



Principal's Role in Addressing Issues Affecting Teacher Competence to Improve Teaching and Learning Processes at SMA Negeri 1 Tanjung Pura

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the role of the principal in improving teachers' competence at SMA Negeri 1 Tanjung Pura. Teacher competence is a key factor in determining the quality of learning; therefore, the principal has a strategic responsibility in developing the professional abilities of educators. This research employs a qualitative approach with a case study method. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation, and then analyzed using data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion-drawing techniques. The results show that the principal plays a crucial role in three main aspects: as a manager, a supervisor, and a motivator. As a manager, the principal organizes and implements teacher competence improvement programs through training, workshops, and continuous professional development activities. As a supervisor, the principal conducts planned academic supervision to monitor and evaluate teacher performance. Meanwhile, as a motivator, the principal provides encouragement, recognition, and creates a conducive work climate to enhance teachers' enthusiasm and performance. In addition, the principal also plays a role in addressing current challenges, such as the low mastery of learning technology, by organizing ICT training and encouraging teacher collaboration to share experiences and teaching innovations. The findings of this study affirm that the success of improving teacher competence is greatly influenced by effective, participative, and professionally development-oriented school leadership.

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INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the most essential sectors in developing human resources and plays a major role in advancing a nation. Senior High Schools (SMA) serve as strategic educational institutions in shaping future generations who are competent, ethical, and ready to face global challenges. The quality of education largely depends on the quality of teachers as the forefront of the teaching and learning process. Competent teachers are capable of creating

interactive, innovative, and enjoyable learning environments that enhance students' academic achievements. As stated by (Sari, D., & Nugroho, 2022), improving the quality of education cannot be separated from efforts to strengthen teachers' competencies as key agents of change within the national education system.

The quality of education at the senior high school level in Indonesia is influenced by both internal and external factors, such as school leadership, infrastructure, learning environment, and teacher competence. Among these, teacher competence is one of the most critical factors determining the success of the learning process. Teachers who possess strong pedagogical, professional, social, and personal competencies are more effective in transferring knowledge to students. In this regard, the role of the principal is crucial—not only as an administrator but also as a supervisor, motivator, and innovator in developing teacher competence (Slamet, 2021). Principals are expected to provide continuous guidance and coaching so that teachers can perform professionally and consistently improve the quality of instruction.

Nevertheless, various current issues related to teacher competence remain prevalent in schools, including low motivation for self-development, limited access to relevant professional training, inadequate mastery of educational technology, and insufficient skills in designing meaningful learning experiences. Revealed that many teachers are still unable to fully utilize digital technology in the learning process, thereby reducing instructional effectiveness (Rahmawati, D., & Ananda, 2023). These conditions present significant challenges for school principals to take strategic actions in guiding and assisting teachers in improving their competencies according to the demands of the 21st century.

School principals play a vital role in addressing teacher competence issues through continuous coaching, academic supervision, motivation, and moral support. According to the Indonesian Law Number 14 of 2005 on Teachers and Lecturers, teacher competence includes four essential aspects: pedagogical, professional, social, and personal competencies. These four competencies must be continuously developed to ensure that teachers can perform their functions optimally. Research (Kurniawan, A., & Fitri, 2023) found that many principals have not yet maximized their role in developing teacher competencies due to limited supervision and lack of training facilities. This finding highlights the need for more innovative managerial strategies to ensure that teacher development programs are effective and have a direct impact on the quality of education.

Based on these conditions, this research focuses on how the principal plays a role in overcoming current issues related to teacher competence in the teaching and learning process at SMA Negeri 1 Tanjung Pura, Langkat Regency. The study is expected to contribute to the scientific development of educational management studies and provide practical insights for principals in designing more effective teacher development strategies. Therefore, this research entitled *"The Role of the Principal in Overcoming Current Issues Related to Teacher Competence in the Teaching and Learning Process at SMA Negeri 1 Tanjung Pura, Langkat Regency, Academic Year 2025-2026"* aims to explore the relationship between school leadership roles and the improvement of teaching quality in senior high schools.

The principal holds a crucial responsibility as an educational leader who manages and directs all school activities to run effectively. The role of the principal is not merely administrative but encompasses multiple dimensions – as an educator, manager, supervisor, leader, innovator, and motivator (EMASLIM) – to create a conducive learning climate (Mulyasa, 2017). In the context of educational management, the principal functions as the main driver for improving educational quality through the effective application of managerial principles (Muflihah, A., & Haqiqi, 2019). The Decree of the Minister of Education and Culture No. 0296 of 1996 also emphasizes that the principal is a teacher who is given an additional task to lead the implementation of education in the school.

An effective principal demonstrates competence in planning, organizing, implementing, and supervising all teaching and learning activities. As both manager and supervisor, the principal must ensure that all school resources are utilized efficiently while providing professional guidance to teachers to help them meet competency standards (Sakir, I., & Hartiningsih, 2018). The study by Dwi, Sari, and Giatman revealed that principals with a participatory leadership style significantly increase teacher motivation and performance by fostering a collaborative and open work environment. (Dwi, A. J., Sari, R., & Giatman, 2021)

Teacher competence is defined as a set of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that must be possessed by teachers to perform their professional duties effectively. The four main aspects of teacher competence include pedagogical, professional, personal, and social dimensions. Teachers with strong competencies are capable of designing effective learning processes, guiding students, and assessing learning outcomes objectively (Mardhatillah, O., & Surjanti, 2023). In this regard, the principal plays a pivotal role as a facilitator who supports teachers in developing their competencies through training,

academic supervision, and performance reflection (Kurnia, I. R., Barokah, A., 2023).

Teaching and learning processes in secondary schools require teachers not only to deliver material but also to foster students' critical thinking and creativity. According to (Gagne, 1985), effective learning involves attention, guidance, feedback, and reinforcement. Principals who actively conduct academic supervision help teachers refine their teaching strategies based on classroom observations (Cahyana, A. B., Sembiring, M. G., & Syarifah, 2023). This finding indicates that academic supervision led by the principal plays a crucial role in enhancing teachers' pedagogical and professional abilities by providing constructive feedback, fostering reflective teaching practices, encouraging continuous improvement, and ensuring that instructional activities align with educational standards and students' learning needs effectively.

In instructional leadership, principals are responsible for formulating school visions and missions focused on improving educational quality. They must also actively manage curriculum implementation, monitor instructional processes, and conduct continuous evaluations to ensure that teaching and learning activities effectively align with educational goals and promote student achievement (Hallinger, P., & Murphy, 1985). A principal who practices strong instructional leadership creates a productive and results-oriented learning climate (Nuriati, N., Azis, M., & Husain, 2022). Similarly, (Harjito, A., & Widodo, 2022) found that principals who adopt transformational leadership styles strengthen teacher collaboration and foster a professional culture within schools.

The integration between principal leadership and teacher competence is the key to improving educational quality. The principal serves as a mentor, motivator, and facilitator who encourages teachers to continually enhance their professional abilities (Suyanto, 2018). Through academic supervision and continuous professional development (CPD) programs, principals can ensure that teacher capacity building occurs systematically (Day, C., & Sachs, 2004). With strong structural and moral support from the principal, teacher competence develops sustainably and contributes to better teaching quality (Yusri, 2023).

Within the framework of School-Based Management (SBM), the principal plays a central role as both a manager and a transformational leader who autonomously manages resources (Mulyasa, 2017). As an educator, manager, administrator, supervisor, and innovator, the principal is responsible for cultivating a collaborative and innovative work culture within the school (Anik, M., & Haqiqi, 2019). When these five functions are implemented in a balanced

manner, the development of teacher competence no longer depends solely on external policies but also on the internal initiatives of schools effectively led by the principal.

The quality of education at the senior high school level is influenced by internal and external factors such as school leadership, learning environment, and teacher competence. In this context, the principal does not only act as an administrator but also as a supervisor, motivator, and innovator who continuously encourages the professional growth of teachers (Slamet, 2021). However, various challenges persist, including teachers' low motivation for self-development, limited access to professional training, and inadequate mastery of educational technology. Research by Rahmawati and Ananda (2023) reveals that many teachers are still unable to fully utilize digital technology in the learning process, which reduces instructional effectiveness in schools.

These issues require principals to take strategic actions in improving teacher competence through continuous guidance, academic supervision, and professional and moral support. Law Number 14 of 2005 states that teacher competence consists of pedagogical, professional, social, and personal competencies that must be consistently developed. Nevertheless, several studies show that the principal's role has not been fully optimized due to limited supervision activities and inadequate training facilities (Kurniawan & Fitri, 2023). Based on these conditions, the hypothesis of this study is that the more effective the principal's role in teacher coaching and supervision, the higher the level of teacher competence in implementing the learning process.

In the context of educational management, principals play an important role as instructional leaders who ensure that all learning activities run according to quality standards. Principals are required to plan, organize, implement, and supervise all academic activities effectively (Mulyasa, 2017; Muflihah & Haqiqi, 2019). Through participatory leadership approaches and academic supervision, principals can significantly improve teacher motivation and performance (Dwi, Sari, & Giatman, 2021). Thus, the principal's role in developing teacher competence is not merely administrative but encompasses visionary leadership aimed at improving the overall quality of teaching and learning.

Based on the above considerations, the purpose of this paper is to describe comprehensively the role of the principal in addressing issues related to teacher competence in the teaching and learning process at SMA Negeri 1 Tanjung Pura in the Academic Year 2024-2025. This study is expected to contribute to the development of educational management studies and serve as a practical reference for school principals in designing effective and sustainable teacher

development strategies. Therefore, the results of this research are expected to strengthen the connection between principal leadership and the improvement of teaching quality at the senior high school level.

RESEARCH METHODE

This study focuses on the principal's role in addressing current issues related to teacher competence in the teaching and learning process at SMA Negeri 1 Tanjung Pura for the 2024–2025 academic year. The selection of this school was based on its dynamic managerial conditions and the need to improve teacher competence in response to curriculum demands and changes within the educational system. The research object includes leadership activities, academic supervision practices, and professional interactions between the principal and teachers.

The research employs a descriptive qualitative design, as the researcher aims to describe phenomena in depth within their natural context without manipulating variables. This approach aligns with (Creswell, J. W., & Poth, 2018), who argue that qualitative research is effective when researchers need to understand the meaning of a phenomenon from participants' perspectives. The data consist of primary data, obtained through interviews and observations, and secondary data, including school documents, supervision reports, and policies related to teacher competence improvement (Nazir, 2014).

Participants in this study include the principal as the main informant, as well as teachers, vice principals, and administrative staff as supporting informants. Informants were selected using purposive sampling, which targets individuals who are most knowledgeable and directly involved in teacher competence development. This technique is consistent with (Sugiyono, 2021), who emphasizes that participant selection in qualitative research is based on the depth of information rather than the number of participants.

The research process involves several stages: preparation, data collection, data reduction, data analysis, and report writing. During the preparation stage, the researcher conducted a preliminary study to understand the school's conditions and determine the research focus. This was followed by the development of interview guidelines and observation sheets.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, direct observation of school activities, and document analysis. Interviews were conducted to explore the principal's and teachers' perceptions and experiences regarding competence development. Observations were carried out during supervision activities, teacher meetings, and classroom teaching practices. Documents such as school

work plans, supervision reports, and instructional materials were used to strengthen field data (Moleong, 2019).

The collected data were analyzed using the interactive analysis model of Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, which consists of three components: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction involved selecting essential information related to the principal's leadership practices. Data display was presented in narrative and thematic matrix formats. Conclusions were drawn gradually through repeated verification to ensure the validity of findings (Rahman, F., & Puspitasari, 2022).

Through this approach, the research is expected to produce a comprehensive description of the principal's strategies in addressing teacher competence issues and their contribution to improving the quality of teaching and learning. The findings are also expected to enrich the literature on educational leadership and offer practical recommendations for enhancing teacher professionalism and strengthening school management effectiveness.

RESULT & DISCUSSION

Based on the findings obtained through interviews, observations, and documentation, it was revealed that the principal plays a very significant role in addressing various current issues related to teacher competence at SMA Negeri 1 Tanjung Pura. The leadership role of the principal extends beyond administrative responsibilities, encompassing professional, pedagogical, managerial, and moral guidance to ensure that teaching and learning activities are effective and aligned with the demands of modern education. The principal acts not only as an administrator but also as an instructional leader who provides direction, supervision, and motivation for teachers to continuously improve their competence.

Data from interviews with the principal and several teachers show that structured programs such as training, workshops, and supervision are consistently implemented to encourage teachers to develop innovative learning strategies and master digital technology in the classroom. Observational data from classroom visits also indicate that teachers apply more varied and interactive methods after receiving guidance. Moreover, school documentation such as supervision reports, meeting minutes, and teacher development records confirms that the principal actively promotes collaboration, discipline, and shared responsibility.

Furthermore, the principal fosters a positive school climate by promoting collaboration, discipline, and a sense of shared responsibility among teachers. The principal also uses motivational and religious approaches to build teachers'

intrinsic motivation and professional commitment. As a result, teachers demonstrate improved pedagogical and professional competencies, leading to higher instructional quality and more engaging learning experiences. Therefore, the principal's leadership has proven crucial in enhancing teacher performance and ensuring the continuous improvement of educational quality at SMA Negeri 1 Tanjung Pura.

The principal's leadership is characterized by a proactive and responsive approach to the challenges of teacher competence. Rather than merely executing bureaucratic functions, the principal acts as a central figure who inspires, directs, and motivates teachers to adapt to changing educational trends and pedagogical innovations that meet 21st-century learning needs. As an educational leader, the principal actively provides guidance and professional coaching to enhance teachers' pedagogical and professional competencies. Interview results reveal that regular coordination meetings, classroom supervision, and constructive feedback sessions are conducted to assess and improve teaching quality. Through these activities, the principal ensures that each teacher understands their strengths and weaknesses in the instructional process.

The principal's classroom supervision activities serve as an essential instrument for diagnosing problems encountered by teachers. Issues such as limited teaching method variations, lack of creativity in developing learning media, or insufficient mastery of educational technology are identified and addressed through collaborative problem-solving discussions between the principal and teachers. In addition to functioning as a leader and supervisor, the principal serves as a motivator who fosters teachers' enthusiasm and professional commitment. Recognition and appreciation are given to teachers who demonstrate exemplary performance, while those struggling are encouraged through supportive communication, guidance, and mentoring.

The principal strengthens teacher motivation by fostering a harmonious, collaborative, and inclusive school climate grounded in teamwork, mutual respect, and open communication. In this supportive environment, teachers feel valued, trusted, and empowered to express ideas, share experiences, and actively participate in achieving the school's educational goals. The principal's leadership encourages the development of a positive organizational culture that enhances intrinsic motivation, stimulates creativity, and reinforces a strong sense of professional responsibility among teachers. By maintaining open channels of dialogue and promoting cooperation, the principal effectively minimizes conflicts and builds mutual understanding among staff. Data from

observations and documentation such as meeting minutes and teacher collaboration activities support this finding.

This motivational approach is further reinforced by creating a harmonious school climate. The principal emphasizes teamwork, mutual respect, and open communication as foundations for effective collaboration. Such an environment nurtures teachers' intrinsic motivation and instills a sense of belonging and responsibility toward the school's vision and mission. As a supervisor, the principal implements academic supervision in a structured and continuous manner. Documentation from supervision reports shows that the results are analyzed and utilized to improve lesson planning, instructional delivery, and assessment design. Teachers who face challenges in these areas are provided with individualized assistance to enhance their teaching competence.

Another important function of the principal is that of a manager and decision-maker. The principal addresses teacher competence issues by establishing strategic policies, such as encouraging participation in MGMP, workshops, or certified training programs. These initiatives are designed to keep teachers abreast of pedagogical innovations and technological advancements in education.

The research findings show that the principal at SMA Negeri 1 Tanjung Pura embodies multiple leadership roles educator, motivator, supervisor, innovator, and decision maker. Observational data and interview transcripts demonstrate that teachers who receive regular mentoring and motivational support from the principal show measurable improvement in professional competence. Teachers display enhanced mastery of subject matter, improved pedagogical skills, and greater creativity in applying innovative learning methods, leading to more effective and engaging classroom practices.

Several supporting factors contribute to the principal's success in managing teacher competence. Adequate facilities and infrastructure such as libraries, laboratories, and internet access play a crucial role in facilitating teacher development. Additionally, collegial collaboration among teachers and a shared commitment to improvement make it easier for the principal to implement development programs effectively. However, the process is not without challenges. Interview results and field notes indicate obstacles such as varying levels of teacher motivation, limited time for balancing administrative and developmental duties, and resistance from teachers who are less adaptable to technological changes or innovative pedagogies.

To address these issues, the principal employs a four-stage strategy: planning, implementation, supervision, and motivation. In the planning stage, the principal designs programs such as workshops and seminars in

collaboration with MGMP and external institutions. The implementation stage ensures teacher participation in these programs, while the supervision stage involves observation and evaluation of classroom practices. The final stage focuses on motivation through recognition, rewards, and opportunities for professional growth.

Ultimately, the principal's effective leadership in managing teacher competence has produced tangible improvements in the quality of learning at SMA Negeri 1 Tanjung Pura. This conclusion is supported by triangulated data from interviews, observations, and documentation, all of which show that teachers have become more professional, disciplined, and innovative. The principal's comprehensive role as a leader, mentor, and motivator has thus proven vital in enhancing overall educational quality and fostering a culture of continuous professional development within the school.

Discussion

The findings of this study show that the principal of SMA Negeri 1 Tanjung Pura plays a highly significant role in addressing current issues related to teacher competence. Based on interview, observation, and documentation data, it is evident that the principal does not merely carry out administrative tasks but actively serves as an educator, motivator, supervisor, and innovator. Structured programs such as academic supervision, individual mentoring, motivational guidance, and professional training have contributed to the improvement of teachers' pedagogical and professional competence, as well as their creativity in designing learning activities. These findings affirm that active and humanistic leadership can create a collaborative and supportive work climate that encourages the growth of teacher professionalism.

When compared with previous studies, the results of this research align with existing literature showing that school leadership significantly influences teacher performance and competence. However, a noteworthy difference emerges in the nature of the approach applied. Earlier studies tend to emphasize formal training or MGMP activities as the main instruments for enhancing teacher competence, whereas in this school, improvement is largely driven by personal approaches, motivational strategies, and religiously grounded guidance. This suggests that contextual, empathetic, and human-centered leadership can have an impact that is equally, if not more, effective than technical training.

These findings carry important meaning, indicating that the school principal holds a strategic position as the primary agent of change within the school. The improvement of teacher competence is not an automatic process but the outcome of transformational leadership capable of offering inspiration,

direction, and emotional support to teachers. Thus, the principal functions not only as an administrator but also as a professional facilitator who enables teachers to grow and adapt to the demands of 21st century learning.

The implications of these findings are substantial. Teacher competence development must be viewed as a continuous process involving supervision, mentoring, motivation, and collaboration. Educational authorities and training institutions need to strengthen principal development programs to enhance their supervisory and coaching capacities. For other schools, the leadership practices implemented at SMA Negeri 1 Tanjung Pura can serve as a model of effective strategies for building a productive and professional work culture.

Several factors explain why the findings show significant improvement in teacher competence. The principal practices proactive and responsive leadership, making teachers feel supported and appreciated. Supervision is conducted not as a formality but as a constructive dialogue that helps teachers identify weaknesses and plan improvements. Motivational approaches, particularly those emphasizing moral and religious values, foster intrinsic motivation among teachers. Additionally, the availability of adequate facilities and a collaborative school climate accelerates the development of teacher's professional behavior.

Based on these findings, further actions are necessary to ensure the sustainability of teacher competence improvement. The school needs to expand supervision programs, increase the frequency of professional development activities, strengthen reward systems, and enhance internal MGMP collaboration as a platform for pedagogical dialogue. Teachers should also be encouraged to develop professional portfolios, engage in self reflection, and integrate supervision results into instructional planning. Through these actions, the positive changes in teacher competence can be maintained and strengthened as part of the school's ongoing quality improvement culture.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of research on the role of the principal in addressing current issues related to teacher competence in the teaching and learning process at SMA Negeri 1 Tanjung Pura, it can be concluded that the principal plays a highly central role in guiding, directing, and providing solutions to various challenges faced by teachers. As an educational leader, the principal not only acts as an administrator but also as a manager, supervisor, and motivator who determines the direction of teachers' professional development. Through various strategies such as organizing regular training and workshops, implementing structured academic supervision, encouraging teachers to pursue

formal and non-formal education, promoting participation in Subject Teacher Working Groups (MGMP), and utilizing information technology the principal seeks to enhance teachers' pedagogical and professional competencies. Nevertheless, several obstacles remain, including limited mastery of educational technology, a lack of innovation in teaching methods, and low motivation among some teachers to engage in self-development. To overcome these challenges, the principal applies a humanistic, communicative, and solution-oriented approach through mentoring, personal consultations, and strengthening a collaborative culture among teachers. The principal also provides recognition and rewards to outstanding teachers as a form of appreciation and motivation, while implementing educational sanctions for those who demonstrate low discipline. The impact of these efforts can be seen in the improved quality of learning, where teachers have become more creative, innovative, and able to adapt teaching strategies to students' characteristics, ultimately contributing to both academic and non-academic student achievement. Thus, this study affirms that the success of improving teacher competence is not solely determined by individual teacher efforts but also by the leadership of a visionary, innovative, and professional principal who serves as a key driver in enhancing the overall quality of education within the school.

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