



The Effectiveness of Principal Coaching Practices on Improving the Professional Performance of Elementary School Teachers

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ABSTRACT

This research is motivated by managerial gaps in conventional academic supervision, which often tends to be evaluative-administrative and fails to provide an effective space for stimulating teachers' professional development. The primary focus of this study is to describe the principal's coaching practices using the TIRTA model, analyze its impact on teachers' professional performance in designing and implementing learning, and identify inhibiting factors in its implementation. This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study method. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis at SDN Cangkring 01, Baleendah District, Bandung Regency. Data validity was ensured through source and method triangulation, while data analysis followed the Miles, Huberman, and Saldana model, encompassing data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The results indicate that coaching practices using the TIRTA flow (Goal, Identification, Action Plan, Responsibility) systematically implemented by the principal are effective in enhancing a transformative collaborative space between school leadership and educators. At the Goal stage, an equal partnership is established, making teachers feel valued. In the Identification stage, the principal facilitates teachers in mapping problems objectively through reflective dialogue. The implementation of this model reinforces a paradigm shift in supervision from judgmental oversight to empowering development. The findings conclude that the frequency and quality of coaching conversations have a significant correlation with the increase in intrinsic motivation and teachers' pedagogical skills in managing classroom learning.

Keywords: *Coaching, TIRTA Model, Academic Supervision, Teacher Professional Performance, Elementary School*

INTRODUCTION

The National Education Vision, as stipulated in Law No. 20 of 2003, emphasizes that education in Indonesia must develop the abilities and character of students into civilized individuals, thereby shaping a dignified and qualified nation. To achieve this vision, improving teacher professional performance is an absolute prerequisite that must be met by educational institutions at all levels.

In an effort to improve teacher professional performance, the government has emphasized policy through a meritocratic-based transformation of human resource management. This transformation is realized through various mechanisms, such as competency-based recruitment and placement, performance standardization through digital platforms, an accountable reward and punishment system, and continuous professional development. In improving educator quality, the synergy between the principal's leadership style and the ongoing professional development of educators is a key determinant. The principal's competence in orchestrating strategic assets and building a learning organization climate that stimulates teachers to actively engage in self-development plays a highly effective role in improving teacher professional performance.

The culture of teacher competency development that has developed in most educational institutions currently tends to lack strong direction from the principal and is sporadic. The phenomenon of improved performance often appears secure within the system, but tends to stagnate in learning quality. This is due to teachers' focus being divided between the quality of classroom learning and fulfilling digital and manual administrative tasks. A managerial gap often occurs during academic supervision. The principal's role, which should be a facilitator, shifts to that of an administrative supervisor. Consequently, academic supervision is evaluative and lacks psychological support for teachers, and is perceived by them as judgmental. This hinders teachers from openly discussing the challenges they face in learning. Teacher reflection, on the other hand, does not impact learning improvement and creates a gap between the competencies needed to improve learning quality and the teachers' actual competencies.

In response to these issues, in recent decades, coaching practices have been recognized in the education sector as an effective approach to improving teachers' professional performance in implementing learning. In coaching practices, the principal positions teachers as equal partners, empowered to develop their potential independently, acting as a facilitator. This contrasts with conventional academic supervision, which is often intrusive, administratively oriented, and has a one-way communication pattern. In the context of performance improvement, coaching practices have a significant correlation with the escalation of teacher professional performance because coaching involves a continuous, reflective dialogue mechanism. Not only can it improve teachers' technical skills, but a sense of responsibility and self-efficacy are significant impacts that can be realized if

principals implement coaching practices effectively. Based on the discourse on these phenomena and gaps, research on the Influence of Principal Coaching Practices on Improving Teacher Professional Performance has strategic urgency and is highly relevant to implement.

METHODOLOGY

Approach

The approach used in this research is a qualitative one with a case study design. This research aims to understand in depth how coaching interactions are interpreted, perceived, and influence teachers' behavior, as well as the factors that influence the effectiveness of these coaching practices.

Research Method

The research method used is a case study or phenomenology. In this case, the researcher aims to conduct an in-depth investigation of the coaching process, focusing on teachers' experiences related to principal coaching and the changes they experience.

Research Techniques and Instruments

1. Data collection techniques in this research were conducted through in-depth interviews with principals and teachers, observation, and document analysis.
2. Research Instruments. Research instruments are key tools in qualitative studies, assisting researchers in obtaining data and information to support the research. The research instruments used in this study were interview instruments in the form of semi-structured interview guides, observation instruments in the form of field notes, and documentation study instruments in the form of teacher and supervisor reflection journals.

The interview instruments were used to gather in-depth information regarding the principal's managerial perspective and to understand the psychological impact and stages of the Tirta coaching model received by teachers. The observation instrument focused on interactions between teachers and the principal, the communication atmosphere, and changes in teacher instructional behavior in managing learning. Meanwhile, the documentation study instrument was used to verify administrative data such as the principal's reflection journal, documentation of academic supervision results, and lesson implementation plans. The researcher also used a questionnaire to capture a general overview of all teachers' perceptions of the principal's coaching practices before conducting in-depth interviews.

Data Validity Checking Techniques

Data validity in this study was verified using source triangulation and method triangulation. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing data from teachers and the principal, as well as documents. Method triangulation was conducted by comparing interview results with observation results.

The data analysis technique used in this study utilized the Miles, Huberman, and Saldana Data Analysis Model. The data analysis steps were data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. Research Results

This section presents field findings regarding the TIRTA coaching practices implemented by the Principal of Cangkring 01 Elementary School. Based on field data collected through participatory observation and in-depth interviews with the Principal and teachers at Cangkring 01 Elementary School, it was found that the Principal's coaching practices were systematic. The following discussion will detail how each TIRTA stage of the coaching practice contributed to the continuous improvement of teacher professional performance.

1. Implementation of the Objective Stage (T)

Based on observations, the principal began the coaching session by establishing a warm and conducive relationship. Using effective questioning techniques, the principal encouraged teachers to formulate meeting objectives and independently establish success indicators. The teachers then conveyed the desired objectives, and the principal assisted them in measuring these objectives to ensure clarity and measurability by asking teachers about the success measures of the coaching session. This participatory approach respects teachers as partners, allowing them to feel fully supported in their self-development without any pressure or coercion from their superiors. At this stage, teachers feel more valued because the coaching objectives are not determined unilaterally by the principal.

2. Implementation of the Identification Phase (I)

In this phase, the principal facilitates teachers in identifying problems through analysis of relevant facts. By asking provocative questions about the obstacles faced and the factors supporting solutions, the principal successfully stimulates the emergence of innovative ideas from teachers. The practice of active listening without pre-judgment is consistently implemented, so teachers feel motivated to explore their internal potential and available resources to overcome these obstacles.

3. Implementation of the Action Plan Phase (R)

In this stage, the principal invites teachers to consider whether they have alternative solutions to address the problems they face and the timeframe they aim to achieve. These questions encourage teachers to formulate concrete and practical steps to address the problems they face, tailored to the timeframe the teacher sets.

4. Implementation of the Accountability Stage (TA)

In this stage, the principal inquires about the teacher's follow-up and plans to maintain their commitment to the action plan to resolve the issues they are facing. This ensures that the teacher feels accountable for the action plan agreed upon during the coaching session. The principal and teacher then agree on a follow-up schedule to monitor the teacher's progress and offer any necessary support.

Based on interviews with teachers, the principal's coaching activities are conducted at least once every three months. However, if the teacher encounters an issue that needs to be discussed, coaching can be conducted as needed.

Issues discussed in the coaching sessions include problems in the learning process, student development, teacher administration, and school programs. During the coaching sessions, the teachers felt comfortable and safe because the principal always responded well to the teacher's comments, did not interrupt, and asked thoughtful questions.

5. Barriers to the Implementation of the TIRTA Coaching Model

Based on findings in the field, the implementation of the TIRTA coaching model by the principal is not free from various structural and cultural barriers. Broadly speaking, these obstacles can be categorized into three main dimensions:

a. Psychological Resistance and Seniority Culture.

The most significant obstacle arises from psychological aspects, particularly the strong power distance within the school culture. Teachers, especially those with longer tenure (senior teachers), tend to feel uncomfortable or even threatened when asked to engage in independent reflection. There is a perception that coaching is a form of hidden "audit" of their performance. As revealed in interviews with principals, the transition from an instructive to a collaborative leadership style takes time, as teachers are accustomed to waiting for direction rather than seeking solutions independently.

b. Time Management Limitations

Technically, principals face challenges in allocating quality time for each teacher. The TIRTA coaching model requires full attendance and active listening, which often clashes with the principal's busy administrative and managerial workload. This results in coaching sessions sometimes being rushed, resulting in the "Identification" stage not being explored in depth.

c. Communication Competence and Asking Insightful Questions

Internal barriers were also found on the part of school principals, namely difficulty formulating stimulating questions. Principals often fall back into old patterns of providing direct advice before teachers have a chance to explore. This hinders the creation of double-loop learning because teachers' critical thinking is stifled by the principal's instant solutions.

Examining these barriers, it can be analyzed that the main obstacle to coaching in educational settings is rooted in organizational culture. Referring to Kurt Lewin's Change Management theory, the unfreezing stage (unfreezing old habits) is the most difficult. Senior teacher resistance indicates a comfort zone with traditional, top-down supervision patterns.

Theoretically, the obstacle to asking insightful questions demonstrates that coaching is not simply a communication skill—a complex cognitive skill. If the principal fails to maintain a partner position and reverts to being a commanding officer, the intrinsic motivation of teachers, as explained in Self-Determination

Theory, will not grow. Therefore, these time and competency constraints emphasize that the success of coaching is highly dependent on the organization's commitment to reducing the Principal's administrative burden so that the focus on people development can be achieved optimally.

B. Discussion

1. Transformation from Conventional Supervision to Transformative Coaching

The findings of this study indicate a fundamental influence on the leadership patterns of the Principal at SDN Cangkring 01. The TIRTA coaching model has transformed the conventional supervision model, which tends to be judgmental, into a collaborative process that maximizes teachers' personal and professional potential through a process that stimulates and explores creative thinking.

Within the leadership paradigm, this transformation signifies the implementation of instructional leadership that focuses on human development through equal relationships (partnerships), and the TIRTA model creates a "comfortable space" for teachers. Theoretically, this aligns with the concept of Humanistic Coaching, where the success of behavioral change is largely determined by the quality of the relationship between coach and coachee. When the principal relinquishes his or her authority and becomes a partner, teacher resistance to change decreases significantly. Teachers' openness in acknowledging their weaknesses in pedagogical skills and obstacles to performance improvement becomes a gateway to authentic performance improvement, not simply a matter of fulfilling formal administrative duties.

2. Reconstructing Teacher Performance through Reflection Mechanisms

The improvement in teacher professional performance in this study was found not to be the result of one-way instructions, but rather through a process of in-depth reflection. The Identification and Action Plan stages in the TIRTA model require teachers to break from routine and evaluate the effectiveness of work patterns in the teaching and learning process.

Field findings demonstrate that when the principal applies the Identification and Action Plan stages during coaching, he or she does not provide instructions. Instead, through reflective questions, the principal encourages teachers not only to improve their teaching methods (Action) but also to recognize incorrect assumptions about how students learn. Consequently, the resulting changes are far more permanent and transformative for teachers' professional performance than simply following the principal's direction.

3. Sustainable Performance through Collaborative Accountability.

Research findings on the Accountability (TA) stage confirm that the TIRTA model minimizes a gap often encountered in traditional supervision, namely weak follow-up. In traditional supervision, the process is often considered complete after grades are issued, but in TIRTA, the primary value lies in continuity.

The accountability aspect of coaching builds what is known as professional

accountability. The commitment expressed by teachers at the end of the coaching session constitutes a psychological contract. Field discussions indicate that an agreement has been reached between teachers and the principal regarding what support is needed, who will provide it, and when it will be reviewed. This creates a support system within the school environment. This aligns with the concept of Professional Learning Communities (PLC), where teacher performance improvement is viewed as a continuous learning journey. This success demonstrates that teacher performance improvement is linear with the principal's consistency in overseeing the action plan through supportive, rather than instructive, monitoring.

4. Significant Differences Between Teachers Who Regularly Receive Coaching Practices and Those Who Do Not.

Based on the data analysis, significant differences were found in the quality of professional performance between teachers who receive regular coaching practices compared to teachers who do not receive it or who only receive conventional supervision. These differences are not only visible in administrative aspects, but also extend deeper into pedagogical and psychological dimensions.

a. Reflective Behavior Transformation and Adaptability

Teachers who regularly participate in the TIRTA coaching cycle demonstrate a higher level of adaptability to classroom dynamics. Through stimulating questions in the "Identification" and "Action Plan" stages, teachers become accustomed to conducting self-assessments. This contrasts with the group of teachers who rarely receive coaching, who tend to get stuck in monotonous teaching patterns (routines) and exhibit greater resistance to learning innovation. Theoretically, this difference confirms the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Theory, which argues that personalized and ongoing interventions have been shown to be far more effective in transforming instructional practices than sporadic mass training (Joyce & Shower, 2002; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). This approach, which focuses on individual mentoring, allows for a deeper and more contextual internalization of competencies for educators.

b. Effectiveness of Learning Management

Empirically, teachers who receive regular coaching demonstrate superior performance in developing student-centered learning strategies. This is because the coaching process acts as cognitive scaffolding that helps teachers solve complex classroom problems by finding their own solutions. Research data shows that teachers in this group have more consistent pedagogical competency scores due to the monitoring and accountability mechanisms in the "Responsibility" (TA) stage.

c. Self-Efficacy and Professional Motivation

Another striking difference lies in the level of self-efficacy. Teachers who regularly receive coaching feel more supported and valued as professional partners by the principal. According to Albert Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory, teachers' confidence in their ability to manage their classrooms is positively related to the amount of constructive feedback they receive. Conversely, teachers who do not

receive regular coaching tend to feel isolated in their pedagogical problems, which can negatively impact their motivation and long-term professional innovation.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research results and discussion, it can be concluded that the implementation of the TIRTA (Objectives, Identification, Action Plan, and Responsibilities) coaching model by the Principal at SDN Cangkring 01 significantly transformed teachers' professional performance, shifting from routine work patterns to reflective and adaptive behavior. With its structured stages, this practice successfully replaced the conventional, top-down, instructive supervision paradigm with an equal partnership, fostering intrinsic motivation and teacher confidence in managing learning. Despite facing structural barriers such as limited time for management and cultural barriers in the form of psychological resistance from senior teachers due to power distance, coaching proved to be more effective than traditional supervision.

Significant differences were seen in teachers who regularly received coaching, demonstrating more consistent pedagogical quality, independent problem-solving skills, and stronger professional commitment through a psychological contract in collaborative accountability. Thus, the TIRTA model serves not only as a communication tool but also as a crucial human resource development strategy for creating a school ecosystem that serves as a sustainable learning community.

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