



The Principal's Role as a Supervisor in Improving Teacher Professionalism

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Abstract: This study looks at how the principal at Persis Integrated Islamic Elementary School in Palu City may improve teacher professionalism as a supervisor. Direct observation and in-depth interviews with the principal and a number of instructors were used to gather data using a descriptive qualitative technique. The findings show that the principal's supervisory job is fulfilled through four primary responsibilities: coordinator, consultant, group leader, and evaluator. These duties are carried out through three primary phases: planning, implementation, and assessment. In their capacity as coordinator, the principal works with the vice principal to create a curriculum supervision program at the start of the semester based on an examination of the needs of the teachers and the academic schedule of the school. As a consultant, the principal offers specific advice based on each teacher's requirements and issues in a focused way. In their capacity as group leaders, the principal facilitates a teacher forum where educators can reflect together and share their experiences. The principal evaluates educational resources in an impartial and helpful manner in their capacity as an evaluator. Harmonious communication, clear schedules, teacher forums, specialised direction, and teacher gratitude are all supporting variables for supervision. Limited facilities, some teachers' unfavourable opinions on supervision, and the principal's time constraints from hectic administrative duties are also impediments.

Keywords : principal; supervisor; teacher professionalism; academic supervision; school management.

Abstrak: Penelitian ini meneliti bagaimana kepala sekolah di SD Islam Terpadu Persis di Kota Palu dapat meningkatkan profesionalisme guru sebagai seorang supervisor. Observasi langsung dan wawancara mendalam dengan kepala sekolah dan sejumlah instruktur digunakan untuk mengumpulkan data menggunakan teknik kualitatif deskriptif. Temuan menunjukkan bahwasanya pekerjaan pengawasan kepala sekolah dipenuhi melalui empat tanggung jawab utama: koordinator, konsultan, pemimpin kelompok, dan evaluator. Tugas-tugas ini dilakukan melalui tiga fase utama: perencanaan, implementasi, dan penilaian. Dalam kapasitasnya sebagai koordinator, kepala sekolah bekerja sama dengan wakil kepala sekolah untuk membuat program pengawasan kurikulum di awal semester berdasarkan pemeriksaan kebutuhan guru dan jadwal akademik sekolah. Sebagai konsultan, kepala sekolah memberi saran khusus berdasarkan kebutuhan dan masalah masing-masing guru secara terfokus. Dalam kapasitasnya sebagai pemimpin kelompok, kepala sekolah memfasilitasi forum guru di mana para pendidik dapat merefleksikan bersama dan berbagi pengalaman mereka. Kepala sekolah mengevaluasi sumber daya

pendidikan secara imparial dan bermanfaat dalam kapasitasnya sebagai evaluator. Komunikasi yang harmonis, jadwal yang jelas, forum guru, arahan khusus, dan rasa terima kasih guru merupakan variabel pendukung untuk supervisi. Keterbatasan fasilitas, opini yang kurang baik dari beberapa guru tentang supervisi, dan keterbatasan waktu kepala sekolah akibat tugas administratif yang padat juga menjadi hambatan.

Kata kunci : kepala sekolah; supervisor; profesionalisme guru; supervisi akademik; manajemen sekolah.

Introduction

The development of competitive and high-quality human resources is strategically supported by education. The quality of the learning process carried out by teachers, who are the primary implementers of educational activities, has a significant impact on the achievement of educational goals in schools (Nurfatimah et al., 2022; Ali et al., 2026; Azzahrah & Marpaung, 2025). Therefore, to improve educational standards in Indonesia, teacher professionalism is a crucial component that requires further development and careful attention. This aligns with Law Number 14 of 2005 concerning the Mandate of Teachers and Lecturers, which states that educators are professionals with a crucial role in the implementation of education.

However, in reality, improving teacher professionalism is closely linked to several issues in the education sector. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which required rapid modifications to the educational process (Sadikin & Hamidah, 2020), and the adoption of the Independent Curriculum, which demands teacher flexibility and creativity in the classroom, are two examples of such challenges. The principal's supervisory role becomes even more crucial and strategic in this situation. In addition to overseeing teacher performance (Mailani et al., 2023), educational supervision by the principal also serves as a form of professional support and guidance to improve the quality of the learning process. Therefore, one of the principal's primary responsibilities in promoting and improving teacher professional competence in schools is academic monitoring, as stated in Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture Number 6 of 2018.

Many previous studies have shown that academic supervision carried out by the principal has a positive and significant influence on improving teacher professional competence (Arifin, 2022). Furthermore, teacher motivation in developing their professional skills is also closely related to the quality of supervision they receive (Al Faruq & Supriyanto, 2020). However, there are still research gaps that require further study, as these studies have not specifically highlighted the context of integrated Islamic schools at the elementary school level. The results of a preliminary study conducted at SD Islam Terpadu Persis, Palu City, showed that 62% of teachers had not yet achieved the minimum professional competency standards set by the school. Furthermore, the results of the principal's academic supervision in the last semester showed an average score of 67.4 on a scale

of 100, which is still below the "good" category limit (75). This condition indicates that the relationship between academic supervision and teacher competence at the school is not yet optimal, so more in-depth and measurable empirical research is needed.

Initial observations at Persis Integrated Islamic Elementary School in Palu City revealed that there are still a number of unfavorable conditions surrounding the implementation of academic supervision. This is indicated by the presence of educators who demonstrate a less-than-ideal level of professionalism, such as delays in completing learning administration tasks and a lack of involvement in professional development initiatives. This condition indicates a gap between the reality in the field and the principal's duties as a supervisor, namely, to promote and improve teacher professionalism. To improve teacher professionalism, a study of the principal's supervisory function is very important, especially in terms of how the principal fulfills the role of the coordinator, consultant, group leader, and evaluator. Based on this explanation, the objectives of this study are: (1) what is the role of the principal as a supervisor in improving teacher professionalism at Persis Integrated Islamic Elementary School in Palu City; (2) what are the supporting and inhibiting factors of the principal's role as a supervisor in improving teacher professionalism at Persis Integrated Islamic Elementary School in Palu City.

Methods

This research combines descriptive techniques with qualitative methodology. This method was chosen because it allows researchers to methodically explain various facts and events that occur in the research environment and to gain a comprehensive understanding of the phenomena studied based on real-world conditions (Sugiyono, 2013). This research was conducted at SD Islam Terpadu Persis, Palu City, located at Jl. Sungai Ogomojolo No. 4B, Tatanga District, Palu City, Central Sulawesi.

The subjects of this study consisted of the principal and five teachers selected using a purposive sampling technique. The selection of informants was based on the following criteria: (1) they are permanent teachers who actively teach at Persis Integrated Islamic Elementary School, (2) they have undergone academic supervision by the principal, and (3) they are willing to volunteer as research informants. All informants have given their informed consent before participating, and their identities are kept confidential in accordance with research ethics principles.

Data collection was carried out using three methods, namely: (1) direct observation of the implementation of supervisory activities in the school environment; (2) in-depth interviews with the principal and teachers to collect information about the policies, stages, and supervisory strategies implemented; and

(3) documentation studies, which included school data, learning materials, and activity documentation in the form of photographs.

To ensure data validity, this study implemented operational triangulation through three approaches. First, source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from the principal and teachers separately. Second, technical triangulation was conducted by confirming interview data through direct observation and document analysis. Third, temporal triangulation was conducted by collecting data at different points in time to ensure the consistency and reliability of the information obtained (Alfansyur, 2020).

Result and Discussion

Result

Supervision Planning Stage

Supervision planning is a strategic initial step in determining the success of academic supervision. At Persis Integrated Islamic Elementary School in Palu City, the supervision planning process is carried out in a structured manner at the beginning of each semester, taking into account the actual needs of teachers and adapting to the school's conditions and academic calendar.

The principal develops a supervision program based on an analysis of teacher needs, including pedagogical skills, instructional administration, and classroom implementation. The supervision program is designed collaboratively with the vice principal for curriculum. As the principal explained:

"I plan the supervision program by systematically organizing it at the beginning of the semester. The planning is based on an analysis of teacher needs and refers to the school's academic calendar. The supervision program is developed with the vice principal for curriculum, including the implementation schedule, supervision objectives, and aspects to be supervised." (H. Saiman, Interview, September 4, 2025).

The principal's statement was confirmed by the perspective of teachers, who directly receive supervision. Most teachers stated that they were aware of the supervision program from the beginning of the semester and were involved in the scheduling process, although this involvement was still informational. One teacher explained:

"We usually receive information about the supervision schedule from the principal at the beginning of the semester. The program is already organized, and we just need to prepare the administration and learning materials according to his instructions." (Muhammad Arbi, Interview, September 6, 2025).

Data triangulation through field observations and documentation analysis further strengthened the findings of this study. The 2024/2025 Academic Supervision Program documents analyzed by the researchers showed that the supervision schedule was systematically designed each month, with structured class

divisions and equipped with assessment instruments covering pedagogical and administrative aspects of learning. Field observations also indicated that the principal actively conducted classroom visits according to the established schedule. These findings demonstrate alignment between the planning outlined in the documents and the implementation of academic supervision in the field.

Analytically, this systematic planning pattern, involving elements of collaboration, demonstrates a supervisory approach that emphasizes professional development (developmental supervision), rather than merely administrative oversight. The fact that teachers are aware of the supervision schedule and have prepared themselves prior to its implementation demonstrates the creation of a relatively open and non-inspective supervisory climate. However, teacher involvement in the planning stage remains limited to providing information and does not yet reach the level of active participation in decision-making.

During the planning stage, the principal acts as a coordinator, organizing and directing the implementation of teacher supervision and development activities. This role aims to ensure that the learning process can proceed effectively and with high quality, in line with the standards established by the school.

Supervision Implementation Stage

At the Persis Integrated Islamic Elementary School in Palu City, supervision is conducted through various methods, including preparation, classroom observation, assessment, and constructive criticism. The principal implements individualized guidance methods tailored to the needs, characteristics, and challenges of each teacher.

"Through individual guidance, I can provide more focused direction, input, and coaching tailored to the needs and challenges teachers face, enabling more effective efforts to improve teacher professionalism." (H. Saiman, Interview, September 4, 2025).

Teachers' perspectives not only confirmed these findings but also broadened their understanding of ongoing supervision practices. Teachers expressed that individual supervision provided them with greater opportunities to openly discuss learning issues compared to collective evaluations. One teacher also shared her experience as follows:

"The principal's presence in class, followed by personal feedback, made me feel more comfortable expressing the various difficulties I was experiencing in the learning process. Furthermore, the feedback felt more relevant to the conditions and situations in the class I was facing." (Ermayanti A. Ladaka, Interview, September 7, 2025).

Triangulation with observational and documentary data supports both statements. The researcher's observations indicate that the principal conducted in-person classroom visits and recorded the learning process using a prepared

observation instrument. The Academic Supervision Assessment Sheet obtained by the researcher contained specific notes per teacher regarding the opening, core, and closing aspects of the lesson, indicating that the supervision process was not superficial.

Interpretatively, the individual approach implemented by this principal reflects what Sergiovanni & Starratt (2007) call clinical supervision—supervision that focuses on the individual needs of teachers and emphasizes two-way dialogue between supervisor and teacher. The success of this approach, as reflected in the positive responses of teachers, indicates that the supervisory relationship in this school has moved beyond a control function to a professional development function. However, this finding requires further examination: whether the individual feedback provided has been systematically followed up by teachers and documented as part of their ongoing professional development plan.

At this stage, the principal acts as a consultant, offering guidance, direction, and other solutions to various problems teachers encounter during the teaching and learning process. In addition to evaluating teacher performance, supervision also serves as a professional development tool aimed at helping educators improve teaching standards.

Supervision Evaluation Stage

The supervision evaluation phase at Persis Integrated Islamic Elementary School in Palu City was conducted collaboratively through a teacher forum led directly by the principal. This collective approach provided an opportunity for all teachers to actively participate in joint reflection activities, share experiences, and discuss various challenges and alternative solutions that emerged during the learning process.

In the forum, one of the main focuses of the evaluation was the assessment of learning tools such as Teaching Modules, Annual Programs (Prota), and Semester Programs (Promes). The principal and teachers reviewed these tools to assess their alignment with the applicable curriculum, the completeness of the learning components, and the relevance of the methods used in the learning process.

"Supervision evaluations at our school are conducted through teacher forums. We review the Teaching Modules and other tools each teacher has developed, discuss the results of classroom supervision, and provide feedback to each other." (H. Saiman, Interview, September 4, 2025).

Teachers' experiences participating in the evaluation forums provided a more diverse picture. Some teachers found the forums quite productive, allowing them to learn from each other's experiences. However, several teachers also reported that on several occasions, discussions tended to be dominated by the principal's direction, thus limiting teachers' opportunities to provide bottom-up feedback. One teacher explained:

"The teacher forum helped me identify gaps in my learning tools. However, I wish there was more time for us to share teaching strategies with each other, rather than just receiving assessments from the principal." (Fenia, Interview, September 8, 2025).

Observational and documentary data confirmed the implementation of this evaluation forum. Researchers observed that the forum lasted approximately two hours with a structured agenda: an opening by the principal, presentations of supervision results by class, group discussions, and a closing with recommendations for follow-up. The minutes of the Supervision Evaluation Forum obtained by researchers included an attendance list, discussion points, and a mutually agreed-upon follow-up plan, indicating that this forum was more than just an administrative formality.

Analytically, this collective evaluation forum reflects a reflective practice model that encourages teachers to collectively reflect on their learning practices. The forum's positive contribution to teacher professional development lies in the peer learning mechanism that naturally develops when teachers share learning strategies. However, findings from the teachers' perspective indicate an imbalance in the distribution of voices within the forum: the principal's dominant direction can hinder the emergence of learning innovations originating from the teachers themselves.

During this evaluation phase, the principal plays a dual role as both group leader and evaluator, assessing and providing input on the implementation of learning. The teacher forum has proven to contribute positively to teacher professional development through the exchange of creative learning strategies and various innovative solutions. Moving forward, the role of teachers as active evaluation agents, not just recipients, is being strengthened. Assessment will be key to increasing the effectiveness of this supervision evaluation stage.

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors of Supervision

Several factors contribute to the success of supervision in schools. First, good, open, and harmonious communication between the principal and teachers serves as the primary foundation for creating a conducive and mutually supportive supervisory environment. Second, providing specific, targeted guidance tailored to the needs of each individual teacher makes the supervision process feel more meaningful and relevant. Third, collective support, manifested through teacher forums, provides a space for educators to share experiences, discuss, and learn together on an ongoing basis. Fourth, the availability of clear, structured, and well-organized supervision planning and schedules allows all parties involved to prepare optimally. Fifth, providing awards and appreciation to high-achieving teachers has been shown to increase educators' motivation and enthusiasm in carrying out their duties professionally.

On the other hand, several factors also hinder the implementation of supervision. First, limited school facilities, including the limited availability of technological devices that are not yet fully adequate, are a real obstacle that limits the effectiveness of the supervision process. Second, some teachers still have a misperception of supervision, namely, viewing it solely as an evaluation activity that finds fault, rather than understanding it as a constructive process of coaching and professional development. Meanwhile, the principal's limited time due to the heavy administrative and managerial burden that must be handled every day means that supervision implementation often cannot be carried out optimally, comprehensively, and sustainably as it should.

Discussion

The results of the study indicate that the principal's role as supervisor at SD Islam Terpadu Persis in Palu City is realized through four main roles: coordinator, consultant, group leader, and evaluator, which are implemented through three stages: planning, implementation, and evaluation according to the clinical supervision model. This finding aligns with the clinical supervision framework proposed by Pitoy et al., (2022), which emphasizes the importance of a continuous supervision cycle. Conceptually, this finding aligns with the academic supervision model, which emphasizes the importance of a planned, dialogic, and ongoing supervision process in supporting teacher professional development (Azizah & Usman, 2023; Harun & Masrufa, 2023). However, this procedural conformity does not automatically indicate that the supervision implemented has resulted in a significant increase in teacher professional competence. This is because the research data primarily describe the supervision implementation process rather than empirical changes in teachers' teaching practices after supervision. Furthermore, it should be noted that this study relies entirely on the principal's perspective as the primary data source, so the obtained picture does not fully reflect the experiences and perceptions of teachers as supervisees.

In his role as coordinator, the principal aligns the supervision program with the school's objectives through a collaborative planning process with the vice principal for curriculum. This finding strengthens the argument for the importance of coordination in educational supervision. However, compared with findings (Wahyudi et al., 2019), which indicate that supervision coordination in private, religious-based elementary schools is often hampered by hierarchical organizational structures and limited communication between management levels, the success of coordination at SD Islam Terpadu Persis, Palu City, requires further testing through triangulation of data from teachers and educational staff. The unique context of an integrated Islamic-based school, with its values of togetherness and deliberation as the foundation of its organizational culture, is likely a moderating factor that has not been explored in depth in this study.

As a consultant, the principal provides professional support to teachers through individual guidance tailored to each teacher's needs. This approach aligns with the concept of collaborative supervision (Herlilawati, 2021), which emphasizes the importance of a harmonious professional relationship between teachers and supervisors. However, the claim that this individual guidance method is "proven effective" requires more critical examination. The effectiveness of this approach does not necessarily apply universally. Therefore, without data describing the profiles of supervised teachers and measurable changes in performance post-supervision, this claim of effectiveness remains tentative and requires further empirical verification.

The principal's role as group leader is realized through the organization of teacher forums, which he actively facilitates. These forums align conceptually with the concept of professional learning communities (PLC) outlined by Jasmin (2021), which emphasizes collaboration and the exchange of experiences among educators as a driver of ongoing professional development. However, it is important to question the extent to which these forums truly function as spaces for equal dialogue, or whether they are merely formalities led by a top-down approach. Research (Stoll et al., 2006) suggests that effective PLCs require trust, autonomy, and openness to critique each other's practices—conditions not always met in hierarchical school structures.

The claim that teacher motivation and creativity were "proven to increase" as a result of the forum also needs to be addressed critically. Without valid measurement instruments and adequate longitudinal data, the improvements are likely merely perceptual and self-reported by the principal. Similarly, although the findings (Yuneti et al., 2019) do indicate that effective communication and participatory leadership contribute to successful supervision, their research context needs to be examined for its suitability to the specific conditions of SD Islam Terpadu Persis, Palu City, before generalizing directly.

As an evaluator, the principal conducts objective and constructive assessments of learning planning, implementation, and evaluation. This practice aligns with the supervisory evaluation principles proposed by Dwi Hartono et al. (2023), which emphasize that the evaluation process must produce clear recommendations that can be implemented in learning practices. A comparison with the findings of (Tihalimah, 2022) conducted during the pandemic using a technology-based approach is also relevant; this study shows that direct supervision through classroom observation remains the most effective method under normal learning conditions. However, it is important to note that the relative effectiveness of face-to-face and technology-based supervision cannot be concluded from a single school context, as differences in infrastructure, teacher digital capacity, and school culture may produce different findings in other locations.

The inhibiting factors identified, particularly teachers' negative perceptions of supervision and principals' time constraints, align with findings (Ballu et al., 2021). This indicates that structural and psychological barriers to supervision are cross-contextual and not unique to a single school. Efforts to address these barriers through a humanistic and collaborative supervision approach are commendable; however, the effectiveness of this approach needs to be empirically verified, not simply through narrative claims. Supporting factors such as harmonious communication and appreciation for teachers, as confirmed by (Elvina et al., 2024), demonstrate that the relational dimension of supervision cannot be separated from its technical dimensions. These findings also emphasize the need for further research that explicitly measures the relationship between the quality of principal-teacher relationships and measurable and objectively verified changes in teaching performance.

Conclusion

The findings of this study indicate that the principal's role as supervisor at Persis Integrated Islamic Elementary School in Palu City has been effectively implemented through a structured process, encompassing planning, implementation, and evaluation, in line with a continuous clinical supervision approach. In its implementation, the principal carries out four interrelated functions. First, as coordinator, he aligns the supervision program with the school's vision, along with the vice principal for curriculum. Second, as a consultant, he provides guidance tailored to the individual needs of each teacher. Third, as group leader, he facilitates teacher forums as a space for reflection and sharing of learning practices. Fourth, as an evaluator, he assesses learning tools and processes objectively and constructively.

The success of this supervision is supported by several supporting conditions, namely good communication between the principal and teachers, an active teacher forum, a regular supervision schedule, a personalized coaching approach, and recognition of teacher achievement. These factors collectively contribute to building a culture of professionalism in schools. However, several obstacles remain that require attention, such as a lack of facilities and learning technology devices, the persistence of some teachers who view supervision as an opportunity to assess mistakes, and the limited time of the principal due to a heavy administrative workload.

These obstacles can be minimized through a more humane and collaborative supervisory approach, so that teachers understand that supervision is truly a professional development effort, not merely a performance assessment. In general, academic supervision that is implemented in a planned manner, involves active teacher participation, and is oriented toward coaching has been proven to improve

teacher professionalism. In this regard, the active involvement of the principal is a determining factor in the success of the supervision process.

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