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Coaching-Based Academic Supervision Strategy by The Principal in Improving Teacher Competence to Design Deep Learning at SD IT Robbani Ogan Ilir

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Abstract: The purpose of this study is to describe the principal's coaching-based academic supervision strategy in an effort to improve teachers' competence in designing deep learning at SD IT Robbani Ogan Ilir. This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design. The data collection instruments and techniques included in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation analysis. Data were analyzed using the Interactive Model by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña. Informants were selected using a purposive sampling technique. Supervision planning began with a data-driven needs assessment to build psychological safety for educators. The implementation of coaching utilized the TIRTA flow, which stimulated teachers' intrinsic motivation and self-reflection. The evaluation showed a significant improvement in teachers' ability to develop learning designs, although achieving the highest cognitive level (C6) remained a challenge due to student heterogeneity. This research provides practical applications and benefits in the fields of educational management and instructional leadership, as well as for the continuous professional development of principals and teachers. The novelty of this study lies in its specific examination of the synergy between the principal's coaching strategy intervention and the improvement of teachers' competence in designing deep learning documents, shifting the paradigm from instructive evaluation to collaborative mentoring within a school environment that integrates Islamic values.

Keywords: *Academic Supervision, Coaching, Deep Learning, Teacher Competence, SDIT*

A. Introduction

The dynamics of 21st-century education demand a fundamental paradigm shift from surface learning to Deep Learning. In this approach, students are not only required to recall or memorize facts but are encouraged to understand concepts holistically and be able to apply their knowledge to solve real-world problems (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). To realize this vision, teachers play a vital role as learning designers in the classroom (Fullan, Quinn, & McEachen, 2018). However, empirical reality at SD IT Robbani Ogan Ilir indicates a significant pedagogical competency gap. Based on a preliminary study of learning documents, it was found that 75% of teachers are still trapped in an administrative dilemma; Teaching Modules (*Modul Ajar*) are prepared solely as physical supplements to meet supervisory requirements, lacking the internalization of Deep Learning concepts. An analysis of 20 Teaching Modules revealed that 80% of the written learning activities are

still dominated by one-way lecture methods and fail to reflect the essence of deep learning. Teachers struggle to translate deep learning concepts into concrete activities because they are accustomed to surface learning methods that focus solely on content memorization, causing classroom learning to fall short of the desired high-level cognitive outcomes. This issue is further exacerbated by the headmaster's conventional academic supervision practices, which often function as administrative inspections focused on fault-finding (Priansa, 2018). This top-down instructive approach causes anxiety and pressure for 45% of teachers, effectively stifling their independence and innovative potential in teaching.

Departing from these problems, this study is motivated by the urgency to revitalize academic supervision methods to be more humanistic and empowering. The intervention strategy considered most relevant to address this challenge is the coaching approach (Whitmore, 2017). Unlike dictatorial instructional methods, coaching establishes an equal partnership between the supervisor and the teacher, utilizing powerful questioning to provoke self-awareness (Knight, 2018). Through this approach, teachers are facilitated in discovering their own pedagogical improvement solutions, thereby building the autonomy and intrinsic motivation that serve as the fundamental foundation for designing creative Deep Learning ecosystems (Knight, 2019).

Regarding the effectiveness of leadership and supervision strategies, various previous studies have provided a strong foundation. Haryono et al. (2025) found that instructional leadership simultaneously exerts a very significant positive influence on learning quality in Islamic educational institutions. Specifically in the SDIT (Integrated Islamic Primary School) environment, Pratama (2023) emphasized the importance of effective managerial leadership by principals, while Jayanti et al. (2024) asserted that conventional academic supervision through classroom visits can improve teaching staff performance.

In the context of recent curriculum design challenges, Priyadi et al. (2024) mapped that teachers often encounter obstacles at the planning stage, particularly in modifying learning objectives. To address these technical constraints, Suryanti et al. (2025) demonstrated that interventions in the form of training and mentoring are effective in improving teachers' skills in designing differentiated learning. Furthermore, the effectiveness of coaching-based supervision using the TIRTA flow has been proven by Soro et al. (2024) as well as Setianingsih and Hanif (2024), who found that implementing the TIRTA conversation flow makes teachers feel more comfortable and effective in independently discovering innovative solutions. This aligns with Nofitri's (2023) study, which showed the success of the TIRTA method in building two-way reflective communication. Additionally, Mabruroh and Atikah (2024), along with Karwanto, Khamidi, and Wulandari (2025), reinforced that the application of coaching in primary education tangibly shifts the rigid evaluation paradigm toward collaborative mentoring that impacts teacher learning quality.

On the other hand, the shift toward Deep Learning has also become a primary focus of recent studies. Hidayat and Lyesmaya (2024) and Halim (2025) highlighted that optimizing the strategic role of the principal is the key to successfully integrating Deep Learning, although its implementation is often hindered by training that is too generic. Hasan Assidiqi and Sadiyah (2025), along with Nurul et al. (2025), also emphasized that this approach is crucial for primary education to transition the culture of memorization into critical reasoning, wherein teachers must act as architects of learning. Philosophically,

Mustaghfirin and Zaman (2025) enriched this discourse by proving a strong alignment between the core principles of Deep Learning and the values and practices of Islamic education.

Although many literatures have discussed educational supervision or Deep Learning methods separately, there is still an urgent research gap to be bridged. Most previous studies, such as Haryono et al. (2025) and Jayanti et al. (2024), have focused on instructional leadership effectiveness in general or conventional supervision. Meanwhile, research by Priyadi et al. (2024) and Suryanti et al. (2025) has been limited to mapping curriculum obstacles or offering solutions through technical training (workshops). Not many studies have specifically examined the synergy between coaching-based supervision strategies and the improvement of teachers' technical competence in preparing deep learning documents (Teaching Modules/Lesson Plans) within the environment of an Integrated Islamic Primary School (SDIT) that integrates religious values. Therefore, this study aims to fill that gap by exploring in depth how the coaching dialogue process can revolutionize teachers' mindsets from mere administrative compliance to becoming adaptive Deep Learning Designers.

B. Methods

This study is qualitative research applying a case study design. Grounded in postpositivist philosophy, this research was designed to explore the object's condition in its natural setting. Through this approach, phenomena can be explored in detail, in depth, and are consistently bounded by specific times and activities.

The research was conducted at SD IT Robbani Ogan Ilir, Ogan Ilir Regency, South Sumatra. The site selection was based on purposive criteria, as the school is currently in a curriculum transformation phase focusing on strengthening student competencies through the *Deep Learning* framework. Furthermore, the local principal's initiative in starting to implement a humanistic supervision approach was a key rationale for site selection. The observation and research process lasted for six months, from December 2025 to May 2026.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling, a technique used to select subjects based on specific considerations, as they are deemed to best understand the situations and activities being studied. Informants were classified into two main groups: key informants and supporting informants. The Principal of SD IT Robbani Ogan Ilir was positioned as the key informant, acting as the primary subject in designing and implementing coaching-based supervision strategies. Meanwhile, supporting informants consisted of the Curriculum Vice-Principal, who assisted in the supervision process, and four Class Teachers who acted as coachees.

The use of purposive sampling ensures that the gathered data is comprehensive and representative. The rationale for the number of informants—1 Principal (Key Informant), 1 Curriculum Vice-Principal (Supporting Informant), and 4 Class Teachers—is based on considerations of data variability and data saturation. The Principal and Curriculum Vice-

Principal were chosen as policymakers and executors of supervision. The Curriculum Vice-Principal, in particular, was selected to validate administrative data and managed learning instruments. The four class teachers were selected to observe variations in the application of *Deep Learning* across different grade levels (lower and upper grades). This selection was based on the teachers' level of active engagement in the six-month coaching process, which is considered sufficient to provide an in-depth narrative regarding pedagogical behavioral changes from the coachee's perspective.

In line with the qualitative nature of this research, the researcher acted directly as the key instrument in the field, assuming the role of a passive participant observer. Data collection was conducted through three complementary methodological instruments. First, in-depth interviews were conducted with the Principal and teachers to obtain primary data in the form of narratives, actions, and the psychological responses of the informants. This stage was supported by structured interview guides. The interview procedure was semi-structured to provide space for exploration. The steps were as follows:

1. Pre-Interview (Rapport Building): The researcher initiated the process with informal conversations to build trust and create comfort, ensuring informants did not feel intimidated, given that supervision topics are often sensitive.
2. Execution: Interviews lasted 45–60 minutes per session and were conducted in the school office or classrooms during free periods to ensure privacy.
3. Technique: The researcher used interview guides containing open-ended but flexible (flowing) questions. The researcher recorded conversations (with permission) and noted key points in a field journal to capture the emotional or non-verbal responses of the informants.
4. Closing: The researcher provided oral confirmation of the main points discussed to ensure information accuracy.

Second, passive participant observation was conducted through direct observation during the pre- and post-coaching phases in the field. All data from these observations were compiled in factual field note sheets regarding the coaching practice. Observation procedures included:

1. Pre-Observation Phase: The researcher observed the dialogue process as the Principal and teacher agreed upon goals and development areas. The researcher noted the use of powerful questions within the TIRTA flow.
2. Class Observation Phase: The researcher observed the implementation of learning tools (*Teaching Modules*) in class using factual note sheets. The observation focused on the *Deep Learning* pillars (MMJ: *Mindful, Meaningful, Joyful*) and student activities.
3. Post-Observation Phase: The researcher observed the post-teaching reflection session, noting how teachers reflected on their own shortcomings and how the Principal provided data-based feedback rather than judgment.

Third, secondary data collection was carried out through documentation studies, focusing on examining learning instruments including *Teaching Modules* and Lesson Plans (RPP) owned by teachers before and after supervision, as well as reviewing the school's supervision program documents.

Data analysis was conducted inductively and continuously, based on the Interactive Model developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014). The analysis was performed simultaneously through three main stages:

1. Data Condensation: The researcher transcribed interview results verbatim, then performed coding (labeling) of keywords (e.g., "self-awareness," "administrative barriers," or "TIRTA principles"). Data deemed irrelevant to the research focus was excluded.
2. Data Display: The researcher organized data into comparison matrices between pre- and post-coaching supervision results to observe patterns of behavioral change visually and narratively.
3. Conclusion Drawing: The researcher sought causal relationships between coaching interventions and the improvement of teaching module quality. Verification was conducted by cross-referencing interview results (what teachers said) with documentation study results (what was written in the *Teaching Modules*) to ensure validity (technique triangulation).

To ensure that these study findings possess good repeatability for other researchers under similar conditions, data trustworthiness standards were strictly enforced. Data integrity was maintained through the application of source triangulation (comparing information between informants). Additionally, technique triangulation was applied by cross-referencing data obtained from interviews, observations, and document studies. This validation series was further perfected through extended field observations and the implementation of member checking mechanisms, where findings were re-confirmed with informants to avoid bias.

C. Results and Discussion

1. Dialogic and Data-Driven Planning

Academic supervision planning at SD IT Robbani Ogan Ilir has undergone a fundamental transformation, shifting from mere administrative routine fulfillment to a strategic space essential for creating psychological safety for all teaching staff. This crucial stage begins with the implementation of a highly precise and comprehensive needs assessment. In practice, the Principal takes the initial step of critically examining the Teaching Modules (Modul Ajar) to measure the extent to which the designed learning activities accommodate deep conceptual understanding. The Principal explained: "*The way we identify teacher needs begins with examining the learning tools prepared by teachers, such as teaching*

modules. Through these documents, we can see the learning objectives and the designed learning activities. Thus, we can assess the extent to which the learning process has encouraged deep conceptual understanding."

Complementing this step, the Vice Principal uses a structured questionnaire instrument that requires teachers to describe classroom conditions based on real, factual data, thereby avoiding bias stemming from mere assumptions. Regarding the implementation of this instrument, the Vice Principal added: *"We have prepared instruments in the form of questionnaires and lists of questions. These questions cover targets to be achieved as well as obstacles encountered during learning. I ask teachers to describe students' learning conditions specifically using data, not just assumptions."* This data-driven planning practice aligns closely with the theory of Kempa (2023), who asserts that quality supervision planning must be grounded in small-scale research or factual data so that the mentoring provided is more precise and targeted. Through these data-based stages and humanistic socialization, teachers' pedagogical anxiety can be significantly reduced, as they realize that supervision is intended entirely for professional development, not as a forum for judgment.

Furthermore, the selection of the mentoring strategy in this planning phase is specifically designed by considering the demographic profile of teachers in the school environment, which is dominated by Generation Z. The Principal explained the strategic reasoning behind this approach: *"On average, the teachers at SD IT Robbani Ogan Ilir are Generation Z. Characteristically, they are critical and creative, but the communication and discussion process must be carried out in a relaxed, easygoing, and comfortable atmosphere. The coaching method greatly facilitates this... Conversely, if using ordinary instructional methods, teachers look nervous and afraid."*

This strategic decision to transform from a rigid directive approach to a collaborative and non-directive intervention is in line with the concept of Developmental Supervision initiated by Glickman et al. (2020). In the pre-observation dialogue stage, the direct involvement of teachers in determining the focus of classroom observation successfully fosters a strong sense of autonomy and positions them as complete subjects. This was felt directly by Teacher RN (5th-grade teacher), who testified: *"I feel very helped, Ma'am. Because there is mentoring, I don't feel nervous."*

Providing this space for autonomy represents a strong empirical application of the Partnership Principles by Knight (2019), where the commitment to improvement is born from a dialogue that prioritizes equality. This partnership practice simultaneously reinforces the principles of andragogy, or adult learning, where educators feel psychologically valued, heard regarding their obstacles, and fully involved in making strategic decisions regarding the direction of their own professional development. Teacher VS (6th-grade teacher) affirmed this shift in perception: *"This supervision is hoped to be not just a place for assessment, but also a discussion space for teachers to receive constructive*

feedback... This mentoring gives me a complete understanding of how to design learning activities centered on the students."

At the classroom implementation stage, the supervision strategy is implemented through a clinical approach integrated with the TIRTA conversation flow (Purpose, Identification, Action Plan, Responsibility). Integrating this flow ensures that observations are systematic and have a clear direction. During the observation process, the supervisor's focus has shifted from merely assessing teaching styles to observing manifestations of student learning activities that reflect the three main pillars of Deep Learning (Mindful, Meaningful, Joyful). The Principal explained her observation priorities:

> *"My main focus for deep learning is the 'joyful' aspect. I observe how the teacher packages the learning... so that students feel happy and learn in a fluid way without feeling burdened. The second aspect is 'meaningful' and 'mindful,' which is the extent to which the teacher relates learning materials to students' daily lives."*

Observation data indicates that the supervisor is not just fixated on delivery techniques but also on the teacher's adaptability. The Vice Principal added observation details regarding classroom dynamics: *"I observe the teacher's ability to implement the teaching module... especially how the teacher handles classroom dynamics during the core activities, for example, if a student cries or loses focus."* This approach directly rejects the dominance of rote memorization methods (*surface learning*) and confirms the theoretical synthesis of Hattie and Donoghue (2016), which states that the essence of education is leading students toward holistic transfer of knowledge capabilities.

Entering the post-observation dialogue session, the application of the TIRTA flow successfully turned the reflection atmosphere into an empowering space. Teachers no longer feel judged but are invited to dissect their own teaching practices independently. Teacher RN expressed this paradigm shift: *"There is no dictation... She immediately provides direction for future development rather than dictating errors."* In the same vein, Teacher MR revealed how the powerful questioning techniques in TIRTA triggered his creativity: *"The triggering questions she asks actually allow me to think of new ideas that I hadn't thought of before."*

Critical analysis shows that this success lies in shifting the supervisor's role as *scaffolding* (Vygotsky's Social Constructivism theory). By asking triggering questions, the supervisor helps teachers reach the *Zone of Proximal Development* (ZPD) in pedagogical aspects that were previously unreachable independently. Furthermore, this field data validates Deci & Ryan's *Self-Determination Theory* regarding the fulfillment of teachers' psychological needs. Teacher VN stated: *"Instead of dictating or giving rigid instructions, the Principal positions herself as a partner. She invites me to discuss so we can find solutions together."*

This wide space for autonomy is proven to increase teachers' *sense of ownership* over the improvement processes they undertake. When teachers feel heard and their expertise is acknowledged through equal dialogue (Knight's 2019 partnership principles), intrinsic motivation to innovate grows stronger than through directive approaches. The integration of Islamic values through the principle of *tawasau bil-haq* (mutual advice) in these conversations also creates a robust professional brotherhood (*ukhuwah*), transforming supervision from an "inspection" activity into an *islaah* (continuous improvement) activity based on data objectivity (*tabayyun*) and compassion.

Analytically, these empirical findings scientifically strengthen the postulates of Deci & Ryan's *Self-Determination Theory*. The professional growth of an educator occurs optimally when their three basic psychological needs are facilitated:

1. Autonomy: Teachers are given the freedom to formulate solutions, which increases their *sense of ownership*.
2. Competence: Reflective dialogue makes teachers aware of their potential and capable of overcoming their own pedagogical obstacles.
3. Relatedness: Safe partnership relationships minimize resistance and create a collaborative learning ecosystem.

Thus, supervision is no longer viewed as a linear top-down process but as an interactive cycle that accommodates teachers' emotional and cognitive needs. This strategy is proven to shift the paradigm from "surveillance" to "mentoring," which serves as the key to sustainable innovation at SD IT Robbani Ogan Ilir.

2. Evaluation: Performance Transformation and Cognitive Heterogeneity Challenges

The evaluation stage indicates a tangible shift in the quality of learning design; teachers have begun to abandon the habit of adopting administrative templates from the internet and have shifted toward developing original learning activities that are contextualized to their students' conditions. This performance transformation validates the reliability of applying the *Backward Design* framework by McTighe and Curtis (2022), where the designer's mindset is inverted: defining evidence of student understanding before structuring daily activities. This fundamental change was directly acknowledged by informants in the field. Teacher RN provided a testimony regarding this transformation: *"In the past, I only followed existing templates without truly understanding them deeply... But now, I can develop my own student activities based on my own reasoning. I feel that this semester I have truly mastered how to construct them."*

A critical analysis indicates that this success is not merely a technical change but an enhancement of teacher *self-efficacy*. In accordance with Albert Bandura's postulate, the teachers' strengthened belief makes them more courageous in taking intellectual risks to attempt new innovations within the classroom. However, this evaluation also reveals an

empirical limitation. The implementation of 21st-century skills (6C), particularly in stimulating *Critical Thinking* and *Creativity* at the highest taxonomy level (C6/Creating), remains a challenge for most educators due to student heterogeneity (students with special needs and slow learners).

Table 1: Summary of Teacher Performance Evaluation Results

Evaluation Aspect	Before Coaching	After Coaching
Lesson Preparation	Adopting internet templates	Developing original activities
Design Orientation	Content-based	Evidence-based understanding (Backward Design)
Learning Characteristics	Surface Learning (Rote)	Towards Deep Learning (MMJ)
Cognitive Level	Dominantly C1–C3	Transitioning towards C4–C6 (still limited)

To overcome these cognitive achievement obstacles, the researcher's analysis concludes that *Deep Learning* design cannot be standardized. Integrating Tomlinson's *Differentiated Learning* theory is essential for teachers to inclusively accommodate varying student learning readiness. The sustainability of this system is guaranteed through rigorous follow-up mechanisms. The school has integrated *peer observation* and weekly evaluations as instruments for *continuous improvement* (Kaizen). As expressed by Verda Novita Sari: *"My hope is that supervision can be conducted sustainably. That way, we teachers can continuously monitor our own development, while simultaneously improving our competence in designing active, critical, and meaningful learning..."* The weekly evaluation conducted every Friday is no longer viewed as an administrative burden, but rather as a reflective space (*muhasabah*) that triggers permanent quality improvement.

D. Conclusions

The conclusions of this study confirm that the research objective of describing the coaching-based academic supervision strategy in improving teacher competence has been comprehensively achieved. In the planning stage, this objective was achieved through the implementation of a strategic needs assessment based on data from *Teaching Module* document reviews and teacher psychological mapping. Through this approach, the principal successfully built psychological safety and trust through highly humanistic pre-

observation dialogues. This strategy proved highly effective, particularly for Generation Z teachers, as it succeeded in reducing anxiety and building initial commitment through partnership principles and andragogy, wherein teachers are actively involved in determining the focus of their own professional development.

In the implementation stage, the research objectives were realized through the implementation of the TIRTA conversation flow (Tujuan/Purpose, Identifikasi/Identification, Rencana Aksi/Action Plan, Tanggung Jawab/Responsibility), which acted effectively as an inquiry instrument to stimulate teachers' self-reflection. The observation focus was specifically directed toward the pillars of Deep Learning, namely the Mindful, Meaningful, and Joyful (MMJ) aspects. By providing scaffolding and asking powerful questions, the principal successfully triggered the intrinsic motivation of the teaching staff. This encouraged teachers to transform into creative learning designers without feeling pressured or dictated to by leadership instructions.

Furthermore, success in the evaluation stage was evidenced by a significant improvement in teacher competence in developing *Backward Design*-based learning structures, where the primary teaching focus shifted toward seeking tangible evidence of student understanding. Although learning design competence generally increased, this study also concludes that the implementation of 6C skills, particularly regarding the *Critical Thinking* and *Creativity* aspects required to reach the highest cognitive level (C6), still faces challenges in the field due to student heterogeneity, such as the presence of students with special needs (ABK) and slow learners. Ultimately, the establishment of a routine document evaluation mechanism conducted every Friday has successfully created an ecosystem or culture of continuous improvement (*Kaizen*) that consistently directs educators toward the highest standards of educational quality.

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