



Coaching-Based Academic Supervision as a Strategy to Improve Teachers' Professional Performance: A Qualitative Case Study in Secondary School

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received: 21 Nov 2025

Revised: 19 Des 2025

Accepted: 24 Des 2025

Published online: 05 Jan 2026

Keywords:

Academic Supervision,
Coaching Technique,
Teacher Professional Performance,
School Principal,
Secondary Education

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Article Doi:

<https://doi.org/10.31258/jes.10.1.p.1352-1363>

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ABSTRACT

Improving teachers' professional performance is a critical challenge in secondary education, especially when academic supervision is often perceived as administrative control rather than a developmental process. This study aims to examine the implementation of coaching-based academic supervision conducted by school principals and its role in enhancing teachers' professional performance at SMP Negeri 9 Pekalongan. Employing a qualitative approach with a case study design, the research investigates the supervision process, teachers' perceptions, and its impact on instructional practices. Data were collected through focus group discussions, classroom observations, and document analysis involving the principal and teachers participating in coaching-based supervision activities. The findings indicate that coaching-based academic supervision transforms supervision into a reflective and collaborative professional development process through joint goal setting, classroom observation, reflective dialogue, and post-observation reflection. This approach enhances teachers' self-awareness, motivation, and instructional innovation, while fostering a supportive and trusting supervisory relationship. Challenges included time constraints and varying readiness of teachers to engage in reflective coaching. The study concludes that coaching-based supervision effectively improves teachers' professional performance and builds a collaborative learning culture. Theoretically, it advances academic supervision models by integrating coaching principles; practically, it provides actionable guidance for school leaders in sustaining teacher professional development.

1. Introduction

Improving the quality of education at the secondary level including junior high schools (SMP), senior high schools (SMA), and vocational high schools (SMK) is

highly dependent on teachers' professional performance as the primary agents of the teaching and learning process. High-performing teachers are not only characterized by mastery of subject matter and instructional skills but also by reflective, collaborative, and adaptive capacities in responding to students' needs. Optimal teacher performance serves as a key indicator of high-quality learning and has a direct impact on students' learning outcomes and overall learning experiences.

From the perspective of educational management, academic supervision is a strategic instrument employed by school principals to ensure and enhance the quality of learning in schools. Academic supervision is understood as a series of systematically designed activities aimed at supporting teachers in developing their pedagogical and professional competencies through continuous planning, implementation, and evaluation of instruction (Glickman, 2007). Research by Hilhamsyah, Azahar, and Handika (2025) demonstrates that well-planned academic supervision significantly improves teachers' instructional quality, particularly in lesson planning, classroom management, and learning assessment. These findings underscore the role of academic supervision as a mechanism for teacher professional development that directly contributes to learning quality. Nevertheless, conventional academic supervision practices, which tend to be verification-oriented and hierarchical, are often perceived as inspection-based and one-directional. Such supervisory approaches frequently generate teacher resistance and anxiety, thereby limiting openness in reflecting on actual classroom practices. Consequently, supervision becomes more focused on administrative compliance than on sustainable professional development (Hanik et al., 2024).

In response to these limitations, coaching-based academic supervision has emerged as a more humanistic, collaborative, and empowering supervisory model. This approach positions teachers as active agents in their own professional development. School principals no longer function merely as evaluators but rather as coaches or facilitators who accompany teachers through reflective and egalitarian dialogue to explore potential, identify instructional challenges, and formulate contextualized solutions (Hanik et al., 2024). This approach aligns with the concept of instructional coaching, which emphasizes professional partnership between supervisors and teachers (Knight, 2007).

Conceptually, coaching is grounded in the assumption that individuals possess internal resources for growth and development. Within the context of academic supervision, teachers are viewed as *coachees* who are capable of setting professional goals, identifying instructional problems, and determining improvement strategies independently. The role of the principal as a coach is to facilitate this process through *powerful questions* that promote self-awareness, critical reflection, and professional responsibility (Novitasari & Asbari, 2021). This perspective is consistent with the *co-active coaching* model, which emphasizes equality, trust, and meaningful dialogue in the coach–teacher relationship (Saripah & Suwandari, 2025).

Empirical evidence consistently supports the effectiveness of coaching-based academic supervision in enhancing teachers' professional performance. A study by

Yosie, Witarsa, and Masrul (2024) found that instructional coaching significantly contributes to improvements in classroom management skills and the overall quality of teaching practices. Similarly, Ayu, Pratama, and Lestari (2025) reported that coaching-based academic supervision strengthens teachers' reflective practices, which are fundamental to sustainable professional development. Other studies conducted in Indonesia also confirm that this supervisory approach enhances pedagogical competence, work motivation, professional reflection, and instructional innovation among teachers (Hanik et al., 2025; Astuti et al., 2025).

In terms of implementation, coaching-based academic supervision in Indonesia frequently adopts structured coaching models, one of which is the TIRTA framework—an adaptation of the global GROW coaching model. The TIRTA framework consists of four stages: Goal setting, Identification of reality, Action planning, and Responsibility (Will). Setianingsih and Hanif (2024) explain that the application of the TIRTA model in academic supervision effectively improves teacher performance, particularly in lesson planning, instructional delivery, and learning evaluation.

Furthermore, the principles embedded in the MERDEKA framework comprising Self-Reflection, Exploration, Collaborative Space, Contextual Demonstration, Elaboration of Understanding, Interconnection of Concepts, and Concrete Action are highly relevant for integration into coaching-based academic supervision. The integration of the TIRTA framework with MERDEKA principles enables supervision to be conducted holistically and sustainably, beginning with teachers' self-reflection and culminating in the implementation and evaluation of instructional practices. This approach aligns with the *Merdeka Belajar* policy, which emphasizes learner-centered instruction and the optimal development of students' potential (Tanggulungan & Sihotang, 2024).

Moreover, coaching-based academic supervision contributes to the development of equitable professional partnerships between school principals and teachers. A collaborative and supportive working relationship not only enhances teachers' instructional competence but also strengthens their work motivation and professional commitment (Saputra et al., 2025). Such conditions foster a school climate conducive to critical reflection and continuous improvement of teaching practices. Importantly, the implementation of coaching-based academic supervision is consistent with the demands of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, which prioritizes student-centered learning. Through coaching, teachers are supported in adapting instructional strategies to students' diverse needs and characteristics, thereby improving the quality of instructional services and promoting meaningful learning outcomes (Yulidar et al., 2025).

Based on the foregoing discussion, the implementation of coaching-based academic supervision by school principals at the secondary education level warrants in-depth investigation. This study aims to provide empirical insights into the process of implementing coaching-based academic supervision in secondary schools, the challenges encountered, and teachers' perceptions of its impact on their professional performance.

2. Methodology

Research Design and Approach

This study employed a qualitative research approach with a case study design. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows the researcher to explore deeply the processes, meanings, and experiences of participants regarding the implementation of coaching-based academic supervision, which aims to improve teachers' professional performance (Sugiyono, 2021; Mulyasa, 2020). The case study design was applied to investigate academic supervision contextually and holistically within the specific setting of SMP Negeri 9 Pekalongan (Arikunto, 2020). This approach enables a detailed understanding of the interactions between the principal and teachers, including collaborative planning, reflective discussions, and classroom practices. It also allows the researcher to examine the complexities of supervision implementation, teacher perceptions, and the impact on instructional quality. Using a case study provides empirical insights that can inform theory development on coaching-based supervision in secondary schools.

Research Site and Participants

The study was conducted at SMP Negeri 9 Pekalongan, Central Java, Indonesia, selected because the school had implemented coaching-based academic supervision as part of its teacher professional development program. The research focused on teachers and the principal who had participated in at least one full cycle of coaching-based supervision. Participants were selected purposively to ensure that they had direct experience relevant to the research objectives. Purposive sampling enabled the inclusion of informants who could provide rich, detailed data about the supervision process, challenges encountered, and professional growth. Demographic information, including teaching experience and subject area, was also considered to ensure representativeness. The research period spanned three months, from August to October 2025, during which observations, FGDs, interviews, and document collection were conducted to obtain comprehensive insights into supervision practices.

Data Collection Instruments

Data were collected using in-depth interviews, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), participant observations, and document analysis. The instruments, including interview guides, observation checklists, and document review sheets, were carefully developed based on literature review and consultation with experts in educational supervision. To ensure validity and reliability, these instruments were pilot-tested with teachers outside the research sample, and revisions were made to improve clarity, relevance, and alignment with the study objectives. Each instrument was designed to capture specific aspects of the supervision process, such as goal setting, reflective coaching dialogues, and instructional improvement, allowing for triangulation of data across different methods. The researcher served as the primary instrument, ensuring consistency and in-depth understanding of contextual dynamics during data collection.

Research Ethics

Ethical considerations were rigorously applied in this study. Prior to data collection, informed consent was obtained from all participants, who were fully informed about the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks, and benefits. Participants were assured that their involvement was voluntary, and they had the right to withdraw at any time without consequence. Measures were taken to maintain confidentiality, including anonymizing participant identities in transcriptions, field notes, and reports. Data were securely stored, and access was limited to the research team. These ethical procedures ensured respect for participants' rights and reinforced the credibility and integrity of the study.

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection was conducted iteratively through multiple methods, including in-depth interviews, FGDs, classroom observations, and document analysis. This cyclical approach allowed the researcher to gather comprehensive data while continuously reflecting on emerging patterns and themes. FGDs enabled participants to share experiences collectively, while interviews provided detailed individual perspectives. Classroom observations captured real-time instructional practices and teacher engagement during supervision cycles. Documents, such as lesson plans, supervision records, and reflective reports, were analyzed to corroborate findings from observations and interviews. Triangulation across these methods strengthened the validity and credibility of the data.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed interactively and continuously through three main stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Arikunto, 2020; Sugiyono, 2021). Data reduction involved selecting, simplifying, and thematically categorizing information relevant to the research objectives. Data display was presented through descriptive narratives, thematic tables, and diagrams to reveal patterns and relationships. Conclusion drawing included interpreting findings, identifying themes, and verifying results via member checking. Source and technique triangulation, along with audit trails, ensured data credibility, transparency, and reliability, making the conclusions empirically grounded and theoretically meaningful.

3. Results and Discussion

Implementation of Coaching-Based Academic Supervision

The findings indicate that coaching-based academic supervision at SMP Negeri 9 Pekalongan was carried out systematically and collaboratively by the principal. Unlike conventional inspection-oriented supervision, the coaching approach positioned teachers as reflective partners, enhancing their self-awareness and motivation. The principal's use of open-ended questions and reflective dialogue

encouraged teachers to critically evaluate their instructional practices, identify challenges, and formulate improvement strategies, which explains why teachers reported increased pedagogical innovation and instructional confidence. Classroom observations and post-observation reflections revealed that teachers gradually implemented actionable changes aligned with students' learning needs, indicating a meaningful transformation in professional practice.

Application of the Coaching Framework in Academic Supervision

The supervision process followed a framework integrating the TIRTA model with the MERDEKA learning cycle. Teachers' reflections during the Mulai dari Diri (Starting from Self) stage revealed initial self-awareness of instructional gaps. In the Exploration and Action Planning stages, reflective questioning and collaborative goal-setting facilitated targeted instructional improvements. During Demonstration and Evaluation, teachers applied strategies and assessed their effectiveness, while the principal provided constructive feedback. The Collaboration and Affirmation stages reinforced intrinsic motivation, peer learning, and sustainability of instructional improvements. These stages collectively explain how the coaching framework translated into measurable professional growth.

Teachers' Perceptions of Coaching-Based Academic Supervision

FGD results indicated that teachers experienced a more supportive and empowering supervision environment, reporting enhanced self-confidence, critical reflection, and motivation to implement instructional innovations. Teachers noted that reflective dialogue allowed them to experiment safely with new strategies, contributing to gradual and context-specific improvements in teaching. This perception reflects the successful alignment between coaching principles and teachers' professional needs, highlighting why the approach positively influenced both motivation and pedagogical competence.

Challenges in Implementing Coaching-Based Academic Supervision

Time constraints for both principals and teachers limited the depth and continuity of supervision, reducing opportunities for thorough reflective dialogue and follow-up. Initial unfamiliarity with reflective and dialogical coaching practices required teachers to undergo an adaptation period to actively participate in the process. Additionally, uneven understanding of coaching concepts among teachers highlighted gaps in prior knowledge and preparedness, necessitating targeted capacity-building programs. These challenges underscore the importance of ongoing support, structured professional development, and scheduling strategies to ensure coaching-based supervision can be implemented effectively and sustainably, maximizing its impact on teacher professional growth.

Supporting Factors for the Success of Coaching-Based Academic Supervision

Key factors supporting the successful implementation of coaching-based academic supervision included the principal's commitment to professional development,

empathetic and trust-based interactions, teachers' openness to feedback, and a collaborative school culture. These factors collectively created a conducive environment for sustainable improvements in instructional practices, reflective teaching, and overall professional growth. The findings, challenges, and supporting elements are summarized thematically in the following table 1, providing a clear overview of the implementation and impact of coaching-based academic supervision.

Table 1. Summary of Key Findings

Theme	Key Findings	Explanation / Impact
Coaching Approach	Reflective dialogue, joint goal-setting, classroom observation, post-observation reflection	Promoted teacher self-awareness, critical reflection, and instructional innovation
Teacher Perceptions	Supportive, empowering, motivated, confident	Increased openness to experimentation and professional growth
Challenges	Limited time, unfamiliarity with reflective methods, uneven coaching understanding	Required adaptation and capacity-building
Supporting Factors	Principal's commitment, trust-based interactions, teacher readiness, collaborative culture	Enabled sustainable implementation and enhanced professionalism

Discussion

The Implementation of Coaching-Based Academic Supervision as a Transformation of Supervisory Practices

The findings of this study indicate that coaching-based academic supervision at SMP Negeri 9 Pekalongan has shifted the supervision paradigm from an inspection-oriented approach toward a collaborative and reflective model of professional development. Unlike previous studies that primarily highlight incremental improvements in teacher competence (Suryani & Rochmad, 2021; Wibowo, 2022), this study uniquely demonstrates how reflective dialogue and empowerment-oriented coaching transform teachers' perceptions of supervision, promoting intrinsic motivation and self-directed professional growth. This finding reinforces Glickman's (2007) assertion that academic supervision should function as a continuous process of teachers' professional growth.

The Effectiveness of Integrating the TIRTA Model and MERDEKA Principles

The integration of the TIRTA model with MERDEKA learning cycle principles provided teachers with a systematic and contextual reflective framework. Critically, this study extends prior research (Setianingsih & Hanif, 2024; Rahmawati & Susanto, 2022; Hidayat, 2023) by demonstrating that combining structured reflection with student-centered pedagogy enables teachers not only to plan and implement lessons more effectively but also to internalize reflective practices as part of their ongoing professional identity. The initial reflection stage (Mulai dari Diri) enabled teachers to independently recognize instructional strengths and

weaknesses, aligning with Pratiwi et al. (2021), but with the added dimension of fostering teachers' self-efficacy in a real school context.

The Influence of Coaching-Based Supervision on Teachers' Professional Performance

Coaching-based academic supervision positively influenced pedagogical reflection, work motivation, and instructional innovation. Distinctively, this study provides conceptual evidence that coaching supervision addresses both technical and psychological dimensions of teacher performance simultaneously, which has not been emphasized in prior national studies (Sulastrri & Widodo, 2020; Kartini, 2022; Rohman & Azizah, 2021). Teachers' increased intrinsic motivation and confidence highlight the added value of reflective coaching over conventional supervision approaches.

Coaching-Based Supervision in Building Professional Partnerships

Findings show that coaching-based supervision fostered equitable professional partnerships characterized by trust, openness, and collaboration. This study conceptually contributes by demonstrating how sustained coaching interactions create a collaborative learning culture that reinforces both teacher performance and school-wide reflective practices, extending insights from Saputra et al. (2025) and Handayani & Supriyanto (2021). Professional partnerships here are not only relational but serve as a mechanism for embedding a culture of continuous improvement.

Challenges in Implementing Coaching-Based Academic Supervision

Despite the positive impacts, several challenges were identified in implementing coaching-based academic supervision. Time constraints for both principals and teachers limited the depth of reflective interactions, while varying levels of teachers' readiness for engaging in coaching activities required an adaptation period. Some teachers initially struggled to understand coaching concepts, necessitating targeted capacity-building and ongoing mentoring. These findings highlight the importance of structural adjustments, such as scheduling dedicated time for coaching sessions, and the principal's active role as a facilitator and guide, which goes beyond conventional supervisory functions, ensuring sustainable professional development (Yuliana & Kurniawan, 2021; Wahyuni, 2022; Astuti & Prabowo, 2023).

Implications of Coaching-Based Academic Supervision for School Development

Coaching-based academic supervision contributes significantly to improving teachers' professional performance and fostering a reflective and collaborative school culture. Beyond technical instructional enhancement, it strengthens teachers' self-efficacy, motivation, and commitment to continuous improvement. This study provides a conceptual framework demonstrating how integrating reflective practices, empowerment strategies, and structured mentoring can guide

school leaders in implementing sustainable, development-oriented supervision. Such a framework serves both as theoretical evidence and practical guidance, highlighting coaching-based supervision as a transformative approach for professional growth, instructional innovation, and the promotion of a culture of continuous learning in secondary schools (Kurniasih & Sani, 2020; Hilhamsyah et al., 2025).

4. Conclusion

This study concludes that coaching-based academic supervision implemented by the school principal at SMP Negeri 9 Pekalongan represents an effective professional development approach for enhancing teachers' professional performance. Supervision is no longer perceived as an administrative monitoring activity, but rather as a reflective and collaborative mentoring process that positions teachers as partners in instructional development. The implementation of coaching-based academic supervision was carried out systematically through stages of self-reflection, exploration of instructional practices, formulation of action plans, classroom observation, and dialogical and affirmative post-observation reflection. The integration of coaching principles with teachers' professional development frameworks enabled the establishment of a sustainable, contextual, and needs-based supervision process that is responsive to both teachers' and students' needs.

The findings indicate that coaching-based academic supervision positively contributes to increased teachers' reflective awareness, work motivation, self-confidence, and willingness to engage in instructional innovation. Teachers experienced more meaningful professional support, which encouraged active involvement in improving the quality of their instructional practices. Nevertheless, the implementation of coaching-based academic supervision still faces several challenges, particularly related to time constraints and variations in teachers' readiness to understand and apply the coaching approach. This study is limited by its focus on a single school, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. Future research could expand the sample across multiple schools and regions to strengthen empirical evidence. Strengthening principals' capacities as instructional coaches and fostering a school culture that supports continuous reflection and professional collaboration remain essential.

Overall, coaching-based academic supervision holds substantial potential as a relevant and adaptive model of teacher professional development. By emphasizing reflective practice, collaborative mentoring, and contextually tailored guidance, this approach not only enhances teachers' instructional skills but also fosters their motivation, self-confidence, and willingness to innovate. Its implementation supports sustained improvement in teaching quality, aligns with the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum, and can be effectively applied across secondary education levels, including junior high schools, senior high schools, and vocational schools.

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How to cite this article:

Solowati, I., Kurniasari, L., Amalia, F., & Soedjono. (2026). Coaching-Based Academic Supervision as a Strategy to Improve Teachers' Professional Performance: A Qualitative Case Study in Secondary School. *Journal of Educational Sciences*, 10(1), 1352-1363.
