

Academic Supervision For Enhancing Teachers' Pedagogical Competence: A Case Study at SD Negeri Tanjung Lama, Aceh Tenggara, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Improving teacher pedagogical competence remains central to global educational reform. Academic supervision has been widely recognized as a strategic instrument for strengthening instructional quality; however, its contextual implementation in rural developing-country settings remains underexplored. This study investigates how academic supervision contributes to improving teachers' pedagogical competence in a rural public elementary school in Aceh Tenggara, Indonesia. Employing a qualitative case study design, data were collected through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis involving one principal and six teachers. Thematic analysis revealed that structured supervision planning, dialogical feedback processes, reflective post-observation conferences, and continuous mentoring significantly enhanced lesson planning quality, student-centered learning practices, classroom management, and formative assessment strategies. Nevertheless, supervision effectiveness was constrained by administrative workload, time limitations, and limited professional development integration. This study contributes theoretically by contextualizing instructional supervision theory within rural school leadership practice and practically by proposing a contextual supervision improvement model applicable to similar settings. The findings underscore the need for policy reinforcement to institutionalize reflective supervision frameworks in primary education systems.

Keywords: Academic Supervision, Teacher Pedagogical Competence, Elementary School

ABSTRAK

Peningkatan kompetensi pedagogik guru tetap menjadi fokus utama dalam reformasi pendidikan global. Supervisi akademik telah diakui secara luas sebagai instrumen strategis untuk memperkuat kualitas pembelajaran; namun, implementasinya secara kontekstual di lingkungan sekolah pedesaan pada negara berkembang masih kurang dieksplorasi. Penelitian ini bertujuan

untuk menganalisis bagaimana supervisi akademik berkontribusi terhadap peningkatan kompetensi pedagogik guru di sebuah sekolah dasar negeri di wilayah pedesaan Aceh Tenggara, Indonesia. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain studi kasus kualitatif dengan pengumpulan data melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur, observasi kelas, dan analisis dokumen yang melibatkan satu kepala sekolah dan enam guru. Analisis tematik menunjukkan bahwa perencanaan supervisi yang terstruktur, proses umpan balik dialogis, konferensi reflektif pasca-observasi, serta pendampingan berkelanjutan secara signifikan meningkatkan kualitas perencanaan pembelajaran, praktik pembelajaran berpusat pada siswa, pengelolaan kelas, dan strategi penilaian formatif. Namun demikian, efektivitas supervisi masih dibatasi oleh beban administrasi, keterbatasan waktu, serta minimnya integrasi dengan program pengembangan profesional berkelanjutan. Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi teoretis dengan mengontekstualisasikan teori supervisi pembelajaran dalam praktik kepemimpinan sekolah pedesaan, serta kontribusi praktis melalui pengusulan model peningkatan supervisi kontekstual yang dapat diterapkan pada lingkungan serupa. Temuan penelitian ini menegaskan pentingnya penguatan kebijakan untuk menginstitusionalisasikan kerangka supervisi reflektif dalam sistem pendidikan dasar.

Kata Kunci: Supervisi Akademik, Kompetensi Pedagogik Guru, Sekolah Dasar

INTRODUCTION

Teacher quality remains one of the most significant determinants of student achievement globally (OECD, 2022). Research consistently demonstrates that effective teachers exert a stronger influence on student outcomes than structural factors such as infrastructure or curriculum design (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). Consequently, strengthening pedagogical competence has become a central priority in education systems worldwide (UNESCO, 2023).

Beyond its impact on academic performance, teacher quality also shapes students' motivation, learning engagement, and long-term educational trajectories. Studies indicate that pedagogically competent teachers are better able to differentiate instruction, manage diverse classrooms, and foster inclusive learning environments (Leithwood et al., 2020). In primary education particularly, strong pedagogical foundations are crucial because they influence students' cognitive development, literacy acquisition, and socio-emotional growth at formative stages.

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In response to these global challenges, many countries have reformed teacher development policies by emphasizing instructional leadership and academic supervision as mechanisms for continuous professional growth (Hallinger, 2022). Rather than focusing solely on initial teacher certification, contemporary reform efforts highlight ongoing mentoring, reflective practice, and school-based supervision to ensure sustained improvement in teaching quality. Thus, enhancing pedagogical competence is not merely a professional issue but a systemic educational priority.

Instructional supervision is widely recognized as a mechanism for enhancing teacher professionalism and instructional effectiveness (Hallinger, 2022; Glickman et al., 2020). Contemporary supervision theory emphasizes collaborative, reflective, and developmental approaches rather than inspection-based control models (Sergiovanni, 2021). In high-performing systems, supervision is integrated into instructional leadership practices and continuous professional development (Leithwood et al., 2020).

In developing countries, however, supervision often remains procedural and compliance-driven (Nguyen et al., 2021). In Southeast Asia, research indicates that supervision practices frequently prioritize administrative documentation over pedagogical mentoring (Arar & Oplatka, 2022). This issue is particularly evident in rural schools, where principals face resource constraints and heavy administrative burdens (Harris & Jones, 2020).

As a result, supervision activities tend to be conducted as routine formalities rather than as meaningful professional development processes. Principals frequently focus on checking lesson plans and fulfilling reporting requirements, leaving limited space for reflective dialogue and instructional coaching. Such compliance-oriented approaches reduce supervision to a bureaucratic exercise, thereby weakening its potential to foster instructional improvement and teacher professional growth.

In Indonesia, teacher pedagogical competence remains uneven across regions (Kemendikbud, 2023). National teacher competency assessments show significant disparities between urban and rural schools (OECD, 2022). While academic supervision is mandated by national regulation, its implementation quality varies widely (Wahyuni & Mulyasa, 2022). Studies suggest that supervision positively correlates with teacher performance (Rahmawati et al., 2021; Zulfikar & Hamid, 2024), yet most research relies on quantitative surveys and lacks contextual depth.

These disparities indicate that regulatory compliance alone is

insufficient to ensure meaningful pedagogical improvement. In many cases, supervision is implemented as a formal administrative requirement rather than as a sustained professional learning process. Particularly in rural and peripheral areas, limitations in leadership capacity, professional support systems, and access to training opportunities contribute to inconsistent supervision practices. Therefore, there is a pressing need for context-sensitive research that explores how supervision operates in specific school environments and how it meaningfully influences teachers' pedagogical competence beyond statistical correlations.

Specifically, limited empirical research examines how supervision functions in rural Indonesian elementary schools using qualitative approaches. Moreover, there remains insufficient exploration of how supervision practices directly influence components of pedagogical competence, such as lesson planning, student engagement strategies, and formative assessment.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Instructional Supervision Theory

Instructional supervision evolved from inspection models toward developmental and clinical supervision frameworks (Glickman et al., 2020). Sergiovanni (2021) conceptualizes supervision as moral leadership grounded in professional growth. Hallinger (2022) emphasizes instructional leadership alignment, arguing that supervision is central to school effectiveness. Contemporary literature highlights dialogical supervision, peer reflection, and feedback cycles as essential components (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2021). Effective supervision integrates observation, reflective dialogue, and action planning (Yoon et al., 2020).

Beyond its procedural function, instructional supervision is increasingly understood as a capacity-building mechanism. Rather than merely evaluating teacher performance, supervision is intended to strengthen instructional decision-making, pedagogical reasoning, and adaptive expertise (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). Within this framework, the principal acts not as an inspector but as an instructional coach who facilitates professional inquiry and supports teachers' reflective practice.

Recent scholarship also situates supervision within distributed leadership theory, where leadership practices are shared and embedded in daily instructional interactions (Spillane, 2021). This perspective suggests that

supervision effectiveness depends on relational trust, collaborative culture, and professional dialogue. Bryk and Schneider (2020) argue that relational trust between school leaders and teachers significantly enhances the impact of instructional improvement initiatives, including supervision.

Furthermore, research underscores that reflective supervision fosters teacher self-efficacy and professional identity development (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2021). When supervision includes constructive feedback and collaborative problem-solving, teachers are more likely to experiment with innovative strategies and refine their classroom practices. Thus, instructional supervision operates not only as a monitoring tool but as a transformative process that mediates pedagogical change through reflection, dialogue, and sustained professional engagement.

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Pedagogical Competence

Pedagogical competence encompasses knowledge of learners, curriculum design, instructional strategies, assessment literacy, and classroom management (Shulman, 2020). Darling-Hammond et al. (2020) argue that pedagogical competence directly impacts equity and student engagement. In primary education, effective pedagogy requires adaptive teaching practices that respond to students' developmental stages and diverse learning needs (OECD, 2022).

Beyond technical instructional skills, pedagogical competence also involves teachers' ability to integrate subject matter knowledge with pedagogical content knowledge (PCK), enabling them to present concepts in ways that are accessible and meaningful to students. Shulman (2020) emphasizes that effective teachers transform disciplinary knowledge into pedagogically powerful representations that promote conceptual understanding rather than rote memorization. This integrative capacity is particularly critical in elementary education, where foundational literacy, numeracy, and socio-emotional skills are developed.

Moreover, pedagogical competence is closely linked to reflective practice and continuous professional learning. Teachers who engage in systematic reflection are more capable of evaluating their instructional

effectiveness, adjusting strategies, and responding to classroom dynamics (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). Research indicates that reflective teachers demonstrate higher levels of instructional adaptability and student-centered learning implementation, which are essential for improving learning outcomes in diverse classroom contexts.

In contemporary educational discourse, pedagogical competence is also associated with inclusive and culturally responsive teaching practices. Effective teachers must be able to create equitable learning environments, differentiate instruction, and implement formative assessment strategies that support all learners (OECD, 2022). Therefore, strengthening pedagogical competence requires structured professional support systems, including academic supervision, mentoring, and collaborative professional learning communities, to ensure sustained instructional improvement.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative case study design to explore in depth how academic supervision contributes to the improvement of teachers' pedagogical competence within a specific school context (Yin, 2020). The research was conducted in a rural public elementary school in Aceh Tenggara, Indonesia. Participants consisted of one principal and six teachers selected through purposive sampling based on their active involvement in supervision activities. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis, including lesson plans and supervision reports, to obtain comprehensive and contextualized insights.

Data analysis followed the thematic analysis procedures outlined by Miles et al. (2020), involving systematic stages of data reduction, open coding, axial coding, and theme development. The coding process aimed to identify recurring patterns related to supervision practices and pedagogical competence development. To ensure credibility and trustworthiness, the study applied methodological triangulation across data sources and techniques, as well as member checking to validate participants' interpretations. An audit trail was also maintained to enhance transparency and confirmability of the findings.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Supervision Planning

The findings indicate that supervision planning was conducted

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systematically at the beginning of each semester. The principal developed a formal supervision schedule outlining observation timelines, targeted teachers, and focus areas aligned with the school's academic calendar. This structured planning ensured that supervision activities were not incidental but embedded within the school's instructional program. Such systematic scheduling reflects principles of instructional leadership, where planning serves as the foundation for sustained instructional improvement (Hallinger, 2022).

In addition to scheduling, teachers were provided with supervision instruments and lesson plan review guidelines prior to classroom observation. These instruments included indicators related to learning objectives, instructional strategies, student engagement, classroom management, and assessment integration. By sharing these tools in advance, the principal promoted transparency and reduced teachers' anxiety regarding the supervision process. This approach aligns with developmental supervision theory, which emphasizes clarity of expectations and collaborative preparation (Glickman et al., 2020).

Interview data revealed that early communication regarding supervision objectives encouraged teachers to prepare more thoroughly. Several teachers reported revising their lesson plans to ensure alignment with curriculum standards and learning outcomes before the observation took place. This finding suggests that supervision planning itself functioned as a preliminary intervention, stimulating reflective preparation even before classroom implementation. Such anticipatory reflection supports the argument that supervision influences instructional quality indirectly through planning processes.

Furthermore, the planning stage included informal discussions between the principal and teachers regarding instructional challenges. These preliminary conversations allowed teachers to express specific concerns, such as student participation or assessment strategies, which later became focal points during observation. This dialogical planning process demonstrates that effective supervision begins with relational engagement rather than mere procedural scheduling. Research highlights that relational trust enhances the effectiveness of supervision practices (Bryk & Schneider, 2020).

However, despite the structured planning framework, challenges were identified. The principal acknowledged that administrative duties occasionally delayed supervision scheduling adjustments. Teachers also

indicated that supervision frequency was sometimes limited due to competing institutional responsibilities. This finding reflects broader concerns in rural school contexts, where leadership workload can constrain the continuity of instructional supervision (Harris & Jones, 2020). Nonetheless, the structured planning process established a foundational mechanism for pedagogical improvement within the school.

Feedback and Reflection

Post-observation conferences were conducted shortly after classroom observations and were structured as reflective dialogues rather than evaluative judgments. During these sessions, the principal invited teachers to first share their own reflections on the lesson, including perceived strengths and areas for improvement. This reflective sequencing encouraged self-assessment before external feedback was provided. Teachers indicated that this approach reduced defensiveness and created a more open and professional atmosphere. Such dialogical supervision practices align with contemporary instructional leadership frameworks that prioritize collaborative reflection and professional growth (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2021).

Teachers reported increased awareness of their instructional strengths and weaknesses following these reflective conferences. For example, several participants acknowledged that they previously underestimated the importance of formative questioning techniques and student participation monitoring. Through guided feedback, they became more conscious of classroom interaction patterns and time management strategies. This heightened pedagogical awareness suggests that feedback sessions functioned as cognitive activation processes, prompting teachers to critically evaluate and refine their instructional decisions.

Moreover, the feedback discussions often resulted in concrete action plans for subsequent lessons. Teachers described implementing specific improvements such as incorporating varied learning media, improving transitions between activities, and applying formative assessment strategies more systematically. The presence of actionable recommendations indicates that reflection was not merely theoretical but translated into practical pedagogical adjustments. This finding supports research suggesting that effective supervision fosters instructional change when feedback is specific, constructive, and future-oriented (Yoon et al., 2020).

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study align with Hallinger's (2022) instructional leadership framework, which emphasizes the principal's role in promoting teaching quality through structured and reflective supervision practices. The results demonstrate that supervision strengthens pedagogical competence when it is implemented as a developmental and dialogical process rather than as a compliance-oriented activity. Consistent with Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2021), dialogical feedback increased teacher self-efficacy by encouraging self-reflection and professional confidence in instructional decision-making. Teachers who engaged in reflective supervision exhibited greater awareness of classroom practices and demonstrated willingness to adjust instructional strategies.

Unlike large-scale survey studies that primarily identify statistical correlations between supervision and teacher performance (Rahmawati et al., 2021), this research provides contextual qualitative evidence from a rural school setting. The findings support Harris and Jones' (2020) argument that leadership practices must be contextually adapted, particularly in rural and resource-constrained environments. In this case, supervision effectiveness depended not only on formal policy mandates but also on relational trust, communication patterns, and situational leadership flexibility.

Furthermore, the study reinforces the notion that supervision operates as an indirect mechanism of instructional improvement. Rather than directly altering classroom outcomes, supervision mediates pedagogical change through reflective dialogue and action planning. This mediation process strengthens teachers' professional reasoning and instructional adaptability, which ultimately influence classroom practice. Such findings extend existing supervision literature by demonstrating how reflective cycles function at the micro-level within daily school routines.

The improvement in lesson planning and formative assessment practices observed in this study also corresponds with research by Darling-Hammond et al. (2020), which highlights the importance of professional learning processes in enhancing pedagogical competence. When supervision integrates observation, reflection, and follow-up mentoring, it becomes a structured professional development mechanism embedded within the school system. This embedded approach appears particularly valuable in rural contexts where access to external training opportunities may be limited.

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However, the study also reveals structural constraints that potentially weaken supervision sustainability. Administrative workload and limited time allocation reduced the frequency and depth of supervision cycles. This finding echoes broader concerns in educational leadership research that excessive bureaucratic responsibilities often limit principals' instructional leadership capacity (Grissom et al., 2021). Without institutional adjustments, supervision risks reverting to procedural compliance rather than developmental engagement.

Overall, the findings suggest that academic supervision can serve as a transformative tool for improving pedagogical competence when implemented reflectively, systematically, and contextually. The study contributes to instructional leadership scholarship by demonstrating how supervision practices in rural elementary schools can foster professional growth despite structural limitations. Future research should explore comparative multi-site designs to examine whether similar supervision dynamics operate across different rural and urban contexts.

Unlike large-scale survey studies (Rahmawati et al., 2021), this research provides contextual qualitative evidence from a rural setting, supporting Harris and Jones' (2020) argument about contextual leadership adaptation.

CONCLUSION

Supervision, when structured and reflective, contributes significantly to improving teachers' pedagogical competence. The findings of this study demonstrate that supervision is most effective when it emphasizes collaborative dialogue, systematic planning, classroom observation, and constructive feedback. Through reflective conferences and follow-up discussions, teachers developed greater instructional awareness, refined lesson planning strategies, and strengthened classroom management practices. These processes fostered not only technical pedagogical improvement but also enhanced professional confidence and self-efficacy.

Institutional support and workload redistribution are necessary to maximize supervision effectiveness. Principals require sufficient time, administrative assistance, and policy backing to prioritize instructional leadership over bureaucratic tasks. Schools and educational authorities should therefore design policies that integrate supervision into continuous professional development frameworks rather than treating it as a periodic administrative requirement. Sustainable supervision systems, supported by

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clear guidelines and collaborative culture, can serve as a long-term strategy for improving teaching quality and student learning outcomes, particularly in rural elementary school contexts.

NOVELTY STATEMENT

This study advances existing instructional supervision scholarship by:

1. Providing a contextualized rural supervision model grounded in empirical qualitative evidence.
2. Bridging instructional leadership theory and pedagogical competence development within a developing-country primary school context.
3. Demonstrating how reflective supervision cycles mediate pedagogical transformation under structural constraints.

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