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Innovative Managerial Supervision by School Principals in Improving the Functional Positions of Elementary School Teachers

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Abstract. Many Indonesian elementary school teachers remain in the same functional rank for years because they lack understanding of credit regulations, struggle to produce classroom action research, and receive little systematic support from school leadership. This study analyzes how principals use innovative managerial supervision to improve teachers' functional positions at SDN Peuteuycondong 1 in Cianjur Regency and SDN Gegerbitung in Sukabumi Regency. A qualitative multi-site case study collected data from eight informants (two principals, two senior teachers, and four junior teachers) through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and document study. The data were analyzed with the interactive model of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, and trustworthiness was established through triangulation, member checking, and an audit trail. Planning relied on a personnel diagnostic audit that mapped teachers into safe, critical, and stagnant career zones. Implementation combined Promotion Clinics, peer mentoring, and in-house training on classroom action research, supported by kindness-based leadership. Evaluation was formative and monthly, and follow-up addressed the workload causes of delay rather than issuing reprimands. Teachers' understanding of administrative requirements and the quality of their instructional portfolios improved, and school records indicate that more than 80 percent of eligible teachers who applied for promotion over two years succeeded. The two schools shared the same supervisory logic but differed in delivery: problem-based grouping led by the principal at one site and delegation to peer facilitators at the other. The study concludes that managerial supervision works as career facilitation rather than inspection but depends on stable external regulation.

Keywords: Continuing Professional Development, Innovative Leadership, Managerial Supervision, Organizational Resilience, School Principal

1 Introduction

Basic education serves as a cornerstone of the national education system, laying the groundwork for knowledge, character, and the skills required for further education. The quality of education at this level depends substantially on the professionalism and competence of teachers, who carry the primary responsibility for instruction and the

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formation of character [1], [2]. Law Number 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers [3] establishes that teachers are professional educators whose tasks include educating, teaching, guiding, training, assessing, and evaluating students. This professionalism is not measured solely by pedagogical capability within the classroom; it is also reflected in continuing career development, formally represented by the advancement of functional positions (Jabatan Fungsional). The functional position of a teacher is a formal status defining duties, responsibilities, authority, and entitlements, and its elevation rests on the accumulation of credit derived from teaching performance and from participation in continuing professional development, as regulated by the Minister of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform [4].

Empirical conditions nevertheless reveal a persistent anomaly in teacher career progression. A considerable number of elementary school teachers encounter systemic obstacles in elevating their functional positions, a phenomenon commonly described as rank stagnation. It is not unusual to find teachers remaining in a given rank for many years, in some cases for over a decade. This stagnation arises from several converging factors: limited understanding of the regulations governing the compilation of credit score assessment proposals, difficulty in producing scientific publications such as classroom action research, a dense administrative workload, and the transition toward digital performance evaluation platforms. The factor most frequently overlooked is the absence of systematic and sustained mentoring from school leadership. The consequences extend beyond the individual teacher's welfare and motivation to the institution, which experiences a stagnant academic climate and reduced instructional innovation.

Continuing professional development is effective, however, only under particular conditions. Evidence indicates that professional development grounded in actual classroom problems and accompanied by sustained mentoring influences practice, whereas isolated workshops generally do not [5]. This has a direct bearing on rank stagnation, since the requirement that teachers produce scientific work is in substance a requirement that they conduct inquiry into their own teaching, which demands exactly the sustained support that isolated training cannot provide.

Within this context the role of the principal is strategic. A principal is not a passive administrator but an educational manager and supervisor responsible for improving the quality of human resources within the institution. Managerial supervision is among the competencies a principal must possess. Unlike academic supervision, which addresses the instructional process in the classroom, managerial supervision concerns the coaching and oversight of school management, including personnel management and the career development of teachers. Effective managerial supervision proceeds through a sequence of management functions from planning and organizing through implementation to evaluation and follow-up. In many elementary schools, however, the practice remains confined to administrative routine, is frequently reactive, oriented toward identifying faults, and does not provide constructive solutions for career development.

There is consequently a need for a transformative approach, here termed innovative managerial supervision. Innovation in supervision requires principals to move away from hierarchical and authoritarian paradigms toward approaches that are more

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humanistic and collaborative. The implementation of a kindness-based leadership strategy has proven effective in creating a psychologically safe working environment in which teachers feel supported rather than judged when facing administrative or academic difficulty [6]. Principals also need to adopt a deep learning-based planning model, ensuring that supervision programs address the root causes of competency gaps rather than fulfilling procedural obligations [7], and to use technology to streamline documentation and manage digital performance records efficiently [8].

The developmental tradition in supervision scholarship provides the theoretical basis for this orientation. Supervision understood developmentally holds that the appropriate supervisory approach varies with the teacher's level of expertise, commitment, and capacity for abstraction, so that directive, collaborative, and non-directive approaches are each suited to different teachers rather than one being generally superior [9]. This proposition is directly relevant to rank stagnation, because teachers blocked at the same rank are blocked for different reasons, and it supplies the criterion against which the differentiated strategies observed in this study are assessed.

Previous research has examined the impact of principal supervision on teacher performance in general terms, including the significance of managerial leadership in sustaining school quality and enrollment [10], the transformation of educational management to enhance organizational resilience [11], the integration of ecopedagogy and character education within school management [12], and the role of school management in preventing harmful school cultures [13]. A significant gap nevertheless remains. Most studies confine supervision to the domain of pedagogical competence, while research dissecting managerial supervision as an intervention in the improvement of teachers' functional positions, particularly through innovative approaches in rural elementary schools, remains limited.

To address this gap, the research focuses on two elementary schools with distinctive managerial characteristics: SDN Peuteuycondong 1 in Cianjur Regency and SDN Gegerbitung in Sukabumi Regency. These schools were selected because, despite geographical challenges and infrastructural limitations typical of rural schools, the leadership in both institutions has demonstrated effective practice in resolving the deadlock of teacher promotion. The principals have applied supervisory approaches combining transformative education values [14], attention to the working climate, and the strengthening of organizational resilience to address teachers' workloads. The study is guided by four questions corresponding to the phases of supervision, together with a fifth concerning which elements of the practice are consistent across the two sites and which are contingent on local conditions [15].

2 Methods

2.1 Research Design and Sites

This research was designed using a qualitative approach with a descriptive multi-site case study method. The qualitative approach was selected because the objective is to understand and interpret social phenomena relating to the managerial supervision

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practices of principals in their natural settings. The case study method was employed because the focus is a bounded system, namely the practice of supervision at SDN Peuteuycondong 1 and SDN Gegerbitung, and the multiple-case variant allows each school to be analyzed as a complete case before a cross-case synthesis is developed. This approach is appropriate for addressing how and why questions concerning the implementation of managerial strategies [15]. The design is summarized in Fig. 1.

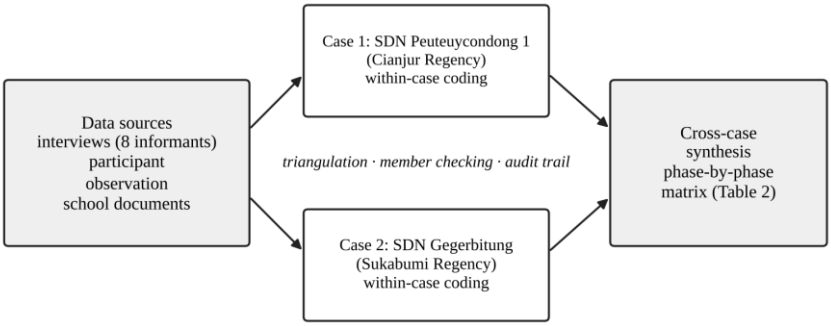


Fig. 1. Multi-site case study design: within-case analysis of each school followed by a phase-by-phase cross-case synthesis.

The two sites were selected deliberately because they operate under the same national regulations governing teacher credit assessment while differing in staffing profile and in the channel through which support is delivered. SDN Peuteuycondong 1 has a staff with a pronounced spread of seniority and digital confidence, which makes problem-specific grouping efficient. SDN Gegerbitung has an active school-level teacher working group, which makes delegation to peer facilitators efficient. Holding the regulatory framework constant while varying these conditions constitutes the comparative logic of the study.

2.2 Informants

Primary data sources were human informants selected through purposive sampling on the basis of authority, direct involvement, and understanding of the research focus. Informants comprised two principals as primary policymakers, two senior teachers, and four junior teachers who were either undergoing or had recently completed an application for functional position promotion, as presented in Table 1. The inclusion criterion required direct experience of the school's supervision program, so that informants could describe the process rather than its documentation.

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Table 1. Distribution of research informants

No.	Informant	SDN Peuteuycondong 1	SDN Gegerbitung	Data Focus
1	School principal	1	1	Supervision policy across all phases
2	Senior teacher	1	1	Digital constraints and rank stagnation
3	Junior teacher	2	2	Experience of promotion application
	Total	4	4	8 informants

2.3 Data Collection

Data collection techniques comprised three methods. In-depth semi-structured interviews explored managerial reasoning, the obstacles encountered, the strategies deployed by principals, and teachers' perceptions of the supervision programs. Passive participant observation covered managerial interactions, the conduct of personnel coaching sessions, the use of digital performance platforms, and the general working climate of the school. Documentation study reviewed the records of supervision programs, School Work Plans, the physical evidence assembled for credit score proposals, and demographic data on teacher ranking across successive years [16].

The three techniques were combined so that claims made in interviews could be tested against observed practice and against written records. This mattered particularly for the evaluation phase, where accounts of monthly monitoring could only be assessed by examining whether the corresponding checklists and progress records existed. In this qualitative design the researcher functioned as the principal instrument, which required reflexivity and sustained attention to context, and field notes were written immediately after each visit [17].

2.4 Data Analysis and Trustworthiness

Data analysis adopted the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, comprising data reduction, in which field data were selected and simplified according to the management function framework; data display, presenting data as comparative narratives and matrices; and conclusion drawing with verification [18]. Coding proceeded deductively from the phases of supervision, with sub-codes emerging inductively for themes such as digital anxiety, writing avoidance, and workload redistribution.

Trustworthiness was established through the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability [19]. Credibility was pursued through persistent observation, member checking, and both source and technique triangulation. Transferability was addressed through thick description of each school's context, dependability through an audit trail of instruments, transcripts, and coding decisions,

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and confirmability through peer debriefing with colleagues in educational management not involved in data collection. The personnel statistics reported in the findings are drawn from school records and are presented as documentary evidence of the outcomes the schools themselves record, not as measurements generated by this research.

2.5 Research Ethics

Research ethics were observed throughout. Permission was obtained from the relevant education offices and from both schools before fieldwork; informants were informed of the purpose of the research and of their right to withdraw; consent was secured; and the identities of individual teachers are not disclosed, which is of particular importance here given that the data concern individual career progression. Personnel documents were examined on school premises without copying data identifying individual teachers.

3 Results

3.1 Planning of Innovative Managerial Supervision

Planning determines the direction of managerial supervision. The findings at SDN Peuteuycondong 1 and SDN Gegerbitung indicate that planning has shifted from an administrative routine toward a data-driven paradigm. The principals at both sites design supervision programs not to satisfy accreditation documents but as a career development roadmap for each teacher. This corresponds to a deep learning-based planning model in which each step addresses an identified need and connects to the school's vision [7].

The first innovative step in planning was a personnel diagnostic audit conducted at the start of the academic year. The principals collected and verified data on years of service, current rank, accumulated credit, and training portfolios for every teacher. At SDN Peuteuycondong 1, the principal mapped teachers into three zones: a safe zone of recently promoted teachers, a critical zone of teachers due for promotion but without prepared files, and a stagnant zone of teachers in the same rank for more than five years, generally because they had not conducted classroom action research. On the basis of this map the principal set employee performance targets that were individually differentiated rather than uniform (Fig. 2). This differentiation reflects the principle that supervisory approach should match the teacher's level of readiness rather than being applied identically to all [9].

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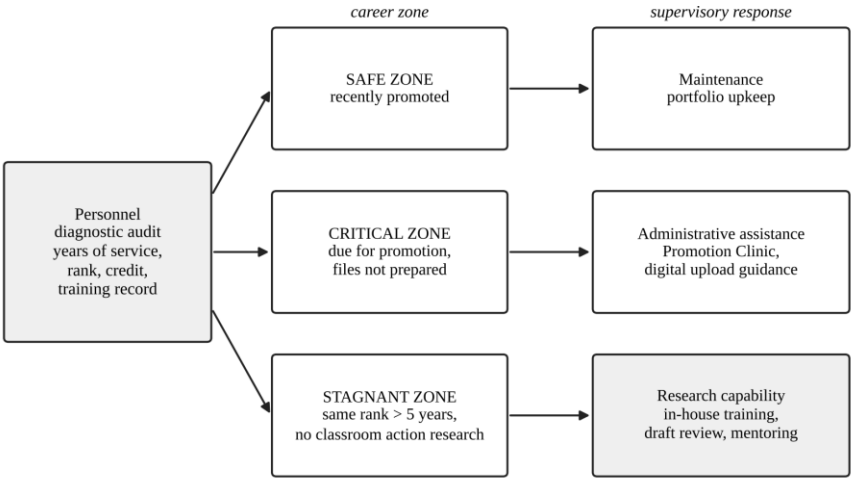


Fig. 2. Career zones identified by the personnel diagnostic audit and the supervisory response assigned to each.

At SDN Gegerbitung, planning innovation lay in the integration of the school's vision, career development, and local context. The principal formed an internal teacher career development team, incorporated into the Annual Work Plan, which was designed to function as a body of peer mentors. The principal also allocated a specific time, the second Saturday of each month, as a professional literacy day, providing a collaborative space for designing instructional works, developing teaching modules informed by ecopedagogy, and drafting classroom action research proposals as a prerequisite for promotion [12].

This proactive planning prevents the concentration of effort at the credit assessment deadline, since the principals scheduled document compilation quarterly rather than at the end of the year. Field findings nevertheless revealed an external constraint: periodic regulatory changes from the central education office concerning the integrated digital performance application obliged principals to revise supervisory instruments reactively. The organizational resilience established during this phase allowed the schools to maintain their objective despite those shifts, but both principals identified regulatory instability as the one constraint their own planning could not absorb [11].

3.2 Organizing and the Distribution of Supervisory Capacity

Organizing in both schools concerned the distribution of supervisory capacity beyond the principal. At SDN Gegerbitung this was achieved by activating and revitalizing the school-level teacher working group and learning community. The principal delegated authority to teachers with stronger information technology competence, who served as facilitating coordinators for their colleagues. Through this arrangement the administrative burden on individual teachers was reduced, and the collaboration

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fostered mutual assistance that shifted the prevailing culture from competition toward cooperation.

At SDN Peuteuycondong 1 the organization was problem-based rather than peer-based: teachers were grouped according to the specific obstacle they faced, so that those with digital literacy constraints formed one group and those lacking research experience formed another. The principal and the school operator worked directly with the first group. The two arrangements distribute capacity differently, and the comparison identifies a corresponding risk in each: peer facilitation at Gegerbitung spreads capability but depends on the continued presence of the facilitating teachers, while problem-based grouping at Peuteuycondong 1 addresses needs precisely but keeps the principal at the center of delivery. Neither school had documented how either arrangement would continue under a change of personnel.

3.3 Implementation through Kindness-Based Leadership

The implementation phase is where leadership innovation was most evident. Departing from the view of supervision as inspection, the principals applied a kindness-based leadership strategy anchored in building trust, providing mentoring, and creating a collaborative working space free from intimidation [6]. Teachers identified this as the condition that made it possible to disclose difficulty, which in turn made targeted support possible: a teacher unwilling to admit to being unable to draft research cannot be helped to draft it.

The most prominent innovation during implementation was the establishment of an in-house Promotion Clinic. Rather than instructing teachers to compile their credit proposals independently, the principals provided dedicated consultation time. At SDN Peuteuycondong 1 the clinic was organized by problem, with a session for senior teachers facing digital constraints in which the principal and the school operator provided hands-on guidance in uploading supporting evidence. Technology was treated as a facility requiring mediation rather than as a barrier or a given competence [8].

Implementation also addressed the substantive instructional work on which promotion depends. Many teachers were stagnant because they had not produced scientific publications. The principals facilitated in-house training workshops on classroom action research, inviting local supervisors and academics as resource persons and using the school's operational funds for the purpose. The principals reviewed drafts before submission, provided feedback, and helped align research questions with actual classroom problems. This participatory approach addressed teachers' reluctance to write and shifted their perception of professional development from an administrative imposition toward a meaningful undertaking, which is consistent with evidence that development grounded in real classroom problems and sustained by mentoring is what changes practice [5].

3.4 Evaluation, Follow-up, and Implications

Evaluation and follow-up determine whether the interventions yield durable effects. Supervision evaluation at both schools was formative rather than conducted at the

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registration deadline: the principals checked the progress of document compilation at the end of each month, supported by a simple digital checklist accessible to teachers so that progress was visible to all parties.

Follow-up was constructive. Where a teacher was found to be behind in assembling evidence, the principal did not issue a written reprimand but conducted a personal discussion to identify the cause, which frequently proved to be an additional workload such as serving on a competition committee or as treasurer of operational funds. The principal then provided time management support or redistributed committee tasks. This follow-up addressed the structural cause of delay rather than its symptom, and it is the point at which supervision became managerial rather than merely encouraging.

The implications of this supervision were substantial. First, teachers' understanding of the regulations governing the integration of digital performance records with the national credit assessment system increased, and teachers no longer depended on school operators or external intermediaries to manage their promotion files. Second, the quality of instructional work improved, as teachers began producing interactive learning media, instructional videos, and teaching aids as part of their portfolios, which affected classroom practice as well as their applications. Third, and most directly related to the research objective, personnel documentation indicates that over the preceding two years the success rate of teachers proposing rank elevation at both schools exceeded 80 percent of those eligible. As noted in the method, this figure is drawn from school records. Teachers described the effect in terms of institutional trust: where leadership is seen to act for their career interests, affective commitment to the school rises [20].

3.5 Cross-Site Comparison of Supervisory Practice

Compared across sites, the two schools converge on the substance of all four phases, on the absence of documented continuity arrangements, and on their shared vulnerability to regulatory instability, while differing in the channel through which supervision is delivered, as summarized in Table 2.

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Table 2. Cross-site comparison of innovative managerial supervision

Supervision Phase	SDN Peuteuycondong 1 (Cianjur)	SDN Gegerbitung (Sukabumi)
Planning	Personnel diagnostic audit mapping teachers into safe, critical, and stagnant zones	Career development team in the Annual Work Plan; monthly professional literacy day
Organizing	Problem-based grouping; principal and school operator deliver support directly	Delegation to peer facilitators through the teacher working group
Implementation	Promotion Clinic organized by problem, including hands-on digital guidance	Peer mentoring plus in-house training on classroom action research
Evaluation and follow-up	Monthly checklist review; workload causes of delay addressed individually	Monthly checklist review; follow-up routed through the working group
Shared weaknesses	No documented continuity for expert roles; exposure to regulatory change	No documented continuity for expert roles; exposure to regulatory change

The pattern in Table 2 indicates that staffing profile determines the delivery channel rather than the supervisory logic. At SDN Peuteuycondong 1, a wide spread of digital confidence made problem-based grouping with direct principal involvement the efficient route. At SDN Gegerbitung, an active teacher working group made delegation to peer facilitators efficient and reduced the principal's direct load. Both produced comparable promotion outcomes, which is the principal benefit of comparing the sites rather than studying either alone, and both remain exposed to the same external constraint, since no school-level arrangement can stabilize regulation issued from outside [20].

4 Discussion

The findings present a theoretical account of how managerial practice at the school level can address macro-level teacher career stagnation. Referenced against the classical management functions of planning, organizing, actuating, and controlling [21], the actions of the principals indicate that the framework remains applicable provided it undergoes contextual translation to address contemporary problems. The particular translation observed here is that the object of management is not the instructional process but the teacher's career trajectory, which is a domain the supervision literature has addressed less fully. Fig. 3 summarizes the cycle as practiced at both schools.

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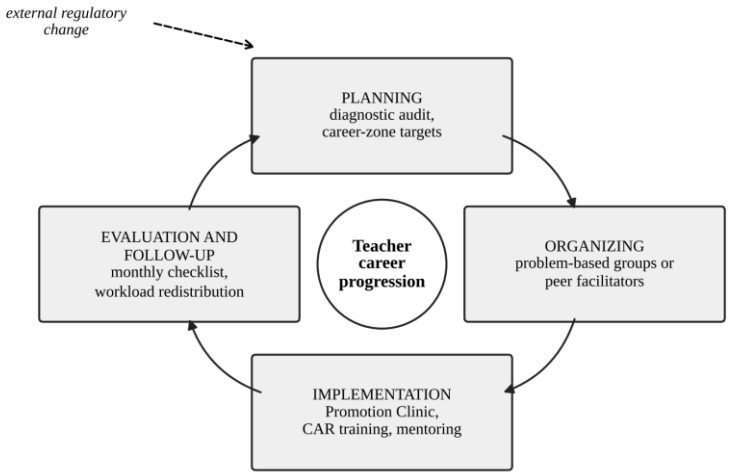


Fig. 3. The managerial supervision cycle directed at teacher career progression; the dashed arrow marks the external regulatory change that school-level planning could not absorb.

In planning, the personnel diagnostic audit demonstrates the value of deep learning-based planning in institutional governance [7]. Detailed planning prevents the pattern in which teachers assemble documents immediately before a submission deadline. By mapping teachers' career positions, the principal functions as a designer establishing the foundation before construction begins, and the alignment of promotion targets with the School Work Plan indicates that professional development is treated as a core function of human resource management rather than as an additional burden [10].

The differentiation of supervisory strategy deserves particular emphasis, since it is where practice and theory correspond most precisely. The three career zones identified at SDN Peuteuycondong 1 are in effect three different supervisory problems: teachers recently promoted require maintenance, teachers due for promotion require administrative assistance, and teachers long stagnant require the development of research capability. Treating these identically would fail all three, much as uniform instruction fails a heterogeneous class in the account of differentiation given by Tomlinson [22]. This is the proposition advanced in the developmental tradition of supervision, which holds that the appropriate approach varies with the teacher's expertise and commitment rather than one approach being generally superior [9], and the schools' practice constitutes an applied instance of it in a domain, career progression, to which it has rarely been applied.

The implementation phase underscores the significance of kindness-based leadership [6]. The principal challenge in this setting is teacher resistance to change,

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particularly the transition from manual to digital systems. Authoritative leadership may compel teachers to upload documents but will not produce teachers intrinsically motivated to conduct meaningful classroom research. By providing the Promotion Clinic, the principals reduced the power distance between leadership and staff, converting a bureaucratic process into a community of practice in which knowledge is produced through joint participation rather than transmitted [23]. The condition reported by teachers, namely that the clinic made it safe to disclose difficulty, is what distinguishes this from conventional training.

This practice also corresponds to the philosophy of transformative education [14]. Transformative education emphasizes 21st-century competencies, and a teacher will be unable to develop these in students if they have not themselves been developed and supervised in a corresponding manner. Collaboration through the revitalized teacher working group cultivates collegiality, and where such development becomes collective the school begins to function as a learning organization in which capability is institutional rather than individual [24]. This aligns with a conception of pedagogy grounded in adab, in which mutual respect and assistance among teachers constitute the ethical foundation of professional work [25], and such a collegial climate operates indirectly as a safeguard against harmful conduct within the school, since communication rests on mutual regard [13].

From the perspective of evaluation and follow-up, the findings indicate that organizational resilience depends on how a school processes feedback [11]. Innovative principals do not treat a teacher's failure to produce research as grounds for sanction but as baseline data for more precise intervention. Monthly formative evaluation reduced the risk of files being rejected at district level. This orientation corresponds to the clinical supervision tradition, in which observation and conference form a cycle aimed at professional growth rather than judgment [26], and its extension here is that the object of the cycle is the teacher's documented career rather than a single lesson. The follow-up practice of redistributing committee tasks is notable in this respect, since it treats delay as a workload problem rather than a motivational one.

The improvement of functional positions carries consequences beyond the individual. When positions advance, professional allowances and job satisfaction rise, and teachers who feel valued exhibit higher organizational commitment and greater willingness to engage in student coaching and school activity [20]. The elevation of functional positions is therefore not the final objective but an indicator that human resource development is functioning, and in this respect the principals have moved from the role of overseer to that of instructional leader and career facilitator [20].

4.1 Limitations

Several limitations should be acknowledged. The study involved two elementary schools, so its findings are analytically rather than statistically generalizable; the promotion statistics are documentary and were not independently verified or attributed causally to the supervision model; informants were drawn from principals and teachers engaged in promotion processes, so teachers who had disengaged from career development are underrepresented; and the absence of longitudinal data means that

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conclusions about the durability of these effects, particularly under further regulatory change, remain inferential.

5 Conclusion

This research concludes that the innovative managerial supervision of school principals plays a determinative role in improving the functional positions of elementary school teachers. At both SDN Peuteuycondong 1 and SDN Gegerbitung the process was organized systematically yet flexibly, encompassing data-based diagnostic planning, organizing that distributed supervisory capacity, humanistic implementation through Promotion Clinic programs grounded in kindness-based leadership, and continuous formative evaluation. These practices proved effective in reducing administrative barriers, lowering technological anxiety, and addressing teachers' reluctance to produce scientific work.

The implications of this supervision are evident in improved understanding of performance and credit regulations, an accelerated rate of promotion application, and higher quality instructional portfolios, which together strengthen organizational resilience and the school's learning ecosystem. The central mechanism identified is the differentiation of supervisory approach according to the teacher's situation: the mapping of career zones meant that maintenance, administrative assistance, and research capability development were treated as distinct problems rather than addressed by a single program.

The comparative dimension yields a further conclusion. The supervisory logic was identical at both sites, while the delivery channel varied with staffing profile: a school with a wide spread of digital confidence was served by problem-based grouping with direct principal involvement, whereas a school with an active teacher working group was served by delegation to peer facilitators. Both sites also shared two weaknesses, namely the absence of documented continuity arrangements for the roles carrying expertise and a common vulnerability to regulatory change originating outside the school.

On this basis it is recommended that principals in other regions adapt the internal personnel clinic model to their own staffing profile rather than replicating its specific sessions, and that they document continuity arrangements for facilitating roles. Teachers are advised to adopt a proactive stance toward professional development, and regional education offices are encouraged to provide stable regulations and technical guidance, since regulatory instability was the one constraint that school-level planning could not absorb. Future research should examine the relationship between functional position advancement and student academic outcomes using designs capable of supporting causal inference, and should follow these practices across successive regulatory cycles.

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DECLARATIONS

Author Contributions

Conceptualization, J.M.F. and L.S.; methodology, J.M.F. and L.S.; investigation and data curation, J.M.F.; formal analysis, J.M.F.; writing—original draft preparation, J.M.F.; writing—review and editing, L.S.; supervision, L.S. Both authors have read and agreed to the published version of the article.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this article.

Research Ethics and Informed Consent

Permission was obtained from the relevant education offices and from both schools before fieldwork, informants were informed of the purpose of the research and of their right to withdraw, and consent was secured. Because the data concern individual career progression, the identities of individual teachers are not disclosed, and personnel documents were examined on school premises without copying identifying data.

Data Availability Statement

Anonymized interview transcripts, field notes, and coding records are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request. Personnel records are not available because they contain personal data of individual teachers.

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