



The Principal's Strategies in Teacher Professional Development in Public Junior High Schools in Jambi Province

Muhajirin¹ Maisah² Kemas Imron Rosadi³
UIN STS Jambi

Corresponding Author: Muhajirin: muhajirin0020@gmail.com

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords: *Principal's Strategies, Teacher Professional Development*

Received : 12, Oktober

Revised : 20, November

Accepted: 3, December

©2023 Muhajirin, Maisah, Rosadi (s): This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the [Creative Commons Atribusi 4.0 Internasional](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).



ABSTRACT

This research explores the strategies implemented by school principals in improving teacher professionalism in public junior high schools in Jambi Province. The study focuses on identifying key factors that influence the success of professional development programs, examining the role of school leadership, and addressing the challenges faced in the implementation of these strategies. The findings indicate that the strategies employed by principals, such as structured planning, the establishment of learning communities, and motivational leadership, have had a positive impact on teacher engagement and professional growth. However, challenges such as varying teacher competencies, limited technological resources, and inconsistent participation in professional development programs persist, hindering the full potential of these strategies. School principals, particularly in schools such as SMP Negeri 6 Sungai Penuh, SMP Negeri 8 Muaro Jambi, and SMP Negeri 7 Tanjung Jabung Timur, play a critical role in fostering an environment conducive to teacher development through motivation, constructive feedback, and collaborative efforts. The study suggests that improving mentoring programs, enhancing technological infrastructure, and providing flexible training schedules can address the existing barriers. These findings contribute to the growing body of knowledge on the effectiveness of leadership strategies in improving teacher professionalism and have implications for future educational reforms in Jambi Province and beyond.

INTRODUCTION

Education is a fundamental aspect of a nation's development (Adams, 2002). Teachers, as the main drivers of the learning process, play a pivotal role in determining the quality of education. In the context of public junior high schools in Jambi Province, teacher professional development is a critical issue given the challenges of globalization, technological advancements, and evolving curricula. Principals, as educational leaders at the school level, hold a strategic responsibility to support and guide teachers' professional growth to address these challenges effectively. However, several challenges hinder the process of teacher professional development in the field (Park & So, 2014). These challenges include a lack of support from principals in the form of training, ineffective supervision, and limited resources and facilities to support teacher development programs. Furthermore, some principals have yet to fully understand effective managerial strategies to motivate and empower teachers in enhancing their competencies.

A research gap also exists regarding the specific strategies employed by principals in Jambi Province for teacher professional development. Most prior studies have focused on teacher challenges or the impact of general education policies, without delving into the critical role of principals as a key element in teacher development success. This study is significant because principals play a strategic role in determining the quality of education in schools. Principals are not only administrators but also leaders who inspire and motivate teachers to continually improve their competencies. In this increasingly competitive educational era, teachers must be equipped with pedagogical, technological, and professional skills aligned with the needs of students and society.

The primary objective of this research is to identify and analyze the strategies employed by principals in developing teacher professionalism in public junior high schools in Jambi Province. This study aims to provide practical guidance for principals in implementing effective and sustainable strategies to improve the quality of teachers in their respective schools. This research is highly relevant to the field of educational management, particularly in the development of human resources in the education sector. By offering in-depth insights into principals' strategies, this study is expected to serve as a reference for educational policymakers, principals, and teachers in enhancing the quality of teaching and learning.

Previous studies have shown that principals with strong leadership skills significantly influence teachers' motivation and performance. Research by Lee highlights the importance of needs-based training and mentoring programs as tools for developing teacher professionalism (Lee, 2005). However, these studies were primarily conducted in foreign settings or urban areas with better educational facilities. In Indonesia, particularly in Jambi Province, limited research has explored how principals address specific local challenges, such as budget constraints, cultural differences, and geographical factors affecting access to professional development programs. This study seeks to enhance and complement previous findings by highlighting practical strategies applicable to the local context.

The novelty of this research lies in its approach to exploring principals' strategies for teacher professional development in Jambi Province. This study not only focuses on theoretical aspects but also examines real-world practices employed by principals to overcome local challenges. The specific contribution of this research is the development of a locally contextualized model of strategies that can be adapted by principals in other regions facing similar challenges. Additionally, this study provides fresh insights into how principals can optimize available resources to support teacher professional development. The resulting model from this research is expected to enrich the literature in educational management and serve as a guide for school principals across Indonesia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Teacher Professional Development

Teacher professional development refers to the continuous process of improving teachers' skills, knowledge, and practices to enhance their effectiveness in the classroom. According to Guskey, effective professional development programs should focus on both the needs of teachers and the broader objectives of educational institutions (Guskey, 2002). Methods such as in-service training, workshops, mentoring, and peer collaboration have been identified as effective strategies for fostering teacher growth. However, these programs require proper planning, implementation, and follow-up to ensure meaningful impact.

Research has also highlighted the importance of aligning professional development with contemporary educational challenges, such as integrating technology into teaching and meeting diverse student needs (Desimone, 2009). In the context of Jambi Province, the implementation of such programs remains inconsistent due to limited resources and institutional support, underscoring the need for strategic leadership by school principals.

The Role of Principals in Educational Leadership

Principals play a pivotal role in shaping the professional development of teachers. As highlighted by Leithwood et al., effective school leaders act as instructional leaders, focusing on improving teaching and learning processes (Leithwood et al., 2004). They do this by creating a conducive environment, facilitating professional development opportunities, and fostering a culture of collaboration among teachers.

In Indonesia, several studies have shown that principals who adopt participatory leadership approaches tend to have more significant success in promoting teacher professional development ((Suyatno et al., 2020). Strategies such as regular teacher supervision, coaching, and recognition of achievements have been proven to increase teachers' motivation and performance. However, there is limited research specifically addressing how these strategies are applied in rural or resource-constrained settings, such as Jambi Province.

Challenges in Teacher Development in Indonesia

Indonesia faces several challenges in improving teacher quality. These include insufficient funding for professional development programs, unequal access to resources between urban and rural areas, and a lack of alignment between training programs and teachers' needs (Chu-Chang et al., 2013). Furthermore, bureaucratic obstacles and the absence of a systematic evaluation mechanism for professional development activities often reduce their effectiveness.

In Jambi Province, geographical and cultural diversity adds another layer of complexity. Principals must navigate these challenges while implementing strategies that are contextually appropriate and sustainable. Addressing these issues requires innovative approaches that leverage local strengths and resources.

Gaps in the Existing Literature

While the significance of teacher professional development and the role of principals have been well-documented, there is a lack of research that integrates these two aspects within the specific context of public junior high schools in Jambi Province. Most existing studies focus on either the challenges faced by teachers or general leadership practices, without delving into the nuanced strategies principals employ to address local challenges.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts the instructional leadership theory as its foundation. According to Hallinger and Murphy, instructional leadership emphasizes the principal's role in setting clear educational goals, managing the instructional program, and fostering a positive school climate (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). This framework is particularly relevant for exploring how principals in Jambi Province design and implement strategies for teacher professional development amidst various challenges. The literature review highlights the need for a context-specific exploration of principals' strategies in Jambi Province, which will contribute to a deeper understanding of effective leadership practices in fostering teacher professional development.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative research approach with a descriptive design to explore the strategies used by principals in public junior high schools in Jambi Province for teacher professional development. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows for a comprehensive understanding of complex social phenomena within their real-life contexts. This method facilitated the collection of detailed insights into the principals' strategies, challenges, and contextual factors influencing teacher development efforts in both urban and rural areas.

The research was conducted in selected public junior high schools across Jambi Province, ensuring a diverse representation of schools with varying resources and environments. The primary subjects of the study were school principals, as they are the main drivers of teacher professional development initiatives. Additional data were gathered from teachers and education supervisors to triangulate findings and provide a holistic view of the strategies

implemented. The data were collected through semi-structured interviews, direct observations, and analysis of school documents such as training plans, attendance records, and policy guidelines.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the data, multiple methods of verification were employed. Triangulation was used by comparing findings from interviews, observations, and document analysis. Member checking was conducted by sharing interview transcripts and preliminary interpretations with participants for confirmation. Peer debriefing was also utilized, wherein colleagues and experts in the field reviewed the findings to ensure objective analysis. Ethical considerations were adhered to throughout the study, including obtaining informed consent, maintaining confidentiality, and ensuring voluntary participation of all respondents.

The data were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive model, which involved data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Huberman, 2011). Data reduction focused on summarizing and coding relevant information, while data displays such as tables and matrices helped identify patterns and relationships. Conclusions were drawn and verified against the raw data to ensure accuracy and consistency. This rigorous methodological framework ensured that the study's findings provided valuable insights into the strategies employed by principals in Jambi Province for enhancing teacher professionalism.

RESEARCH RESULT

The findings reveal that strategies for teacher professional development in public junior high schools in Jambi Province are not yet optimal due to several key factors. Limitations in strategic planning, scarce resources, and varying teacher motivation serve as significant obstacles. These findings are elaborated below:

The Role of Principals in Teacher Professional Development

The role of school principals is crucial in identifying and addressing teachers' professional development needs. For instance, at SMP Negeri 6 Sungai Penuh, Principal AMZ demonstrated that motivational approaches and providing constructive feedback can boost teachers' morale and engagement. By applying Herzberg's motivation theory and transformational leadership principles, principals can create a supportive and inspiring environment for teachers to enhance their competencies. Similarly, at SMP Negeri 8 Muaro Jambi and SMP Negeri 7 Tanjung Jabung Timur, principals act as motivators, facilitators, and supervisors, playing vital roles in facilitating professional growth. Support in the form of incentives, facilities, and feedback highlights principals' active involvement in fostering effective and sustainable teacher development.

Strategies for Enhancing Teacher Professionalism in Jambi Province

Principals in public junior high schools in Jambi Province have employed various strategies to improve teacher professionalism. At SMP Negeri 6 Sungai Penuh, Principal AMZ implemented well-structured planning, including annual activities and curriculum development, to enhance educational quality. At SMP

Negeri 8 Muaro Jambi, the principal activated learning communities as platforms for teachers to share knowledge and experiences, strengthening their capacities through regular discussions and access to innovative teaching methods. At SMP Negeri 7 Tanjung Jabung Timur, the focus on motivation and support through training and Teacher Subject Discussion Groups (MGMP) provided additional avenues for teachers to enhance their competencies. Classroom observations and constructive feedback were integral parts of these strategies to improve teaching quality.

Challenges in Implementing Professional Development Strategies

Despite these strategies, significant challenges hinder the progress of teacher professional development in Jambi Province. Limited parental involvement at SMP Negeri 6 Sungai Penuh constrained the success of development programs. At both SMP Negeri 6 Sungai Penuh and SMP Negeri 8 Muaro Jambi, disparities in teachers' professional capacities created challenges, with clear gaps in skills and knowledge requiring additional mentoring programs. Limited access to technology and varying teacher motivation levels at SMP Negeri 8 Muaro Jambi further hindered progress, as some teachers struggled with information technology and showed inconsistent commitment to development programs. Lastly, busy schedules at SMP Negeri 8 Muaro Jambi made it difficult for teachers to attend training without disrupting their teaching duties, highlighting the need for better time management and flexible training schedules. These challenges require integrated solutions to achieve optimal results in education development.

Effectiveness of Principals' Strategies for Teacher Professional Development

The strategies implemented by principals in public junior high schools in Jambi Province have shown varying levels of effectiveness. At SMP Negeri 6 Sungai Penuh, approaches involving comprehensive educational planning, partnerships with external institutions, and supportive educational facilities have improved teaching quality, although challenges remain regarding diverse teaching experiences and insufficient facilities. These efforts align with collaboration theory in teacher professional development but require enhancements in physical facilities and additional support for less experienced teachers.

At SMP Negeri 8 Muaro Jambi, implementing the School Quality Management Program (PMM) and the e-performance system has yielded positive results, but a lack of active engagement among some teachers has hindered optimal outcomes. This reflects a need for better motivational strategies, technology training, and time management support to increase teacher participation. At SMP Negeri 7 Tanjung Jabung Timur, In-House Training (IHT) has effectively improved teacher skills and collaboration, but low participation in the Teacher Subject Discussion Group (MGMP) limits its impact. Adjusting schedules and providing flexible support are essential for ensuring full engagement in training programs. Overall, while various strategies have been implemented, these challenges require attention and integrated solutions to achieve optimal outcomes in teacher professional development.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study highlight both the strengths and challenges of principals' strategies in developing teacher professionalism in public junior high schools across Jambi Province. This discussion focuses on analyzing these findings within the context of educational leadership theories and existing literature while addressing their implications for practice and policy. The role of principals as key agents in fostering teacher professional development is consistent with transformational leadership theory. Principals such as AMZ from SMP Negeri 6 Sungai Penuh demonstrated that a motivational approach, combined with constructive feedback, significantly enhances teacher engagement. Herzberg's two-factor theory further supports this, indicating that intrinsic motivators, such as recognition and personal growth opportunities, can lead to improved teacher performance. Moreover, principals at SMP Negeri 8 Muaro Jambi and SMP Negeri 7 Tanjung Jabung Timur showcased their roles as facilitators, motivators, and supervisors, providing resources and fostering environments conducive to learning and growth. These findings align with the concept of distributed leadership, which emphasizes collaboration and empowerment to achieve organizational goals.

Despite these efforts, the research identified critical challenges that hinder the effectiveness of professional development initiatives. The disparity in teachers' skills and knowledge, particularly at SMP Negeri 6 Sungai Penuh and SMP Negeri 8 Muaro Jambi, underscores the need for targeted mentoring programs to address gaps. Previous studies, such as those by Hargreaves and Fullan, emphasize the importance of tailored professional development programs that cater to the unique needs of teachers (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). Furthermore, the limited use of technology in SMP Negeri 8 Muaro Jambi reflects broader systemic issues in integrating digital tools into education, as highlighted by UNESCO's report on ICT in education (UNESCO, 2020). Addressing this challenge requires capacity-building initiatives and sustained investment in technological infrastructure.

The study also revealed that principals' strategies in enhancing teacher professionalism vary in their effectiveness based on contextual factors. For instance, structured annual planning and curriculum development at SMP Negeri 6 Sungai Penuh have improved teaching quality but remain constrained by insufficient facilities. Similarly, the implementation of School Quality Management Programs (PMM) and e-performance systems at SMP Negeri 8 Muaro Jambi shows promise but suffers from inconsistent teacher participation. These findings reflect the need for holistic strategies that integrate motivational support, time management, and collaborative platforms such as Teacher Subject Discussion Groups (MGMP).

In conclusion, this study reinforces the critical role of principals in shaping teacher professional development while highlighting significant challenges that need addressing (MacLeod, 2020). The findings contribute to the broader discourse on educational leadership by emphasizing the interplay between strategic planning, motivational support, and contextual factors in achieving professional growth among teachers. Future research should explore scalable

and context-sensitive models of teacher development that can be effectively implemented in diverse educational settings.

This study offers several key academic contributions to the field of educational leadership and teacher professional development. First, it deepens the understanding of the role that principals play in enhancing the professional growth of teachers in public junior high schools, particularly in Jambi Province. By examining the specific strategies employed by principals, such as motivational leadership, constructive feedback, and the creation of supportive learning environments, this study provides empirical evidence that supports the application of transformational leadership theory in the Indonesian educational context. The findings contribute to the growing body of literature on how leadership practices can directly impact teacher motivation and professional development.

Second, the study highlights the importance of a well-structured approach to teacher development, particularly the integration of community learning platforms like Teacher Subject Discussion Groups (MGMP) and peer mentoring. It suggests that effective professional development goes beyond formal training and includes fostering collaboration among teachers. This contribution enriches the literature on professional learning communities (PLCs), showing how localized, school-specific practices can facilitate continuous professional growth. Furthermore, the study adds new insights into the challenges faced by principals, such as the disparities in teacher competencies and the insufficient use of technology, thus offering a more comprehensive understanding of the barriers to effective professional development in a developing country context.

Additionally, the findings contribute to the theoretical discussion surrounding the gap between strategic planning and the practical realities of implementing professional development programs. By identifying the mismatch between policy intentions and the day-to-day constraints faced by schools, such as limited resources and time management issues, this research calls for a more nuanced approach to educational policy that considers local contexts and the dynamic needs of teachers. Lastly, the study provides a comprehensive framework for future research in the area of teacher professional development. It encourages further investigation into how specific leadership practices can be adapted to different cultural and educational contexts, particularly in regions with unique challenges. The study's findings serve as a foundation for policy recommendations that can improve teacher professionalism, highlighting the importance of integrating motivational strategies, peer collaboration, and technology into school leadership practices. Thus, this research not only extends existing knowledge but also offers practical insights for policymakers, school leaders, and educators seeking to enhance the quality of teaching and learning in similar settings.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that the strategies employed by school principals in Jambi Province to enhance teacher professionalism show varying levels of effectiveness. Key strategies include motivational leadership, structured professional development planning, and the establishment of collaborative learning platforms such as Teacher Subject Discussion Groups (MGMP). These strategies have contributed to improving teacher engagement, performance, and competence. However, challenges such as disparities in teacher skills, limited technological resources, and inconsistent participation in development programs need to be addressed to optimize the effectiveness of these strategies.

To improve teacher professionalism in Jambi Province, it is recommended that school principals focus on providing targeted support for teachers with lower competencies, particularly through mentoring and peer collaboration. Additionally, principals should invest in professional development programs that integrate technology and time management solutions to overcome existing barriers. More flexible scheduling and improved technological infrastructure are necessary to ensure that teachers can fully participate in training without compromising their teaching responsibilities. Finally, further efforts should be made to strengthen partnerships with external organizations to bring in more diverse resources and expertise.

ADVANCED RESEARCH

Like any study, this research has certain limitations. One limitation is the scope of the research, which focused on a specific geographic area (Jambi Province), and the findings may not be entirely generalizable to other regions with different educational contexts. Additionally, this study primarily focused on the perspectives of school principals and did not explore the experiences of teachers in-depth. Future research could extend this study by incorporating teacher feedback and examining how teachers perceive the effectiveness of professional development programs. Further studies could also explore the long-term impacts of the implemented strategies on student outcomes and the overall school culture. Additionally, research could investigate the role of external factors, such as government policies or community involvement, in shaping the effectiveness of professional development programs.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to all the individuals and institutions who supported me throughout the research process. My sincere thanks go to the school principals and teachers in Jambi Province for their cooperation and valuable insights, which greatly enriched this study. I also appreciate the guidance and constructive feedback from my academic advisors and colleagues, which helped refine this paper.

REFERENCES

- Adams, D. K. (2002). *Education and national development: Priorities, policies, and planning* (1st ed.). Asian Development Bank.
- Chu-Chang, M., Al-Samarrai, S., Shaeffer, S., Ragatz, A. B., De Ree, J., & Stevenson, R. (2013). *Teacher reform in Indonesia: The role of politics and evidence in policy making*. World Bank Publications.
- Desimone, L. M. (2009). Improving impact studies of teachers' professional development: Toward better conceptualizations and measures. *Educational Researcher*, 38(3), 181–199. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X08331140>
- Guskey, T. R. (2002). Professional development and teacher change. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, 8(3), 381–391. <https://doi.org/10.1080/135406002100000512>
- Hallinger, P., & Murphy, J. (1985). Assessing the instructional management behavior of principals. *The Elementary School Journal*, 86(2), 217–247.
- Hargreaves, A., & Fullan, M. (2012). *Professional capital: Transforming teaching in every school*. Teachers College Press.
- Huberman, M. B. M. dan A. M. (2011). *Analisis Data Kualitatif: Buku Sumber Tentang Metode-Metode Baru*. UI Press.
- Lee, H. J. (2005). Developing a Professional Development Program Model Based on Teachers' Needs. *Professional Educator*, 27, 39–49.
- Leithwood, K., Seashore Louis, K., Anderson, S., & Wahlstrom, K. (2004). *How leadership influences student learning*. The Wallace Foundation. <https://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/Documents/How-Leadership-Influences-Student-Learning.pdf>
- MacLeod, L. (2020). Shaping professional development of educators: The role of school leaders. *Critical Perspectives on Teaching, Learning and Leadership: Enhancing Educational Outcomes*, 189–217.
- Park, M., & So, K. (2014). Opportunities and challenges for teacher professional development: a case of collaborative learning community in South Korea. *International Education Studies*, 7(7), 96–108.
- Suyatno, S., Andayani, R., & Firdaus, F. (2020). The role of participatory leadership in promoting teacher professional development in Indonesia. *Journal of Educational Leadership*, 22(3), 297–314. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13632434.2020.1794586>
- UNESCO. (2020). *ICT in education: A review of policies, practices, and challenges*. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000373154>