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THE ROLE OF THE PRINCIPAL AS A MANAGER IN ENHANCING TEACHER PROFESSIONALISM AT SD NEGERI 07 BANTARBOLANG PEMALANG REGENCY

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Abstract. This study addresses the issue of low levels of teacher professionalism, which can hinder the quality of education in primary schools. The research aims to describe in depth the role of the principal as a manager in enhancing teacher professionalism at SD Negeri 07 Bantarbolang. A qualitative descriptive method was employed, with data collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis. The results show that the principal actively plans, implements, and evaluates various programs to improve teacher professionalism. Specific strategies include academic supervision, internal training sessions, and the development of a collaborative work culture focused on strengthening teacher competencies. Data validity was ensured through triangulation of sources and methods, as well as member checks to enhance credibility. The study concludes that effective managerial leadership by the principal plays a significant role in improving teacher professionalism, thereby contributing positively to the overall quality of education.

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INTRODUCTION

Basic education serves as the fundamental cornerstone in developing high-quality human resources (Ardhiya et al., 2022), in which the principal holds a central role as an educational manager responsible for enhancing teacher professionalism. Teacher professionalism is closely linked to the quality of teaching and student learning outcomes (Mailani et al., 2023). The principal's role as a facilitator significantly influences the quality of instruction by providing adequate infrastructure and fostering an innovative culture within the school environment (Amelia, 2023). Principals who demonstrate competence in managing educational organizations are capable of encouraging teachers to adopt creative and adaptive teaching strategies in response to ongoing developments (Ernawati et al., 2024).

This study specifically aims to explore in depth how the principal's managerial role at SD Negeri 07 Bantarbolang, Pemalang Regency, contributes to the enhancement of teacher professionalism. The research is expected to offer both theoretical and practical contributions to the development of effective leadership strategies and serve as a reference for educational policy formulation, particularly at the primary education level. The principal is responsible for planning, organizing, directing, and supervising all aspects of the school system, with a primary focus on teacher development and the improvement of education quality (Munawwarah et al., 2024).

Strategic planning conducted by the principal includes identifying teachers' training needs, designing systematic professional development programs, and implementing continuous evaluations to ensure the effectiveness of the implementation (Putra et al., 2024). Furthermore, principals are expected to facilitate teachers' adaptation to technological advancements and instructional innovations. Planning that involves active teacher participation can enhance a sense of ownership and increase the effectiveness of program implementation, thereby strengthening teacher engagement in instructional innovation.

In the implementation phase (actuating), principals play a strategic role in directing and supporting teacher professional development through ongoing training, constructive academic

supervision, motivational support, and the provision of instructional facilities that support the teaching and learning process (Priyono et al., 2021). These efforts aim to create a working environment that encourages continuous teacher growth and innovation. Therefore, the success of basic education is highly dependent on the effectiveness of the principal's managerial role in optimizing and empowering human resources within the school.

At SD Negeri 07 Bantarbolang, Pemalang Regency, the principal plays a pivotal role in mobilizing all school components to ensure that formulated policies are effectively implemented. The successful implementation of these policies is expected to have a tangible impact on improving the quality of teaching and learning (Arief, 2021). In practice, the principal adopts a collaborative approach by involving teachers in the process of identifying needs and designing competency development strategies. The principal's role extends beyond that of a policymaker to that of a facilitator, responsible for providing the necessary resources and support facilities for enhancing teacher professionalism. This collaborative approach fosters a positive synergy between the principal and teachers, resulting in more optimal decision-making and program implementation processes.

Principals who are able to formulate needs-based planning strategies are more likely to succeed in implementing professional development policies (Nasir et al., 2023). The success of policy implementation is significantly influenced by the quality of communication, active teacher involvement, and support from stakeholders such as the school committee and the local education authority (Al-Thani, 2024; Nwanguma & James, 2024). Based on these considerations, this study aims to explore the implementation of teacher professionalism enhancement policies at SD Negeri 07 Bantarbolang and to identify the supporting and inhibiting factors in the process.

In addition to planning and implementation, the principal also plays a critical role in the supervision or controlling function, which includes evaluating teacher performance, conducting academic supervision, and monitoring the implementation of the curriculum and teaching methods (Marfinda, 2022). At SD Negeri 07 Bantarbolang, the principal is responsible for ensuring that each teacher not only meets established competency standards but also continues to grow professionally. Supervision is conducted through classroom observations, the provision of constructive feedback, and ongoing coaching aimed at improving instructional quality.

Effective supervision fosters a conducive learning environment, supports a culture of innovation among teachers, and encourages adaptation to educational developments (Simanjuntak et al., 2024). The work culture established at SD Negeri 07 Bantarbolang demonstrates strong synergy and collaboration among teachers. The teachers tend to be open in sharing experiences and teaching methods with one another, indicating that the principal has successfully built a collaborative work environment that strongly supports collective professional development.

This success prompted the researcher to investigate further the strategies and approaches employed by the principal in performing managerial functions to enhance teacher professionalism. This study holds both academic and practical significance. Academically, it aims to explore effective school principal leadership practices and identify supporting and inhibiting factors in implementing policies to improve teacher professionalism. Practically, the research is expected to provide policy recommendations and actionable strategies that can serve as guidelines for other school leaders, particularly those in remote areas or with limited resources. Thus, the findings of this study are not only descriptive but also applicable in supporting the development of more inclusive education policies.

Specifically, this research focuses on the role of the principal as a manager in enhancing teacher professionalism at SD Negeri 07 Bantarbolang. The main focus covers three managerial dimensions: (1) Planning, which includes the development of professional improvement programs, vision and mission formulation, and provision of supporting resources (Amon & Harliansyah, 2022); (2) Actuating, involving the implementation of training, workshops, and the creation of a work culture that fosters professionalism development (Siregar et al., 2024); and (3) Controlling, which entails teacher performance evaluation, monitoring mechanisms, as well

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as feedback and follow-up actions by the principal (Fauzi et al., 2023). Several studies have demonstrated that the role of the principal as an educational manager significantly contributes to enhancing teacher professionalism in elementary schools. This finding aligns with Yenni et al. (2020), who highlighted the instructional leadership dimension of the principal at SD Negeri 9 Betung. In this context, the principal functions not only as a manager but also as an educator, administrator, supervisor, innovator, and motivator. These diverse roles have proven effective in developing teachers' professional competencies, both pedagogically and personally (Yenni et al., 2020).

The research conducted by Sundari in 2024 at SD Negeri Tanjungsari 01, Brebes Regency, reinforces previous findings by demonstrating that principals who optimally perform managerial functions through systematic planning, organizing, implementation, and supervision can significantly improve teacher performance. This improvement arises not only from strengthening the school management structure but also from the intensity of coaching, collaboration among teachers, and active participation in scientific forums as part of continuous professional development (Sundari et al., 2024). Similarly, the study by Alvishah et al. (2021) at MI Daarunnajah Nyamplungsari emphasizes the importance of the principal's multifunctional role as an educator, manager, administrator, supervisor, and motivator. In practice, the principal guides and supervises teachers intensively to enhance the quality of learning in all aspects, including planning, implementation, and evaluation (Alvishah et al., 2021).

Although various previous studies have comprehensively revealed the contribution of principals in improving teacher professionalism, most of these studies remain general and focus on theoretical aspects or managerial practices in different regional or school contexts. For example, Yenni et al. (2020) highlighted the instructional leadership dimension of principals, which encompasses not only the managerial role but also dual roles as educators, innovators, and motivators. This study provides a broad overview of instructional leadership but does not specifically focus on managerial practices within a local context. Likewise, the study by Sundari et al. (2024) at SD Negeri Tanjungsari 01 focuses more on the systemic implementation of principals' managerial functions in improving teacher performance through planning, implementation, and supervision. While emphasizing the importance of the managerial role, the study's scope centers on teacher performance in general rather than directly strengthening teacher professionalism as the primary focus. Meanwhile, Alvishah et al. (2021) describe the principal's multifunctional role in improving learning quality; however, their research does not deeply explore how principals' managerial strategies are specifically applied to build teacher professionalism within the context of public elementary schools in semi-urban areas.

Therefore, an important gap remains unaddressed in previous research, namely the specific and focused analysis of the principal's role as a manager in efforts to enhance teacher professionalism in public elementary schools situated in unique cultural and geographical contexts, such as SD Negeri 07 Bantarbolang, Pemalang Regency. This local context has distinct characteristics regarding human resources, environmental support, and internal school policies that require adaptive and contextual managerial approaches. Hence, this study aims to fill this gap by providing empirical contributions concerning principals' managerial strategies that directly impact the development of teacher professionalism in practical field settings.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research employed a descriptive qualitative approach conducted at SD Negeri 07 Bantarbolang, Pemalang Regency. The study focused on exploring the role of the principal as a manager in enhancing teacher professionalism. The research site was selected purposively because of the principal's active efforts in implementing teacher development programs. The key informant was the school principal, while supporting informants included teachers, education staff, and school committee members who were involved in or observed the implementation of managerial policies. Data collection techniques consisted of in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and document studies. In-depth interviews were carried out to obtain information about the principal's managerial strategies, teachers' responses, and

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the impact of policies on professional development. Observations were conducted by attending school activities such as coordination meetings, training sessions, and supervision processes. Document studies included reviewing work plans, supervision reports, and records of teacher training to support and validate the data from interviews and observations.

The primary instrument in this research was the researcher, supported by interview guides, observation sheets, and documentation checklists. Data validity was ensured using source triangulation by comparing data from different informants, method triangulation by combining various techniques, and member checking by confirming findings with respondents. Data were analyzed through data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions to produce an in-depth description of the principal's managerial role in improving teacher professionalism.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study on the role of the principal as a manager in enhancing teacher professionalism at SD Negeri 07 Bantarbolang, Pemalang Regency, revealed several significant findings related to the processes of planning, organizing, actuating, and supervising.

1. Planning Function

Interview findings with the principal revealed that all stakeholders were actively involved in the development of school programs, such as the School Activity and Budget Plan (RKAS), the annual work plan, and the teaching schedule. The principal stated, *"We involve all parties to ensure that the plans created genuinely reflect the needs of the school and positively contribute to improving teacher professionalism."* This statement was supported by several teachers who reported that they were regularly invited to planning meetings and given the opportunity to voice their opinions, particularly regarding classroom challenges. One teacher shared, *"We are always given a chance to speak during planning meetings. I once proposed an adjustment to the teaching schedule to better accommodate students' learning rhythms, and the suggestion was approved."* Another teacher stated, *"What I appreciate is that our input is not only heard but also taken seriously. The principal truly listens and tries to implement ideas that are reasonable for the school."* A third teacher added, *"During the preparation of the RKAS, we were encouraged to recommend learning tools and classroom facilities that we genuinely needed. Many of our suggestions, such as acquiring digital learning media and enhancing library resources, were included in the final budget."*

Meanwhile, some teachers emphasized, *"This inclusive process makes us feel more responsible for the success of school programs. It's not just the principal's plan—it becomes our collective plan."* Teachers perceived that the principal provided space for open discussion and welcomed input, fostering a collaborative and respectful atmosphere among the teaching staff. They also noted that involvement in planning strengthened their sense of ownership and accountability in the implementation of school programs. Observations during planning meetings confirmed the inclusive nature of this process. Teachers, school committee members, and administrative staff were actively engaged in discussions, exchanging ideas and submitting proposals that were immediately incorporated into draft planning documents. The process appeared dynamic, with each stakeholder group given time to speak, raise questions, and offer clarifications. Meeting minutes reflected revisions made in response to feedback provided during these sessions, indicating that consultation was not merely procedural but genuinely integrated into decision-making.

Supporting documents, such as the RKAS and annual work plan archives, demonstrated clear evidence of stakeholder participation. Attendance lists, teachers' proposal records, and revision logs all showed that school planning was participatory. In several documents, annotations and handwritten notes indicated active discussions, with adjustments made to accommodate requests from subject teachers regarding teaching aids and scheduling. Based on interviews, observations, and document analysis, it can be interpreted that the planning function exercised by the principal was not only strategic but also participatory. The inclusive and transparent approach contributed to a higher level of teacher engagement and professional

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commitment. Furthermore, this approach ensured that school programs were grounded in the actual needs and aspirations of those directly involved in the teaching and learning process.

2. Organizing Function

Regarding the organizing function, the principal explained that the school's organizational structure is designed based on each teacher's competence, experience, and potential. He emphasized, *"We assign responsibilities according to educational background and individual strengths to avoid overlapping duties and to optimize the implementation of school programs."* This statement was supported by several teachers who affirmed that task assignments were made transparently at the beginning of the academic year and aligned with their academic qualifications, professional experience, and personal interests. One teacher stated, *"At the start of each school year, the principal holds a coordination meeting to distribute all responsibilities. For instance, because I have experience with literacy programs, I was appointed as the literacy team coordinator. I feel that my role is appropriate and appreciated."*

Another teacher added, *"I graduated in Islamic Education, and I was assigned to manage religious extracurricular activities, including coaching students for religious competitions. This is highly satisfying because the school acknowledges our areas of specialization."* Similarly, several other teachers noted, *"The task assignment process is open and fair. We are even allowed to provide input if we feel a particular responsibility is not suitable for us. This flexibility makes the system feel more democratic."* Some teachers also emphasized that the organizing function is not merely about routine task distribution but also about building trust and a sense of responsibility. One teacher commented, *"I was surprised when I was asked to be the class coordinator for an inter-school event. It was challenging, but I learned a lot. The principal's trust in me motivated me to do my best."* In line with this, several teachers remarked, *"I feel empowered because the structure allows everyone the opportunity to lead. It's not always the same people being appointed; the principal tries to rotate roles fairly."*

Many teachers appreciated that the organizational structure was displayed publicly in the teachers' lounge. A senior teacher explained, *"The chart on the wall helps us understand the hierarchy and communication flow. If I need something related to student affairs, I know exactly who to talk to. This clarity reduces confusion and saves time."* Field observations confirmed the interview statements. In the teachers' lounge, a well-organized organizational chart was displayed alongside printed task lists, clearly indicating names, positions, and areas of responsibility. During school meetings, teachers were observed performing specific roles in coordination with one another, such as leading prayers, managing attendance, preparing student presentations, and maintaining classroom order—all indicating that assigned roles were actively implemented.

Documentation supported these practices. The annual organizational chart and job description documents showed that roles were logically structured and equitably distributed among the teaching staff. School planning meeting minutes also included sections where teachers were asked about their readiness and interest in specific roles. This participatory mechanism reinforced perceptions of transparency and fairness in the organizing function. Based on interview data, field observations, and document analysis, it can be interpreted that the organizing function at this school is carried out in a careful and systematic manner. The principal's emphasis on assigning duties based on competence and potential contributes not only to more effective work distribution but also to the development of a positive organizational climate. Teachers feel recognized and empowered, which fosters greater responsibility, collaboration, and commitment to their roles. This well-structured approach enhances the overall quality of school management and aligns with efforts to improve teacher professionalism and school performance.

3. Actuating Function

In implementing the actuating function, the principal emphasized the importance of teacher capacity-building activities, such as training programs, workshops, and in-house professional development (TKD). He noted that these activities are held regularly to enhance teachers' competencies and ensure their responsiveness to the evolving demands of education.

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The principal explained, *"We do not want professional development to be merely ceremonial. The goal is to ensure that each training session has a direct and meaningful impact on classroom instruction and student learning outcomes."* This assertion was affirmed by several teachers. Some reported, *"The workshops we attend are very practical. For example, after a recent in-house training on differentiated instruction, I immediately began grouping students based on their learning styles, and the results were positive."* Others added, *"The topics are always relevant—ranging from digital literacy to classroom management. It's not just theory but something we can apply right away."*

One teacher shared a personal experience: *"After one of the sessions on formative assessment strategies, I began using self-assessment checklists in my class. It helped students become more reflective. Changes like this are only possible because we are provided with tangible and useful tools."* Teachers also noted that the principal's efforts extended beyond internal training. Several senior teachers stated, *"He encourages us to participate in webinars and external training programs. Some of us have even received support to pursue further education, such as postgraduate studies."* Most teachers commented, *"I appreciate how the principal sometimes invites external speakers, such as university lecturers or educational consultants. It adds variety and depth to our learning."*

Observations during several training sessions revealed a high level of teacher participation. Teachers were actively involved in discussions, note-taking, group activities, and simulations. The atmosphere was dynamic, with participants eager to ask questions and share classroom experiences. It was evident that these sessions were not mere formalities, but were perceived as valuable opportunities for professional development. This was further supported by follow-up classroom observations. Teachers who had participated in the training were seen implementing new strategies, such as interactive learning media, group work techniques, and student self-assessment tools. Collaboration among teachers was also evident through peer-sharing of training materials.

Document analysis revealed well-structured training agendas, attendance records, and post-training evaluation forms all indicating a planned and well-managed approach to teacher development. Training materials aligned with current curriculum demands, including the Merdeka Curriculum and the integration of digital platforms in teaching and learning. Based on triangulated data from interviews, observations, and document analysis, it can be interpreted that the principal has effectively implemented the actuating function by fostering a culture of continuous professional development. The relevance and practicality of the training programs have strengthened teachers' instructional practices and motivation. Moreover, the principal's role as a motivator and facilitator has been instrumental in mobilizing teachers to innovate and grow professionally, ultimately contributing to improved teaching quality and student learning outcomes.

4. Supervising Function

Regarding the supervisory function, the principal stated that supervision is conducted through direct classroom observations, regular mentoring, and informal checks to monitor the quality of teaching and learning. He emphasized, *"Supervision is not about fault-finding, but about providing constructive support. After each observation, I prioritize giving both written and verbal feedback so that teachers can reflect and improve."* He also noted that, ideally, each teacher should be supervised at least once per semester, although time constraints often require adjustments. This claim was supported by several teachers who acknowledged the principal's sincere efforts to observe classroom instruction and provide meaningful feedback. One teacher reported, *"After being observed during a science lesson, the principal praised my use of visual aids and suggested that I give clearer instructions during group work. It felt more like coaching than judging."* Another explained, *"I appreciate that the feedback process is two-way. The principal listens when we explain our instructional choices, which makes us feel respected as professionals."*

Senior teachers added that feedback is sometimes provided informally, such as after school events or project presentations. *"Even brief comments help us understand what needs*

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improvement," one said. However, some teachers acknowledged that supervision is not always implemented consistently. One remarked, *"In some academic years, I was observed twice, but in other years, not at all. It really depends on the principal's schedule and other duties."* Junior teachers noted, *"Sometimes supervision feels rushed or generic. It would be more helpful if followed by deeper mentoring or collaborative reflection."* Another important aspect raised by the teachers was the absence of a structured reward or recognition system related to supervisory outcomes. One teacher suggested, *"It would be more motivating if our teaching improvements were acknowledged perhaps through teacher appreciation awards or public recognition during staff meetings."* Others echoed this view: *"Even though I've applied the feedback and improved student engagement in my class, it's rarely acknowledged beyond the feedback session. Formal appreciation would mean a lot."*

In response, the principal admitted that although supervision is taken seriously, the school has yet to implement a clear reward system. He stated, *"We aim to focus on growth and reflection, but I do understand that recognition is equally important. Going forward, we plan to develop a mechanism to acknowledge teachers who demonstrate outstanding dedication and improvement."* Classroom observation sessions confirmed the principal's use of standard supervision forms and an average duration of 30–45 minutes per visit, during which he took notes and occasionally interacted with students. Brief feedback sessions typically followed the observations, although in some cases, further mentoring was postponed due to scheduling conflicts.

In the teachers' room, documentation such as observation forms, mentoring notes, and teacher performance monitoring records were available. However, the depth and frequency of these records varied. Some teachers had multiple feedback entries in a semester, while others had only one or none. The documents also lacked evidence of structured follow-up actions or a performance tracking system. Based on triangulated data from interviews, observations, and document analysis, it can be interpreted that the supervisory function at this school is implemented with genuine intent and focuses on developmental feedback. The principal's commitment to fostering a supportive and non-threatening environment has been well received by teachers. However, inconsistencies in implementation, limited frequency, and the absence of formal recognition mechanisms remain areas for improvement. Strengthening the system with structured follow-up mentoring and motivational incentives could significantly enhance the impact of supervision on teaching quality and teacher morale.

Interpretation by the researcher suggests that the principal demonstrates a clear commitment to improving teacher professionalism through comprehensive planning, participatory organizing, active implementation of development programs, and supervision geared toward continuous improvement. However, challenges such as inconsistent supervision and the lack of recognition for outstanding teachers indicate areas needing further refinement to optimize professional growth. When examined through the lens of management theories, such as the planning-organizing-leading-controlling (POLC) framework (Hidayatullah, 2024), the principal's practices align with the essential managerial functions required for organizational effectiveness. The participatory approach in planning and organizing reflects distributed leadership concepts emphasizing shared decision-making as a driver of professional engagement and commitment. The collaborative culture and focus on teacher development are consistent with the findings of Hallinger, who demonstrated that instructional leadership contributes significantly to teacher effectiveness and student outcomes.

Moreover, this study resonates with research Wiwesa (2021), which underlines that consistent supervision and constructive feedback are critical components of sustained professional growth. The observed inconsistencies in classroom visits and absence of rewards highlight gaps between managerial intentions and implementation, supporting the argument Herlina et al. (2022) that leadership must balance formal structures with moral and motivational dimensions to create lasting impact. In conclusion, the principal's role as a manager and leader in SD Negeri 07 Bantarbolang significantly contributes to the enhancement of teacher professionalism. The comprehensive and participatory strategies, corroborated by multiple

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sources and observation, illustrate a strong foundation for teacher development. However, strengthening consistency in supervision and implementing recognition mechanisms are recommended to further optimize the positive outcomes already achieved.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that the principal of SD Negeri 07 Bantarbolang, Pemalang Regency, has implemented various managerial functions to enhance teacher professionalism. In the planning function, the principal formulated the school's vision, mission, and objectives by involving all stakeholders, as well as developed the School Work Plan (RKS), School Activity and Budget Plan (RKAS), learning programs, and evaluations according to the academic calendar. Although active, creative, and enjoyable learning (PAKEM) has been applied, some teachers have yet to prepare assessment blueprints. In the organizing function, the principal established the organizational structure and distributed teacher duties based on factors such as experience and qualifications. The principal also mobilized teachers through professional development activities, including seminars and training, and motivated them to pursue further education. Regarding curriculum management, the principal formed a curriculum development team that integrates the national curriculum and local content. Information technology has been utilized for administration and learning, although CCTV facilities are not yet available. Lastly, in the supervision function, the principal conducted classroom supervision and observations, although these were not carried out consistently, and recognition for outstanding teachers was limited to verbal praise. Overall, despite some challenges, the principal has made substantial efforts to improve teacher professionalism through structured management.

Based on these findings, several concrete recommendations can be proposed. First, the principal should provide regular technical assistance and mentoring to help teachers prepare comprehensive assessment blueprints, so that learning evaluation becomes more systematic and measurable. Second, to enhance supervision effectiveness, classroom observations should be scheduled consistently throughout the academic year, and their results documented as a basis for follow-up coaching. Third, the school could consider allocating budget funds to gradually improve infrastructure, including installing CCTV to support supervision and security. Fourth, recognition and rewards for outstanding teachers should be formalized through certificates, awards ceremonies, or incentives, rather than relying solely on verbal appreciation, to further motivate teacher performance. Lastly, collaboration with educational institutions or training providers can be expanded to enrich teachers' professional development opportunities and keep them updated with current pedagogical practices.

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