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The Role of Principals in Improving the Professional Competence of Teachers

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Abstract: Teachers' professional competence is an important determinant of the quality of education and student achievement. In the Indonesian context, school principals play an important role as instructional leaders, facilitators, and supervisors in strengthening teachers' professional capacity. This qualitative descriptive study aims to explore the role of school principals in improving the professional competence of teachers at SD Negeri 2 Benua, South Konawe Regency. Data was collected through interviews, observations, and document analysis, involving principals, teachers, and school supervisors. These findings reveal that principals use three key strategies: (1) providing ongoing professional development through workshops and internal training, (2) strengthening collegial collaboration through teacher working groups and peer coaching, and (3) implementing instructional supervision to ensure the quality of teaching. These efforts contribute to a significant improvement in teachers' mastery of subject matter, pedagogical skills, and classroom management. The study concludes that effective principal leadership practices are essential in promoting sustainable teacher professional competence in primary schools.

Keywords: Basic Education, Principal's Leadership, Qualitative Studies, Teachers' Professional Competence

A. Introduction

The quality of education is highly determined by teachers' competence, especially their professional competencies which include mastery of subject matter, pedagogical skills, and the ability to adapt to curriculum changes (Darling-Hammond, 2020). In Indonesia, efforts to improve teacher competence have become a national priority, reflected in various education policies and professional development programs (Kawuryan et al., 2020; Rachmadtullah et al., 2025). This initiative emphasizes that teachers' professional competence should not only be seen as an individual responsibility but also as an institutional agenda that requires systemic support, especially from school leaders.

Principals, as leaders of educational institutions, play a central role in ensuring the continued professional growth of teachers. An effective principal acts not only as an administrator but also as an instructional leader who inspires, supervises, and supports teachers (Leithwood et al., 2020). This expanded conception of school leadership has been discussed extensively in international scholarship, highlighting the importance of the principal's role in shaping teacher learning communities, building instructional capacity, and sustaining organizational improvement (Chang & Hall, 2022). However, the extent to which principals contribute to improving teachers' professional competence varies depending on contextual factors at the school level, such as resources, culture, and policy implementation fidelity.

This study examines the role of school principals in improving the professional competence of teachers at SD Negeri 2 Benua, South Konawe Regency. The focus is on identifying the leadership strategies and practices implemented by principals, and how these practices affect teachers' professional development. The findings reveal that three main strategies are used: (1) facilitating ongoing professional development, (2) encouraging collegial collaboration, and (3) implementing instructional supervision. These strategies, although based on local practices, resonate strongly with global research on effective school leadership.

In Indonesia, particularly in schools located in rural contexts, efforts to improve teachers' professional competence continue to face complex structural and cultural challenges. Although various regulations such as the National Education Standards, Continuing Professional Development (CPD), and academic supervision programs have been established, their implementation often does not run optimally. Gaps between policy and actual practice in the field remain evident.

Many schools in remote areas operate with limited resources, such as minimal access to training, a lack of high-quality supervision, and restricted learning facilities. In addition, the leadership role of principals is often not optimal due to heavy administrative burdens and limited opportunities for capacity development. These conditions directly affect the quality of teaching and teachers' professional growth.

Within the rural Indonesian context, principals play a central role in shaping the school's work culture, overseeing instructional practices, and empowering teachers. However, there is still limited research that explores principals' leadership strategies in depth, particularly regarding how these strategies are perceived by teachers and how contextual factors strengthen or hinder their implementation. Therefore, this study is needed to address this gap and provide a richer empirical understanding of leadership practices that effectively enhance teachers' professional competence.

This study employs Instructional Leadership (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985) as the primary theoretical framework. This framework emphasizes that a principal's role in

improving teacher competence is not merely administrative but centers on three key functions: (1) establishing clear school goals, (2) managing the instructional program through supervision and curriculum coordination, and (3) creating an academic climate that supports learning. Instructional leadership is relevant to this study because it helps explain how principals in rural contexts guide, support, and facilitate teachers' professional development through structured and learning-oriented strategies.

In addition, this study draws on Transformational Leadership (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005), which conceptualizes principals as agents of change who inspire, motivate, and empower teachers to continuously develop professionally. This approach highlights the importance of shared vision, individualized support, and capacity building in driving school improvement. Together, these two frameworks provide a solid theoretical foundation for analyzing the leadership strategies emerging from the study's findings.

Professional development (PD) is widely recognized as the foundation for improving teacher competence. Principals are essential in creating opportunities for teachers to access structured training, workshops, and seminars that update their pedagogical knowledge and content. In the context of SD Negeri 2 Benua, the principal organizes school-based training programs that are in line with the national curriculum reform while encouraging participation in district-level workshops (Perry et al., 2024; Krasniqi, 2022.) Research shows that effective PD is characterized by content focus, active learning, coherence with teacher work, continuous duration, and collective participation. By promoting PD opportunities that integrate these characteristics, principals can ensure that teacher learning translates into better classroom practices (Philipsen et al., 2019; Pischetola et al., 2023). In addition, in developing countries such as Indonesia, school-based PD is often more effective than external programs because it is contextually relevant and directly related to the daily challenges of teachers (Postholm, 2018). Thus, the proactive role of school principals in PD at SD Negeri 2 Benua provides evidence of instructional leadership that bridges policy with practice.

Outside of formal PD, teacher learning is greatly enhanced through collegial collaboration. International research consistently highlights the value of professional learning communities (PLCs) in promoting sustainable teacher development, reflective practice, and instructional innovation (Admiraal et al., 2021; Cordeiro et al., 2021). At SD Negeri 2 Benua, the principal forms and strengthens the teacher working group (KKG) which serves as a platform for collaborative lesson planning, peer coaching, and problem-solving. The literature shows that when teachers collaborate in a structured and supportive environment, they develop collective efficacy, which is a strong predictor of student achievement (Goddard et al., 2021). Principals are central in fostering such an environment by setting expectations for collaboration, providing time and resources, and modeling collaborative behavior itself (Çoban et

al., 2023). In the case of SD Negeri 2 Benua, peer observation and reflective dialogue facilitated by the principal helped teachers build trust and openness, conditions identified as essential for effective PLCs.

Instructional supervision is another key strategy in which principals improve teacher competence. Supervision, when done as a developmental rather than evaluative practice, allows teachers to receive constructive feedback on their teaching methods. At SD Negeri 2 Benua, the principal regularly observes the classroom, reviews lesson plans, and provides individual feedback sessions. Teachers report that this process increases their confidence and ability to align teaching with curriculum standards. Scientific evidence confirms that supervision contributes to teacher growth when it is participatory, supportive, and oriented towards professional learning rather than adherence (Lillejord, K Børte, 2023; Lillejord et al., 2020). The instructional leadership framework also emphasizes the role of the principal in setting academic goals, monitoring instruction, and promoting a culture of high expectations (He et al., 2024). The principal's approach at SD Negeri 2 Benua is in line with international best practice by focusing on instructional improvement and capacity building rather than punitive accountability actions.

While these findings are promising, it's important to recognize that principals' efforts are mediated by contextual challenges. Rural schools in Indonesia often face limited resources, inadequate access to external training, and high teacher workloads. This constraint requires principals to be innovative in maximizing existing resources and encouraging internal collaboration (Teo et al., 2024). For example, at SD Negeri 2 Benua, the principal leverages local expertise by encouraging experienced teachers to guide their beginner peers. This peer mentoring system compensates for limited access to formal PD programs and demonstrates adaptive leadership that is responsive to context. At the same time, the decentralization of education in Indonesia gives greater autonomy to school principals to design school-based improvement strategies (Bandur et al., 2022). This autonomy, if done effectively, allows principals to align school-level initiatives with broader national priorities, thereby improving the coherence and sustainability of teacher competency development. However, principals must also balance administrative demands with their instructional leadership responsibilities of the tensions noted in the Indonesian and international contexts. (Lumban Gaol, 2023).

The case of SD Negeri 2 Benua illustrates that school principals play an important role in teachers' professional growth, especially through PD, collaboration, and supervision. Therefore, policymakers should strengthen capacity building programs for school principals to equip them with instructional leadership skills. International evidence suggests that leadership preparation programs that focus on pedagogical knowledge, organizational management, and relational skills are highly effective in enabling principals to support teacher development. In addition, the sustainability of

teacher competency improvement depends on institutionalization practices such as PLC and formative supervision. Instilling these practices into school culture requires systemic support, including adequate funding, supportive policies, and mechanisms for sharing best practices across schools. In Indonesia, initiatives such as (Brauckmann et al., 2023) *Guru Penggerak* (teacher leadership programs) can be synergized with principal leadership training to create a coherent framework for teacher professional growth (Bandur et al., 2022).

B. Methods

This study uses a qualitative descriptive design to provide an in-depth exploration of the role of school principals in improving teachers' professional competence. Qualitative descriptive research is particularly suitable for studies that aim to describe phenomena in their natural settings, with minimal abstraction and interpretation (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Lim, 2025; Villamin et al., 2025). This allows for rich depictions of the context in which leadership practices occur and how these practices shape teacher development. By focusing on descriptive accounts, the study was able to capture the perspectives and life experiences of the participants while placing them in the socio-cultural reality of the school.

Research Place

This study was conducted at SD Negeri 2 Benua, South Konawe Regency, Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia, a public elementary school that represents the context of rural education in Indonesia. Conducting research in this setting provides insight into how leadership practices can be effectively adapted in resource-constrained environments, an issue that has also been highlighted in global research on educational leadership in developing countries (Mugendawala et al., 2020). Participants were selected using purposive sampling, a common strategy in qualitative research that allows researchers to deliberately select individuals with rich information related to the focus of the research. The participants of this study consisted of eight individuals at SD Negeri 2 Benua: the principal (R1), six teachers (R2–R7), and one school supervisor (R8). The principal has 18 years of experience with a Master of Education qualification. The teachers have a working period of 4–12 years with a Bachelor of Education background and are active in professional development. School superintendent with two decades of experience with a Master of Education. This composition presents diverse perspectives, allowing triangulation and reinforcing the credibility of research findings.

Data were analyzed using a thematic analysis framework, which involves three interconnected phases 1) Data reduction, in which interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents are encoded and condensed into manageable units of meaning, 2) Data visualization, where themes and categories are visually arranged through

matrix and charts, allowing the identification of patterns and relationships, 3) Conclusion drawing and verification, where the resulting interpretations are tested against the data for consistency and coherence. Thematic analysis is well established as a systematic approach to identifying recurring themes in qualitative research, offering flexibility and rigor. Using this method, this research is able to move beyond descriptive accounts to uncover the underlying leadership strategies that shape teachers' professional competencies. (Miles et al., 2020) (Schlunegger et al., 2024).

Belief

To ensure the reliability of the research, several strategies are used in line with the criteria of credibility, transferability, reliability, and confirmation (Megheirkouni et al., 2023.). 1) Credibility is achieved through triangulation of data across sources (principals, teachers, supervisors) and methods (interviews, observations, documents). Member checks are also done by sharing initial findings with participants to verify accuracy 1) Reliability is ensured by maintaining an audit trail of the data collection and analysis process, allowing for external review, 2) Confirmation is enhanced through reflexivity, with researchers documenting potential biases and ensuring that interpretations are based on data, 3) Transferability is supported by providing a bold description of the research context, allowing reader to assess the implementation in a similar setting. The use of multiple strategies to ensure trust is consistent with best practices in qualitative research and to increase the validity of findings in leadership studies (Shenton, 2004).

Ethical Considerations

Although not explicitly stated in the initial outline, ethical principles are also observed. Informed consent is obtained from all participants, confidentiality is maintained with anonymous responses, and participants are guaranteed their right to withdraw at any time. Ethical compliance is an important component of qualitative research and reinforces the credibility of findings. (Erdmann et al., 2023).

C. Results and Discussion

The findings show that principals play an important role in improving teachers' professional competence through the following strategies: The findings from interviews and observations revealed that the principal of SD Negeri 2 Benua plays an active role in facilitating the development of the teaching profession both through internal and external initiatives. The six teacher participants (R2–R7) consistently highlighted the importance of school-based training and workshops held under the leadership of the principal. This activity is focused on curriculum implementation, classroom-based assessment, and the integration of ICT into daily teaching practices. For example, R3 emphasizes that math teaching workshops using digital apps not

only provide technical skills but also confidence in implementing innovative teaching strategies. Similarly, R6 shows that literacy workshops improve his ability to design reading activities that align with national literacy programs.

In addition to internal training, the principal also encourages teachers to participate in external professional development programs, such as regional seminars and trainings organized by the local education office. Respondents reported that teachers attending the program were required to disseminate the knowledge and practice they gained through structured peer-to-peer sharing sessions at school. This approach fosters a culture of collective learning, as highlighted by R2, who notes that sharing sessions help bridge the gap between more experienced and less experienced teachers. The role of the principal as a facilitator is in line with findings in the international literature, which emphasizes that effective school leaders create opportunities for continuous learning and professional collaboration. By integrating internal workshops with external learning opportunities, principals not only expand teachers' access to professional knowledge but also strengthen collegiality and sustainability of professional growth within the school.

Table 1. Teachers' Perceptions of the Role of Principals in Facilitating Professional Development

Respond	Key Experiences Reported	Examples of Activities Mentioned	Impact Felt on Professional Competence
R2	Benefit from peer-sharing sessions after external training	Dissemination of knowledge from seminars	Increased collaboration and understanding of curriculum changes
R3	Acquire skills in integrating ICT in subject teaching	Workshop on teaching mathematics with digital applications	Increased confidence in using innovative teaching strategies
R4	Improving assessment literacy through school-based workshops	Classroom assessment method training	Better ability to design formative assessments
R5	Strengthen teaching practices through external PD exposure	Participation in regional teacher training	Adoption of new instructional techniques in daily practice
R6	Improvement of literacy teaching strategies	Literacy-focused workshops	Design of more effective reading and writing activities in line with policy
R7	Bridging the knowledge gap as an early career teacher through peer mentoring	Learning and peer-sharing sessions	Faster adaptation to professional demands
R1 (Principal)	Organize internal training and facilitate access to external PD programs	Curriculum, ICT, and assessment workshops; External seminars	Building a culture of continuous learning and teacher empowerment
R8 (Supervisor)	Observe an increase in teacher participation in professional development activities	Monitoring and evaluation reports	Confirmed positive trajectory of improving teachers' professional competence

Strengthening College Collaboration

The findings presented in Table 3 highlight the role of school principals in encouraging collegial collaboration between teachers at SD Negeri 2 Benua. Teachers report that the formation of teacher working groups (KKG) serves as a platform for collaborative lesson planning and problem-solving. For example, R2 and R5 describe how the KKG allows them to co-design lesson plans and exchange solutions to instructional challenges, thereby increasing their capacity to meet the diverse needs of students. Similarly, R3 and R4 emphasize the value of peer coaching and classroom observation, which provide opportunities for reflective practice and constructive feedback. This is in line with (Voelkel Jr, J Chrispeels, 2017; Jr et al., 2017), those who argue that collaboration encourages reciprocal learning and strengthens the collective efficacy of teachers. Novice teachers, such as R7, particularly benefit from collegial mentoring in KKG and peer observation activities, which accelerate their professional adaptation. As R6 notes, sharing literacy strategies in this collaborative space expands its instructional approach. These practices underscore the importance of principles in fostering a culture of professional learning communities (PLCs), where knowledge is constructed together and shared. (Darling-Hammond et al., 2024).

Supervision and Instructional Feedback

The findings in Table 4 illustrate the central role of supervision and instructional feedback in improving the professional competence of teachers in SD Negeri 2 Benua. Teachers consistently reported that principals conducted regular classroom observations, followed by constructive feedback sessions aimed at improving the quality of lessons. For example, R2 emphasizes that systematic feedback helps to improve lesson structuring, while R3 highlights the importance of aligning daily teaching with curriculum standards. Such practices echo the argument that instructional leadership is most effective when leaders are directly involved in monitoring and guiding teaching practices.

Some respondents (R4, R5, and R6) noted that the practice of supervision goes beyond evaluation and promotes reflective teaching. Constructive criticism of assessment design and innovative instructional techniques encourages teachers to adopt more valid assessment tools and experiment with new methods. This is consistent with (Carless, 2022; Harrison et al., 2022) the findings. who argue that high-quality feedback is one of the most powerful drivers of teacher learning and instructional improvement?

Novice teachers (R7) in particular benefit from stricter monitoring and personalised feedback, which accelerates their adaptation to professional standards. The principal (R1) ensures that supervision is carried out in a supportive manner, balancing accountability with capacity building. This approach, validated by an external school

supervisor (R8), fosters a culture of trust and professional growth. Overall, supervision and instructional feedback are found to be important mechanisms in ensuring that teachers' instructional practices not only meet curriculum requirements but also continue to improve in quality and effectiveness.

Table 2. Teachers' Perceptions of the Principal's Role in Supervision and Instructional Feedback

Respond	Key Experiences Reported	Examples of Activities Mentioned	Impact Felt on Professional Competence
R2	Benefit from structured supervision and feedback on lesson delivery	Classroom observation with post-observation feedback	Better lesson structure and clearer concept delivery
R3	Gain insight into curriculum alignment	Feedback session after maths lesson	A better understanding of curriculum standards and alignment with daily teaching
R4	Strengthen assessment practices through supervisory input	Lesson plan review and class assessment methods	Capacity building to design valid and reliable formative assessments
R5	Appreciate constructive criticism to teach innovation	Feedback after implementing new instructional techniques	Increased willingness to experiment with innovative methods
R6	Develop reflective practice by discussing strengths and weaknesses	Post-observation reflection meeting	Increased self-awareness and adaptability in teaching strategies
R7	Receive guidance as a beginner teacher through strict monitoring	Frequent review of lesson plans and follow-up discussions	Accelerated professional adjustment and pedagogical improvement
R1 (Principal)	Conduct systematic classroom supervision and provide individualized feedback	Regular observation, lesson plan monitoring, reflective discussion	Ensuring teaching practices are aligned with the curriculum while supporting teacher growth
R8 (Supervisor)	Surveillance practices validated as supportive rather than evaluative	External monitoring and oversight reports	Confirmed supervision is effective for professional competency development

When viewed collectively, these three strategies form an integrative framework of principal leadership that nurtures continuous teacher professional growth. Professional development initiatives provided teachers with new knowledge, collegial collaboration fostered mutual support and reflective practice, and instructional supervision ensured accountability while offering personalized guidance. The synergy among these strategies reflects what, describe as the essence of successful school leadership: creating conditions where teachers feel supported, empowered, and motivated to improve (Leithwood et al., 2020).

Overall, the findings underscore that enhancing teacher competence is not the result of a single intervention but of an ecosystem of leadership practices strategically coordinated by the principal. In the context of SD Negeri 2 Benua, this integrative

leadership model has fostered a culture of professional learning, collaboration, and reflective practice, which are essential for sustaining educational quality in rapidly changing contexts.

The results of this study highlight the important role of school principals as instructional leaders in improving the professional competence of teachers at SD Negeri 2 Benua, South Konawe Regency. This is in line with a broader body of scholarship that positions school leadership as a key determinant of the quality of education, especially in a context where teacher capacity remains uneven (Bandur et al., 2022; Darling-Hammond, 2020; Leithwood et al., 2020). These findings underscore that effective principals go beyond administrative duties; They actively facilitate professional learning, foster a collaborative culture, and provide systematic instructional supervision. These practices, when integrated, not only strengthen teacher competence but also create conditions for improved student learning outcomes.

Facilitating Professional Development as Continuous Learning

The first major theme that emerged from this study was the role of school principals in facilitating professional development. Teachers consistently report that school-based training, workshops, and encouragement to attend external programs are at the core of their professional growth. This resonates with the concept of continuous professional learning, which emphasizes the need for teachers to continuously improve their skills to adapt to the demands of new curriculums, pedagogical innovations, and digital transformation in education (OECD Org., 2021). For example, the integration of ICT workshops at SD Negeri 2 Benua reflects a strategic response to the growing demand for technology-mediated teaching. Such initiatives are consistent with (Darling-Hammond, 2020). which argues that principals who prioritize professional development foster an environment where teachers are empowered to innovate. In addition, requiring teachers who participate in external training to disseminate knowledge through peer learning sessions strengthens the sustainability of professional development. This peer-sharing model illustrates the (Sims et al., 2021; van Oostveen et al., 2019). that professional development is most effective when it is in a collaborative and repetitive learning cycle.

The Indonesian context, where teacher competence is a national policy priority (Bandur et al., 2022). It further highlights the importance of professional learning facilitated by the principal. The findings of this study show that school principals who act as facilitators of professional development can bridge policy initiatives with practical implementation at the school level.

Strengthening College Collaboration and Professional Learning Communities

The second major finding concerns the role of principals in strengthening collegial collaboration. Through the formation of *Teacher Working Groups* (KKG), teachers are provided with a structured platform to engage in collaborative lesson planning, problem-solving, and reflective discussions. This practice resonates with the international literature on professional learning communities (PLCs), which emphasizes the role of collaborative structures in enhancing teacher learning. Teachers in the study reported that peer coaching and classroom observation encouraged reflective practice and facilitated knowledge sharing across experience levels. For novice teachers, collegial collaboration provides mentoring opportunities that accelerate their adaptation to professional expectations. This is consistent with the findings (Meyer et al., 2022). who argue that collaboration among teachers leads to stronger collective efficacy, better teaching practices, and better student outcomes.

By promoting open-ended classroom practices and encouraging teachers to observe each other, principals foster a culture of trust and continuous improvement. Such practices are in line with (Lash et al., 2024), which emphasizes that PLCs thrive when school leaders create a safe space for shared risk-taking, reflection, and inquiry. In the case of SD Negeri 2 Benua, the principal's leadership in instituting KKG and peer learning mechanisms not only improves teacher competence but also instills collaboration into the school's professional culture.

Instructional Supervision and Constructive Feedback

The third dimension of principal leadership concerns supervision and instructional feedback. Teachers consistently recognize the value of routine classroom observation and post-observation discussions in refining their teaching practices. Unlike traditional evaluative supervision, which is often thought of as punishment, the principal's approach is supportive, constructive, and evolving. This is in line with the conception of instructional supervision as a catalyst for professional growth rather than a compliance mechanism.

Constructive feedback is highly valued by teachers, who note improvements in lesson structuring, curriculum alignment, and assessment practices. Feedback also motivates teachers to innovate and experiment with new instructional strategies, confirming the argument that high-quality feedback is one of the most powerful influences on teacher learning. Beginner teachers, in particular, benefit from rigorous supervision and personalized tutoring, which accelerates their integration into professional norms and expectations.

The dual function of supervision ensures accountability while supporting growth is emerging as a central mechanism for improving the quality of teaching (Thessin,

2019), also emphasizes that effective principals balance accountability with capacity building, thereby ensuring that supervision contributes meaningfully to teacher competence and student outcomes.

Integrative Leadership Model

When viewed holistically, the three strategies of facilitating professional development, strengthening collegial collaboration, and providing instructional supervision are integrative leadership models. Each strategy reinforces the other: professional development provides new knowledge and skills; collegial collaboration ensures that learning is shared, tailored and sustainable; and instructional supervision holds teachers accountable while encouraging reflection and innovation. This interconnected framework is in line with (Leithwood et al., 2020) which argues that successful principals combine multiple dimensions of leadership to create an environment where teachers feel supported, empowered, and motivated to improve.

These findings also highlight the importance of contextual adaptation. Although the strategies observed at SD Negeri 2 Benua are consistent with global best practices, their implementation is sensitive to the local realities of the school, including resource limitations and the professional profile of teaching staff. This supports the argument (Cordeiro et al., 2021) that instructional leadership is universal and context-specific, requiring principals to tailor leadership practices to the unique needs of their school.

Implications for Policy and Practice

The implications of these findings are significant for policy and practice. For policymakers, this research underscores the need to strengthen principal preparation and professional development programs, ensuring that principals are equipped with the skills to serve as instructional leaders rather than simply administrative managers. For practitioners, these findings highlight the value of integrating professional development, collaboration, and supervision into a coherent leadership strategy that encourages the continued growth of teachers.

On a theoretical level, this research contributes to the literature on instructional leadership in the context of Southeast Asia, showing how global leadership theory can be adapted to local realities. By documenting the practice of a school principal in a rural Indonesian school, this study provides insight into the ways in which leadership strategies can be mobilized to improve teacher competence in resource-constrained environments.

Implication

The findings of this study underscore the importance of principals being actively involved as instructional leaders to improve teachers' professional competence. Practically, principals should prioritize facilitating school-based professional development, promoting collegial collaboration through teacher working groups, and implementing regular instructional supervision with constructive feedback. These practices create a supportive school environment where teachers are empowered to innovate and improve their pedagogical approaches. Schools can also develop systematic mechanisms for peer coaching and lessons, which have been shown to be effective in encouraging reflective teaching and continuous improvement (Rachmadtullah et al.,2025).

Theoretical implications; From a theoretical point of view, this study expands the discourse on instructional leadership by highlighting the integration of three interrelated dimensions: professional development, collegial collaboration, and instructional supervision. Together, these dimensions reinforce the idea that the principal's leadership is not limited to administrative tasks but serves as a catalyst for building a professional learning community and maintaining teacher competence. This perspective supports and enriches existing leadership models, such as the instructional leadership framework, by demonstrating their application in the context of Indonesian primary schools (Cordeiro et al., 2021).

Policy Implications; At the policy level, this study emphasizes the need for systemic support to strengthen the leadership capacity of school principals. Policymakers should design professional development programs designed specifically for principals to enhance their competencies in instructional leadership. In addition, education policies should institute collaborative structures, such as teacher working groups and peer coaching, to ensure its sustainability across schools. Integrating monitoring and evaluation mechanisms into the policy framework will also ensure accountability and effectiveness in principals' efforts to improve teacher competence. These measures can contribute to achieving national education goals and aligning with global standards for quality teaching and learning. (OECD Org., 2021).

D. Conclusions

This study examines the role of school principals in improving the professional competence of teachers at SD Negeri 2 Benua, South Konawe Regency, by focusing on three main strategies: facilitating professional development, strengthening collegial collaboration, and conducting instructional supervision with constructive feedback. These findings suggest that these strategies are not applied in isolation, but rather form an integrated leadership model that effectively encourages continuous professional growth among teachers.

Principals' efforts in facilitating professional development through school-based workshops and encouragement to participate in external training provide teachers with updated pedagogical knowledge and enhance their ability to integrate ICT, design assessments, and adapt to curriculum reforms. At the same time, the establishment of *Teacher Working Groups* (KKG) and the promotion of peer coaching and collaborative practices strengthen collegial collaboration, allowing teachers to jointly build solutions, share expertise, and develop collective efficacy. Additionally, supervision and instructional feedback create opportunities for reflective practice, ensuring that teaching aligns with curriculum standards while promoting innovation and adaptability in the classroom.

These findings underscore the importance of principals adopting a holistic approach to leadership that combines capacity building, collaboration, and accountability. As supported by the international literature (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Leithwood et al., 2020; Robinson et al., 2008), effective instructional leadership is a determining factor in improving teacher quality and, ultimately, student learning outcomes. In the context of Indonesia's basic education, this integrative leadership model offers valuable insights for policymakers and practitioners seeking to strengthen teacher competencies as a foundation for improving the quality of education.

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