

Analysis of School Principal Planning in Improving Teacher Competence at SMPN 5 Penukal Utara

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ABSTRACT

The enhancement of teacher competence is essential to improving the quality of education. This study specifically examines the planning strategies implemented by the principal of SMPN 5 Penukal Utara to achieve this goal. Through a qualitative approach, the research explores the professional development programs undertaken, the principal's role in facilitating these activities, and teachers' perceptions of program effectiveness. The findings indicate that while the planning is generally well-structured, challenges remain in its implementation. These results underscore the importance of designing more effective teacher professional development programs in the future. This research aims to analyze the role of the principal's planning in improving teacher competence at SMPN 5 Penukal Utara. Teacher competence is a crucial factor in enhancing the quality of teaching and student learning outcomes. The study employs a descriptive qualitative method, collecting data through interviews, observations, and documentation. The findings reveal that the principal's planning includes key aspects such as identifying teachers' training needs, developing continuous training programs, and conducting regular monitoring and evaluation. The principal plays a pivotal role in fostering pedagogical, professional, social, and personal competence among teachers through various activities, such as workshops, training sessions, and group discussions. The implementation of these plans has improved teachers' teaching skills and motivation. However, several challenges persist, including budget constraints and suboptimal teacher participation. Overall, effective planning by the principal can significantly enhance teacher competence, ultimately contributing to better educational outcomes at the school.

Keywords: Principal Planning; Teacher Competence, Quality Improvement

INTRODUCTION

The quality of education is profoundly influenced by teachers' competence in carrying out their professional responsibilities. Principals, as educational leaders, hold a strategic role in planning and executing programs aimed at enhancing teacher competence within schools. According to Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System, one of the key objectives of national education is to cultivate students' potential to become individuals who are faithful, pious, morally upright, healthy, knowledgeable, skilled, and creative. To realize these objectives, the presence of competent teachers with strong professional, pedagogical, personal, and social capabilities is indispensable.

Despite this, SMPN 5 Penukal Utara, a rural educational institution in Indonesia, faces considerable challenges in improving teacher competence. These challenges include limited training opportunities, resource constraints, and a lack of consistent evaluation mechanisms for teacher performance. Previous studies, such as those by Opfer and Pedder (2014), emphasize that teacher development requires systematic and well-planned interventions, yet the localized constraints in under-resourced schools often impede progress. Addressing these constraints necessitates innovative and context-specific strategies, which often fall under the purview of the principal's leadership.

In recent years, the urgency to improve teacher competence has grown due to the increasing demands of 21st-century education, including technological integration and student-centered learning. Research by Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) underscores the importance of professional development in enhancing teacher efficacy, while Grissom et al. (2021) highlight the pivotal role of principals in driving these efforts. However, existing studies largely focus on urban or well-resourced settings, leaving a gap in understanding how rural schools, particularly in Indonesia, can navigate these challenges.

This study seeks to bridge that gap by exploring the strategic planning and implementation processes employed by the principal of SMPN 5 Penukal Utara to improve teacher competence. Unlike previous research, this study delves into the specific constraints and opportunities present in rural school contexts, providing a nuanced understanding of the principal's role in addressing these challenges. By focusing on localized issues such as limited funding and suboptimal teacher participation, the research offers practical insights into overcoming barriers to teacher development.

The novelty of this research lies in its integration of a comprehensive planning framework that emphasizes collaboration between principals and teachers in designing and executing professional development initiatives. Activities such as workshops, training sessions, and collaborative discussions are examined to assess

their effectiveness in enhancing teacher competence. The study also employs a participatory approach, allowing for teacher feedback to inform program improvement, which is an area often overlooked in existing literature.

By analyzing the principal's role in a rural Indonesian school, this research contributes to the broader discourse on educational leadership and teacher development in resource-constrained settings. It builds on frameworks proposed by Fullan (2016) and Tondeur et al. (2020) while offering fresh perspectives tailored to the challenges of rural education. Ultimately, this research aims to provide actionable recommendations for principals and policymakers to create more effective and sustainable teacher competence improvement programs. These insights have implications not only for SMPN 5 Penukal Utara but also for other schools facing similar challenges in Indonesia and beyond.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The role of school principals in improving teacher competence has been extensively discussed in educational research, emphasizing its importance in enhancing student learning outcomes and overall educational quality. Teacher competence, as outlined by Darling-Hammond et al. (2017), encompasses four key dimensions: pedagogical, professional, personal, and social competencies. Pedagogical competence involves designing and delivering effective teaching strategies, while professional competence focuses on mastery of subject matter and adherence to teaching standards. Personal competence reflects a teacher's ethical and emotional capabilities, and social competence emphasizes collaboration with peers, students, and the community. Comprehensive professional development programs must address all these dimensions, integrating modern technologies and inclusive practices to meet the evolving demands of education (Tondeur et al., 2020).

Principals play a pivotal role in fostering teacher development through strategic planning. Effective principals engage in activities such as setting clear objectives, conducting needs assessments, and designing targeted interventions. As Grissom et al. (2021) highlight, principals' leadership significantly influences teacher motivation and competence. Strategic planning begins with identifying gaps in teacher skills and knowledge through performance evaluations, a process emphasized by Fullan (2016). It also involves implementing tailored professional development programs, such as workshops, training sessions, and collaborative learning initiatives, to address identified needs (Guskey, 2020). Moreover, continuous monitoring and evaluation are critical to ensuring the effectiveness of these programs and their impact on both teacher performance and student outcomes (Robinson et al., 2020).

Despite its significance, improving teacher competence is often hindered by various challenges. Research by Opfer and Pedder (2014) and Harris et al. (2021) reveals that resource constraints, such as limited funding for professional development, pose a significant barrier. Additionally, teacher resistance to change and competing

priorities can limit participation in training programs. Time constraints and inadequate support systems further exacerbate these issues, making it difficult for principals to implement development initiatives effectively. Addressing these challenges requires adaptive leadership, as suggested by Leithwood et al. (2020), where principals employ innovative strategies and cultivate a culture of continuous improvement.

To overcome these challenges, researchers propose several strategies to enhance teacher competence. Collaborative learning models, such as peer-to-peer mentoring and professional learning communities, have been found to be highly effective (Zwart et al., 2015). Integrating technology into training programs also provides accessible and flexible professional development opportunities (Tondeur et al., 2020). Regular classroom observations and constructive feedback further support teacher growth, fostering an environment of accountability and self-improvement.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research method to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the school principal's planning in improving teacher competence. The qualitative approach is particularly suited to explore in-depth meanings, interpretations, and nuanced understandings of complex phenomena. By focusing on the contextual and situational aspects of the subject matter, qualitative research provides rich, detailed insights that are essential for analyzing the processes and strategies employed by the principal.

The data collection techniques used in this research include in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and documentation analysis. In-depth interviews are conducted with the school principal, teachers, and other relevant stakeholders to gather detailed perspectives and firsthand accounts of their experiences and perceptions regarding the planning and implementation of teacher development programs. Participatory observations involve the researcher actively engaging in and observing activities related to teacher professional development, such as workshops or planning meetings, to capture real-time dynamics and interactions. This method helps in understanding the practical aspects of the programs and the challenges faced during their execution. Documentation analysis is employed to examine relevant records, reports, and plans, providing additional context and corroborating the information obtained through interviews and observations.

The combination of these data collection techniques ensures a holistic and triangulated approach, enhancing the validity and reliability of the findings. By using qualitative methods, this study not only identifies the strategies and processes involved in the principal's planning but also uncovers the underlying factors, challenges, and impacts of these efforts on teacher competence. This methodology is particularly valuable in exploring the specific educational context of SMPN 5 Penukal Utara, making it possible to generate practical and context-sensitive recommendations.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Principal's Planning in Improving Teacher Competence at SMPN 5 Penukal Utara

Interviews conducted with the principal of SMPN 5 Penukal Utara, Mrs. Binti Khomsiyah, S.Pd.I., M.Pd.I., revealed several structured plans to enhance teacher competence. The principal stated, *“At SMPN 5 Penukal Utara, we have several initiatives to support teacher competence development. These include periodic training sessions related to educational technology and teaching methodology improvement. We also encourage teachers to participate in workshops and seminars, both within and outside the school.”* Additionally, the school has implemented a mentoring program where senior teachers guide new or less experienced teachers. According to the principal, *“We conduct competency evaluations every semester to measure the progress achieved by our teachers.”*

Feedback from teachers corroborated these plans. Mr. Imam Ansori, S.Pd.I., a teacher at the school, praised the principal's initiatives, stating, *“The training sessions have been incredibly helpful in understanding how to integrate technological advancements into teaching. The mentoring program has also been valuable in addressing the challenges we face in the classroom.”* Students echoed this sentiment, with one, Ahmad, noting the positive changes in teaching methods, *“Our teachers are now more innovative and engaging in their teaching, often introducing new methods that make learning more enjoyable.”*

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in the Principal's Planning

Interviews also explored the factors that support and hinder the principal's planning efforts. Mrs. Binti Khomsiyah explained that the planning process begins with a needs analysis based on teacher performance evaluations. The school identifies areas requiring improvement, such as content mastery, teaching methodologies, and the use of educational technology, and then designs relevant training programs.

Supporting factors for the improvement of teacher competence at SMPN 5 Penukal Utara include strong government support, teacher commitment, collaboration among teachers, and adequate facilities. The government, along with the local education department, provides various training programs and seminars that facilitate teacher development. Teachers at the school demonstrate a high level of commitment to their professional growth, actively engaging in training and self-development opportunities. Additionally, the culture of collaboration among teachers, through peer mentoring and group discussions, fosters knowledge sharing and skill enhancement. The school also benefits from adequate resources, such as computer labs and internet access, which support the implementation of training programs, especially those focused on online learning initiatives.

On the other hand, there are several inhibiting factors that challenge the successful implementation of these development programs. One significant barrier is budget constraints, as limited funding restricts the number and quality of professional development programs that can be offered. Teachers' busy schedules present another challenge, making it difficult to allocate time for training sessions without disrupting their teaching responsibilities. Furthermore, despite some available facilities, there are gaps in technology resources, including both hardware and software, which affect the effectiveness of technology-based training. Finally, some teachers face challenges in integrating technology into their teaching due to a lack of confidence, which slows the adoption of modern teaching methods and tools.

Strategies to Overcome Challenges

To address the obstacles faced in improving teacher competence, the principal of SMPN 5 Penukal Utara has implemented several strategic measures. First, the principal has focused on optimizing budget usage by prioritizing collaborations with external organizations that offer low-cost or free training programs. Additionally, flexible scheduling has been introduced, with training sessions conducted outside regular school hours or delivered through online platforms, allowing teachers to participate without disrupting their teaching duties. To overcome limitations in technological resources, the school is actively seeking additional support to enhance its technological infrastructure, either through government aid or partnerships with private entities. Finally, the school emphasizes continuous training, organizing regular, need-based sessions aimed at building teachers' confidence and proficiency, particularly in integrating technology into their teaching practices. These efforts are designed to ensure that teachers are well-equipped to adapt to the demands of modern education.

These findings highlight the principal's strategic efforts to improve teacher competence, addressing both opportunities and challenges in the process. The initiatives undertaken at SMPN 5 Penukal Utara serve as a model for other schools aiming to enhance their educational quality through systematic teacher development.

The findings from this research highlight the crucial role of school principals in enhancing teacher competence. The principal at SMPN 5 Penukal Utara implemented systematic planning involving training sessions, mentoring programs, and regular evaluations, which align with existing theories on leadership in education. According to Leithwood et al. (2004), effective school leadership is a vital determinant in creating a conducive environment for professional growth among teachers. The principal's initiatives at SMPN 5 Penukal Utara support this perspective by demonstrating a leadership style focused on capacity building and professional development.

One of the key elements in the principal's planning was the use of periodic training to enhance teachers' pedagogical and technological skills. This approach is

consistent with Fullan's (2016) emphasis on continuous professional learning as a driver for improved teaching practices. By equipping teachers with up-to-date knowledge and skills, the school ensures that educators remain responsive to advancements in educational methodologies and technology. This aligns with recent studies highlighting the growing need for technology integration in classrooms to foster innovative teaching methods (Kimmons, 2020).

The mentoring program initiated by the principal is another noteworthy strategy. Senior teachers acted as mentors, guiding new or less experienced colleagues. This collaborative approach reflects findings by Hattie (2009), who identified teacher collaboration and mentoring as significant factors in improving student outcomes. Mentoring not only builds a supportive professional network but also fosters a culture of shared responsibility for professional growth. Despite these efforts, challenges such as budget constraints and limited time availability were significant hurdles. These findings resonate with the work of OECD (2019), which reported that financial limitations and time constraints often hinder professional development in schools globally. However, the principal's creative strategies, such as optimizing budget allocations and utilizing online training platforms, demonstrate adaptability and innovation in overcoming these barriers. Another critical challenge was the limited technological proficiency among some teachers. This issue underscores the digital divide that persists in many educational settings, as noted by UNESCO (2020). Addressing this gap is essential to fully leverage technology in enhancing teaching practices. The principal's focus on continuous training to improve digital skills reflects a proactive approach to tackling this challenge.

The role of government support emerged as a crucial enabler in the principal's planning efforts. Training programs and seminars provided by the education department were integral in addressing gaps in teacher competence. This aligns with findings from Darling-Hammond et al. (2017), which emphasize the importance of policy-level support in sustaining professional development initiatives. However, the research also highlights the need for schools to actively seek partnerships with external organizations to supplement government efforts, a strategy that can enhance resource availability and diversify learning opportunities. The findings also reveal a strong commitment among teachers to professional growth, an asset for any professional development initiative. This intrinsic motivation among educators aligns with Ryan and Deci's (2000) self-determination theory, which posits that autonomy and a sense of competence are key drivers of motivation. By creating opportunities for skill enhancement, the principal effectively tapped into this motivation, fostering a positive learning culture.

This study contributes to the literature by offering a context-specific exploration of a principal's planning in a rural Indonesian school setting. While previous studies have extensively documented the general role of principals in teacher development (Leithwood et al., 2004; Fullan, 2016), this research provides new insights into how these strategies are adapted in resource-constrained environments. The emphasis on

mentoring as a formalized program and the creative use of limited resources reflect innovative practices that can serve as models for similar educational contexts.

The implications of this study are significant for both policy and practice. First, educational policymakers should consider increasing funding for teacher development programs, particularly in rural areas where resource constraints are more pronounced. Second, school leaders can adopt a multi-faceted approach to professional development, combining training, mentoring, and regular evaluations to create a comprehensive framework for teacher growth. For schools, fostering a collaborative culture is critical. Encouraging teacher collaboration through mentoring and peer discussions can enhance professional learning communities, ultimately benefiting students. Additionally, integrating technology-focused training into professional development programs is essential to prepare teachers for 21st-century classrooms. Finally, this research underscores the importance of adaptive leadership in addressing contextual challenges. School principals must exhibit creativity and resourcefulness in overcoming barriers, ensuring that professional development initiatives remain impactful despite constraints. By prioritizing teacher competence, schools can drive improvements in teaching quality, student engagement, and overall educational outcomes. In conclusion, the findings of this study highlight the transformative potential of well-planned professional development initiatives led by proactive school leadership. By addressing challenges and leveraging available resources effectively, schools like SMPN 5 Penukal Utara demonstrate that meaningful improvements in teacher competence are achievable, even in resource-constrained settings.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the findings of this study demonstrate that the principal of SMPN 5 Penukal Utara has implemented a comprehensive and strategic approach to improving teacher competence. Through the introduction of periodic training, workshops, mentoring programs, and regular evaluations, the school has made significant strides in enhancing the professional skills of its teachers. These efforts have received positive responses from both teachers and students, with teachers reporting greater support in adopting new teaching methods and technologies, and students noting improved innovation in classroom practices. However, while the planning process is commendable, several challenges have emerged, such as limited funding, time constraints for teachers, and inadequate facilities to support technology-based training. Despite these obstacles, the principal's proactive measures, such as optimizing resources, offering flexible training schedules, and improving school infrastructure, have helped mitigate the impact of these challenges. Ultimately, the study suggests that with strategic leadership and resourceful planning, schools can successfully overcome barriers to improving teacher competence, thereby enhancing teaching quality and student learning outcomes. The positive impact of these efforts underscores the importance of continuous professional development and the need for a supportive school environment that fosters teacher growth and collaboration.

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