

ENHANCING LEARNING QUALITY THROUGH PRINCIPAL SUPERVISION IN SOUTHWEST ACEH'S PUBLIC MIDDLE SCHOOLS

Nova Edison¹, Khairuddin¹, Murniati AR¹

¹Graduate School of Education Administration, Universitas Syiah Kuala, Banda Aceh 23111, Indonesia

Correspondence Address : Graduate School of Education Administration, Universitas Syiah Kuala,
Banda Aceh 23111, Indonesia

Corresponding E-mail: ¹⁾ sausannafadita@gmail.com, ²⁾ khairuddin@usk.ac.id, ³⁾ murniaty@usk.ac.id

Abstract

This study investigates the academic supervision practices implemented by the principals of SMP Negeri 1 Manggeng and SMP Negeri 1 Setia, focusing on the essential elements of planning, execution, follow-up, and the overcoming of challenges to improve the quality of learning. Utilizing a qualitative approach, data were collected through interviews, observations, and document analysis to understand the multifaceted nature of academic supervision and its critical role in fostering educational excellence. The findings highlight the importance of collaborative planning between principals, vice principals, and teachers to establish clear supervision goals, schedules, and objectives. Such collaboration ensures that academic supervision aligns with educational goals and addresses the specific needs of teachers, significantly contributing to their preparedness and responsiveness. Effective implementation of academic supervision is identified as crucial for realizing planned objectives, employing strategies like classroom visits, observations, and individual discussions to assess and enhance teachers' instructional practices. However, challenges such as scheduling conflicts and the principals' workload highlight the need for adaptability and strategic delegation to maintain momentum in supervision activities. The study further reveals the significance of follow-up actions in translating the insights gained from supervision into tangible improvements in teaching and learning. Constructive feedback, guidance, and recognition of teachers' efforts by principals are essential in promoting a culture of continuous professional development. Addressing the challenges encountered during academic supervision necessitates flexibility, improved communication, and a commitment to providing professional development opportunities for teachers. The research concludes that academic supervision by school principals is integral to enhancing the quality of learning. Through strategic planning, effective implementation, and constructive follow-up, principals can lead their schools toward achieving higher educational standards, despite the challenges of academic supervision. This study underscores the central role of leadership in academic supervision and offers recommendations for educational policy and practice to support effective supervision processes.

Keywords: *Academic Supervision, Educational Improvement, School Principals, Teacher Development, Planning and Implementation.*

1. INTRODUCTION

In the ever-evolving landscape of education, the imperative for continuous improvement and adaptability within the classroom cannot be overstated. Central to this paradigm is the recognition of teachers not merely as facilitators but as pivotal agents of change within the education system. This research paper delves into the crucial interplay between teachers and students within the classroom setting, an arena where the most significant educational transformations take place. As posited by Nalurita and Novianty (2020), the teacher embodies the education system for the student, orchestrating the learning environment, steering student competence, and ultimately sculpting the calibre of graduates. The quintessence of teaching goes beyond mere knowledge transmission, encapsulating the nurturing of discipline, responsibility, and a culture of continuous improvement and innovation. However, the landscape is marred by challenges that compromise the quality of learning. A not insignificant number of educators, as highlighted by Sastrawan (2019), falter in fulfilling their foundational duties and responsibilities, largely due to a myriad of reasons

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ranging from a lack of motivation to a reluctance in embracing technological advancements. This neglect not only impedes the professional development of teachers but also diminishes the quality of education received by students. In response to these challenges, the role of school principals in the professional development of teachers through academic supervision emerges as a linchpin for enhancing the quality of learning. The practice of academic supervision, as outlined by Aqib and Zainal (2021), transcends mere evaluative measures, aiming instead to foster a supportive environment that encourages continuous growth, the utilization of effective teaching strategies, and the integration of technology in education. Nevertheless, preliminary observations in state junior high schools in Southwest Aceh reveal a stark inefficiency in the implementation of academic supervision, attributed to factors such as the principals' limited time, lack of motivation, and inadequate planning and follow-through. Prompted by these findings, this study seeks to explore the efficacy of academic supervision by school principals as a catalyst for improving the quality of learning. By focusing on SMP Negeri 1 Manggeng and SMP Negeri 1 Setia, the research aims to unravel the complexities surrounding academic supervision and its impact on the educational ecosystem, thereby contributing valuable insights into the formulation of strategies aimed at elevating the standards of education through effective leadership and teacher development.

2. IMPLEMENTATION METHOD**2.1 Research Approach**

This study employs a qualitative approach aimed at uncovering and describing the implementation of academic supervision by school principals to enhance the quality of learning in public junior high schools in the Southwest Aceh region. The qualitative methodology was selected due to its focus on descriptive data rather than numerical, aligning with the research's intent to elaborate on the academic supervision phenomena through detailed verbal descriptions rather than quantitative measures (Zakariah et al., 2020). The research is designed as a descriptive study, which seeks to meticulously detail the current state of a phenomenon based on observable facts (Fadjarajani et al., 2022). This study aims to provide a clear portrayal of the academic supervision practices conducted by school principals and identify the challenges faced in improving the quality of learning within the targeted junior high schools.

2.2 Research Location and Duration

The study is conducted at SMP Negeri 1 Manggeng and SMP Negeri 1 Setia, as these locations present pertinent examples of the academic supervision challenges and practices within the Southwest Aceh district's educational system (Sukardi, 2021). The research spans three months, from January to March 2024, encompassing data collection, analysis, report writing, seminars on findings, revisions, and report printing, in accordance with the research permit obtained. Subjects were selected using purposive sampling techniques, targeting individuals deemed most knowledgeable and directly involved with academic supervision in the specified schools (Sari et al., 2023). This method ensures that the research focuses on informed perspectives relevant to the study's aims.

2.3 Research Instruments

In qualitative research, the researcher serves as the primary instrument, complemented by tools such as interview guides and observation protocols (Sidiq and Choiri, 2019). These instruments are vital for gathering primary data through observations and interviews, while secondary data is acquired from relevant documentation aligned with the research focus.

2.4 Credibility Test

The scientific integrity of the research is upheld through data validity checks based on credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability criteria (Sugiyono, 2009). This study

employs triangulation to ensure credibility, comparing data from various sources, methods, and times to reconcile any discrepancies and ascertain the most accurate findings (Sugiyono, 2019).

2.5 Data Collection Techniques

Data was gathered through field research techniques, including direct observations, semi-structured in-depth interviews, and document analysis (Nur et al., 2022; Fadhallah, 2021). These methods enable the collection of rich, contextual data essential for a comprehensive understanding of academic supervision practices.

2.6 Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis follows the framework proposed by Miles and Huberman, encompassing data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Khasanah et al., 2023). This systematic approach facilitates the identification of key findings and insights related to academic supervision's impact on learning quality within the studied schools.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Research Findings

This chapter presents the findings and discussion from the data collection and information gathering process in the field, offering a concrete picture and thereby producing a description of the academic supervision activities conducted by school principals to enhance the quality of learning at SMP Negeri 1 Manggeng and SMP Negeri 1 Setia.

3.2 Academic Supervision Planning

The planning of academic supervision by the principals of SMP Negeri 1 Manggeng and SMP Negeri 1 Setia is a strategic effort to improve the quality of educational services and create high-achieving graduates. The planning phase, as described by Bahrudin Walidin, the principal of SMP Negeri 1 Manggeng, involves annual preparations including discussions with the vice principals and teaching staff to outline the academic supervision program. This planning phase emphasizes scheduled supervisions, preparation for supervisory activities, and clearly defined supervisory aspects, including lesson planning, teaching processes, and evaluation methods.

3.3 Implementation of Academic Supervision

Following the planning phase, academic supervision is executed according to the predetermined schedule. However, adjustments are sometimes necessary due to unforeseen events. The involvement of vice principals and senior teachers as supervisors ensures the supervision's effectiveness. The approach adopted by the principals includes classroom visits, observation, and private conversations, focusing on various aspects of teaching such as mastery of teaching materials, lesson planning, and classroom management.

3.4 Follow-up Actions

The follow-up actions after academic supervision are crucial for enhancing learning quality and professional competence of teachers. This involves appreciating successful teachers and providing guidance and remediation for those needing improvement. Supervisors, including the principals, engage in discussions with teachers to review supervisory notes, offer solutions, and plan for improvement. This stage is fundamental for reinforcing positive changes in teaching practices and addressing any identified issues.

3.5 Challenges in Academic Supervision

Despite the positive direction of academic supervision, there are challenges and obstacles encountered during its implementation. These include scheduling conflicts, reluctance among some teachers towards supervision, and limitations in resources and technology. The principals and teachers of SMP Negeri 1 Manggeng and SMP Negeri 1 Setia have expressed that while the

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process has been largely beneficial, there are areas requiring improvement to better facilitate academic supervision and enhance the overall quality of education.

The findings highlight the significance of structured planning, effective implementation, and thorough follow-up actions in the academic supervision process. The challenges identified underscore the need for flexibility in scheduling, improved communication and coordination among stakeholders, and enhanced resources and support for teachers. Addressing these challenges is essential for fostering an environment conducive to professional growth and learning excellence. The positive impacts of academic supervision, as reported by teachers and principals, indicate its vital role in promoting quality education and professional development. However, continuous efforts to refine the supervision process and overcome the identified obstacles are crucial for sustaining and enhancing its effectiveness in improving teaching and learning outcomes.

3.6 Discussion

This section elaborates on the critical analysis of the research findings related to academic supervision carried out by the principals of SMP Negeri 1 Manggeng and SMP Negeri 1 Setia to improve the quality of learning. The discussion is structured around four main areas: planning, implementation, follow-up, and challenges encountered in the academic supervision process.

3.6.1 Academic Supervision Planning

The planning phase of academic supervision is pivotal in setting the groundwork for successful implementation. According to Ministerial Regulation No. 13 of 2007, principals are required to possess competencies including managerial, entrepreneurial, supervisory, and social skills. Effective supervision planning necessitates a comprehensive understanding of these competencies to facilitate an environment conducive to learning and teacher development. The planning process, which involves collaboration between the principal, vice principals, and teachers, aims to establish a clear framework for supervision activities, including scheduling, target setting, and preparation of necessary materials. This collaborative approach ensures that supervision is aligned with the overall educational objectives and addresses the specific needs of the school and its teachers.

3.6.2 Implementation of Academic Supervision

The execution of academic supervision activities, based on the detailed planning, is critical to enhancing the quality of learning. The research findings highlight the importance of employing various techniques such as classroom visits, observations, and private conversations to assess and guide teachers' instructional practices. However, challenges such as scheduling conflicts and the principal's workload can hinder the effectiveness of supervision. Delegating responsibilities to vice principals or senior teachers emerges as a viable strategy to overcome these obstacles, ensuring that supervision activities proceed as planned and contribute positively to the teaching and learning environment.

3.6.3 Follow-up Actions

Follow-up actions are essential for translating the insights gained from supervision into tangible improvements in teaching quality and learning outcomes. The principals' approach to providing feedback, offering guidance, and recognizing teachers' efforts plays a significant role in motivating teachers to enhance their professional competencies. Effective follow-up involves not only addressing areas for improvement but also celebrating successes and fostering a culture of continuous learning and development among the teaching staff.

3.6.4 Challenges in Academic Supervision

Despite the structured approach to planning and implementation, various challenges can impede the effectiveness of academic supervision. These include adjustments to supervision

schedules due to unforeseen commitments, incomplete preparation by teachers, and limitations in resources and technological support. Addressing these challenges requires flexibility, effective communication, and a commitment to resource allocation and professional development opportunities for teachers. The academic supervision process, encompassing planning, implementation, and follow-up, is integral to improving the quality of education. While challenges exist, their resolution lies in collaborative efforts, strategic delegation, and an emphasis on professional growth and resource optimization. As principals navigate these challenges, their leadership and supervisory competencies become crucial in fostering an environment that supports teacher development and enhances student learning outcomes. The success of academic supervision hinges on a balanced approach that combines rigorous planning, flexible execution, and constructive feedback, aimed at realizing the full potential of teachers and students alike.

4. CONCLUSION

This research explored the academic supervision carried out by the principals of SMP Negeri 1 Manggeng and SMP Negeri 1 Setia, focusing on the planning, implementation, follow-up, and challenges inherent in enhancing the quality of learning. Drawing from the comprehensive analysis of data gathered through interviews, observations, and documentation, the study illuminated the multifaceted nature of academic supervision and its pivotal role in educational improvement. The findings underscore the significance of strategic planning, effective execution, constructive follow-up, and overcoming challenges to foster a conducive learning environment.

1. Academic Supervision Planning

The planning phase of academic supervision is foundational, setting the trajectory for effective supervision practices. The study revealed that successful planning involves a collaborative effort between the principal, vice principals, and teachers, aiming to outline clear objectives, schedules, and targets for academic supervision. This collaborative approach ensures alignment with educational goals and addresses specific needs, contributing significantly to the preparedness and responsiveness of the teaching faculty.

2. Implementation of Academic Supervision

Effective implementation is crucial for the realization of the supervision plan's objectives. Employing various techniques such as classroom visits, observations, and individual discussions enables principals to assess and guide teachers' practices effectively. However, challenges like scheduling conflicts and workload demands necessitate strategic delegation to maintain the supervision momentum, underscoring the need for adaptability and shared leadership in educational settings.

3. Follow-up Actions

The significance of follow-up actions in translating supervision insights into tangible educational improvements cannot be overstated. Principals' feedback, guidance, and recognition of teachers' efforts are vital in fostering a culture of continuous professional development. This not only addresses areas needing improvement but also acknowledges and builds on the strengths of teaching staff, thereby motivating them towards excellence.

4. Challenges in Academic Supervision

Challenges encountered during academic supervision, including scheduling adjustments, inadequate teacher preparation, and resource limitations, highlight the complexity of executing academic supervision effectively. Addressing these challenges requires flexibility, enhanced communication, and a commitment to providing professional development opportunities and resources for teachers.

5. Implications and Recommendations

The findings of this study have important implications for educational leadership and policy. Principals, as key educational leaders, play a critical role in academic supervision, necessitating ongoing professional development to enhance their supervisory competencies. Additionally, the study underscores the importance of fostering a supportive and collaborative school culture that values continuous improvement and professional growth.

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To address the challenges identified, schools should consider:

- Developing flexible supervision schedules that accommodate unforeseen commitments while ensuring the continuity of supervision activities.
- Enhancing teacher preparedness through regular training and professional development opportunities, focusing on areas such as instructional strategies and technology integration.
- Allocating resources strategically to support effective supervision practices, including technological tools and materials for teaching and learning.

6. Final Thoughts

Academic supervision by school principals is integral to enhancing the quality of learning. Through strategic planning, effective implementation, and constructive follow-up, principals can lead their schools towards achieving higher educational standards. Overcoming the challenges of academic supervision requires a collaborative, flexible, and resourceful approach, emphasizing the central role of leadership in fostering educational excellence. The journey towards improved teaching and learning is continuous, demanding dedication, innovation, and a shared vision for success.

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