

Contextualized Supervisory Management and Principal Performance: A Comparative Analysis of Administrative Stabilization and Transformational Innovation

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the supervisory management practices of school supervisors in Pagelaran and Sukanagara Districts, focusing on how contextual conditions shape supervisory approaches and outcomes. Using a qualitative comparative design, the research employed in-depth interviews, participant observations, document analysis, and member checking to ensure data validity. A total of 56 interviews, 32 observations, and 48 administrative documents were analyzed using thematic coding supported by NVivo 12. Findings reveal that both districts operate within identical structural mandates but demonstrate markedly different supervisory trajectories. In Pagelaran, supervision centers on administrative stabilization due to significant foundational gaps such as incomplete school planning documents and limited managerial capacity among principals. A directive, compliance-oriented model proved effective, resulting in a 57 percent increase in administrative adherence. In contrast, Sukanagara exhibits a more advanced supervisory ecosystem characterized by reflective coaching, collaborative problem-solving, design thinking sessions, and peer-based supervision. This developmental model stimulated substantial innovation, with schools producing an average of 2.3 new programs per semester and sustaining 78 percent of them. The study concludes that effective supervision must be adaptive, sequenced, and aligned with school readiness levels. Administrative reinforcement is essential in low-capacity contexts, while collaborative and transformative strategies thrive in schools with stronger cultural and organizational maturity. The research contributes to supervisory theory by highlighting the importance of contextual differentiation and ecosystemic perspectives in supervision, and it recommends policy reforms related to supervisory workload, digital systems, and differentiated competency development.

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Introduction

1 Background

Education is a fundamental human need, playing a role in improving individual quality and serving as an essential instrument for national development (Gulo et al., 2024; Samala et al., 2024). Through education, individuals develop intelligence, skills, and ethical values that shape character (Herawati et al., 2022). However, the achievement of national education goals heavily depends on the quality of school principals' leadership as key actors at the educational unit level (Muslim et al., 2020; Savitri et al., 2022). School principals have a strategic role in mobilizing all school elements, thus the quality of their leadership directly influences the quality of education (Kanahaya & Nugroho, 2025; Silitonga et al., 2022).

Although the government has endeavored to improve the quality of education through curriculum refinement, strengthening school management, and increasing the capacity of educators, there are concerns that these policies have not been fully balanced by optimal performance from school principals (Bush et al., 2023; Hanim et al., 2020). Policy implementation is often hampered at the school level, especially if principals lack adequate managerial and supervisory skills (Etiyasningsih & Bariroh, 2024). This situation raises a crucial question regarding how guidance and supervision from school supervisors can continuously improve the professionalism of school principals (Izzuddin, 2020; Rahayu et al., 2023).

Despite Permendiknas Number 13 of 2007 stipulating five main competencies that school principals must possess, the reality on the ground shows a significant gap between these standards and their implementation (Saparudin et al., 2022; Suharti, 2021). Many principals still struggle with developing literacy-numeracy programs (Kurniawati et al., 2025; Son et al., 2023), effectively managing resources, and conducting academic supervision that genuinely improves the quality of learning (Dwikurnaningsih & Paais, 2022; Endriani & Yulita, 2021). This indicates that the guidance from school supervisors has not been entirely systematic, structured, or continuous.

School supervisors, as professional mentors for school principals, play an important role in bridging this gap (Izzuddin, 2020). However, the effectiveness of guidance highly depends on the management of the guidance itself, from planning, implementation, evaluation, to follow-up (Utomo et al., 2024). In Cianjur Regency, particularly in the sub-districts of Pagelaran and Sukanagara (known locally as Koryandik areas), the need to improve the quality of school principals becomes even more pressing due to diverse regional characteristics and educational challenges (Nurhadi et al., 2023; Sanoto et al., 2022). Therefore, in-depth research on supervisor guidance management is highly relevant and necessary.

2 Previous Literature Review

Research findings Maharani (2024) highlight the substantial impact of supervisory oversight on enhancing teachers' professional capabilities and the overall quality of educational delivery within schools. These findings affirm the supervisor's role as encompassing both administrative and crucial pedagogical dimensions. Concurrently, other studies Jabar & Susilo (2021) underscore the pivotal role of effective school leadership in cultivating high-quality human capital, a cornerstone of the national education system. However, a noticeable gap exists in empirical research specifically investigating the

management of supervisory guidance tailored to improving the performance of school principals, particularly when considering diverse geographical and institutional settings. Therefore, this study endeavors to augment the existing scholarly discourse by adopting a more specialized and contextualized investigative approach.

This study is underpinned by several identifiable research gaps. Firstly, a significant portion of existing literature concerning supervisory practices predominantly emphasizes the development of teacher competence, often overlooking the performance enhancement of school principals in their capacity as leaders of educational units. Secondly, comprehensive analyses of supervisor guidance management encompassing its intricate phases of planning, implementation, evaluation, follow-up, identification of constraints, and proposed solutions are notably scarce. Thirdly, a distinct void exists in research that specifically examines the geographical context of the Pagelaran and Sukanagara districts within Cianjur Regency as a primary research setting. Fourthly, prior investigations have not adequately explored the interrelationship between supervisor guidance management and the execution of recent educational policy initiatives, particularly the "Sekolah Penggerak" and "Kurikulum Merdeka" programs, which necessitate reinforced proficiencies in literacy, numeracy, and transformational leadership among school principals.

The current research introduces several novel contributions. Its primary focus extends beyond a mere delineation of the general responsibilities of supervisors, instead delving into a comprehensive and integrated framework of supervisor guidance management. Moreover, this study explicitly links supervisor guidance methodologies with the contemporary educational policy landscape, which mandates that principals demonstrate adaptability and serve as transformational learning leaders. The investigation's execution across two geographically distinct regions, characterized by varying attributes, is anticipated to generate highly contextualized and pertinent findings, thereby advancing both theoretical understanding and practical applications within educational management.

The overarching objective of this study is to provide a comprehensive elucidation of supervisor guidance management practices aimed at enhancing the performance of school principals within the Pagelaran and Sukanagara Districts of Cianjur Regency. Furthermore, this research seeks to meticulously explore the strategies, operational processes, inherent constraints, and the resultant impact of supervisor guidance on elevating the managerial competence, academic supervisory proficiencies, and overall leadership capabilities of school principals. It is anticipated that this investigation will yield actionable recommendations beneficial to school supervisors, principals, and local governmental bodies, thereby contributing to the broader amelioration of educational management quality. From a theoretical perspective, this research is poised to significantly enrich the existing scholarly literature pertaining to supervisor guidance management and the continuous development of school leadership.

Method

This study employs a qualitative approach with a comparative case study design. The qualitative approach was selected because the research aims to understand the phenomenon of supervisory guidance management in a deep, comprehensive, and contextual manner, particularly in relation to improving school principals' performance. As emphasized by Moleong (2017), a qualitative approach enables researchers to explore meaning, processes, and interactional dynamics that occur naturally in the field. Meanwhile, the comparative case study design is used to examine and contrast supervisory guidance practices in two settings with distinct characteristics, namely the Pagelaran and Sukanagara Districts of Cianjur Regency. Yin (2018) states that a case study is appropriate when the researcher intends to

investigate contemporary phenomena within real-life contexts, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are not clearly defined. The design selection was also based on the need to explore supervisory practices comprehensively not merely to produce statistical descriptions but to understand patterns, strategies, constraints, and impacts that emerge throughout the implementation process.

Research informants were selected through purposive sampling, namely the selection of subjects who best understand the phenomenon under investigation. Key informants consisted of school supervisors in the two districts, school principals as the main target of supervisory guidance, and teachers as supporting informants to provide additional perspectives on the impact of supervisory guidance on principal performance and instructional processes. The criteria for selecting informants included adequate understanding of supervisory activities, active involvement in supervisory programs, and the ability to provide rich and relevant data. If necessary, snowball sampling was used to identify additional informants based on recommendations from previous participants (Etikan, 2016).

Data were collected using three primary techniques: in-depth interviews, non-participatory observations, and document analysis. In-depth interviews, guided by semi-structured protocols, were conducted to explore various aspects of supervisory guidance management, including planning, implementation, evaluation, follow-up actions, strategies, constraints, and perceptions of its impact on principals' managerial and supervisory performance. Non-participatory observations were conducted to closely observe supervisory activities, coordination meetings, academic supervision sessions, and principals' managerial practices. These observations offered empirical insights into real-world practices that might not be fully captured through interviews. Document analysis was conducted by reviewing relevant documents such as supervisory work plans, supervision reports, school planning documents, curriculum guidelines, and educational policy documents. Together, these techniques provided complementary data to produce rich and valid findings.

To ensure data trustworthiness, the study applied source triangulation, technique triangulation, and time triangulation, as well as member checking to validate the findings with informants. These procedures adhere to the trustworthiness criteria proposed by Lincoln et al. (1985), which include credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was ensured through triangulation and prolonged engagement in the field; transferability was enhanced through detailed contextual descriptions; dependability was maintained through systematic documentation of the research process; and confirmability was achieved by maintaining reflective notes and an audit trail to support objectivity.

The research process involved several stages. The pre-fieldwork stage included preparing the research design, conducting preliminary studies, obtaining research permits from the Department of Education and both district offices, and establishing initial communication with key informants to build rapport and obtain an overview of the field. The fieldwork stage consisted of conducting interviews, observations, and document analysis in accordance with the research plan. Data analysis was carried out concurrently with data collection, following the interactive model of Miles, M.B & Huberman (1994), which involves data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification. Data reduction involved selecting and organizing relevant information into categories and themes; data display utilized narrative descriptions, summary tables, diagrams, and direct quotations to support the explanations; and conclusion drawing was conducted iteratively to identify patterns and relationships among components of supervisory guidance management. The final stage was the preparation of the research report in the form of descriptive-analytical narratives accompanied by empirical findings, theoretical synthesis, and practical recommendations.

Result

The findings of this study illuminate the complex dynamics of supervisory management in Pagelaran and Sukanagara Districts, grounded in an extensive triangulation strategy that included 56 in-depth interviews, 32 participant observations, and a systematic review of 48 institutional planning documents. Member-checking procedures were conducted with all respondents to validate interpretive accuracy. Thematic analysis, supported by NVivo 12, revealed that although both districts operate within comparable structural mandates, their supervisory practices diverge markedly. Pagelaran exhibits a predominantly administrative and compliance-driven orientation, whereas Sukanagara demonstrates a more collaborative, innovation-centered supervisory culture. These contrasts reflect deeper socio-organizational differences that shape how supervisory leadership is enacted in each local context.

1 Contextual Planning Grounded in Differential Needs Assessment

Needs assessment processes in both districts served as the foundation for planning, yet the resulting priorities diverged substantively. In Pagelaran, supervisory planning concentrated on strengthening foundational administrative systems. Document analysis revealed that 87% of priority schools lacked complete RKS/RKAS documentation, while 72% of principals required intensive support in developing basic planning competencies. Supervisors allocated an average of 4.2 hours per school to initial document audits, illustrating the substantial administrative gaps that required remediation. As articulated by one supervisor, the district's strategy resembled a tiered developmental model, emphasizing the necessity of establishing structural integrity before advancing toward more sophisticated initiatives. In contrast, Sukanagara displayed a readiness for higher-order developmental interventions. Supervisors implemented a Multidimensional Competency Diagnosis encompassing assessments of innovative reasoning, literacy culture, and inter-school collaboration networks. The K3S forum functioned as a collaborative ideation hub in which principals generated prototype programs for immediate trial in their respective schools. This practice highlights a district-wide ethos that positions professional collaboration as a driver of systemic innovation.

2 Implementation of Supervisory Assistance: Divergent Models and Outcomes

Implementation patterns further demonstrated a clear divergence between the districts. Pagelaran employed a structured clinical supervision model characterized by a 3:1 ratio of administrative coaching to instructional support. After six months, 95% of principals achieved competency in producing complete planning documents, and accreditation document completeness improved by 45%. While highly effective in establishing managerial order, this model risked constraining principals' long-term creative capacities by privileging compliance over innovation. Conversely, Sukanagara adopted a reflective-collaborative supervisory paradigm marked by greater methodological complexity. Supervisors employed tiered coaching, facilitated Design Thinking sessions three to five times each semester, and institutionalized peer supervision among principals. This model yielded an average of 2.3 innovation programs per school per semester, with a sustainability rate of 78%. The reflective orientation of this approach encouraged principals to engage in continuous inquiry, iterative problem-solving, and collective knowledge-building.

3 Evaluation Approaches: From Standardized Verification to Developmental Assessment

Evaluation practices in Pagelaran centered on standardized verification mechanisms. Supervisors utilized administrative indicators and compliance dashboards to track progress toward the district's target of 100% fulfillment of minimum documentation standards. This model strengthened procedural accountability but offered limited insight into substantive instructional or cultural development. Sukanagara, by comparison, implemented qualitative-developmental evaluation tools, including portfolio-based assessment, 360-degree feedback involving teachers and students, and analyses of school climate and learning culture. These evaluative practices produced more nuanced, contextually rich understandings of school improvement processes, though they required evaluators with advanced analytical and facilitative competencies.

4 Structural and Cultural Constraints in Supervisory Practice

Both districts faced pronounced structural and cultural challenges that constrained the effectiveness of supervision. Structurally, the supervisor-to-school ratio of 1:14 exceeded the recommended maximum of 1:8, while administrative demands consumed approximately 60% of supervisors' working time. Only 40% of schools were equipped with adequate technological infrastructure, limiting the feasibility of digital-based supervision. Cultural barriers also shaped supervisory dynamics. In Pagelaran, 65% of respondents continued to perceive supervisors primarily as evaluators rather than developmental partners, contributing to a resistance-to-change rate of 42% among principals. In Sukanagara, while innovation was more robust, disparities in innovation capacity across schools ranged from 35% to 85%, and 28% of principals reported symptoms of innovation fatigue driven by continuous programmatic demands.

5 Strengthening Measures and Emerging Supervisory Innovations

Pagelaran has begun integrating digital tools through a Supervision Management System enabling real-time monitoring. The K3S forum was reoriented into an Administrative Excellence Center, and a buddy school mechanism was implemented to promote cooperative capacity-building. Sukanagara advanced further by developing an Innovation Ecosystem supporting co-creation, small-scale action research, and digital dissemination of best practices. Supervisors employed hybrid mentoring that combined face-to-face guidance with virtual coaching, enhancing accessibility and continuity of support.

6 Impacts and Strategic Recommendations

Pagelaran achieved a 57% increase in administrative compliance and a 35% reduction in audit discrepancies, indicating substantial progress in structural and procedural alignment. Sukanagara recorded a 68% increase in innovation outputs and a 42% improvement in participation in academic competitions, reflecting enhanced instructional and cultural development. Strategic recommendations include adjusting the supervisor-to-school ratio to 1:10, expanding the integration of digital supervision systems, and implementing differentiated competency development for supervisors based on domain specialization. These measures are essential for building a supervisory model that balances standardization with adaptive, context-responsive leadership

Discussion

1 Interpretation of Key Findings

This study demonstrates that supervisory management in Pagelaran and Sukanagara operates under similar structural mandates but yields markedly different outcomes due to distinct contextual, cultural, and organizational factors. The robust methodological triangulation encompassing in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and comprehensive document analysis confirms the validity of these differences and enriches the interpretive depth of the results. In Pagelaran, significant administrative deficits positioned supervision primarily as a stabilizing mechanism. Supervisors functioned as managers of compliance, aligning with a bureaucratic model that prioritizes standardization and procedural clarity. This approach was contextually appropriate, given the foundational gaps identified: 87% of schools lacked complete planning documents, and 72% of principals required intensive basic support. The documented improvements such as a 57% increase in administrative compliance demonstrate that structural reinforcement can produce rapid, measurable gains in low-capacity environments. Conversely, Sukanagara exemplified a more advanced supervisory paradigm. Schools exhibited higher readiness for transformational guidance, enabling supervisors to transition from compliance-driven oversight to developmental and collaborative mentorship. The adoption of design-thinking sessions, portfolio-based evaluation, and cross-school innovation ecosystems aligns with contemporary supervision theories that emphasize reflective practice and distributed leadership. Consequently, Sukanagara schools achieved significant innovation outcomes, including a 68% increase in new programs and a 42% growth in academic competition participation.

2 Comparative Analysis: Administrative Stability vs. Transformational Growth

The contrast between the two districts illustrates two distinct trajectories of supervisory maturation. Pagelaran represents an early-stage developmental environment where establishing stability and routine is a necessary precursor to innovation. Without a solid administrative foundation, innovative initiatives tend to be unsustainable. Sukanagara, by contrast, demonstrates the conditions under which supervision can act as a catalyst for transformative change. The presence of active professional learning communities, a strong literacy culture, and collaborative leadership fostered a conducive ecosystem for sustained innovation.

3 Integration with Theoretical Frameworks

The study's outcomes reinforce several established theoretical constructs. Specifically, Pagelaran's need for foundational strengthening aligns with Capacity Building Theory, suggesting that supervisors must first establish organizational coherence before advancing to instructional or transformational agendas. The collaborative mechanisms in Sukanagara, such as peer supervision and innovation labs, reflect the principles of Distributed Leadership, where supervisors act as facilitators of collective capacity. Furthermore, the observed differences map onto Glickman's Developmental Supervision Model, with Pagelaran aligning with a more directive approach and Sukanagara embodying collaborative and non-directive methods. Sukanagara's use of design thinking and reflective coaching also illustrates how schools can evolve into learning organizations with appropriate supervisory support, consistent with Organizational Learning Theory.

4 Implications for Supervisory Practice

The findings yield several key practical implications. Supervisory strategies must be tailored to school readiness levels, moving away from one-size-fits-all interventions. Administrative supervision remains essential in low-capacity contexts but should be viewed as a transitional phase toward more developmental model. Additionally, supervisor workloads require urgent restructuring, as the current ratio of 1:14 is prohibitive for implementing reflective or collaborative practices effectively. Professional learning communities hold significant potential for shifting supervision from a hierarchical to a peer-driven process, and technology-supported supervision should be institutionalized for efficient monitoring, documentation, and virtual coaching.

5 Policy Implications

The identified systemic constraints highlight the need for broader governmental intervention. Policy reforms should focus on reducing administrative burdens, standardizing digital supervision platforms, and adjusting supervisor-school ratios. Implementing differential competency certification for supervisors, tailored to both administrative and developmental roles, would better align supervisory functions with diverse school needs.

6 Limitations and Avenues for Future Research

While this study offers rich comparative insights, its scope is limited to two districts with specific contextual features. Future research could explore the longitudinal impacts of these supervisory models, investigate the role of teacher perceptions in supervisory effectiveness, and examine the integration of AI-powered analytics within supervision systems.

7 Concluding Remarks

This study demonstrates that effective supervisory management cannot rely on a singular, universal model. Instead, it must be adaptive, context-sensitive, and developmentally sequenced. Pagelaran underscores the critical importance of establishing strong administrative foundations, while Sukanagara showcases the transformative potential of collaborative and innovative supervisory approaches. Collectively, these cases illuminate the evolving nature of educational supervision and underscore the urgency of policy reforms that support differentiated, technology-enhanced, and capacity-building supervision across diverse educational landscapes.

8 Relevance to Previous Research

The discussion of these findings exhibits consistency with prior research on educational supervision, particularly regarding the supervisor's role in strengthening school management and enhancing principal competency. This study confirms the general principle from extant literature that effective supervision must be adaptive and needs-based. Regarding administrative-focused supervision, the orientation towards strengthening basic administration in Pagelaran aligns with previous studies asserting that a robust administrative foundation is a prerequisite for school quality improvement. This research reinforces that understanding with empirical field data, demonstrating a 57% increase in administrative compliance following structured, intensive supervision. Similarly, the reflective-collaborative

supervision approach developed in Sukanagara corresponds with earlier research emphasizing that innovation and a collaborative school culture thrive more effectively within a supervisory ecosystem that fosters creativity. While this study's primary contribution lies in its empirical findings that strongly support and deepen the theoretical understanding of reflective-collaborative supervision, it builds upon a broader body of literature on effective supervisory practices, evidenced by an average of 2.3 new innovations per semester and a 78% sustainability rate. Furthermore, the findings related to structural and cultural obstacles also demonstrate relevance to the patterns of problems widely discussed in academic literature on educational supervision. Issues such as excessive supervisor workload, limited technological infrastructure, and school cultural resistance are common in analogous educational contexts. This study reinforces this relevance by providing more detailed empirical data, such as the 1:14 supervisor-to-school ratio and 60% of work time consumed by administrative tasks.

This study offers novel contributions primarily in two aspects. First, it presents a comprehensive comparison between two districts with differing supervisory characteristics, resulting in a sharper delineation of practical variations compared to similar studies. The focus on data triangulation involving interviews, observations, documents, and member-checking provides a high degree of validity for the findings. Second, it introduces the concept of an "organic supervisory innovation ecosystem" that developed in Sukanagara. This finding enriches the study of educational supervision by demonstrating that the supervisor's role is no longer limited to quality control but also extends to being a catalyst for creativity, collaboration, and inter-school learning. Subsequent research should consider further exploration of hybrid supervision models that integrate clinical and reflective approaches. Moreover, studies could expand the analysis to the aspect of principals' transformational leadership as a long-term outcome of the distinct supervisory models implemented in these two districts.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the effectiveness of supervisory management is fundamentally shaped by the contextual readiness of schools and the initial managerial capacity of principals. The comparative analysis between Pagelaran and Sukanagara affirms that educational supervision cannot be implemented uniformly; rather, it must be adapted to each school's organizational maturity and cultural environment. In Pagelaran, supervisors function primarily as agents of administrative stabilization. The initial conditions—marked by incomplete planning documents and limited managerial competence among principals—demanded a directive and structurally oriented supervisory approach. The recorded 57 percent increase in administrative compliance confirms that strengthening foundational management practices is a prerequisite for improving school quality. Thus, supervision in such contexts represents a capacity-building phase that must occur before schools can transition toward innovation. Conversely, Sukanagara illustrates how supervision can become a driver of transformation when schools exhibit higher readiness and more mature professional cultures. The collaborative and reflective supervisory strategies adopted by supervisors successfully stimulated sustained innovation, reflected in an average of 2.3 new programs per semester and a sustainability rate of 78 percent. These findings highlight that when supervision emphasizes dialogue, empowerment, and co-design, schools evolve into learning organizations with strong adaptive capacity. Overall, the study underscores that educational supervision is a developmental continuum that progresses from administrative stabilization to transformational guidance. Effective supervision must be adaptive, grounded in needs-based diagnosis, and responsive to the internal capacity of schools. Moreover, macro-level policies—such as achieving ideal supervisor-school ratios, digitizing supervisory processes, and strengthening professional learning communities—are essential to ensuring the sustainability of high-quality supervisory practices. Theoretically, this study contributes by demonstrating

the value of adopting an ecosystem perspective in educational supervision, in which supervisory effectiveness is shaped by the interplay between supervisory capacity, school culture, and policy structures. Practically, the study offers a differentiated supervision model that can guide local governments in designing more contextualized and equitable supervisory strategies.

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