February 2025)

Another principal emphasized the importance of collaborative planning:

*“Programs for improving professionalism are not developed individually, but through joint meetings with vice principals and teachers to ensure that the programs meet actual needs.”* (Principal, interview, February 2025)

These statements indicate that planning was participatory and data-informed.

Observations show that planning activities were conducted through formal meetings such as school work plan discussions, academic supervision preparation, and teacher professional development forums. Principals actively facilitated discussions to identify priority areas, including pedagogical competence, mastery of learning technology, and assessment skills. Observational data also indicate that principals encouraged teachers to participate in professional learning communities (MGMP) and training programs aligned with school goals.

Document analysis of school work plans (RKAS), supervision programs, annual activity plans, and teacher development records confirms that planning activities were systematically documented. Planning documents include schedules for academic supervision, workshops, in-house training, and teacher participation in external professional development programs. These documents demonstrate alignment between planning activities, school vision, and national education standards. Table 1 summarizes the key planning strategies employed by principals in improving teacher professionalism.

Table 1. Planning Strategies in Principal Management for Improving Teacher Professionalism.

| No. | Planning Aspect  | Strategy           | Description                                  |
|-----|------------------|--------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| 1   | Needs assessment | Competency mapping | Identification of teacher professional needs |

|   |                         |                                   |                                                         |
|---|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| 2 | Program design          | Professional development planning | Design of supervision, training, and mentoring programs |
| 3 | Stakeholder involvement | Collaborative planning            | Involvement of vice principals and teachers             |
| 4 | Policy alignment        | Regulatory compliance             | Alignment with national education standards             |
| 5 | Documentation           | Formal planning records           | RKAS, supervision plans, and activity schedules         |

*Source: Interviews, observations, and document analysis (2025)*

Overall, the planning stage demonstrates that principals functioned as strategic managers in improving teacher professionalism. By conducting needs-based and collaborative planning aligned with policy frameworks, principals established a strong foundation for organizing resources, implementing development programs, and supervising teacher performance. These findings suggest that systematic planning is essential for ensuring the effectiveness and sustainability of teacher professionalism improvement initiatives.

**3.2 Organizing of Principal Management in Improving Teacher Professionalism**

The organizing stage focuses on how principals translate planned programs into structured arrangements of human resources, roles, and institutional mechanisms to support teacher professionalism improvement. Findings from interviews, observations, and document analysis at SMPN 2 Agrabinta and SMPN 5 Cibinong indicate that principals organized teacher development programs through clear role distribution, teamwork, and institutional coordination.

Interview data reveal that principals emphasized the importance of organizing school personnel to ensure the effective implementation of professional development programs. One vice principal explained:

“Organization is carried out by clearly dividing tasks, determining who is responsible for supervision, teacher training, and coordination with the MGMP.”  
(Vice Principal, interview, March 2025)

A teacher highlighted the supportive role of principals in organizing professional activities:

“The principal forms a school development team so that teacher professionalism improvement activities can be carried out in a more focused manner.” (Teacher, interview, March 2025)

These statements indicate that organizing involved structured delegation and teamwork.

Observations show that principals established formal teams, such as academic supervision teams and school development teams, to manage teacher professional development activities. Meetings were conducted regularly to coordinate schedules, allocate resources, and monitor program implementation. Observational data also

indicate that principals facilitated communication among teachers to encourage peer collaboration and knowledge sharing.

Document analysis of organizational structures, assignment letters, meeting minutes, and program coordination documents confirms that organizing practices were formally institutionalized. Documents show clear task distribution among principals, vice principals, teachers, and administrative staff. These organizational arrangements ensured that teacher professionalism programs were systematically implemented and monitored. Table 2 summarizes the organizing strategies employed by principals in managing teacher professionalism improvement.

Table 2. Organizing Strategies in Principal Management for Improving Teacher Professionalism

| No. | Organizing Aspect        | Strategy              | Description                                    |
|-----|--------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| 1   | Organizational structure | Development teams     | Formation of supervision and development teams |
| 2   | Role distribution        | Task delegation       | Clear assignment of responsibilities           |
| 3   | Coordination             | Regular meetings      | Coordination among school personnel            |
| 4   | Collaboration            | Peer support          | Encouragement of teacher collaboration         |
| 5   | Resource management      | Institutional support | Allocation of time and resources               |

The organizing stage demonstrates that principals functioned as institutional coordinators who structured human resources and organizational mechanisms to support teacher professionalism improvement. By establishing clear roles, fostering collaboration, and ensuring institutional support, principals created an enabling environment for effective program implementation. These findings suggest that effective organizing is essential for translating strategic planning into operational practices that enhance teacher professionalism.

### 3.3 Implementation of Principal Management in Improving Teacher Professionalism

The implementation stage reflects how planned and organized programs for improving teacher professionalism are executed in daily school practices. Findings from interviews, observations, and document analysis at SMPN 2 Agrabinta and SMPN 5 Cibinong indicate that principals actively implemented various professional development strategies to enhance teachers' competencies and performance.

Interview data reveal that principals implemented professional development programs through academic supervision, training activities, and continuous mentoring. One principal stated:

*"The implementation of teacher professionalism improvement is carried out through academic supervision, internal training, and by encouraging teachers to participate in external training programs and MGMP activities."* (Principal, interview, April 2025)

A teacher emphasized the practical impact of implementation activities:  
“Through supervision and training, we receive direct feedback to improve teaching practices and learning management.” (Teacher, interview, April 2025)

These statements indicate that implementation focused on practical competency improvement.

Observations show that principals regularly conducted classroom supervision and provided constructive feedback to teachers. In-house training sessions and workshops were organized to enhance pedagogical skills, classroom management, and the use of learning technology. Observational data also indicate increased teacher participation in professional learning communities and collaborative lesson planning activities.

Document analysis of supervision reports, training attendance records, teacher performance evaluations, and professional development documentation confirms that implementation activities were systematically carried out and recorded. Documents show improvements in lesson planning quality, classroom practices, and teacher engagement in professional development programs. Table 3 summarizes key implementation practices in principal management for improving teacher professionalism.

Table 3. Implementation Practices in Principal Management for Improving Teacher Professionalism.

| No. | Implementation Aspect  | Practice                          | Description                       |
|-----|------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1   | Academic supervision   | Classroom observation             | Direct supervision and feedback   |
| 2   | Professional training  | In-house and external training    | Skill enhancement programs        |
| 3   | Mentoring              | Continuous guidance               | Ongoing support for teachers      |
| 4   | Collaboration          | Professional learning communities | Teacher collaboration and sharing |
| 5   | Performance monitoring | Documentation and evaluation      | Monitoring teacher improvement    |

Source: Interviews, observations, and document analysis (2025)

The implementation stage demonstrates that principals functioned as instructional leaders who actively facilitated teacher professional growth. By integrating supervision, training, mentoring, and collaborative learning, principals ensured that professional development programs were effectively executed. These findings suggest that consistent and supportive implementation practices are crucial for translating organizational plans into meaningful improvements in teacher professionalism.

3.4 Supervision and Evaluation of Principal Management in Improving Teacher Professionalism

Supervision and evaluation constitute the final stage of principal management in improving teacher professionalism and function as mechanisms for quality assurance and continuous improvement. Findings from interviews, observations, and document

analysis at SMPN 2 Agrabinta and SMPN 5 Cibinong indicate that principals conducted supervision and evaluation systematically to monitor teacher performance, assess program effectiveness, and provide follow-up support.

Interview data reveal that principals viewed supervision and evaluation as reflective and developmental processes rather than merely administrative control. One principal stated:

*“We conduct supervision and evaluation to support teachers’ professional growth, not to find faults. The results are used as the basis for further development.”* (Principal, interview, May 2025)

A teacher also emphasized the supportive nature of supervision:

*“After supervision, we receive constructive feedback and guidance to improve teaching and learning.”* Teacher, interview, May 2025)

These statements suggest that supervision and evaluation were oriented toward professional growth. Observations show that principals conducted scheduled and unscheduled classroom supervision to observe teaching practices, classroom management, and student engagement. Post-observation meetings were held to discuss strengths, challenges, and improvement strategies. Observational data also indicate that evaluation results were discussed in teacher meetings and used to plan follow-up training and mentoring activities.

Document analysis of supervision instruments, evaluation reports, teacher performance appraisals, and follow-up action plans confirms that supervision and evaluation activities were systematically documented. Documents include observation rubrics, feedback notes, performance indicators, and records of professional development follow-up. These records demonstrate that evaluation findings informed subsequent planning and implementation stages. Table 4 summarizes key supervision and evaluation practices employed by principals in improving teacher professionalism.

Table 4. Supervision and Evaluation Practices in Principal Management for Improving Teacher Professionalism

| No. | Supervision Aspect     | Practice                    | Description                      |
|-----|------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1   | Classroom supervision  | Observation and feedback    | Monitoring teaching practices    |
| 2   | Performance evaluation | Appraisal instruments       | Assessment of teacher competence |
| 3   | Reflective meetings    | Post-supervision discussion | Collaborative reflection         |
| 4   | Follow-up actions      | Coaching and mentoring      | Continuous professional support  |
| 5   | Documentation          | Evaluation records          | Basis for future planning        |

The supervision and evaluation stage demonstrates that principals played an active role as instructional supervisors who ensured accountability and continuous improvement in teacher professionalism. By combining systematic observation, constructive feedback, and follow-up support, principals created a reflective professional culture within schools. These findings suggest that effective supervision and evaluation are essential for sustaining improvements in teacher competence and aligning professional development efforts with school goals.

## 4 Discussion

This study examined principal management practices in improving teacher professionalism at SMPN 2 Agrabinta and SMPN 5 Cibinong through four core management functions: planning, organizing, implementation, and supervision and evaluation. The findings indicate that systematic and participatory principal management plays a critical role in enhancing teacher competence, motivation, and instructional quality.

The findings from the planning stage demonstrate that principals adopted a needs-based and data-informed approach to improving teacher professionalism. Competency mapping based on supervision results and performance evaluations enabled principals to design targeted professional development programs. This aligns with classical management theory, which emphasizes planning as a decisive function that determines organizational direction and effectiveness [24], [25].

These findings are consistent with previous studies indicating that professional development initiatives are more effective when aligned with teachers' actual needs and school contexts [26]. By involving teachers and vice principals in planning processes, principals fostered a sense of ownership and commitment, which is essential for the sustainability of professional development programs.

The organizing stage highlights the importance of clear role distribution, teamwork, and institutional coordination in supporting teacher professionalism improvement. The formation of supervision teams and development committees reflects effective organizational practices that enable efficient program implementation. This finding supports contingency theory, which posits that organizational effectiveness depends on the alignment between structure, tasks, and environmental demands.

The collaborative structures observed in this study facilitate peer learning and professional dialogue among teachers, reinforcing findings from earlier research that professional learning communities contribute significantly to teacher competence and instructional improvement. This study extends existing literature by demonstrating how organizing functions operationalize professional development initiatives at the school level [27].

The implementation findings indicate that principals actively exercised instructional leadership through academic supervision, training programs, and continuous mentoring. These practices enabled teachers to receive direct feedback and practical guidance to improve their teaching practices. This aligns with the concept of instructional leadership, which emphasizes the role of principals in influencing teaching and learning processes [28].

Moreover, the integration of supervision, training, and collaborative learning reflects a comprehensive approach to professional development. Previous studies have shown that fragmented or one-time training programs have limited impact on teacher performance. In contrast, the sustained and integrated implementation practices observed in this study contribute to meaningful and lasting improvements in teacher professionalism.

The supervision and evaluation stage underscores the importance of reflective practices in sustaining teacher professional growth. Principals conducted supervision

not merely as a control mechanism but as a developmental process aimed at supporting teachers' improvement. This approach aligns with contemporary supervision theories that emphasize coaching, mentoring, and professional dialogue[29].

The use of evaluation results to inform follow-up actions and future planning reflects a continuous improvement cycle in educational management. These findings corroborate previous research indicating that effective supervision and evaluation systems enhance teacher motivation, accountability, and instructional quality[30]. This study contributes new insights by demonstrating how supervision and evaluation are integrated into a broader management framework rather than functioning as isolated activities.

Overall, this study contributes descriptively by illustrating how principal management functions operate in improving teacher professionalism, explanatorily by clarifying the mechanisms through which management practices influence teacher competence, and predictively by suggesting that systematic and participatory principal management can lead to sustained improvements in instructional quality. The findings reinforce the relevance of classical management theory in contemporary educational contexts.

Practically, the study highlights that improving teacher professionalism requires more than policy mandates; it necessitates effective school-level management and leadership. Principals must function as strategic planners, organizational coordinators, instructional leaders, and reflective supervisors. These insights provide practical guidance for school leaders and policymakers seeking to strengthen teacher professionalism and enhance the quality of junior high school education..

## 5 Conclusion

This study concludes that effective principal management plays a decisive role in improving teacher professionalism at the junior high school level. At SMPN 2 Agrabinta and SMPN 5 Cibinong, principals implemented management functions systematically through planning, organizing, implementation, and supervision and evaluation. Needs-based planning enabled the identification of teachers' competency gaps, organizing ensured clear role distribution and collaboration, implementation facilitated professional development through supervision and training, and supervision and evaluation supported continuous improvement through reflective and developmental practices. The findings indicate that improving teacher professionalism requires integrated and participatory management rather than fragmented or incidental efforts. Principals who function as instructional leaders and professional mentors are more likely to foster sustainable teacher development and enhance instructional quality. This study contributes theoretically to educational management by reinforcing the relevance of classical management functions in school leadership and practically by providing a reference for principals and policymakers in designing effective strategies to strengthen teacher professionalism and improve the quality of junior high school education.

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