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Implementation of Coaching-Based Academic Supervision to Improve Teacher Competence at SMPN 2 Saluputti, Tana Toraja, South Sulawesi

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Abstract

This study describes the implementation of coaching-based academic supervision to improve teacher competence at SMPN 2 Saluputti, Tana Toraja. It employed a descriptive qualitative method involving one vice principal as the coach and three teachers as coachees. Data were collected through observation, interviews, documentation, and field notes across three cycles. The findings show that supervision implementation increased from 60% to 95%, while teacher competence scores rose from 80 to 95. TIRTA-model coaching also strengthened teacher reflection and reduced implementation barriers through contextual adaptation.

Keywords: coaching, teacher competence, TIRTA model, academic supervision, Tana Toraja

INTRODUCTION

Educational quality is strongly determined by teachers' ability to design, implement, and evaluate learning. Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers emphasizes that teachers must possess pedagogical, professional, social, and personal competence as the basis for carrying out their professional duties (Republik Indonesia, 2005). In practice, these expectations are often not fully achieved because teachers still face various constraints, both from limited institutional support and from professional development practices that have not yet been fully effective.

At SMPN 2 Saluputti, Tana Toraja Regency, this condition is reflected in learning that is not yet fully varied, is less adaptive to the diversity of student characteristics, and has not optimally used feedback for continuous improvement. Initial observations showed

that some teachers still relied on monotonous instructional patterns, had difficulty preparing more differentiated teaching materials, and were not yet accustomed to conducting systematic reflection on their teaching practice. This situation reduced student enthusiasm and limited classroom innovation.

Academic supervision is essentially one of the strategic instruments for helping teachers improve learning quality. Arikunto (2006) views academic supervision as the observation of academic problems directly related to instruction in order to help teachers improve the quality of teaching. In line with this, Mulyasa (2012) emphasizes that academic supervision should be presented as professional assistance through systematic planning, careful observation, and objective as well as timely feedback.

The problem is that in many schools supervision is still understood

as an inspection activity focused on performance assessment rather than as a mentoring process. An overly directive pattern often puts teachers in a defensive position, makes them reluctant to disclose the real problems they face, and provides little encouragement for them to find solutions independently. In such contexts, supervision loses its transformative power because it produces administrative compliance rather than deep professional growth.

The coaching approach offers a more collaborative alternative. Through coaching, the relationship between supervisor and teacher is built as a professional partnership that positions the teacher as a learning subject. Reflective questioning, active listening, and the development of joint action plans become the core of the process. Suharyanto et al. (2024) emphasize that coaching in academic supervision can help principals and teachers develop their potential more optimally because the assistance process does not stop at evaluation, but moves toward self-awareness, commitment, and corrective action.

At SMPN 2 Saluputti, this approach has strong relevance because the school is located in a rural context with geographical challenges, limited access to information technology, and a fairly heavy administrative burden on teachers. On the other hand, the school has strong cultural capital through Torajan values that emphasize togetherness, respect, and learning rooted in community life. Thus, coaching is positioned not only as a supervision technique, but also as an approach that can be aligned with school culture.

This study is based on the assumption that coaching-based academic supervision can create a safe reflective space, enable teachers to identify their own development needs, and foster stronger professional responsibility. The TIRTA model used in this study facilitates the coaching flow through goal setting, situation identification, action planning, and the affirmation of responsibility (Suharyanto et al., 2024). Through this flow, instructional improvement is expected to proceed in a more directed way and to be monitored from one cycle to the next.

Specifically, this study aims to describe: (1) the implementation of coaching-based academic supervision at SMPN 2 Saluputti; (2) the improvement of teacher competence after participating in the coaching process; and (3) the supporting and inhibiting factors in its implementation. The findings are expected to provide practical contributions for schools with similar characteristics, especially rural schools that require a contextual, humane, and sustainable teacher development model.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach because it sought to understand in depth the process of implementing coaching-based academic supervision in the real school context. This approach was chosen to capture the dynamics of interaction between coach and coachee, the forms of change experienced by teachers, and the school environmental conditions influencing the success of supervision. Within this framework, the study did not focus on hypothesis testing, but rather on a detailed description of the processes, experiences, and developments that emerged during program implementation (Sugiyono, 2019; Yin, 2018).

The research was conducted at SMPN 2 Saluputti, Tana Toraja Regency, South Sulawesi. The participants consisted of one vice principal who acted as the coach as well as the academic supervisor, and three teachers as coachees. The study was carried

out over one semester and divided into three cycles. Each cycle included pre-supervision, classroom observation, and post-supervision stages with a consistent coaching dialogue pattern.

In the pre-supervision stage, the coach and teachers built agreement, set the focus for improvement, and formulated the learning objectives to be observed. The supervision stage was carried out through objective classroom observation without direct intervention in the teaching and learning process. The post-supervision stage involved reflective conversations using the TIRTA model, which includes goals, identification of conditions and obstacles, action plans, and responsibility (Suharyanto et al., 2024). This sequence was used to ensure that feedback did not stop at observational findings, but was followed by a clear commitment to change.

Research data were collected through learning observation, in-depth interviews, documentation, and field notes. Observation was directed at examining the implementation of supervision stages and changes in teachers' instructional practices. Interviews were conducted with the coach and coachees to explore their experiences during the coaching process, their perceptions of competence development, and the supporting and inhibiting factors they encountered. Documentation included lesson plans, reflection journals, observation notes, and follow-up documents. The use of these multiple techniques is consistent with the triangulation principle in qualitative research (Sugiyono, 2019).

Data analysis was carried out gradually through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Findings from each cycle were compared to identify developments in the supervision pattern and changes in teacher competence. Data trustworthiness was maintained through source triangulation, technique triangulation, and member checking of key findings with participants. In this way, the description of the findings was intended to remain accurate, contextual, and accountable (Miles et al., 2014; Sugiyono, 2019).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Implementation of Coaching-Based Academic Supervision

The findings show that the implementation of coaching-based academic supervision at SMPN 2 Saluputti proceeded gradually and became increasingly mature from one cycle to the next. In Cycle I, the process was still in the adaptation stage. Teachers were not yet fully accustomed to a supervision model that used reflective questions and positioned them as dialogue partners. Therefore, supervision implementation at this stage reached only 60%. Even so, this initial phase was important because it served as the stage for building trust between coach and coachee.

At the pre-supervision stage, the coach did not immediately emphasize teacher weaknesses, but instead opened conversations about learning objectives, obstacles that usually emerged in class, and aspects teachers wanted to improve. This strategy made teachers feel more valued. In interviews, the teachers stated that this approach differed from the usual supervision they had previously received because it did not create a sense of being judged. This change in atmosphere became the main foundation for the effectiveness of coaching, as teachers became more willing to disclose the real problems they faced.

Cycle II showed more structured development. Supervision implementation increased to 80% because the TIRTA stages began to be applied more consistently. At this phase, the coach was able

to direct the conversation to help teachers identify strengths, weaknesses, and alternative actions after observation. Teachers also began to show more active involvement in formulating solutions. Whereas in Cycle I reflection was still largely guided by the coach, in Cycle II teachers began to articulate self-evaluation and development needs more clearly.

In Cycle III, supervision implementation reached 95%. This increase was reflected in greater teacher readiness, higher-quality post-observation dialogue, and more measurable follow-up actions. Teachers no longer waited for detailed instructions, but came with improvement plans they had already considered. The coach functioned more as a facilitator who sharpened priorities, reinforced commitment, and ensured the accountability of the action plan. Thus, coaching moved from a basic assistance pattern toward professional guidance centered on teacher autonomy.

This success was also supported by the school's ability to adapt coaching practices to local conditions. Challenges related to mountainous access, limited ICT devices, and dense teaching schedules were addressed not by forcing rigid mechanisms, but through flexible scheduling, face-to-face meetings, and manual note-taking when digital facilities were not possible. This contextual adaptation shows that the success of coaching-based supervision depends not only on the conceptual model, but also on the ability to translate it into school reality.

Improvement of Teacher Competence

The most prominent changes after the implementation of coaching appeared in teachers' pedagogical and professional competence. According to the research data, teacher competence scores were initially 65, then increased to 80 in Cycle I, 90 in Cycle II, and 95 in Cycle III. This rise indicates that the coaching process not only changed perceptions, but also affected instructional practices that could be directly observed.

In the pedagogical domain, teachers began to show progress in developing learning plans that were better structured and more relevant to student needs. Lesson plans and teaching modules were no longer prepared merely to meet administrative demands, but began to reflect more aligned objectives, steps, and assessments. Teachers also became more aware of the importance of varied methods, student-centered activities, and simple differentiation to adjust learning to heterogeneous classroom conditions.

Improvements were also evident in classroom implementation. Teachers began to reduce lecture dominance and provide greater space for discussion, question-and-answer sessions, and activities based on local context. In Indonesian and English classes, for example, Torajan values and local stories began to be integrated as learning materials or learning contexts. This made instruction closer to students' experiences while also increasing their participation. From a professional perspective, teachers showed better content understanding because they were able to connect lesson content with students' real lives.

In the evaluation aspect, coaching helped teachers develop a more objective and reflective perspective. Assessment was no longer understood merely as score giving, but as a means of examining the achievement of learning objectives and determining follow-up actions. Teachers began to use clearer rubrics, utilize student work as feedback material, and distinguish between conceptual errors and technical shortcomings. This improvement is important because evaluation competence is often a weak point in school instructional practice.

The use of learning technology also showed progress, although it was implemented in simple ways according to available facilities. Teachers began to use easily accessible digital tools, including mobile phone applications, to support material presentation and learning documentation. Although internet access remained unstable, the increased openness toward ICT use indicates a shift in teachers' professionalism from routine work patterns toward continuous learning efforts.

Another very important development was the emergence of self-reflection as a habit. In this study, reflection was not only an activity after supervision, but gradually became part of teachers' professional routine. In the early cycles, reflection still depended heavily on questions from the coach. However, by the final cycle teachers had become accustomed to recording successes, obstacles, and possible improvements after teaching. This habit indicates that coaching encouraged internal change rather than mere compliance with supervisory direction.

From the perspective of teacher development, these findings strengthen the idea that competence improvement is easier to achieve when teachers are actively involved in the improvement process. Feedback delivered dialogically makes teachers feel not corrected from the outside, but guided to identify their own development priorities. This mechanism is what distinguishes coaching from supervision that is merely evaluative (Mulyasa, 2012; Suharyanto et al., 2024).

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors

This study also found that the success of coaching implementation was influenced by the interaction between supporting and inhibiting factors. At the beginning of implementation, supporting factors were at a scale of 4 to 5, whereas inhibiting factors were at a scale of 6 to 7. As the cycles progressed, support increased to 9 and obstacles decreased to 2. This change shows that coaching effectiveness does not emerge automatically, but is built through organizational adaptation and changes in participants' perceptions. The main supporting factors included the coach's competence gained from training, teachers' intrinsic motivation to improve learning, more equal working relationships, peer support, and an inclusive school culture. Torajan cultural values played an important reinforcing role because they encouraged mutual respect, togetherness, and openness to dialogue. When coaching was carried out with attention to this cultural context, teachers experienced supervision as a safe space for learning rather than as a tense arena of assessment.

The main inhibiting factors were limited time due to administrative workload, dense teaching schedules, difficult territorial access, and limited ICT facilities. In the initial stage, these obstacles meant that coaching was not yet implemented optimally. In addition, teachers' understanding of coaching was still low, so some teachers initially viewed the activity as an ordinary form of supervision. However, after experiencing the concrete benefits of reflective dialogue and jointly prepared action plans, this resistance gradually declined.

The findings show that obstacles can be minimized when schools apply realistic strategies. Flexible scheduling, face-to-face meetings when digital connectivity is problematic, and the reinforcement of simple but consistent follow-up actions became effective solutions. This suggests that successful coaching does not require ideal facilities, but rather commitment, consistency, and sensitivity to context (Suharyanto et al., 2024).

Meaning of the Findings for Rural Schools

In the context of rural schools, this study confirms that coaching deserves to be considered as a relevant and sustainable supervision approach. Schools in areas such as Saluputti often face structural constraints that make formal supervision models difficult to implement optimally. Therefore, overly bureaucratic approaches tend to be less effective. Coaching works better because it is flexible, relies on strong interpersonal communication, and can be implemented with limited resources.

These findings also show that the integration of local wisdom not only enriches learning materials, but also strengthens teachers' acceptance of supervisory innovation. When cultural values become part of the dialogue and learning process, change is not felt as external pressure, but as a collective effort aligned with the school's identity. Thus, the implementation of coaching-based academic supervision at SMPN 2 Saluputti not only improved teacher competence, but also built a more reflective, collaborative, and contextual professional learning culture.

Practical Implications and Research Limitations

Practically, these findings indicate that principals or vice principals do not need to wait for complex supervisory instruments to begin coaching. What matters more is consistency in building planned professional conversations. Pre-supervision meetings can be brief but focused, observation can be conducted with simple instruments that emphasize observable teaching behavior, and post-supervision can be directed to questions that encourage teachers to map their own improvement priorities. In the context of SMPN 2 Saluputti, such a simple pattern was effective because it fit the school's working rhythm and did not add excessive administrative burden. Another important implication is the need to make coaching part of school work culture rather than an incidental activity. When coaching is positioned as a recurring program, teachers have the opportunity to see their own development over time. Sustainable cycles ensure that improvement does not stop at one observation, but is followed by monitoring of action plans, discussion of new constraints, and adjustment of targets. In this way, schools do not only obtain supervision data, but also build a healthier professional learning ecosystem. This finding is relevant for other schools that wish to develop teacher learning communities at relatively low cost but with meaningful developmental impact.

Nevertheless, this study has limitations. The number of participants was relatively small because the research focused on one school and involved only three teachers. Consequently, the findings are not intended to be statistically generalized to all schools, but to provide an in-depth contextual understanding. In addition, the indicators of competence improvement in this study were interpreted more through process development, supervision scores, and changes in teachers' professional behavior than through experimental measurement comparing control and treatment groups. Therefore, the results are better understood as practical evidence of the feasibility and effectiveness of coaching in a particular context (Yin, 2018).

Despite these limitations, the strength of this study lies in its closeness to actual school practice. The three implementation cycles enabled the researcher to observe processual change, including how initial resistance declined, how coaching questions gradually became meaningful to teachers, and how local cultural values functioned as reinforcers of change. These findings show that supervisory innovation does not always have to come in the form of major policy; consistent, reflective, and context-sensitive

change can produce meaningful impact. Therefore, further studies covering more schools, using comparative approaches, or emphasizing the relationship between coaching and student learning outcomes will be important for enriching the evidence already obtained.

Based on the research findings, implementation steps that can be replicated in other schools include the following: first, preparing a supervision agenda that is clear but flexible in accordance with the school calendar; second, ensuring that the coach masters questioning techniques, active listening, and feedback based on observational data; third, building a shared understanding that coaching aims to help teachers rather than find faults; and fourth, documenting follow-up actions concisely so that each teacher's development can be monitored over time. If these steps are implemented consistently, coaching has the potential to become a professional development mechanism that is more accepted by teachers and more effective than supervision that only emphasizes administrative assessment.

Theoretical Relevance

Theoretically, these findings strengthen the view that effective academic supervision must combine technical and relational dimensions. The technical dimension is reflected in the clarity of goals, observation focus, and instructional follow-up, whereas the relational dimension is reflected in the quality of trust, appreciation, and dialogue between the coach and the teacher. When one of these dimensions is ignored, supervision tends to become imbalanced: overly administrative when relationships are neglected, or too general when classroom evidence is not used as the basis for dialogue. At SMPN 2 Saluputti, the balance of these two dimensions appears to be the main reason why coaching was accepted and sustained (Arikunto, 2006; Mulyasa, 2012; Suharyanto et al., 2024).

These findings also indicate that teacher professional development does not always have to rely on large-scale external training. School-based development, carried out periodically and embedded in daily teaching practice, can produce more tangible change because teachers learn from the real problems they face. In this regard, coaching functions as a bridge between teachers' individual needs and the institutional goals of the school. Schools gain improved instructional quality, while teachers gain a learning space that is more personal, reflective, and relevant to their work context (Mulyasa, 2012; Suharyanto et al., 2024).

The sustainability of coaching also requires school leadership support. Principals or school managers need to ensure that supervisory practice does not stop with a particular coach, but becomes part of the school's development system. This can be done through realistic time arrangements, the provision of teacher-sharing forums, and the strengthening of teacher reflection documentation. With consistent leadership support, coaching not only improves one or two lessons, but also has the potential to shape a school culture that encourages all teachers to continue learning, remain open to feedback, and take responsibility for improving instructional quality (Mulyasa, 2012; Suharyanto et al., 2024).

CONCLUSION

Coaching-based academic supervision at SMPN 2 Saluputti proved to be implementable collaboratively and adaptively through three cycles using the TIRTA model. Supervision implementation increased from 60% in Cycle I to 95% in Cycle III. These changes

occurred because of trust building, the use of reflective questions, objective observation, and clear follow-up agreed upon jointly.

The application of coaching also promoted concrete improvement in teachers' pedagogical and professional competence. Teachers became more skilled in preparing relevant learning, conducting more interactive instruction, carrying out more objective evaluation, using technology in simple yet meaningful ways, and developing habits of self-reflection. Collaborative support, teacher motivation, coach competence, and a school culture grounded in Torajan values became the main reinforcing factors, while barriers of time, access, and infrastructure could be reduced through local adaptation. Therefore, coaching can be recommended as an effective academic supervision strategy for rural schools that wish to strengthen learning quality sustainably.

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