



Principal's coaching strategy in developing teachers' pedagogical competence

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe the principal's coaching strategy in developing teachers' pedagogical competence at SMA Negeri 3 Sanggau, to identify supporting and inhibiting factors, and to analyze its impact on teaching and learning. The research employed a qualitative approach with a case study design. Informants involved included the principal, vice principal for curriculum, six teachers, and two students. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation, and analyzed using data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings show that the coaching strategy was implemented through the stages of pre-supervision, observation, and post-supervision, emphasizing reflection, collaborative dialogue, and constructive feedback. Supporting factors included the principal's supportive leadership, an open school culture, and educational policy support. The main obstacles were teacher resistance, limited time, and lack of understanding of the coaching concept. The impact of coaching was evident in the improvement of teachers' pedagogical competence, particularly in understanding learning concepts, designing interactive learning, and conducting reflective evaluation. This study highlights the importance of the principal's role as a coach in academic supervision to create effective and sustainable learning.



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INTRODUCTION

The quality of education is fundamentally determined by the quality of teachers and the effectiveness of school leadership. Teachers function as the primary agents in designing, implementing, and evaluating learning, while principals play a strategic role as instructional leaders who shape the professional culture of the school. In the context of Indonesian secondary education, pedagogical competence is not merely a technical requirement but a professional mandate regulated in national education standards (Sukmayadi & Yahya, 2020). Pedagogical competence encompasses teachers' ability to understand learners' characteristics, design meaningful learning experiences, implement interactive instruction, and conduct reflective evaluation. When these competencies are not optimally developed, the quality of classroom learning tends to stagnate. Therefore, strengthening teachers' pedagogical competence remains a central agenda in school improvement efforts.

At SMA Negeri 3 Sanggau, preliminary observations revealed that several teachers had not yet achieved optimal pedagogical competence. Some teachers still relied predominantly on lecture-based methods and demonstrated limited variation in instructional strategies. Lesson planning documents indicated that certain lesson plans were prepared administratively but not fully contextualized to students' characteristics. Classroom observations also suggested that formative assessment practices were not consistently implemented. Although academic supervision had been conducted regularly, the process tended to emphasize compliance with administrative requirements rather than reflective professional growth. This situation created a gap between the theoretical ideals of pedagogical competence and the realities observed in classroom practice.

Theoretically, effective instructional leadership requires principals to move beyond administrative supervision toward developmental supervision. Traditional supervision models often position the principal as an evaluator who assesses teachers' performance against predetermined criteria. Such approaches may unintentionally create anxiety and resistance among teachers, limiting opportunities for open dialogue and reflective practice. Contemporary leadership theories, however, emphasize collaboration, empowerment, and professional learning communities (Alkrdem, 2020). In this perspective, supervision should serve as a professional learning process rather than merely an evaluative mechanism. The discrepancy between these theoretical expectations and the empirical realities at the school level highlights the urgency of adopting more transformative strategies.

One approach increasingly discussed in educational leadership literature is coaching. Coaching is conceptualized as a collaborative and dialogic process that supports individuals in achieving their potential through structured reflection, inquiry, and feedback. Unlike traditional supervision, coaching emphasizes partnership, trust, and teacher agency. In educational settings, coaching has been associated with improvements in instructional practices, teacher motivation, and student engagement. Models such as the TIRTA framework, Instructional Coaching, and the GROW model provide structured stages for goal setting, reality exploration, option generation, and commitment to action. These models suggest that professional growth is most sustainable when teachers actively construct their own solutions through guided reflection.

Several previous studies have examined the relationship between coaching and teacher professional development. Knight & Skrtic (2021) found that reflective coaching conversations significantly enhanced teachers' awareness of instructional challenges and promoted continuous improvement. Chiazor et al. (2025) reported that coaching practices in schools fostered teacher autonomy and strengthened instructional innovation. Astuti et al. (2025) demonstrated that democratic supervision based on coaching principles increased teachers' willingness to engage in reflective dialogue. Furthermore, Yakob et al. (2025) linked transformational leadership with individualized coaching support, emphasizing the principal's role in inspiring professional growth. Glover et al. (2023) provided empirical evidence that coaching contributed to measurable improvements in classroom performance and student participation. Kılınç et al. (2025) highlighted that interpersonal trust built through coaching positively influenced teachers' confidence and professional resilience.

Although these studies confirm the positive influence of coaching on teacher development, most research has focused on general professional competence or leadership effectiveness rather than specifically examining pedagogical competence in depth. In addition, limited studies have explored the implementation of the TIRTA coaching model within Indonesian public senior high schools, particularly in regional contexts outside major urban centers. Many existing studies rely on survey-based quantitative approaches, leaving a need for in-depth qualitative exploration of how coaching is practiced in authentic school settings. Moreover, the interaction between supporting and inhibiting factors in coaching implementation has not been sufficiently analyzed. These limitations indicate a clear research gap that warrants further investigation.

The present study addresses this gap by examining the principal's coaching strategy in developing teachers' pedagogical competence within a specific institutional context. By focusing on a case study at SMA Negeri 3 Sanggau, this research provides a contextualized understanding of how coaching is implemented in real practice. It explores not only the stages of coaching but also the relational dynamics, cultural factors, and structural constraints influencing its effectiveness. The study integrates theoretical perspectives on instructional leadership, transformational leadership, and reflective practice to interpret empirical findings. Through this integrative approach, the research seeks to bridge theoretical assumptions with practical realities in schools.

The novelty of this study lies in three aspects. First, it specifically analyzes pedagogical competence as the primary outcome of coaching, rather than examining teacher performance in general terms. Second, it investigates the application of the TIRTA coaching model as an academic supervision strategy in a public senior high school context. Third, it combines data from interviews, observations, and document analysis to provide a comprehensive understanding of coaching practices and their

impact on classroom learning. This multidimensional perspective contributes new empirical insights into the discourse on school-based professional development.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of instructional leadership literature by demonstrating how coaching can function as a transformative supervision approach. It reinforces the argument that professional growth is most effective when grounded in reflective dialogue and partnership. Practically, the findings offer guidance for principals seeking to implement coaching as part of academic supervision. The study also provides evidence for policymakers regarding the importance of fostering supportive school cultures that enable sustainable professional development. By highlighting both supporting and inhibiting factors, the research presents realistic considerations for implementing coaching strategies in similar contexts.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to analyze how the principal's coaching strategy is implemented in developing teachers' pedagogical competence at SMA Negeri 3 Sanggau, to identify the supporting and inhibiting factors influencing its implementation, and to examine its impact on teachers' pedagogical competence and classroom learning quality. Through an in-depth qualitative case study approach, this research seeks to provide a comprehensive and contextually grounded understanding of coaching as a strategic instrument for educational improvement.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design conducted at SMA Negeri 3 Sanggau. A qualitative case study was selected because it allows researchers to explore social phenomena in depth within their real-life context (Cleland et al., 2021). The focus of observation in this research was the implementation of the principal's coaching strategy in developing teachers' pedagogical competence. Specifically, the researcher observed the stages of coaching activities, including pre-supervision conversations, classroom observation processes, and post-supervision reflective dialogues. Classroom teaching practices were also examined to identify changes in lesson planning, instructional methods, classroom interaction patterns, and formative assessment implementation. In addition, the researcher paid attention to interpersonal communication patterns between the principal and teachers during coaching sessions to understand the relational dynamics that influenced the process.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling techniques based on their direct involvement in the coaching process (Magnone & Yeziarski, 2024). The participants consisted of the principal, the vice principal for curriculum, six teachers from different subject areas, and two students who experienced the instructional changes. Data were collected through participant observation, in-depth semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. Supporting data included supervision program documents, coaching schedules, lesson plans (RPP), classroom observation sheets, school policy documents, and records of internal training activities. Interviews were conducted to explore participants' perceptions of the coaching process, its supporting and inhibiting factors, and its impact on pedagogical competence. All interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent and transcribed verbatim to ensure data accuracy and credibility.

Data analysis was conducted using an interactive model consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification as proposed by Fitriawan & Winarji (2025). In the data reduction stage, the researcher selected, coded, and categorized relevant information related to coaching strategies, pedagogical competence development, and influencing factors. Open coding was first applied to identify initial themes, followed by axial coding to connect categories and construct broader thematic patterns. In the data display stage, the findings were organized in matrices and narrative descriptions to facilitate interpretation and comparison across data sources. Finally, conclusions were drawn through continuous verification by comparing findings from interviews, observations, and documentation. To ensure trustworthiness, the study applied triangulation of sources, techniques, and time, as well as member checking and prolonged engagement in the field (Amin et al., 2020). These procedures strengthened the credibility, dependability, and confirmability of the research findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that the principal's coaching strategy at SMA Negeri 3 Sanggau was implemented systematically through three interconnected stages: pre-supervision, observation, and post-supervision. In the pre-supervision stage, the principal conducted initial conversations with teachers to explore their readiness, clarify learning objectives, and identify challenges encountered in classroom practice. Based on interview data with several teachers, this stage helped reduce anxiety because supervision was perceived not as an evaluative inspection but as professional assistance. Teachers stated that they were given space to explain the context of their classes, including student characteristics and learning constraints. Supporting documents such as supervision planning sheets and meeting notes confirmed that these pre-supervision discussions were structured and focused on instructional improvement. This stage laid the foundation for a collaborative relationship between the principal and teachers before classroom observation took place.

The observation stage focused on monitoring authentic teaching practices in the classroom, including instructional methods, media usage, teacher–student interaction, and classroom management. Direct observation records showed that the principal used observation instruments aligned with pedagogical competence indicators. Rather than interrupting the learning process, the principal positioned himself as a silent observer who documented strengths and areas for development. Teachers reported in interviews that this approach made them feel respected and trusted as professionals. Observation documents also revealed detailed notes regarding student engagement, questioning techniques, and the variation of instructional strategies used. These records later became important discussion materials during post-supervision coaching sessions, ensuring that feedback was evidence-based and contextual.

The post-supervision stage emerged as the core component of the coaching strategy. In this phase, the principal engaged teachers in reflective dialogue aimed at encouraging self-assessment and professional growth. Interview findings indicated that teachers were first invited to reflect on their own performance before receiving feedback from the principal. This dialogical process fostered a sense of ownership over improvement plans and reduced defensive attitudes. Supervision reports documented that each session concluded with specific commitments for subsequent lessons, including trying new methods or improving classroom interaction patterns. Such structured reflective conversations demonstrate that coaching was not merely corrective but developmental in nature.

Several supporting factors contributed to the successful implementation of this coaching strategy. Interview data highlighted the principal's supportive leadership style as a key enabling element, characterized by openness, empathy, and constructive communication. Teachers emphasized that good interpersonal relationships within the school created a safe environment for professional dialogue. Document analysis of school policies and internal guidelines further showed alignment with national education policies promoting academic supervision based on coaching principles. However, the study also identified inhibiting factors, including resistance from a small number of teachers who felt satisfied with their existing teaching style. Additionally, the principal's administrative workload limited the time available for intensive coaching sessions. Some teachers initially lacked a clear understanding of coaching as a reflective and collaborative process, as revealed in early interview responses.

The impact of the coaching strategy was evident in the improvement of teachers' pedagogical competence, particularly in conceptual understanding, teaching practice, and evaluation methods. Interviews revealed that teachers developed a deeper understanding of learning theories and began experimenting with varied and innovative instructional strategies. Observation data confirmed increased use of interactive approaches, such as collaborative discussions and contextual learning activities. Teachers also demonstrated greater ability to create enjoyable and student-centered learning environments. Students informally reported experiencing more engaging lessons and feeling more

involved in classroom activities. These findings suggest that coaching contributed to both cognitive and practical dimensions of pedagogical development.

Improvements were also observed in the evaluation aspect of learning. Document analysis of lesson plans and assessment instruments showed increased integration of formative assessment strategies. Teachers reported during interviews that they now used reflective questioning, short quizzes, and feedback sessions to monitor student progress continuously. Furthermore, evaluation results were followed up with remedial and enrichment programs, indicating a more systematic approach to addressing diverse student needs. Coaching sessions frequently included discussions on how assessment data could inform instructional adjustments. In addition to technical improvements, teachers expressed increased motivation and confidence in their professional roles. Overall, the integration of interview findings, observation records, and supporting documents demonstrates that the coaching strategy significantly enhanced teacher competence and positively influenced the quality of learning at SMA Negeri 3 Sanggau.

Table 1. Research Findings Matrix

Research Focus	Key Findings	Data Sources	Supporting Evidence
Principal's Coaching Strategy	1. The principal applied the TIRTA coaching model (General Goals, Identification, Action Plan, Responsibility) in both formal academic supervision and informal discussions.	Interviews, observations, documentation study	1. Statements from the principal, teachers, and students.
	2. Prioritized a reflective, dialogic, and empathetic approach.		2. School supervision documents (KSP).
	3. Adjusted to the needs of each teacher.		3. Supervision schedules and programs containing coaching.
	4. Coaching was conducted before and after classroom observations.		4. Photos of supervision activities.
Supporting Factors	1. Principal's commitment.	Interviews, observations, documentation study	1. Statements from principal, teachers, and students.
	2. Teachers' willingness and openness.		2. Documentation of training and workshops (IHT).
	3. A collaborative school culture.		
	4. Support from teacher leaders (" <i>guru penggerak</i> ").		
	5. External support (Education Office, BPMP, MKKS).		
	6. Flexibility in coaching schedules.		
	7. Harmonious relationship between principal and teachers.		
Inhibiting Factors	1. Some teachers' mindset perceiving coaching as supervision.	Interviews	1. Statements from principal, vice principal, teachers, and students.
	2. Administrative workload and tight teaching schedules.		
	3. Initial teacher resistance to change.		
	4. Limited learning facilities in certain classrooms.		
	5. Insufficient time for deep reflection after coaching.		
Impact of Coaching Strategy	1. Improvement of teachers' pedagogical competence in planning, implementing, and evaluating learning	Interviews, observations, documentation study	1. Teachers' and students' statements about changes in learning.
	2. Teachers became more varied in methods, more reflective, and responsive to students' learning needs.		2. Classroom observation results before and after coaching.
	3. Increased student interaction and participation in class.		3. Documentation of changes in lesson plans and teaching methods.
	4. Positive changes in teachers' behavior—more patient, communicative, and creative.		4. Evidence of increased student activeness in discussions and project tasks.
	5. Lesson plans (RPP) became more contextual and realistic.		
	6. Teachers began to apply formative assessments for learning improvement.		

Discussion

Principal's Coaching Strategy in Developing Teachers' Pedagogical Competence

The findings indicate that the principal of SMA Negeri 3 Sanggau applied the TIRTA coaching model both formally through academic supervision and informally through casual conversations. This reflects a collaborative coaching approach oriented toward developing teachers' potential through reflective dialogue rather than mere evaluation.

The principal emphasized that coaching was not only a feedback tool but also a means of building deep, humanistic relationships between principals and teachers. Coaching served as a foundation for close collaboration in identifying development areas for each teacher, thereby creating a conducive and student-centered learning environment.

Observation data revealed that coaching created space for teachers to share ideas, challenges, and aspirations with the principal. Teachers involved in coaching were more likely to reflect actively on their teaching practices, leading to dynamic and interactive classrooms. The two-way communication that characterized coaching was consistently observed, highlighting positive and supportive interactions between principal and teachers. The principal's consistency in using open-ended questions and providing constructive feedback aligned with principles of reflective dialogue in adult learning theory, which emphasizes experience as the main source of professional learning (Ockerman & Bagui, 2024).

This finding resonates with Van Der Linden et al. (2023), who argue that coaching not only provides feedback but also facilitates teachers' deep reflection. Strengthened two-way communication gives teachers the space to express their perspectives on professional development needs and expectations. It also supports Grant (2020), who state that coaching in education aims to unlock a person's potential to maximize performance, focusing more on facilitating learning than direct teaching. The TIRTA model applied by the principal shares principles with the GROW model (Goal, Reality, Options, Will) popularized by Whitmore, beginning with goal setting, exploring reality, developing solution options, and committing to action.

Within the context of academic supervision, this coaching strategy emphasized democratic and participatory supervision, building trust between supervisor and teacher. Such an approach encouraged teachers to reflect independently on their teaching practices, making improvements truly relevant to classroom needs (Singh, 2025).

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in Implementing the Coaching Strategy

The study revealed that the main supporting factors of successful coaching were the principal's commitment, a collaborative school culture, open communication, and the involvement of teacher leaders who already understood the coaching concept. External factors, such as training provided by the BPMP and support from the Education Office, also strengthened implementation.

These supporting factors align with transformational leadership theory (Taylor et al., 2019), which emphasizes that effective leaders are able to inspire, motivate, and provide individual support to develop the potential of their subordinates. The active role of the principal as a coach reflects these leadership characteristics.

On the other hand, obstacles included the mindset of some teachers who perceived coaching as a form of supervision, heavy administrative workload, and limited time for in-depth coaching sessions. These obstacles correspond with the findings of Maximo et al. (2019), which reported that resistance to supervision can arise when teachers feel the process is a one-sided performance evaluation, thus requiring approaches that foster psychological safety. Nevertheless, the principal attempted to overcome these barriers by being flexible with time and adopting informal methods to reduce resistance. Such efforts are in line with the recommendations of Mardikaningsih & Darmawan (2022), who noted that effective change management requires persuasive and adaptive communication strategies.

Impact of the Coaching Strategy on Teachers' Pedagogical Competence

The study demonstrated that coaching had a significant impact on the improvement of teachers' pedagogical competence at SMA Negeri 3 Sanggau. This improvement was evident in several

interrelated aspects of teachers' professional practice, particularly in lesson planning, teaching implementation, and learning evaluation. Prior to the implementation of coaching-based academic supervision, many teachers tended to prepare lesson plans in a procedural manner, primarily to fulfill administrative requirements. However, after participating in structured coaching sessions, teachers began to design lesson plans that were more systematic, contextual, and responsive to students' characteristics. Document analysis of lesson plans before and after coaching showed clearer learning objectives, more varied instructional strategies, and more relevant assessment instruments. These findings are consistent with the Regulation of the Minister of National Education No. 16 of 2007, which states that pedagogical competence includes the ability to design, implement, and evaluate learning effectively (Daga et al., 2022).

In terms of teaching implementation, a noticeable shift occurred in classroom practices. Teachers who previously relied heavily on lecture-based methods gradually adopted more active and participatory learning approaches. Classroom observations revealed increased use of group discussions, role play, problem-based learning, and contextual teaching media. Students were more frequently engaged in asking questions, expressing opinions, and collaborating with peers. This transformation indicates that coaching did not merely influence theoretical understanding but also reshaped instructional behavior in real classroom settings. Such findings support the theory of teacher capacity building, which emphasizes that reflection- and collaboration-based professional development strengthens teachers' professionalism and improves learning quality (Kirvalidze & Lobzhanidze, 2023).

Improvements were also observed in the evaluation aspect of learning. Teachers increasingly applied formative assessment strategies to monitor students' progress and provide constructive feedback. Rather than focusing solely on summative tests at the end of a unit, teachers began integrating reflective questioning, peer assessment, and short feedback sessions into their daily instruction. Interviews with teachers indicated that coaching conversations helped them understand the importance of assessment as a tool for learning improvement rather than merely a grading mechanism. Furthermore, teachers reported following up evaluation results with remedial and enrichment programs, demonstrating a more comprehensive understanding of assessment cycles. These findings align with Dudek et al. (2019), who argue that coaching enhances teachers' performance in measurable classroom outcomes, particularly in instructional planning and assessment practices.

Data from interviews with the principal further highlighted that coaching in academic supervision was not limited to providing corrective feedback. Instead, it functioned as a structured and supportive dialogue aimed at fostering teachers' self-reflection and professional growth. The principal emphasized that through coaching, teachers were encouraged to identify their own strengths and areas for improvement, thereby developing intrinsic motivation for change. This relational approach created a sense of partnership rather than hierarchy between the principal and teachers. Such findings are in line with Gorghiu et al. (2024), who stress that interpersonal relationships developed through coaching enhance teacher confidence and contribute to sustainable pedagogical development.

Direct classroom observations reinforced the interview findings by illustrating positive interactions between the principal and teachers during pre-supervision, observation, and post-supervision stages. In post-supervision sessions especially, coaching was conducted as a two-way dialogue in which teachers were given space to express their experiences, challenges, and aspirations. This dialogical process reduced teachers' resistance to supervision and fostered openness to innovation. Teachers appeared more willing to experiment with new strategies after reflective discussions with the principal. This phenomenon corresponds with the argument of Jones & Le Fevre (2020), who contend that teachers engaged in coaching are more likely to innovate and create dynamic, interactive learning environments.

The analysis of supporting documents, including supervision reports and revised lesson plans, provided additional evidence of the tangible impact of coaching. These documents showed progressive improvement in instructional design, classroom management strategies, and alignment between learning objectives and assessment techniques. Teachers' reflections documented in supervision forms indicated growing awareness of their pedagogical responsibilities and professional identity. Moreover, students reported experiencing more interactive lessons, varied media usage, and teachers who were

more patient and responsive to their needs. This holistic impact demonstrates that coaching not only improves technical aspects of teaching but also influences the psychological and motivational dimensions of teachers' professional lives, as suggested by Lukiianchuk et al. (2022).

By integrating findings from interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis, it can be concluded that the coaching strategy implemented at SMA Negeri 3 Sanggau significantly enhanced teachers' pedagogical competence and overall classroom learning quality. The approach fostered structured professional conversations, prioritized partnership between the principal and teachers, and employed flexible strategies to address resistance. Furthermore, it encouraged deep professional reflection that translated directly into improved instructional practice. The application of the TIRTA coaching model within academic supervision thus represents a transformative and sustainable teacher development strategy. When implemented consistently and supported by a positive school culture, coaching serves not merely as a supervisory technique but as a comprehensive approach to improving educational quality in a measurable and meaningful way.

CONCLUSION

The principal of SMA Negeri 3 Sanggau implemented a TIRTA-based coaching strategy through reflective, dialogic, and empathetic academic supervision conducted both formally and informally, which was supported by strong leadership commitment, teacher openness, collaborative school culture, flexible scheduling, and external institutional support despite facing challenges such as teacher resistance, administrative workload, and limited time, and this comprehensive approach resulted in measurable improvements in teachers' pedagogical competence in lesson planning, instructional implementation, and formative evaluation, while simultaneously fostering greater teacher professionalism and enhancing students' classroom engagement, participation, and overall learning experience.

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