

The Role of the Principal in Improving Academic Quality at State Elementary School 3 Bandungharjo, Donorojo Subdistrict, Jepara Regency

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Abstract: This study examines the principal's role in improving academic quality at State Elementary School 3 Bandungharjo, Jepara. The principal's roles as an educator, manager, and supervisor are essential for enhancing education quality. Challenges include time limitations, low teacher motivation, budget constraints, and limited teacher involvement. Classroom supervision and evaluations occur, but follow-up actions are insufficient. The study suggests better time management, needs-based training, optimised resources, and improved evaluation systems. Recommendations include government support for competency development and increased funding for educational facilities.

Keywords: Principal, Academic Quality, Education.

Abstrak: Studi ini mengkaji peran kepala sekolah dalam meningkatkan kualitas akademik di SD Negeri 3 Bandungharjo, Jepara. Peran kepala sekolah sebagai pendidik, manajer, dan pengawas sangat penting dalam peningkatan kualitas pendidikan. Tantangan yang dihadapi antara lain keterbatasan waktu, motivasi guru yang rendah, anggaran terbatas, dan keterlibatan guru yang kurang. Supervisi kelas dan evaluasi dilakukan, namun tindak lanjutnya kurang maksimal. Rekomendasi mencakup pengelolaan waktu yang lebih baik, pelatihan berbasis kebutuhan, optimalisasi sumber daya, dan sistem evaluasi yang lebih baik, serta dukungan pemerintah untuk pengembangan kompetensi dan peningkatan dana fasilitas pendidikan.

Kata Kunci: Principal, Academic Quality, Education.

INTRODUCTION

The role of the school principal in improving academic quality at the elementary level is widely recognised as crucial. The principal functions as a leader who exerts a significant influence on the development of educational quality within the school. Educational quality consists of several interrelated components: input, process, and output, all of which are directly influenced by the principal's leadership and policies. Empirical evidence suggests that effective leadership enables a school to grow into a high-performing educational institution. A competent principal is capable of fostering innovation and

motivating both teachers and staff, which ultimately enhances the overall quality of education¹.

At the school level, the principal is expected to optimise their role not only as a manager but also as an educator and supervisor. The responsibilities include planning, organising, and supervising all educational activities carried out in the school. The quality of a school is determined by the synergy of three core elements: input, process, and output. Educational quality is measured not only by students' academic achievements but also by the effectiveness and consistency of the learning processes implemented².

In Donorojo Subdistrict, Jepara Regency, there are 48 elementary schools, one of which is SD Negeri 3 Bandungharjo. Despite being located in a rural area, the school has demonstrated significant progress, as reflected in the increasing number of student enrollments and steady improvements in academic performance. These indicators suggest that SD Negeri 3 Bandungharjo maintains a relatively high level of educational quality. A key contributing factor to this success is the leadership of the school principal, who implements a clear vision supported by strategic programs. The principal has introduced various initiatives aimed at improving academic performance, such as promoting active, creative, and enjoyable learning approaches and strengthening student development through extracurricular activities. These efforts have translated into measurable improvements, including a rise in average school examination scores from 75.89 in the 2021/2022 academic year to 81.35 in the 2023/2024 academic year and increased student participation in both academic and non-academic competitions.

The principal's roles as an educator, manager, and supervisor are fundamental to driving academic improvement. As an educator, the principal provides guidance and professional support to teachers to enhance instructional quality. As a manager, the principal is responsible for managing human resources, learning infrastructure, and school administration. Meanwhile, as a supervisor, the principal ensures that teaching and learning activities are consistently monitored and evaluated. An ideal principal embodies multiple roles: educator, manager, administrator, supervisor, leader, innovator, and motivator. The effective fulfilment of these roles is essential in cultivating a

¹ Muhammad Aziz et al., "Adaptive Leadership Strategies in Rural Schools: A Case Study in Central Java," *Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan* 14, no. 1 (2022): 23–35.

² Kemendiknas, *Manajemen Peningkatan Mutu Berbasis Sekolah* (Jakarta: Direktorat Jenderal Pendidikan Dasar dan Menengah, 2000), 18.

high-quality educational environment, ultimately contributing to improved learning outcomes³.

Although the literature has extensively addressed the role of school principals in enhancing academic quality, few studies have examined this issue in the specific context of rural schools. Rural schools often face unique challenges, such as limited access to resources, socioeconomic disparities, and geographic isolation, which require school leaders to adopt adaptive and context-sensitive leadership strategies⁴. In this respect, this study seeks to fill the research gap by focusing on how school leadership is exercised in a rural public elementary school. The findings are expected to offer new perspectives on leadership practices that are effective in rural educational settings.

This study aims to investigate the role of the school principal in improving academic quality at SD Negeri 3 Bandungharjo, Donorojo Subdistrict, Jepara Regency. Specifically, it examines the implementation of the principal's roles as educator, manager, and supervisor in contributing to academic improvement. The focus of this study is directed toward understanding the principals' strategic fulfilment of their educational, managerial, and supervisory functions in enhancing the academic quality at SD Negeri 3 Bandungharjo.

LITERATUR REVIEW

Academic Quality in Education

Academic quality in education refers to the capacity of educational institutions to meet established standards and criteria that ensure student success and satisfaction. Academic quality involves efforts to stimulate, coordinate, and guide the holistic development of learners, both individually and in groups⁵. It also requires support for educators through improved services, professional development, and motivation⁶. Academic quality is shaped not only by student achievement but also by the quality of learning processes and the conduciveness of the learning environment⁷.

³ Muhammad Fitrah, *Manajemen Pendidikan Dalam Perspektif Kepemimpinan Kepala Sekolah* (Jakarta: Prenadamedia Group, 2017), 34.

⁴ Muhammad Aziz et al., "Adaptive Leadership Strategies in Rural Schools: A Case Study in Central Java," *Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan* 14, no. 1 (2022): 23–35.

⁵ Hendyat Soetopo, *Dasar-Dasar Manajemen Pendidikan* (Jakarta: Rineka Cipta, 2012), 46.

⁶ Muhammad Ahsan, *Pengembangan Mutu Akademik Sekolah* (Bandung: Alfabeta, 2014), 77.

⁷ Edward Sallis, *Total Quality Management in Education. 4th Ed* (London: Routledge, 2014), 63.

The Ministry of Education and Culture identifies four dimensions of educational quality: input, process, output, and outcome. The input dimension includes human resources (teachers, principals, and staff), while the process refers to program implementation, learning, monitoring, and evaluation. The quality of output is reflected in students' academic achievements, and outcomes indicate the long-term impact of education. Effective leadership is essential to ensure these dimensions align⁸.

Recent international literature supports this multidimensional view. Academic quality in schools depends on strategic leadership that fosters teacher collaboration, instructional innovation, and data-informed decision-making⁹. School effectiveness cannot be separated from leadership quality, particularly in managing instructional processes¹⁰.

The Role of the Principal as Educator

The principal's role as an educator involves guiding and supporting teachers to improve instructional quality. The principal must serve as a model of professional development by facilitating training, mentoring, and instructional improvement¹¹. In this role, the principal directly impacts classroom practices, which are closely linked to student learning outcomes.

Principals who act as instructional leaders contribute significantly to student achievement by focusing on teaching quality, curriculum coherence, and teacher capacity-building¹². Moreover, principals who frequently engage in dialogue with teachers, provide formative feedback, and align teaching with learning goals are more likely to drive academic gains¹³.

The Role of the Principal as Manager

The principal's function as a manager centres on organising school operations, managing human and physical resources, and ensuring the

⁸ Kemendikbud, *Indikator Mutu Pendidikan* (Jakarta: Pusat Penelitian Kebijakan Pendidikan, 2016), 12.

⁹ Tuan D Nguyen, Paul Miller, and Katharine O. Strunk, "Principal Effectiveness and Student Achievement," *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 42, no. 3 (2020): 319–44.

¹⁰ Tony Bush and Derek Glover, "School Leadership Models: What Do We Know?," *Educational Management Administration & Leadership* 49, no. 5 (2021): 683–701.

¹¹ Muhammad Fitrah, *Manajemen Pendidikan Dalam Perspektif Kepemimpinan Kepala Sekolah* (Jakarta: Prenadamedia Group, 2017), 101.

¹² Philip Hallinger and Ronald H. Heck, "Collaborative Leadership and School Improvement: Understanding the Impact on School Capacity and Student Learning," *School Leadership & Management* 39, no. 5 (2019): 432–53.

¹³ Kenneth Leithwood, Alma Harris, and David Hopkins, "Seven Strong Claims about Successful School Leadership Revisited," *School Leadership & Management* 40, no. 1 (2020): 5–22.

institution runs efficiently toward educational objectives. Recruitment and placement of staff must be aligned with institutional goals and professional standards¹⁴. The principal must strategically manage planning, organising, actuating, and controlling (POAC) activities in the school¹⁵. These managerial roles support the implementation of quality learning by ensuring that teaching resources, infrastructure, and schedules are effectively coordinated.

Globally, principals' managerial competencies such as planning, delegation, and resource allocation directly influence school performance¹⁶. Effective school leaders must also be capable of strategic planning and resource optimisation to achieve quality outcomes, particularly in disadvantaged or resource-constrained settings¹⁷.

The Role of the Principal as Supervisor

As a supervisor, the principal is responsible for monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning activities to ensure instructional effectiveness. This includes classroom observations, providing feedback, and conducting performance evaluations. The principal must act as a learning supervisor, facilitating reflection and continuous improvement among educators¹⁸.

Supervision is particularly crucial in supporting consistent implementation of school policies and instructional standards. Principal involvement in curriculum supervision is one of the strongest predictors of student achievement¹⁹. Principals who engage in meaningful instructional supervision contribute to improved teacher motivation and classroom quality²⁰.

Previous Studies on the Principal's Role

Several previous studies support the importance of the principal's role in educational quality improvement. Research highlights the positive relationship

¹⁴ Kasmir, *Manajemen Sumber Daya Manusia* (Jakarta: Raja Grafindo Persada, 2016), 89.

¹⁵ Havis Saleh Tanjung, *Manajemen Pendidikan* (Medan: Perdana Publishing, 2018), 44.

¹⁶ David Gurr and Lawrie Drysdale, "Leadership for Challenging Contexts," *Journal of Educational Administration* 58, no. 3 (2020): 235–51.

¹⁷ OECD, *Developing Schools as Learning Organisations: OECD Reviews of School Resources* (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2019), 31.

¹⁸ Muhammad Fitrah, *Manajemen Pendidikan Dalam Perspektif Kepemimpinan Kepala Sekolah* (Jakarta: Prenadamedia Group, 2017), 108.

¹⁹ Viviane M. J. Robinson, Claire A. Lloyd, and Kenneth J. Rowe, "The Impact of Leadership on Student Outcomes," *Educational Administration Quarterly* 56, no. 4 (2020): 589–615.

²⁰ James Sebastian, Elaine Allensworth, and Haigen Huang, "The Role of Principal Leadership in Improving Student Achievement," *Educational Administration Quarterly* 55, no. 4 (2019): 606–44.

between school leadership and student achievement in elementary schools²¹. However, many of these studies focus generally on leadership style or administrative tasks without a specific breakdown of the instructional, managerial, and supervisory roles.

This study, therefore, offers a novel contribution by focusing explicitly on the integrated roles of the principal as educator, manager, and supervisor, especially in a rural school context. The setting of SD Negeri 3 Bandungharjo presents unique challenges and opportunities that are underrepresented in the literature, particularly regarding leadership in schools with limited resources and strong community involvement.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design. A qualitative method was chosen because this research aims to describe and interpret the phenomenon that occurs in the field, particularly regarding the principal's role in improving academic quality at SD Negeri 3 Bandungharjo, Donorojo Subdistrict, Jepara Regency. Qualitative research is interpretive in nature, as the collected data emphasise understanding and interpreting events and interactions in natural settings²². Descriptive research seeks to systematically and thoroughly portray the phenomena being studied without manipulating the existing variables.

This research was conducted at SD Negeri 3 Bandungharjo from November 14, 2023, to May 2024. The school was chosen purposively based on its consistent principal leadership, notable achievements, and identified need for continuous improvement in academic quality. The research stages included proposal development, obtaining ethical clearance, collecting and analysing data, and reporting results.

The selection of informants used purposive sampling, in which participants were deliberately chosen based on their knowledge, experience, and

²¹ Diah Mutiara, Sulastris Djasmi, and Suntoro, "Kepemimpinan Kepala Sekolah Dan Mutu Pendidikan," *Jurnal Administrasi Pendidikan* 27, no. 2 (2020): 70–80; Ratin Nuraeni, "Pengaruh Kepemimpinan Kepala Sekolah Terhadap Kualitas Pembelajaran," *Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Dasar* 4, no. 2 (2019): 50–60; Bambang Suhartono, "Kepemimpinan Kepala Sekolah Dalam Meningkatkan Kinerja Guru," *Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan* 22, no. 1 (2018): 90–100; F Faroh Liswiana, Nurkolis, and Ghufroon Abdullah, "Kepemimpinan Kepala Sekolah dalam Peningkatan Mutu Pendidikan," *Kepemimpinan Kepala Sekolah Dalam Peningkatan Mutu Pendidikan* 25, no. 1 (2017): 60–70; Ahmad Wahyudi, "Kepemimpinan Kepala Sekolah Dalam Peningkatan Prestasi Belajar Siswa," *Jurnal Administrasi Pendidikan* 24, no. 2 (2016): 35–45.

²² Sugiyono, *Metode Penelitian Pendidikan: Kuantitatif, Kualitatif, Dan R&D (Edisi Ke-3, Cetakan Ke-1)* (Bandung: Alfabeta, 2019), 9.

involvement in the school's academic processes. The study involved 10 informants, consisting of 1 principal, four teachers, one school committee member, and four students (upper-grade representatives). These informants were selected because they had direct knowledge of the principal's roles and their impact on academic quality.

The sampling aimed to ensure data saturation, where additional data no longer provided new insights. In case of emerging information gaps during fieldwork, snowball sampling was used to identify further relevant informants.

The research process consisted of three stages: pre-field, fieldwork, and data analysis. (1) **Pre-field activities** included developing the research proposal, selecting the location, securing permission from school authorities and the Education Office, conducting initial school observations, and preparing research instruments such as notebooks, audio recorders, and cameras²³. (2) **During fieldwork**, data were collected through observations, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. Structured observations focused on the school climate, daily academic routines, and learning activities. Semi-structured interviews were used to obtain in-depth information from each informant. The interviews aimed to explore how the principal carried out their roles as educators, managers, and supervisors in enhancing academic quality. Documentation (strategic plans, evaluation reports, educational records, etc.) was used to support and enrich the findings from interviews and observations.

In qualitative research, the researcher serves as the primary instrument. The researcher is the key instrument who collects data through direct interaction with participants²⁴. The researcher's presence in the field was crucial to interpret the data contextually and holistically. The study used both primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected through interviews and observations, while secondary data were obtained from school documents such as lesson plans, supervision notes, and academic records.

To ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the data, the researcher employed source and method triangulation, which involves cross-checking information from different sources and techniques²⁵. In addition, member checking was conducted by returning interview summaries to participants for confirmation and correction. Peer debriefing was also utilised by discussing

²³ Lexy J. Moleong, *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif* (Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya, 2016), 127.

²⁴ Sugiyono, *Metode Penelitian Pendidikan: Kuantitatif, Kualitatif, Dan R&D (Edisi Ke-3, Cetakan Ke-1)* (Bandung: Alfabeta, 2019), 19.

²⁵ Sugiyono, 371.

preliminary findings with academic peers and supervisors to ensure objectivity and clarity²⁶.

The analysis followed the qualitative data analysis model by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana, which includes three concurrent flows of activity: (1) Data Condensation – selecting, focusing, and simplifying raw data. (2) Data Display – organising the data in tables, matrices, and narrative form. (3) Conclusion Drawing and Verification – identifying themes and drawing conclusions based on systematic interpretation²⁷.

This research obtained ethical approval from the Research Ethics Committee of [insert your institution's name], and all participants gave informed consent before data collection. Informants were assured of the confidentiality of their responses, and their identities were anonymised in the research report to protect privacy and ensure research integrity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The role of the principal of SD Negeri 3 Bandungharjo as an educator is reflected in the consistent efforts to enhance teaching quality through regular training and structured guidance. The principal organises monthly meetings with teachers to identify problems and provide solutions, as stated: *"At least once a month, we hold meetings with the teachers, where we listen to their concerns"* (KS/November 14, 2024). Although direct monitoring is rarely conducted, the principal's presence and interaction with both teachers and students motivate them to perform better. This aligns with the view that instructional leadership influences school effectiveness through indirect pathways such as teacher development²⁸. Similarly, principals play a critical role in shaping a culture that supports continuous teacher learning²⁹.

However, limited direct involvement in classroom practices remains a challenge, especially in rural contexts like Jepara. This is consistent with findings in rural Malaysian schools, where principals often face role overload³⁰. The situation in SD Negeri 3 Bandungharjo reflects similar conditions, where time

²⁶ Moleong, *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif*, 332.

²⁷ Matthew B. Miles, A Michael Huberman, and Johnny Saldana, *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook*. 3rd Ed (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2014), 12.

²⁸ H Philip Hallinger and Ronald H. Heck, "Collaborative Leadership and School Improvement: Understanding the Impact on School Capacity and Student Learning," *School Leadership & Management* 39, no. 5 (2019): 432–53.

²⁹ L. Kenneth Leithwood, Alma Harris, and David Hopkins, "Seven Strong Claims about Successful School Leadership Revisited," *School Leadership & Management* 40, no. 1 (2020): 5–22

³⁰ Jane P Preston and K. Erin R. Barnes, "Successful Leadership in Rural Schools: Cultivating Collaboration," *The Rural Educator* 39, no. 1 (2018): 6–15.

constraints limit the principal's ability to supervise teaching activities directly. Teachers confirmed, "*The principal rarely monitors directly, but they do come by once in a while*" (GR4/November 14, 2024). This limitation underscores that collaborative teacher development is essential in bridging instructional gaps in rural areas³¹.

As a manager, the principal demonstrates strategic leadership by formulating a clear school vision, mission, and goals. Planning is carried out collaboratively with teachers, staff, and school committees: "*The school aims to advance both in quality and quantity, so the first step is to establish a clear vision, mission, and objectives*" (KS/November 21, 2024). This participative approach resonates with the concept of transformational leadership, where leaders empower team members to achieve common goals³². A member of the school committee acknowledged that the principal always strives to plan activities inclusively (KM/November 21, 2024). However, challenges remain, such as limited funding, which often hinders the full implementation of planned programs. School leadership must foster collaboration with stakeholders to overcome financial barriers, especially in resource-constrained rural settings³³.

The principal also attempts to optimise available resources by involving educators in task distribution and team-based work. This approach is consistent with the importance of aligning teacher assignments with their competencies to improve instructional outcomes³⁴. However, principals often face administrative overload that detracts from their core function as instructional leaders³⁵. In the case of SD Negeri 3 Bandungharjo, the principal must balance between managerial duties and efforts to enhance academic quality, often at the expense of hands-on instructional supervision.

In the supervisory role, the principal of SD Negeri 3 Bandungharjo conducts regular academic supervision following a structured schedule. "*We make an academic supervision schedule so that the supervision process can achieve its goals*" (KS/November 28, 2024). The principal not only conducts classroom visits but also engages teachers in preparing supervision instruments and discussing

³¹ Jian Zhu, Min Yu, and Jihyun Hwang, "Instructional Leadership in Rural Contexts: A Systematic Review," *Educational Management Administration & Leadership* 50, no. 4 (2022): 586–604.

³² Juharyanto, Sugeng Hartono, and Taufik Maulana, "Transformational Leadership and Its Impact on Teacher Performance in Remote Areas," *Educational Management Administration & Leadership* 51, no. 2 (2023): 251–68.

³³ Achmad Mustofa, "Keterbatasan Anggaran Dan Dampaknya Terhadap Penyediaan Sarana Pendidikan," *Jurnal Kebijakan Pendidikan* 18, no. 1 (2019): 39–48.

³⁴ Syaiful Hadi, "Manajemen Sumber Daya Manusia Dalam Meningkatkan Mutu Pendidikan," *Jurnal Administrasi Pendidikan Indonesia* 27, no. 1 (2020): 12–21.

³⁵ Susanna Loeb, Demetra Kalogrides, and Eric Horng, "Principal Time-Use and School Effectiveness," *American Journal of Education* 123, no. 2 (2017): 171–208.

evaluation results. This practice reflects the model that academic supervision is most effective when it is collaborative and formative³⁶. Teachers expressed appreciation for being involved in such processes, which build professional ownership and reflection (GR3/November 28, 2024; GR4/November 28, 2024).

However, despite routine evaluations, follow-up actions are often lacking. Supervision may become a formality if not accompanied by concrete improvement plans. Evaluations without follow-up risk stagnating school progress³⁷. Likewise, the importance of using evaluation results to guide professional learning communities (PLCs) has been underlined³⁸. Without sustained reflective practice, the impact of supervision is minimal, particularly in schools facing limited external support³⁹.

The use of innovative learning strategies such as Project-Based Learning (PBL) and digital tools further demonstrates the principal's effort to improve academic quality. *"The principal implements a Project-Based Learning (PBL) model, which allows students to develop critical thinking and collaborative skills"* (GR3/November 28, 2024). PBL and technology-based learning enhance engagement and conceptual understanding⁴⁰. However, the challenge remains in sustaining these innovations amid limited resources and time constraints. Excessive administrative tasks limit the principal's engagement in classroom-level innovations⁴¹.

Teacher motivation also poses a challenge, particularly in training participation. *"Some teachers still feel reluctant to join training due to the irrelevance of topics with classroom needs,"* said a teacher (GR2/November 14, 2024). Professional

³⁶ Anwar Gunawan, "Pengawasan Akademik Kepala Sekolah Dan Dampaknya Terhadap Proses Pembelajaran," *Jurnal Kependidikan* 19, no. 3 (2018): 71–80.

³⁷ Eko Sutrisno, "Evaluasi Formalitas Tanpa Tindak Lanjut Dalam Pendidikan Dasar," *Evaluasi Dan Supervisi Pendidikan* 18, no. 2 (2020): 42–50.

³⁸ Viviane M. J Robinson, Claire A. Lloyd, and Kenneth J. Rowe, "The Impact of Leadership on Student Outcomes," *Educational Administration Quarterly* 56, no. 4 (2020): 589–615.

³⁹ Ming Zhou, Yifan Zhang, and Yuhui Cheng, "Feedback Culture in Schools: A Missing Link in Effective Supervision," *Journal of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies* 5, no. 1 (2023): 39–54.

⁴⁰ Agus Santoso, "Model Pembelajaran Berbasis Proyek Dalam Meningkatkan Keterampilan Abad 21," *Jurnal Inovasi Pembelajaran* 26, no. 3 (2020): 59–67.

⁴¹ Muhammad Rizal, "Waktu Kerja Kepala Sekolah Dan Tantangannya Dalam Peningkatan Mutu Akademik," *Jurnal Administrasi Pendidikan* 30, no. 2 (2021): 75–84; Lestari Rachmawati, "Pengaruh Keterlibatan Kepala Sekolah Terhadap Mutu Pembelajaran," *Jurnal Kepemimpinan Pendidikan* 11, no. 1 (2020): 23–30.

development must be aligned with teachers' needs to be effective⁴². Moreover, the success of evaluation-based improvement depends on how well the recommendations are implemented⁴³. The principal must ensure that action plans are derived from evaluation results and are consistently followed up on.

These findings resonate with international studies, which reveal that instructional leadership is most effective when principals build strong teacher collaboration and focus on actionable feedback loops⁴⁴. In the case of SD Negeri 3 Bandungharjo, the leadership approach has succeeded in building teacher capacity and improving exam scores, as evidenced by the increase from 75.89 in 2021/2022 to 81.35 in 2023/2024. However, limitations in funding, monitoring intensity, and structured follow-up still constrain the school's potential for further progress.

In summary, while the principal has demonstrated effectiveness as an educator, manager, and supervisor, the challenges of rural schooling in Jepara, particularly resource limitations and weak follow-up mechanisms, require more structured and systemic solutions. The integration of professional learning communities, stronger evaluation-based action plans, and stakeholder collaboration can significantly strengthen the school's academic quality improvement efforts.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the principal of SD Negeri 3 Bandungharjo plays a pivotal role in enhancing academic quality through three key functions: educator, manager, and supervisor. As an educator, the principal fosters teacher competence through training and innovation in instructional practices. As a manager, the principal formulates and executes programs to support academic improvement, despite challenges such as limited budgets and teacher participation. As a supervisor, the principal conducts regular evaluations, although follow-up actions often lack structure and consistency. To improve outcomes, principals should enhance time management, align training with teachers' practical needs, and seek alternative funding sources. Strengthening

⁴² Ahmad Wicaksono, "Motivasi Guru Terhadap Pelatihan Profesional Di Sekolah Dasar," *Jurnal Profesi Pendidikan* 10, no. 1 (2019): 28–35; Rahmat Hidayat, "Efektivitas Pelatihan Guru Berbasis Kebutuhan Lapangan," *Jurnal Pendidikan Profesi* 12, no. 2 (2020): 44–51.

⁴³ Maria Agustin, "Implementasi Evaluasi Pembelajaran Untuk Peningkatan Mutu Pendidikan," *Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Pembelajaran* 28, no. 1 (2021): 45–53.

⁴⁴ Zhu, Yu, and Hwang, "Instructional Leadership in Rural Contexts: A Systematic Review."; Xia Xia Liang and Hans Peters, "Instructional Leadership Practices in Rural Schools: Challenges and Strategies," *Journal of Educational Administration* 59, no. 6 (2021): 684–701.

follow-up mechanisms after supervision is also crucial to ensure continuous improvement in teaching quality.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the discourse on school leadership by highlighting how instructional, managerial, and supervisory roles are applied in rural school contexts. It underscores the need for leadership approaches that adapt to local challenges, particularly in resource-limited settings.

This study is limited by its single-site focus and reliance on qualitative data. Future research should expand to multiple schools and incorporate mixed methods to deepen understanding. Policymakers are encouraged to provide structured, needs-based professional development and increased investment in rural school infrastructure to sustain educational quality.

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