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Principal's Instructional Leadership in Enhancing Teachers' Pedagogical Competence at SD Negeri 2 Tulakan

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A B S T R A C T

This study aims to analyze and describe the instructional leadership of the principal in improving teachers' pedagogical competence at SD Negeri 2 Tulakan. A qualitative approach was employed to explore in depth the principal's instructional leadership practices, which include defining the school mission, supervising and evaluating instruction, promoting professional development and maintaining high visibility. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis, then analyzed thematically to identify leadership patterns and their contribution to the enhancement of teachers' pedagogical competence. The findings reveal that the principal has implemented instructional. These practices significantly contribute to the improvement of teachers' pedagogical competence, although several challenges remain, such as limited resources, resistance from some teachers, and restricted time for instructional supervision. This study recommends the need for continuous leadership training, strengthened coordination between the principal and teachers, and the development of a more effective supervision system to optimize the implementation of instructional leadership in primary schools.

1. Introduction

The Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 14 of 2005 states that teachers are professional educators responsible for educating, teaching, guiding, assessing, and evaluating students. Pedagogical competence is one of the core competencies that teachers must possess, as stipulated in the Regulation of the Director General of Teachers and Education Personel Number 2626/B/HK.04.01/2023 concerning the Teacher Competency Model. Pedagogical competence emphasizes teachers' ability to manage learning effectively, meaningfully, and in ways that prioritize students' needs. This competence includes: (1) creating a safe learning environment, (2) implementing effective, student-centered instruction, and (3) conducting

assessment of students' learning processes and outcomes, providing constructive feedback, and reporting results. Collectively, these indicators demonstrate that teachers function not only as instructors but also as facilitators, motivators, and evaluators who prioritize students' holistic development (Susanti *et al.*, 2024).

According to Irwantoro and Suryana (2016), pedagogical competence encompasses seven essential components: (1) understanding learners' characteristics, (2) mastery of learning theories and principles of educative instruction, (3) curriculum development, (4) implementation of educative learning activities, (5) fostering student potential, (6) establishing effective communication with students, and (7) conducting accurate assessment and evaluation. Kasmi (2018) further asserts that pedagogical competence is closely tied to teachers' ability to design high-quality lesson plans, which support the creation of purposeful and meaningful learning experiences.

In practice, teachers' pedagogical competence in Indonesia continues to face significant challenges (Raudoh & Kusumastuti, 2025). Data from the Educational Assessment Center (Puspendik) of the Ministry of Education and Culture in 2022 show that the national average score of the Teacher Competency Test (UKG) was only 54.05, below the minimum required standard of 55 (Puspendik Kemendikbud, 2022). Regional disparities are also evident, with Yogyakarta City recording the highest average score of 69.12, while Lanny Jaya Regency scored the lowest at 33.88 (Aidi, 2023). These data indicate that teacher competence, particularly pedagogical competence, remains uneven and poses a major challenge in efforts to improve educational quality nationwide.

Based on the analysis of the Education Report, teachers' pedagogical competence at SD Negeri 2 Tulakan in 2023 and 2024 was categorized as "adequate" (65%), primarily due to suboptimal formulation of learning objectives, misalignment of instructional materials with students' needs, and limitations in instructional methods and learning tools (Education Report of SD Negeri 2 Tulakan, 2023–2024). However, in 2025, the school achieved a significant improvement to the "good" category (80%), indicating progress in defining learning objectives, selecting appropriate learning materials, adopting more varied teaching methods, and improving the completeness of instructional tools (Education Report of SD Negeri 2 Tulakan, 2025). Overall, the school experienced a 15% increase in teachers' pedagogical competence over the past three years, making 2025 a period of recovery and advancement toward improving the quality of learning.

One of the leadership practices that significantly affects teachers' pedagogical competence is instructional leadership (Ningrum & Kusumaningsih, 2025). Mala *et al.* (2021) assert that effective instructional leadership enhances the quality of learning. Instructional leadership refers to the principal's efforts to guide teachers to teach more effectively, ultimately improving classroom learning outcomes. According to Mulyasa (2023), instructional leadership is the principal's ability to lead and mentor teachers in improving learning quality through curriculum development, instructional supervision, and program evaluation. Effective instructional leadership is characterized by the principal's capacity to create a

conducive school climate and support continuous professional development for teachers (Yuni, 2025).

Hallinger and Murphy (2023) conceptualize instructional leadership into three key dimensions: (1) defining the school mission, which includes formulating and communicating school goals; (2) managing the instructional program, which includes coordinating the curriculum, supervising and evaluating instruction, and monitoring student progress; and (3) promoting a positive school climate, which involves protecting instructional time, providing incentives for teachers and students, promoting professional development, and maintaining principal visibility.

The leadership practices at SD Negeri 2 Tulakan show a growing inclination toward instructional leadership, although implementation remains partially optimal. The principal has made efforts to guide teachers in understanding more specific and measurable learning objectives. Academic supervision is conducted regularly each semester through classroom observations and *In-House Training* (IHT) activities tailored to teachers' needs based on observational feedback. These initiatives demonstrate the principal's commitment to improving the quality of instructional processes in the school.

Sustained improvement of teachers' pedagogical competence is essential. Instructional leadership plays a crucial role in strengthening teachers' pedagogical capabilities at SD Negeri 2 Tulakan. With an appropriate leadership approach, the principal can foster continuous improvement that positively impacts the quality of learning. Given the significance of instructional leadership, the present study aims to examine in greater depth the role of the principal's instructional leadership in enhancing teachers' pedagogical competence, drawing on Hallinger and Murphy's framework.

Based on the background described above, this study aims to examine and describe in depth the implementation of the principal's instructional leadership at SD Negeri 2 Tulakan and its role in enhancing teachers' pedagogical competence. Specifically, the research seeks to analyze how the principal defines and communicates the school mission, manages instructional programs through curriculum coordination, academic supervision, and evaluation, and promotes a positive school climate that supports continuous professional development. Through this investigation, the study is expected to provide a comprehensive understanding of how instructional leadership, as conceptualized by Hallinger and Murphy, contributes to the improvement of teachers' pedagogical competence and supports the advancement of learning quality at SD Negeri 2 Tulakan.

2. Methodology

The researcher employed a qualitative research method with a descriptive qualitative approach, which aims to understand and portray phenomena in depth through data in the form of words, images, and documents rather than numerical measurements (Moleong, 2018). Data were collected directly at the research site

through interviews, observations, field notes, photographs, and relevant documents, enabling the researcher to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the natural conditions of the research setting. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows the researcher to examine phenomena holistically within their contextual setting and to describe them scientifically based on actual conditions (Moleong, 2018). This method aligns with the focus of the study, which emphasizes describing the principal's instructional leadership in enhancing teachers' pedagogical competence.

3. Results and Discussion

SD Negeri 2 Tulakan is located in Dukuh Dunggayam RT 01 RW 03, Tulakan Village, Donorojo District, Jepara Regency, and is recognized as one of the leading public elementary schools in the area. The school has the largest student population in Donorojo District, with a total of 141 students, exceeding the enrollment of other schools in the same village, such as SD Negeri 1 Tulakan (121 students), SD Negeri 3 Tulakan (72 students), SD Negeri 4 Tulakan (98 students), and SD Negeri 5 Tulakan (42 students). This high number of students reflects the strong public trust in the quality of educational services provided by the school. The teaching staff consists of ten personnel, including one principal, eight civil servant teachers (ASN) who are all certified educators, and one guest teacher who assists in the instructional process. In terms of facilities, the school is supported by relatively complete infrastructure, comprising a total of 15 rooms, including six classrooms, a principal's office, a teachers' room, a library, a school health unit (UKS), a digital room, a kitchen, a storage room, a prayer room, and a ceremonial yard. The availability of these facilities serves as essential capital in supporting effective teaching and learning activities. Overall, the learning environment is relatively conducive, supported by strong community involvement and an emerging school culture aimed at improving the quality of learning. This condition provides an important foundation for the principal in carrying out instructional leadership roles.

Based on the Education Report from 2023 to 2024, teachers' pedagogical competence at SD Negeri 2 Tulakan was still categorized as adequate. This condition was reflected in several aspects of instruction, including learning objectives that were not yet fully specific and measurable, instructional materials that were not optimally aligned with students' needs, and teaching tools that had not been prepared in a complete and systematic manner. In addition, the variety of instructional methods remained limited, leading teachers to rely predominantly on conventional approaches that emphasized lecturing and assignments. However, the 2025 Education Report indicates a significant improvement to the good category, particularly in teachers' ability to manage learning in a more structured and creative manner. This improvement is evident in the adoption of more varied instructional methods, more contextualized presentation of learning materials, and more complete instructional tools, such as teaching modules, diagnostic assessments, and supporting media. The enhancement of pedagogical competence cannot be separated from the role of the principal, who has consistently implemented instructional leadership through regular supervision, guidance in the preparation of

instructional tools, the provision of constructive feedback, and the facilitation of teachers' professional development. Thus, the principal's leadership has become a key factor in improving teachers' pedagogical competence at SD Negeri 2 Tulakan.

Data collection in this study was conducted through three main techniques: interviews, observations, and document analysis, involving the principal, teachers, and school supervisors as key informants and sources of information. The interviews were carried out face to face in the principal's office and the teachers' room, with each session lasting approximately 10–15 minutes. An interview guide was used as the primary reference; however, the researcher allowed flexibility to explore information more deeply regarding instructional leadership practices, forms of support provided by the principal, and teachers' experiences in enhancing pedagogical competence. In addition, observations were conducted to directly examine classroom instructional processes, teacher–student interactions, and the supervision patterns implemented by the principal, while document analysis was used to review instructional tools, supervision reports, and other relevant school documents. All collected data were then analyzed and described thematically to provide a more comprehensive and in-depth portrayal of the implementation of instructional leadership at SD Negeri 2 Tulakan.

Based on the findings obtained from SD Negeri 2 Tulakan, it is evident that the principal has implemented instructional leadership effectively. This leadership is reflected through several core practices, including: (a) formulating the school's vision and mission, (b) conducting instructional supervision and evaluation, (c) promoting teachers' professional development, and (d) maintaining principal visibility within the school environment. The following section show on table 1. presents a detailed discussion of each dimension.

Table 1. Interview results

No.	Interview Question	Answer
1	How does the principal formulate and determine the school's academic goals and vision?	"I always involve teachers in formulating the school vision because I believe that a strong vision must emerge from shared understanding. Through discussion forums, teachers can express their ideas and expectations, including how they understand students, improve lesson planning and implementation, enhance evaluation, and develop students' potential. In this way, the resulting vision truly reflects the needs and commitment of the entire school community to improving the quality of learning."
2	How does the principal communicate the school's academic vision and goals to teachers, staff, students, and parents?	"I communicate the school's vision, mission, and goals through teachers' council meetings, school committee meetings, and parent meetings so that every decision truly reflects the school's needs and gains support from all relevant stakeholders."
3	What steps does the principal take to monitor the implementation of classroom learning?	"I monitor the learning process through classroom observations, teachers' reports, and evaluation of students' learning outcomes to ensure that teaching and learning activities run effectively and align with the school's academic standards and goals."

4	How does the principal follow up after identifying challenges in the learning process?	"I follow up on every learning challenge by providing guidance to teachers, organizing evaluation meetings, and encouraging improvements in teaching strategies so that the quality of the teaching–learning process continues to improve."
5	How does the principal ensure that instructional time is used effectively?	"I manage the learning schedule, supervise teacher and student attendance, and ensure that all activities run according to plan so that the learning process takes place in an orderly and effective manner."

Formulating the School's Vision and Mission to Enhance Teachers' Pedagogical Competence

The principal of SD Negeri 2 Tulakan has carried out the formulation of the school's vision and mission through a participatory and collaborative process involving teachers, school staff, and other stakeholders. This process was conducted through open forums and deliberative discussions, ensuring that the resulting statements reflect shared understanding and collective commitment. Teachers' active involvement in defining the school's strategic direction fosters a sense of ownership and strengthens their responsibility in integrating the vision into daily instructional practices.

The effectiveness of instructional leadership depends not only on the clarity of the school's vision but also on the principal's ability to foster collaboration and communicate academic goals consistently. When teachers are engaged in developing school policies, their pedagogical competence grows more optimally—ranging from understanding student characteristics, designing meaningful learning experiences, conducting authentic assessments, to facilitating students' holistic development. Thus, the instructional leadership practices at SD Negeri 2 Tulakan contribute significantly to the development of a learning culture that continually prioritizes quality improvement.

Furthermore, research findings show that the principal has consistently communicated the school's vision through regular teacher meetings, vision-mission reinforcement sessions, committee forums, and academic workshops. The vision "To cultivate students who are noble in character, excellent, and environmentally aware through a clean and healthy school environment" is not treated merely as a formal document but is internalized by all school members. This continuous and participatory communication helps teachers embed the values of the vision into learning objectives, instructional strategies, and classroom culture.

Instructional Supervision and Evaluation to Improve Teachers' Pedagogical Competence

The principal holds primary responsibility for ensuring that the learning process aligns with the curriculum and meets expected educational standards. Supervision and evaluation are conducted through academic supervision, classroom

observations, and analysis of student learning outcomes as a basis for instructional reflection. This approach positions the principal not merely as an evaluator but as a mentor who provides professional guidance for teachers to refine their instructional practices.

At SD Negeri 2 Tulakan, the principal integrates evaluation results into reflective supervision using data from students' learning achievements. This ensures coherence among lesson planning, instructional implementation, and learning outcomes. Routine coordination meetings serve as reflective forums where teachers collaboratively discuss learning challenges, assess students' progress, and plan improvements in teaching strategies and instructional tools. The process is dialogic, giving teachers space to identify problems, share classroom experiences, and formulate solutions collectively.

Findings indicate that reflective and participatory supervision positively influences teachers' pedagogical competence. Teachers become more aware of their instructional responsibilities, more competent in aligning teaching with learning objectives, and more consistent in evaluating student progress. Overall, the instructional leadership practiced by the principal demonstrates that sustained, data-driven supervision directly contributes to improving teachers' pedagogical proficiency.

Promoting Teachers' Professional Development to Strengthen Pedagogical Competence

The study reveals that the principal places strong and sustained emphasis on promoting teachers' professional development as a key strategy to strengthen pedagogical competence. This effort is realized by actively encouraging teachers to participate in various capacity-building activities, such as workshops, professional training programs, and the Teacher Working Group (Kelompok Kerja Guru / KKG). These activities are systematically aligned with teachers' instructional needs and curriculum demands, enabling teachers to continuously update their pedagogical knowledge and instructional skills. In addition, regular reflection meetings are organized as structured forums where teachers can exchange experiences, discuss instructional challenges, and share best practices. Through these reflective activities, teachers are encouraged to critically evaluate their teaching practices and collaboratively seek solutions to improve learning quality.

The principal also facilitates mentoring programs aimed at strengthening peer-to-peer learning and the transfer of pedagogical knowledge among teachers. This mentoring process allows more experienced teachers to support their colleagues through guidance, classroom discussions, and shared reflections on instructional practices. Such a collegial approach fosters a supportive professional culture in which teachers feel valued and empowered to learn collaboratively. In this environment, professional growth is viewed as a shared responsibility rather than an individual obligation. In line with Mulyasa (2023), collaborative mentoring is an effective strategy for developing reflective and adaptive teachers who are capable of responding to ongoing changes and challenges in education.

The findings further indicate that these professional development initiatives have a significant impact on enhancing teachers' pedagogical competence. Improvements are particularly evident in teachers' ability to design effective and student-centered instruction, manage classrooms more efficiently, and conduct meaningful and authentic assessments. As teachers become more confident and competent in their instructional roles, the overall quality of teaching and learning improves. Therefore, the principal's role in consistently promoting teachers' professional development is crucial in ensuring sustainable improvement in learning quality at SD Negeri 2 Tulakan.

Maintaining Principal Visibility to Enhance Teachers' Pedagogical Competence

The study demonstrates that the principal maintains a high level of visibility within the school through regular classroom visits, active engagement with teachers and students, and consistent presence in both academic and non-academic activities. This visibility reflects the principal's commitment to being directly involved in the daily instructional processes rather than remaining solely in an administrative role. Through frequent classroom visits, the principal is able to gain firsthand insights into teaching practices, learning environments, and classroom dynamics. Active interactions with teachers and students further strengthen relationships built on trust and openness. The principal's presence during school activities conveys a strong message that teaching and learning are central priorities of the school. Importantly, this visibility is not intended merely as a form of supervision or control, but also as moral support that motivates teachers to perform their professional duties with greater confidence and enthusiasm. As a result, teachers perceive the principal as an accessible leader who is genuinely concerned with instructional improvement.

The principal's consistent presence fosters open communication and strengthens collaboration among members of the school community. By being visible and approachable, the principal creates opportunities for informal dialogue with teachers, allowing concerns, challenges, and ideas to be shared openly. This interaction encourages a sense of collective responsibility for improving instructional quality across the school. High visibility also enables the principal to observe teaching practices directly and understand the diverse needs of teachers and students in real contexts. Based on these observations, the principal can provide timely feedback, guidance, and support tailored to specific instructional situations. Such immediate and context-based responses enhance the relevance of leadership actions and contribute to more responsive and effective instructional practices. Consequently, visibility becomes a strategic means of aligning leadership decisions with classroom realities.

The findings confirm that the principal's visibility has a positive influence on teachers' pedagogical competence. Teachers become more attentive to classroom dynamics and more sensitive to students' learning needs, which supports the design of more effective and student-centered instruction. Increased interaction with the principal encourages teachers to plan lessons more carefully, implement varied instructional strategies, and conduct assessments more consistently. Moreover, the principal's presence cultivates a collaborative learning culture in which teachers

feel inspired to reflect on their practices and learn from one another. This environment supports continuous professional growth and strengthens teachers' commitment to instructional improvement. Thus, principal visibility at SD Negeri 2 Tulakan functions as a key component of instructional leadership that inspires, supports, and reinforces the professional and pedagogical development of teachers.

4. Conclusion

The study concludes that the principal of SD Negeri 2 Tulakan has effectively implemented instructional leadership by collaboratively formulating and communicating the school's vision and mission, conducting systematic instructional supervision with constructive feedback, promoting continuous professional development through training and collegial learning forums, and maintaining strong visibility in daily school activities. These practices collectively enhance teachers' pedagogical competence and strengthen the overall quality of learning. To optimize these outcomes, the principal is advised to intensify academic supervision with more targeted follow-up support, while the District Education Office is encouraged to expand instructional leadership training to ensure broader adoption of effective leadership practices across schools.

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