



The Strategic Role of School Principals in Enhancing Teacher Professionalism

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Keywords:	Abstract
Principal Competency development Teacher	<p>Background: This study aims to: (1) Describe the principal's efforts in developing teacher professional competence at Muhammadiyah Baturan Elementary School. (2) Describe the obstacles in developing teacher professional competence at Muhammadiyah Baturan Elementary School. (3) Describe solutions in developing teacher professional competence at Muhammadiyah Baturan Elementary School.</p> <p>Method: This research is a qualitative research. Data collection techniques are carried out by interview, observation and documentation. Data validity techniques use method triangulation and source triangulation.</p> <p>Result: Research results: (1) The principal's efforts are: a. As a manager, he does not have the right strategy to empower teachers. b. As an administrator, he has not maximized his efforts in various activities of managing school program administration. c. As a supervisor, he has not maximized his efforts in evaluating teachers to find out their weaknesses and strengths when implementing learning. d. As a leader, he has the responsibility to mobilize all resources available in the school. (2) The principal's obstacles are: a. Senior teachers easily forget to master ICT media. b. Limited funding sources and infrastructure. (3) The principal's solutions are: a. The principal holds training on information and communication technology. b. The principal encourages to continue to develop and utilize existing facilities independently, including in training.</p>

INTRODUCTION

In the effort to improve the quality of education, the principal plays a central role as the leader and manager in the school environment. As Pidarta (2011) emphasized, the principal is the highest educational manager at the school level, responsible for managing human resources, programs, and facilities in order to achieve educational goals. In the era of decentralization and school-based management, the competence of principals in managing schools effectively is a crucial determinant of school success.

The performance of teachers, as the frontline implementers of learning, is heavily influenced by the leadership quality of the principal. Stronge, Richard, and Catano (2013) stated that school climate, which is strongly shaped by the leadership of the principal, significantly affects teacher productivity and ultimately student achievement. Therefore, principals must not only act as administrative heads but must also lead, guide, and develop the professional capacities of their teaching staff.

Professional competence is one of the four standard competencies that must be mastered by teachers, alongside pedagogic, social, and personal competencies. According to Mulyasa (2007), professional competence includes mastery of learning material, the ability to develop innovative teaching strategies, and the capacity to adapt to scientific and technological developments. Teachers who lack professional competence may struggle to deliver effective and engaging lessons, which in turn can lead to decreased student motivation and classroom dynamics that are less than optimal.

At SD Muhammadiyah Baturan, it was observed that many teachers still rely heavily on classical learning methods, leading to monotonous classroom atmospheres and reduced student attentiveness. This condition indicates the need for more serious efforts from school leaders to foster the development of teachers' professional competence through systematic empowerment and professional development programs. As Hendarman (2015) argued, the principal as an educational leader must be able to design, implement, and evaluate programs that aim to improve the quality of both human and material resources in schools.

The role of the principal in developing teacher professionalism can be analyzed from several dimensions, namely as a manager, administrator, supervisor, and leader. Pidarta (2008) explains that as a manager, the principal must plan, organize, motivate, and control the resources at school; as an administrator, the principal must master and implement systematic administrative tasks; as a supervisor, the principal must provide guidance and professional support to teachers; and as a leader, the principal must be able to inspire and mobilize all school elements toward achieving educational goals.

However, the development of teacher professional competence faces several challenges. One of the major obstacles is the low mastery of information and communication technology (ICT) among senior teachers, making it difficult for them to integrate technology into the learning process (Yayan Mulyana, 2009). Limited financial resources and inadequate facilities also pose significant constraints to the implementation of continuous professional development programs.

Given these conditions, the role of the principal becomes even more critical. As suggested by Purwanti (2013), a principal must not only focus on administrative tasks but also prioritize the continuous improvement of teacher competencies through creative leadership, strategic planning, and effective supervision. In addition, Sanjaya (2009) emphasized the importance of creating a supportive school climate that encourages teachers to innovate and to engage in lifelong learning.

Based on this background, this research focuses on analyzing the principal's efforts, identifying obstacles, and proposing solutions related to the development of teachers' professional competence at SD Muhammadiyah Baturan. Through a qualitative phenomenological approach, this study aims to provide an in-depth understanding of how leadership practices at the school level can influence teacher development and ultimately impact educational quality.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research approach with a phenomenological research design. The qualitative method was chosen to explore in depth the actual experiences, perceptions, and practices of the principal, vice principal, and teachers regarding the development of professional competence at SD Muhammadiyah Baturan. According to Sugiyono (2012), qualitative research is conducted in natural settings with a primary focus on describing phenomena holistically and contextually, making it suitable for capturing the complex dynamics in educational institutions.

The research setting was SD Muhammadiyah Baturan, selected based on its active efforts to improve teacher competencies amidst various challenges. The study was

conducted over a period of three months, allowing for thorough immersion into the school's organizational culture and leadership practices.

The data sources consisted of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through direct interviews with key informants, including the school principal, the vice principal for academic affairs, and several classroom teachers. Secondary data were gathered from documentation such as school development plans, teacher training records, administrative reports, and observational field notes.

The data collection techniques utilized in this study included interviews, observation, and documentation review. Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured format, allowing the researcher to explore key themes while maintaining flexibility to probe deeper into specific issues as they emerged. Observations were made directly during school activities to witness firsthand the principal's leadership practices, the organizational atmosphere, and teacher development initiatives. Meanwhile, documentation was analyzed to corroborate and enrich the data collected from interviews and observations.

To ensure data validity, the study employed triangulation of methods and sources. Method triangulation was achieved by comparing data obtained through interviews, observations, and document analysis, while source triangulation involved cross-checking information from different informants. According to Gunawan (2013), the application of triangulation techniques increases the credibility and trustworthiness of qualitative research findings.

The data analysis process followed the interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman (1992), which includes data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Initially, data were collected and organized systematically. In the data reduction stage, irrelevant information was eliminated while essential findings were coded and categorized according to emerging themes. The organized data were then displayed through descriptive narratives to facilitate pattern recognition and thematic analysis. Finally, conclusions were drawn by interpreting the patterns that emerged, while constantly validating them against the field data to ensure analytical rigor.

Throughout the research process, the researcher acted as a key instrument, engaging directly with participants and the research environment to capture authentic insights and experiences. Reflexivity was maintained by continuously reflecting on personal biases and their potential impact on data interpretation.

This methodological framework provided a robust basis for comprehensively understanding the principal's role in developing the professional competence of teachers, the challenges encountered, and the strategies employed to overcome those challenges at SD Muhammadiyah Baturan.

RESULTS

The research conducted at SD Muhammadiyah Baturan revealed that the principal's role in developing the professional competence of teachers encompassed four main aspects: managerial, administrative, supervisory, and leadership roles. However, the implementation across these roles showed varying levels of effectiveness and challenges.

In the **managerial** function, the principal demonstrated efforts to organize and optimize school resources, including human resources and infrastructure. Planning activities such as workshops and teacher meetings were initiated. However, based on interviews and observations, these efforts were not supported by a comprehensive strategic plan tailored specifically to the professional development needs of the teachers. Several teachers reported that the management of human resource development was still reactive rather than proactive, relying more on incidental programs instead of systematically scheduled development plans.

As an **administrator**, the principal ensured that essential educational documents such as syllabi, annual programs (prota), semester programs (promes), and lesson plans (RPP) were prepared and documented. Documentation was available and organized in accordance with the minimum service standards for primary education. Nevertheless, administrative activities tended to focus more on fulfilling formal requirements rather than utilizing the data collected for continuous improvement of teaching practices. Teachers admitted that documentation was often completed solely for inspection purposes, with minimal reflection on how it could inform instructional improvement.

Regarding his role as a **leader**, the principal attempted to foster collaboration among teachers and to motivate staff to participate in various school programs. Yet, based on field observations and teacher interviews, the leadership climate lacked the dynamism required to stimulate innovation. Most teachers maintained traditional instructional approaches, with limited integration of contemporary methods such as project-based learning or ICT-enhanced teaching. Leadership initiatives to inspire continuous professional learning among teachers were limited and often depended heavily on the individual motivation of teachers rather than structured leadership support.

In the **supervisory** role, the principal performed regular supervision activities; however, the nature of supervision was predominantly administrative. Evaluation sessions tended to focus on checking documentation and classroom procedures without deep coaching or feedback aimed at improving teaching strategies and fostering reflective practice. Teachers expressed that feedback received after supervision was generally generic and lacked specific actionable advice.

Several **obstacles** emerged that hindered the development of teacher professional competence. The most significant internal obstacle was the low motivation of senior teachers to adapt to technological advancements. Many senior teachers struggled with the use of ICT tools such as projectors, laptops, and digital learning platforms, which limited their ability to innovate in instructional delivery. Externally, limited funding sources constrained the school's ability to provide regular and comprehensive professional development programs or to upgrade necessary facilities and infrastructure.

In response to these challenges, the principal implemented several **solutions**. ICT training workshops were organized to familiarize teachers with basic technological tools for classroom use. Moreover, the principal encouraged teachers to utilize existing resources optimally and promoted independent learning initiatives. Participation in Teacher Working Group (KKG) activities was actively encouraged as a means of peer collaboration and continuous professional development. Although these efforts showed initial positive outcomes, the sustainability and depth of the impact remained an area that required further reinforcement.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reaffirm the complexity of the principal's role in developing teachers' professional competence. According to Pidarta (2008), effective principals must master four key functions: planning, organizing, motivating, and controlling, all of which are critical to the sustainable improvement of teacher quality. The partial implementation observed at SD Muhammadiyah Baturan suggests that while structural activities were in place, the strategic integration of these functions into a cohesive professional development program was lacking.

In the managerial domain, the absence of a clear and structured professional development framework limited the long-term impact of teacher improvement efforts. As Stronge et al. (2013) highlighted, effective school management requires not just administrative compliance but strategic human resource development planning that targets specific professional competencies. Without such a plan, development programs risk

becoming sporadic and superficial, unable to foster deep and lasting change in teaching practices.

In terms of administrative management, the principal succeeded in organizing required documents and reports. However, as noted by Purwanti (2013), administration in education should not be reduced to bureaucratic formalism; it must serve as a support system for pedagogical innovation. The tendency to complete documents solely for inspection without meaningful integration into teaching improvement efforts reflects a missed opportunity to use administration as a dynamic tool for professional growth.

The principal's leadership role also faced challenges. Leadership, according to Hendarman (2015), involves inspiring, facilitating, and sustaining teacher innovation. The observed leadership practices at SD Muhammadiyah Baturan, while supportive on the surface, did not sufficiently create a school climate that fostered creativity and risk-taking among teachers. The reliance on classical teaching methods among the majority of teachers indicates a leadership gap in cultivating a culture of continuous learning and pedagogical experimentation.

Regarding the supervisory function, the principal's approach was largely evaluative rather than developmental. Mulyasa (2007) emphasized that effective supervision should focus on empowering teachers, guiding reflective practices, and facilitating professional growth. The lack of specific, constructive feedback during supervisory activities at SD Muhammadiyah Baturan limited the potential for meaningful teacher learning and instructional improvement.

The obstacles faced by the principal were consistent with those identified in prior research. Yayan Mulyana (2009) asserted that teachers who resist adapting to technological innovations risk stagnating professionally, ultimately impacting the quality of education provided. Furthermore, Sungkowo (2014) emphasized that limited financial resources are a common barrier in education, necessitating creative solutions from school leadership.

The principal's solutions, such as organizing ICT training and promoting independent professional development through KKG participation, are steps in the right direction. However, to maximize their effectiveness, these efforts should be institutionalized into the school's ongoing development agenda, with regular evaluation and follow-up support to ensure that training translates into real improvements in classroom practice.

In conclusion, the principal at SD Muhammadiyah Baturan demonstrated awareness of the importance of developing teachers' professional competence, but systemic and strategic weaknesses in execution reduced the overall effectiveness of these efforts. Sustainable professional development requires not only leadership commitment but also strategic planning, continuous support systems, and a school culture that values innovation, collaboration, and lifelong learning. These findings reinforce the critical need for principals to evolve from administrative managers to instructional leaders who actively shape and nurture the professional growth of their teaching staff.

CONCLUSION

Novelty and Contribution

Based on the results of the study on the role of the principal in developing the professional competence of teachers at Muhammadiyah Baturan Elementary School, the following conclusions were obtained:

The Principal's Efforts in Developing Teachers' Professional Competence at Muhammadiyah Baturan Elementary School The Principal's Efforts as a manager, the principal does not yet have the right strategy to empower his/her education staff in terms of cooperative cooperation to develop teachers' professional competence. The Principal's Efforts as an administrator, have a very close relationship with various administrative

management activities that are in the nature of recording, compiling and documenting all school programs. The Principal's Efforts as a supervisor, have not carried out his/her duties optimally so that it results in a lack of knowledge of the weaknesses and strengths of teachers in implementing learning, and has not been active in helping teachers' difficulties in implementing learning. In other words, the principal is not optimal in carrying out his/her duties as a supervisor. The Principal's Efforts as a leader, have not been able to mobilize all the resources available in the school so that it has not produced a high work ethic and productivity in achieving goals.

The constraints of the principal in developing the professional competence of teachers at SD Muhammadiyah Baturan are: The constraints of the principal as a manager, limited funding sources owned by the school, thus hampering the procurement of programs from the principal. The constraints of the principal as an administrator, Teachers do not master ICT media as part of professional development in particular so that in teaching and learning activities are not optimal, so that the administration of new student admissions has not been optimal in its application. The constraints of the principal as a supervisor, in the implementation of supervision the principal does not experience any constraints. The constraints of the principal as a leader as a driving force in an organization, the uneven distribution of teachers' creativity abilities and limited facilities and infrastructure are separate problems faced by the principal.

The principal's solution in developing professional competence of teachers at SD Muhammadiyah Baturan is: The principal's solution as a manager in overcoming limited funds, the principal minimizes programs that require a lot of funding sources. The principal's solution as an administrator, the principal facilitates teachers to take part in training on computer courses and holds training on information and communication technology. The principal's solution as a leader, the principal motivates teachers to take part in the teacher KKG program. In addition, the principal can also maximize the ability of human resources with programs such as group work between young and old teachers so that the ability to utilize information and communication technology media is equal.

Implications

Based on the research results that have been discussed, the researcher's suggestions regarding the role of the principal in developing teacher professional competence are as follows:

For the principal The principal as a manager must have a strategy that is realized in work programs in optimizing existing resources optimally and efficiently. The principal as an administrator is expected to be able to manage existing programs and improve them. The principal as a supervisor, the principal must have a planned program related to supervision and be implemented sustainably. The principal as a leader must be able to provide an example related to discipline, neatness, performance and create a conducive work environment in improving professional competence.

Teachers are expected to be more active in following developments in science and technology, improving their quality by continuing to learn before providing 10 materials in class. Teachers should understand well the application of innovative learning.

For further researchers, it is hoped that it can be a reference for developing research and can develop it from various different aspects.



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