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STRENGTHENING EARLY CHILHOOD EDUCATION QUALITY THROUGH PRINCIPAL ACADEMIC SUPERVISION WITH ISLAM VALUE

Nofi Wulandari[1]
Universitas PGRI Semarang, Indonesia. wulandarinofi2@gmail.com

Nurkolis
Universitas PGRI Semarang, Indonesia. nurkolis@upgris.ac.id

Muhammad Prayito
Universitas PGRI Semarang, Indonesia. prayito@upgris.ac.id

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ABSTRAK

Supervisi akademik memiliki peran strategis dalam memastikan kualitas pembelajaran yang berkelanjutan pada pendidikan anak usia dini. Penelitian ini mengkaji bagaimana supervisi akademik mendukung peningkatan kualitas pembelajaran di TK Nasima Semarang, sekaligus menempatkan temuan penelitian dalam konteks kepemimpinan instruksional dan pedagogi berpusat pada anak. Kajian ini dilandasi kebutuhan untuk memastikan bahwa supervisi tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai proses evaluatif administratif, tetapi berkembang menjadi pembinaan profesional yang reflektif, kolaboratif, dan menghargai nilai-nilai pendidikan. Menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif, data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur, observasi kelas, dan analisis dokumen. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa supervisi akademik dilaksanakan sebagai siklus berkelanjutan yang mencakup perencanaan sistematis, observasi langsung dan digital, dialog reflektif, serta dukungan pengembangan profesional berkelanjutan. Guru melaporkan peningkatan dalam kesiapan mengajar, kemampuan refleksi pedagogis, serta kapasitas merespons kebutuhan perkembangan anak yang beragam. Orang tua juga mengamati meningkatnya antusiasme dan keterlibatan anak dalam pembelajaran. Temuan penelitian memperlihatkan bahwa proses supervisi tidak hanya meningkatkan kompetensi pedagogis, tetapi juga memperkuat praktik pembelajaran berbasis nilai termasuk keteladanan, empati, dan pembiasaan karakter Islami yang relevan bagi pembentukan akhlak anak usia dini. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa supervisi akademik yang dilakukan secara terstruktur, reflektif, dan kolaboratif berkontribusi signifikan terhadap peningkatan kualitas pembelajaran, penguatan profesionalisme guru, dan pembinaan karakter anak. Temuan ini menegaskan pentingnya integrasi teknologi, kolaborasi guru, dan penerapan pendekatan supervisi yang adaptif dalam konteks PAUD berbasis nilai. Selain itu, penelitian membuka ruang bagi kajian lebih lanjut mengenai supervisi digital dan pengembangan profesional jangka panjang yang berorientasi pada pembelajaran bermutu dan berkarakter.

[1] Correspondence author

Keywords:
Academic Supervision; Early Childhood Education; Instructional Leadership; Islamic Values; Character Development

ABSTRACTS
Academic supervision plays a strategic role in ensuring sustainable learning quality in early childhood education. This study examines how academic supervision supports the improvement of learning quality at TK Nasima Semarang while situating the findings within the broader context of instructional leadership and child-centered pedagogy. The study is grounded in the need to ensure that supervision functions not merely as an administrative evaluative process, but evolves into reflective, collaborative, and value-oriented professional development. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, data were collected through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. The findings show that academic supervision is implemented as a continuous cycle involving systematic planning, direct and digital observation, reflective dialogue, and sustained professional development support. Teachers reported improvements in teaching readiness, pedagogical reflection, and their capacity to respond to children's diverse developmental needs. Parents also observed increased enthusiasm and engagement among children during learning activities. The study further reveals that the supervision process not only enhances pedagogical competence but also strengthens value-based teaching practices, including modeling, empathy, and the cultivation of Islamic character traits relevant to early childhood moral development. The study concludes that academic supervision conducted in a structured, reflective, and collaborative manner significantly contributes to the improvement of learning quality, the strengthening of teacher professionalism, and the character development of young learners. These findings underscore the importance of technology integration, teacher collaboration, and adaptive supervision approaches within value-based early childhood education settings. Moreover, the study opens avenues for further exploration of digital supervision and long-term professional development oriented toward high-quality, character-based learning.

A. INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education has gained substantial global attention as a foundational principle that ensures every learner receives equitable opportunities to access meaningful, high-quality education. As education systems worldwide commit to social justice, equality, and sustainable development, the emphasis on inclusive learning environments has become increasingly central. UNESCO (2020) asserts that inclusive education requires the removal of structural, cultural, and instructional barriers that limit student participation. Instead of viewing learner diversity as a challenge, schools are encouraged to embrace it as a pedagogical resource that enriches the learning process. Ainscow (2020) similarly emphasizes that inclusive systems depend on schools' capacity to adapt curricula, teaching approaches, and school culture to meet diverse learner needs effectively. In line with this perspective, Slee (2019) argues that inclusive education challenges deficit-based assumptions and promotes school cultures rooted in participation, equity, and belonging for all learners.

Although global frameworks strongly promote inclusion, implementing inclusive practices in real classroom settings remains complex. Many schools experience difficulties translating policy commitments into pedagogical practice. Teachers frequently struggle to adapt learning strategies for children with differing developmental levels, abilities, and learning backgrounds. Sharma and Sokal (2021) note that teacher readiness, confidence, and professional competence are decisive factors

that influence the success of inclusive practices. Without sustained support, teachers may find it challenging to design learning experiences that accommodate diverse learners meaningfully. In addition to teacher readiness, the organizational climate within schools contributes significantly to the effectiveness of inclusion efforts. Leadership is consistently recognized as a critical factor influencing school improvement, collaboration, teacher performance, and student learning outcomes. Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins (2020) highlight that strong leadership provides direction, coherence, and a shared commitment to educational quality. In this regard, principals play a pivotal role in shaping school culture, coordinating instructional practices, and ensuring continuous learning improvement.

Within this paradigm, educational leadership is no longer limited to administrative responsibilities; it encompasses strategic instructional guidance. Hallinger (2021) explains that instructional leadership centers on how leaders influence teaching practices to achieve learning goals. Principals are expected to motivate teachers, facilitate professional dialogue, and cultivate a culture of reflection and improvement. Alongside the discourse on inclusive education, the concept of child-friendly schools has become prominent in global education reform. UNICEF (2019) defines child-friendly schools as environments that uphold children's rights, ensure physical and emotional safety, and nurture active participation in learning. These environments respect diversity, prevent discrimination, and promote meaningful relationships among teachers, learners, and the school community.

Inclusive education and child-friendly schooling share a common philosophical foundation: both prioritize meaningful participation, respect for diversity, and supportive learning environments where all learners feel valued. Florian and Black-Hawkins (2019) emphasize that inclusive pedagogy focuses on designing learning activities that enable every learner not only those traditionally labeled as needing support to participate fully and meaningfully. However, the successful integration of inclusive and child-friendly principles depends strongly on the leadership capacity within schools. Arar and Oplatka (2022) demonstrate that leaders who embrace diversity are more likely to cultivate collaborative school cultures that encourage teachers to adopt inclusive instructional practices.

Despite the robust body of research on educational leadership and inclusion, several gaps remain. Many studies have concentrated on policy implementation or teachers' perceptions rather than the direct influence of leadership practices on daily instructional processes, particularly at the early childhood level. Moreover, scholars still debate several issues within inclusive education implementation. For example, some argue that supervision should prioritize teacher evaluation, while others, such as Zepeda (2017), contend that supervision must be developmental and reflective to support continuous teacher growth. Another ongoing debate concerns the integration of digital tools in supervision; while Bush (2020) found that digital supervision enhances efficiency in primary education, others caution that digital monitoring may be less suitable for early childhood contexts that rely heavily on interpersonal interaction. These diverging perspectives highlight the need for context-sensitive research that explores how leadership and supervision operate within different educational environments.

In Indonesia, strengthening inclusive and child-friendly learning practices has become particularly relevant in early childhood education, where foundational skills

and learning dispositions are shaped. Early childhood education institutions face unique challenges related to learner diversity, curriculum adaptation, and parental involvement. Consequently, the role of principals becomes increasingly important in ensuring that teaching practices respond to learners' developmental needs and align with national educational goals. Academic supervision defined in this study as a structured, systematic process through which principals guide, observe, and support teachers to improve instructional quality can serve as a strategic leadership tool for enhancing early childhood learning. Academic supervision typically involves four interrelated components: planning, classroom observation, feedback or reflective dialogue, and follow-up support. When implemented effectively, supervision provides a collaborative platform for professional learning that strengthens teaching practices and supports the creation of inclusive, engaging, and child-centered learning environments.

In line with the journal's focus, early childhood supervision in Indonesia is not only expected to enhance pedagogical quality but also to cultivate moral and ethical development. In many early childhood institutions, including Islamic-based schools, teachers are responsible for modeling values such as honesty, empathy, discipline, and respect. Thus, effective academic supervision must also ensure that teaching practices embody these moral principles and support children's character formation. This value-oriented perspective aligns with Islamic educational philosophy, which emphasizes holistic development (tarbiyah) encompassing intellect, morality, and spiritual character.

Despite its potential, research linking academic supervision with inclusive early childhood education remains limited. Existing studies on supervision often focus on procedural implementation rather than examining how supervision shapes pedagogical decisions, classroom culture, or children's learning experiences. Therefore, exploring academic supervision within the context of inclusive and child-friendly schooling offers an important contribution to the field, especially given the growing need to improve the quality of early childhood education in Indonesia. Moreover, integrating Islamic values or ethical dimensions into supervision practices remains underexplored, creating a relevant research gap for Islamic education scholarship.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to analyze the implementation of academic supervision carried out by the principal of TK Nasima Semarang, with a specific focus on how supervision supports inclusive and child-friendly early childhood learning. The study examines four core aspects of supervision: (1) planning of academic supervision, (2) implementation of classroom observation, (3) reflective feedback mechanisms, and (4) follow-up actions for continuous teacher development. The significance of the study lies in its attempt to connect supervision practices with broader goals of inclusive pedagogy and child-friendly education. Additionally, the study highlights how supervision practices can reinforce moral development and Islamic character formation within early childhood education settings. By understanding how principals design and execute supervision, educational institutions can gain insights into leadership strategies that promote teacher development and enhance instructional quality.

Finally, the study provides initial conclusions that academic supervision at TK Nasima is implemented through a structured, developmental, and collaborative model that meaningfully enhances teaching quality and supports inclusive learning

environments. When integrated with value-based and Islamic educational principles, supervision becomes not only a tool for professional development but also a medium for strengthening ethical practice and character education in early childhood settings. These insights are expected to contribute to future research on early childhood leadership and offer practical implications for improving supervision practices in similar educational settings.

B. METHOD

A qualitative research design was employed in this study because it allows researchers to obtain an in-depth understanding of social phenomena, meanings, and educational practices within their natural settings (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Qualitative approaches are particularly appropriate for exploring complex educational processes, as they enable researchers to examine participants' perspectives, experiences, and interactions in real-life contexts rather than reducing them to numerical variables (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Maxwell, 2013). This study adopted a descriptive qualitative approach that focuses on describing and interpreting phenomena as they occur in real educational environments. Descriptive qualitative research aims to provide a detailed and systematic description of events, activities, and processes experienced by participants (Sandelowski, 2000; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Through this approach, the study explored the stages of academic supervision conducted by the principal, including planning, implementation, feedback provision, and follow-up activities, in order to understand how supervision practices contribute to improving learning quality as an indicator of achieving quality early childhood education. However, because the study involved a single school, the findings are not intended for broad generalization but rather for providing in-depth insights that may inspire similar Islamic-based or value-oriented educational contexts. The study was carried out from June to October 2025, covering stages of preparation, data collection, data analysis, and research reporting, which allowed the researcher to observe supervision activities and gather comprehensive information from participants involved in the supervision process.

Data were collected using semi-structured interviews, observations, and document analysis. The use of multiple data collection methods is recommended in qualitative research to obtain a deeper understanding of the research phenomenon and to strengthen triangulation (Denzin, 2012; Yin, 2018). Semi-structured interviews were conducted to obtain detailed insights into participants' experiences and perspectives regarding academic supervision practices. As noted by Kvale and Brinkmann (2015), semi-structured interviews allow researchers to explore participants' views in depth while maintaining flexibility to follow emerging topics relevant to the research objectives. Participants were selected purposively based on their involvement and experience in the supervision process and consisted of the school principal and several teachers who actively participate in classroom instruction. Observations were conducted to capture real interactions, behaviors, and practices occurring in the school environment, as observation enables researchers to understand social activities that may not always be fully expressed through interviews (Angrosino, 2007; Creswell & Poth, 2018). In addition, document analysis was carried out to review institutional records related to academic supervision, including supervision planning documents, supervision reports, teacher evaluation records, and other materials related to

instructional quality improvement. Document analysis provides valuable contextual information and helps verify data obtained from other sources (Bowen, 2009). All research instruments, including interview guides, observation checklists, and document review sheets, were developed based on the research objectives and validated through expert judgment to ensure their relevance and clarity (Creswell & Poth, 2018). During instrument development, attention was also given to capturing elements of Islamic values and character education embedded in the school's instructional practices.

Data analysis followed the interactive model of qualitative analysis consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). In the first stage, data condensation involved organizing, selecting, and simplifying interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents into meaningful thematic units related to supervision planning, implementation, feedback, and follow-up activities. The second stage involved data display, where the organized data were presented in narrative descriptions and thematic matrices to identify emerging patterns and relationships (Miles et al., 2014). The final stage involved drawing and verifying conclusions by interpreting the findings and identifying recurring themes related to the principal's supervision strategies and their role in improving instructional practices. Thematic analysis further strengthened the interpretation by identifying key patterns across the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To ensure trustworthiness, the study applied several validation strategies including data triangulation, source triangulation, and member checking to confirm the accuracy of the interpretations (Denzin, 2012; Patton, 2015; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Trustworthiness was further enhanced through peer debriefing and maintaining an audit trail documenting the research process. These strategies ensured credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Ethical considerations were also maintained by obtaining informed consent from participants and ensuring confidentiality and anonymity throughout the research process (Orb, Eisenhauer, & Wynaden, 2001). Given the school's Islamic educational environment, the researcher also maintained cultural and religious sensitivity during data collection, ensuring that the research process aligned with the school's values and ethical expectations.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Findings

This study aims to analyze the implementation of academic supervision conducted by the principal of TK Nasima Semarang in improving the quality of learning in early childhood education. The research data were collected through in-depth interviews, classroom observations, and documentation analysis. The interview participants consisted of the principal of TK Nasima, several teachers of TK Nasima, and parents of students (wali murid). All interviews were conducted on 12 February 2026.

The combination of multiple data sources allowed the researcher to apply data triangulation, which strengthened the credibility and validity of the research findings. The interviews provided insights into the perceptions and experiences of the school principal, teachers, and parents regarding the implementation of academic supervision and its impact on learning quality. In addition, the integration of observational and interview data allowed the researcher to capture how academic supervision supports not only pedagogical improvements but also value-based educational practices aligned with the school's Islamic character-building orientation.

Based on the analysis of the collected data, the implementation of academic supervision at TK Nasima is carried out through four main stages: supervision planning, implementation of classroom supervision, supervision evaluation, and follow-up actions. These stages demonstrate that academic supervision is not merely conducted as a formal administrative activity but functions as a strategy for improving teaching practices and enhancing the overall quality of early childhood education. In addition, the findings show that supervision practices increasingly emphasize value-based learning and the cultivation of Islamic moral values as part of character formation.

Heading 1: Implementation of Academic Supervision in Early Childhood Education

Academic supervision plays a significant role in improving the quality of teaching and learning processes in schools. At TK Nasima Semarang, academic supervision is implemented as part of the principal's leadership strategy to support teachers in developing effective teaching practices. The supervision process is also intentionally aligned with the school's Islamic educational philosophy, ensuring that pedagogical practices reflect moral and ethical values.

Based on the interview with the principal conducted on 12 February 2026, academic supervision is designed as a continuous process throughout the academic year. The principal emphasized that supervision aims not only to evaluate teachers' performance but also to provide professional support that helps teachers improve their teaching strategies.

The principal explained:

> *"Academic supervision is planned for the whole academic year and divided into two semesters. Each teacher is supervised at least once in every semester. However, if a teacher needs additional guidance, the supervision process can be conducted more than once."*

This statement indicates that academic supervision at TK Nasima is implemented in a structured and continuous manner to support teachers' professional development. The principal also highlighted that supervision includes monitoring teachers' consistency in modeling good character, integrating Islamic routines, and fostering respectful interactions with children.

1. Planning of Academic Supervision

The first stage of academic supervision at TK Nasima is the planning process conducted at the beginning of the academic year. Based on document analysis and interview data, the principal prepares an academic supervision program that is integrated into the school's annual work plan.

The supervision program includes several key components:

- preparation of classroom supervision schedules
- determination of supervision focus
- development of supervision instruments
- planning of teacher professional development activities

Documentation obtained from the school indicates that the supervision schedule is designed systematically to ensure that each teacher has the opportunity to be supervised regularly.

Furthermore, the supervision plan also includes attention to values-based indicators, such as teachers' use of Islamic greetings, reinforcement of akhlak, and the integration of moral messages during learning activities.

Table 1. Academic Supervision Schedule at TK Nasima

Semester	Number of Teachers	Minimum Supervision
Semester 1	8 Teachers	1 supervision per teacher
Semester 2	8 Teachers	1 supervision per teacher

Source: School Supervision Document (2026)

During the interview conducted on 12 February 2026, the principal also explained that teachers with strong pedagogical practices are often used as references for other teachers.

> *"Usually we observe teachers who already demonstrate strong teaching practices. Their experience can later be shared with other teachers during reflection meetings or teacher discussions."*

This finding indicates that supervision planning at TK Nasima also aims to foster collaborative professional learning among teachers. Collaborative learning is also used as a platform to share strategies for embedding Islamic values and character-building practices across different classes.

2. Implementation of Classroom Supervision

The second stage of academic supervision is the implementation of classroom observation. In this stage, the principal directly observes the teaching and learning process conducted by teachers in the classroom.

The observation focuses on several aspects, including:

• teaching strategies used by teachers
• teacherstudent interaction
• classroom management
• student participation in learning activities

Based on classroom observations conducted during the research, teachers at TK Nasima generally apply child-centered learning approaches. Learning activities are designed to encourage children's active participation through play based learning, exploration, and creative activities.

Table 2. Classroom Observation Results

Observation Aspect	Findings
Learning strategy	Play-based learning
Student participation	Children actively involved
Teacher–student interaction	Positive and supportive
Learning environment	Child-friendly classroom

Source: Field Observation (2026)

During the interview conducted on 12 February 2026, one of the teachers explained that learning activities are intentionally designed to make children feel comfortable and actively engaged.

"We try to design activities that allow children to learn through play and exploration. When children feel happy during learning activities, they become more active and motivated."

However, teachers also acknowledged challenges in addressing the diverse learning needs of children.

"In one classroom, children have different learning abilities. Some children can complete activities quickly, while others require more guidance from the teacher."

These findings indicate that teachers need continuous professional support to improve their ability to manage diverse learning needs in early childhood classrooms. Observations showed that teachers consistently modeled Islamic values through greetings, doa before and after learning, gentle communication, and conflict-resolution practices grounded in empathy and respect.

3. Evaluation of Academic Supervision

After classroom observation, the principal conducts a supervision evaluation through reflective discussions with teachers. The evaluation aims to provide constructive feedback that helps teachers improve their teaching practices.

The discussion usually covers several aspects, such as:

1. alignment between lesson plans and classroom implementation
2. effectiveness of teaching strategies
3. classroom management practices
4. use of learning media

One teacher explained:

"After the observation, the principal usually invites us to discuss the learning process. The discussion helps us understand which aspects of our teaching need improvement."

The evaluation process is conducted in a supportive and dialogic manner.

Notably, the principal also uses the evaluation stage to reinforce value-based teaching, encouraging teachers to integrate akhlak, compassion, and Islamic character development into daily routines and lesson delivery.

4. Follow-Up of Academic Supervision

The final stage of academic supervision is the follow-up process. Follow-up activities are conducted to ensure that the recommendations from the supervision process are implemented in classroom practices.

The follow-up activities at TK Nasima include:

- individual coaching for teachers
- reflective discussions among teachers
- professional development activities
- sharing of effective teaching practices

During the interview on 12 February 2026, the principal explained the importance of teacher collaboration in improving learning quality.

> *"After supervision, we usually organize teacher discussions. Teachers share their experiences and discuss classroom challenges so that they can learn from each other."*

Follow-up sessions increasingly include workshops on character education, Islamic pedagogical values, and the use of digital tools to support meaningful and ethical learning experiences for young children.

5. Parents' Perspectives on Learning Quality

An important finding of this research is the perspective of parents regarding the impact of academic supervision on the learning experience of their children. Interviews with parents revealed that they observed positive changes in their children's learning experiences at school.

One parent stated:

> *"My child seems more enthusiastic about going to school. The teacher often tells us about the activities in class, and we can see that the children enjoy the learning process."*

Another parent emphasized that the communication between teachers and parents also supports children's learning development.

> *"Teachers often inform us about the children's activities and progress. This communication helps parents support learning at home."*

These findings indicate that academic supervision not only influences teachers' teaching practices but also contributes to improving the overall learning experience for students and strengthening communication between school and parents. Parents also recognized that teachers strengthened children's moral behavior for example, increasing independence, politeness, empathy, and Islamic daily routines signaling that supervision contributes to broader moral development.

6. Evidence of Field Research Implementation

To ensure the credibility of this research, several forms of documentation were collected during the data collection process. These documents serve as evidence that the research activities were conducted directly in the field.

The documentation includes:

- photographs of interviews with the school principal
- photographs of classroom observation activities
- photographs of discussions between teachers and the principal after supervision
- photographs of interviews with parents

These visual records also captured several moments where teachers implemented Islamic routines and moral modeling, reinforcing the integration of values-based instruction observed throughout the supervision cycle.

Figure 1. Interview with the Principal of TK Nasima

Figure 2. Classroom Observation during Learning Activities

Figure 3. Teacher Reflection Meeting after Supervision

Figure 4. Interview with Parents of TK Nasima Students

These documents strengthen the research findings by demonstrating that academic supervision at TK Nasima is implemented systematically and contributes to improving the quality of early childhood education.

Implementing Academic Supervision: Classroom Observation and Learning Reflection

The implementation stage represents the core activity of academic supervision. The findings reveal that classroom observations at TK Nasima are conducted through two approaches: direct classroom observation and digital observation through recorded teaching sessions uploaded to a supervision application.

This combination of traditional and digital supervision reflects the adaptation of supervision practices to contemporary educational contexts. According to Bush (2020), the integration of digital technology into school leadership can enhance supervision effectiveness by allowing school leaders to monitor teaching practices more flexibly.

Figure 2. Process of Academic Supervision Implementation

The figure above illustrates the stages of supervision implementation, starting from classroom observation, documentation of teaching activities, and analysis of learning interactions.

Observation results show that most teachers at TK Nasima apply active learning strategies suitable for early childhood education. Teachers use play-based learning

activities, storytelling, and group interactions to stimulate children's curiosity and participation.

These practices align with early childhood education principles that emphasize learning through exploration and play. According to Ainscow (2020), inclusive and child-centered learning environments encourage children to participate actively in the learning process.

Nevertheless, the findings also reveal certain challenges in adapting teaching strategies for children with different developmental abilities. Teachers sometimes experience difficulties in adjusting learning activities to meet diverse needs within the same classroom. Observations show that teachers intentionally embed Islamic routines, such as doa, greetings, and gentle communication, strengthening the moral and spiritual dimension of early childhood learning.

Feedback and Reflective Dialogue in Academic Supervision

Another important aspect of supervision at TK Nasima is the feedback process provided after classroom observation. The principal conducts reflective discussions with teachers to evaluate teaching practices and identify opportunities for improvement.

This reflective approach supports the concept of professional dialogue in academic supervision. Zepeda (2017) emphasizes that effective supervision should encourage teachers to reflect on their own teaching practices and collaboratively explore solutions for instructional challenges.

Table 2. Forms of Feedback in Academic Supervision

Feedback Form	Description
Reflective Dialogue	Discussion between principal and teacher
Teaching Reflection	Teachers analyze their own teaching practices
Collaborative Discussion	Teachers share experiences and suggestions
Improvement Plan	Agreement on follow-up improvement strategies

Source: Research data (2026)

Feedback discussions at TK Nasima also include attention to teachers' consistency in modeling akhlak mulia, empathy, and Islamic character-building practices, ensuring that supervision strengthens both pedagogical and moral–spiritual dimensions of teaching.

Analysis/Discussion

The research findings presented in the previous section illustrate how academic supervision conducted by the principal at TK Nasima Semarang contributes to improving the quality of early childhood learning. This discussion interprets the empirical findings by connecting them with theoretical perspectives on instructional leadership, academic supervision, and teacher professional development in early childhood education.

The results indicate that academic supervision at TK Nasima is implemented through four interconnected stages: supervision planning, classroom observation,

feedback and reflective dialogue, and follow-up professional support. These stages demonstrate that academic supervision is not merely an administrative monitoring activity but a systematic professional development process that supports teachers in improving instructional practices. The findings also reveal that supervision practices function as a medium to strengthen value-based teaching, particularly through the integration of Islamic values in daily learning routines.

The supervision model implemented at TK Nasima reflects the principles of instructional leadership, where school leaders actively guide and support teachers in improving learning processes. According to Hallinger (2021), instructional leadership focuses on how school leaders influence teaching practices to ensure that learning activities meet educational goals. In this context, the principal at TK Nasima plays a strategic role in shaping teaching quality through structured supervision practices. At TK Nasima, the principal's leadership also reflects value-based leadership, ensuring that supervision supports not only instructional quality but also the cultivation of children's moral and Islamic character.

The Principal's Role in Planning Academic Supervision

Planning is the initial stage that determines the effectiveness of the supervision process. The findings of this study show that the principal at TK Nasima develops a structured supervision program at the beginning of the academic year. The program includes supervision schedules, observation instruments, and preparation of supporting documentation. The planning also includes indicators related to Islamic values, such as teachers' use of Islamic greetings, character-building routines, and moral modeling, ensuring alignment between supervision and the school's Islamic-based educational philosophy.

This approach aligns with the view of Glickman, Gordon, and Ross-Gordon (2018), who argue that academic supervision must be carefully planned to ensure that supervision activities support teacher professional growth and instructional improvement.

Teachers reported that the supervision schedule helps them prepare their teaching activities more systematically. This indicates that structured planning enhances teachers' instructional readiness, consistent with Hoy and Miskel's (2013) view that well-organized supervisory structures strengthen teachers' pedagogical self-regulation and professional accountability.

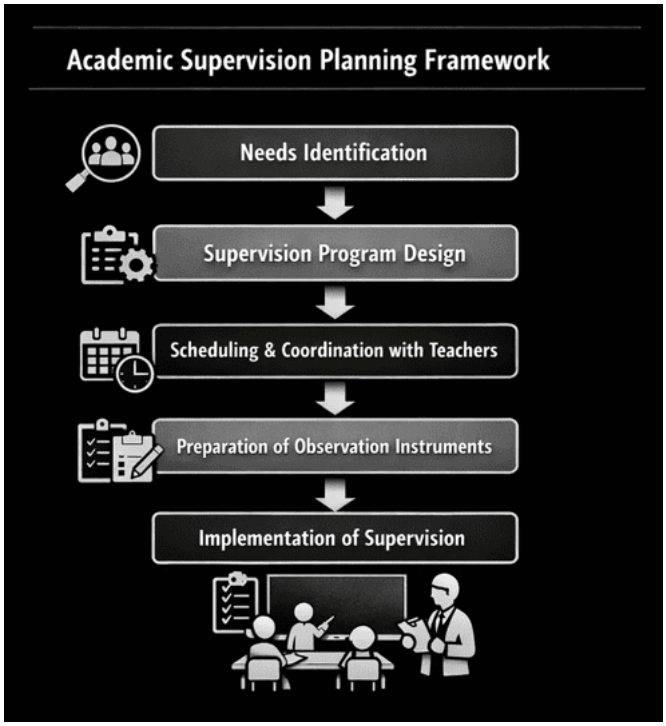


Figure 1. Academic Supervision Planning Framework

This framework illustrates that supervision planning at TK Nasima is structured and collaborative. The principal communicates the supervision plan to teachers and allows adjustments based on classroom conditions.

Table 1. Components of Academic Supervision Planning

Component	Description
Supervision Program	Annual and semester supervision plan
Supervision Schedule	Supervision conducted at least once per semester
Observation Instrument	Checklist focusing on learning process and classroom interaction
Teacher Preparation	Teachers prepare lesson plans and learning documentation

Source: Field data analysis (2026)

Teacher interview data confirm that the principal successfully establishes a structured and supportive supervision environment. Teachers reported that supervision planning helps them prepare teaching activities more systematically. However, certain challenges still exist, particularly related to time limitations due to the principal's administrative responsibilities.

Teacher interview data confirm that the principal successfully establishes a supportive supervision environment.

However, because the research was conducted in only one institution (TK Nasima), the generalizability of these planning strategies to broader early childhood Islamic education settings remains limited.

This approach also encourages collaborative learning among teachers. During group reflection sessions, teachers watch recorded teaching sessions and discuss possible improvements together. Such collaborative learning practices resemble the concept of Professional Learning Communities (PLC) described by Hord (2015).

Implementing Academic Supervision: Classroom Observation and Learning Reflection

The implementation stage of supervision involves observing classroom learning processes. The findings reveal that the principal conducts classroom observations both directly and through recorded teaching sessions uploaded to a digital supervision platform. The integration of digital tools in supervision practices reflects contemporary educational management approaches. Bush (2020) highlights that technology-based supervision can help school leaders monitor teaching practices more efficiently and maintain documentation of instructional processes.

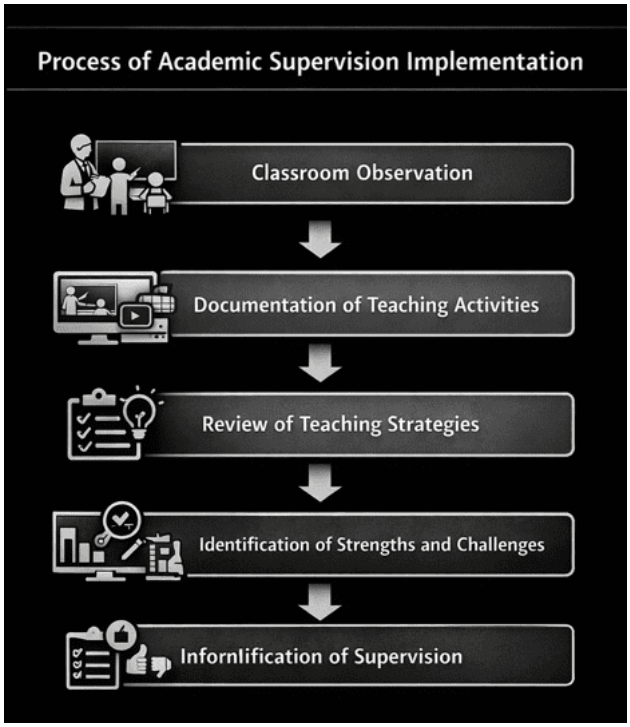


Figure 2. Process of Academic Supervision Implementation

Observation results indicate that teachers frequently implement play-based learning strategies that encourage children's participation. This aligns with Bredekamp's (2019) principle that developmentally appropriate practices in early childhood should emphasize exploratory and play-based learning, enabling children to construct knowledge through social interaction and hands-on engagement.

These findings are consistent with early childhood education principles emphasizing active and experiential learning. According to Ainscow (2020), inclusive

learning environments should encourage participation and accommodate diverse learning needs among students.

However, teachers also reported challenges in managing children with different learning abilities in the same classroom. Adapting learning activities to accommodate diverse developmental levels requires additional preparation and pedagogical competence. This finding reflects the complexity of differentiated instruction in early childhood education, where teachers must simultaneously address children's varying cognitive, social, and emotional development stages (Tomlinson, 2017). Therefore, continuous professional support through academic supervision becomes essential to help teachers develop adaptive teaching strategies.

Feedback and Reflective Dialogue in Academic Supervision

Another important finding of this study relates to the feedback process following classroom observations. The principal provides feedback through reflective discussions with teachers to analyze teaching practices and identify possible improvements. This approach reflects the concept of reflective supervision. Zepeda (2017) explains that effective supervision involves professional dialogue that encourages teachers to reflect critically on their instructional strategies. Teachers reported that feedback discussions help them understand the effectiveness of their instructional methods. This confirms Schön's (1987) concept of reflective practice, where teachers refine their pedagogical decisions through structured reflection facilitated by supervisors.

Table 2. Forms of Feedback in Academic Supervision

Feedback Type	Description
Reflective Dialogue	Discussion between principal and teacher
Teaching Reflection	Teachers evaluate their own practices
Collaborative Discussion	Teachers share teaching experiences
Improvement Plan	Agreement on follow-up strategies

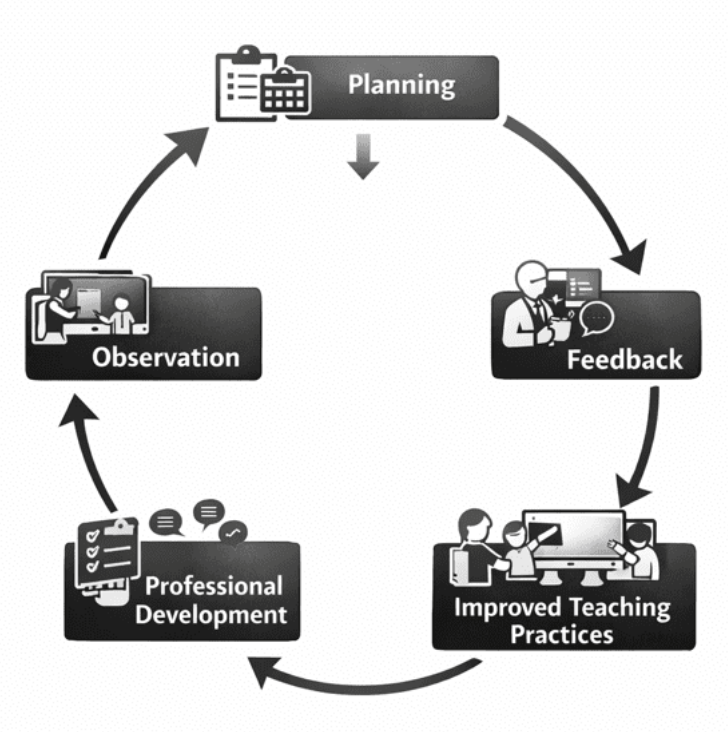
Source: Field interview analysis (2026)

The reflective discussions conducted by the principal also encourage collaborative learning among teachers. During group reflection sessions, teachers watch recorded teaching sessions and discuss alternative teaching strategies together.
This practice resembles the concept of Professional Learning Communities (PLC) described by Hord (2015), where teachers collaboratively learn from each other to improve instructional quality.

Follow-Up Supervision and Continuous Professional Development

The final stage of academic supervision involves mentoring, coaching, and ongoing monitoring to ensure that supervision leads to meaningful improvement Follow-up activities at TK Nasima also include coaching on Islamic pedagogy, character formation, and moral modeling, ensuring that teacher development addresses both instructional and ethical dimensions of early childhood education.

This continuous support is essential for ensuring that supervision activities produce long-term improvements in instructional quality. Hallinger (2021) emphasizes that instructional leadership requires sustained professional support for teachers.



The cycle above demonstrates that academic supervision at TK Nasima functions as a continuous improvement system rather than a one-time evaluation process.
Parents also reported positive perceptions of the learning environment. This suggests that supervision contributes indirectly to parental satisfaction, supporting Epstein's (2011) theory that strong school–family partnerships emerge when instructional quality and communication practices are consistently strengthened.

Synthesis of Research Findings and Previous Studies

To better understand the significance of the findings, the following section synthesizes the relationship between this study and previous research.
The findings of this study reinforce Zepeda's (2017) assertion that effective academic supervision is developmental rather than evaluative, as supervision at TK Nasima emphasizes reflective dialogue, coaching, and continuous instructional improvement. Additionally, this study expands current literature by showing how academic supervision in Islamic early childhood settings can function as a dual-support mechanism enhancing pedagogical competence while strengthening moral–spiritual learning practices However, because the study was conducted in only one Islamic-based preschool, the scope of the findings remains limited, and further research should explore broader contexts. This is consistent with Hallinger's (2021) conceptualization of instructional leadership, where principals guide teaching quality through structured support rather than merely compliance-oriented oversight.

Furthermore, the results partially align with Bush's (2020) study on digital supervision, which argues that technology can enhance monitoring efficiency and documentation accuracy. In the context of TK Nasima, however, digital tools function supplementarily rather than as fully integrated supervisory mechanisms. This divergence may be influenced by the characteristics of early childhood education environments, where hands-on interaction and real-time observation remain central to pedagogical evaluation. Such contextual differences suggest that digital supervision models in preschools require adaptation to developmental needs and classroom dynamics specific to young learners.

Compared with Hord's (2015) concept of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), the supervision practices at TK Nasima demonstrate emerging collaborative structures, particularly through post-observation reflection meetings. However, collaboration is still predominantly principal-driven rather than distributed, indicating that PLC implementation in early childhood settings may require stronger facilitation and teacher autonomy.

1. Theoretical Implications

   The results extend the literature on instructional leadership and early childhood supervision by illustrating how structured, reflective, and collaborative supervision practices contribute to teachers' pedagogical growth. The study provides empirical support for the argument that supervision is most effective when implemented as a continuous cycle of planning, observation, feedback, and follow-up, affirming models proposed by Glickman et al. (2018).

   Moreover, the study highlights the need to contextualize digital supervision frameworks in early childhood education. This contributes to theoretical discussions on how technology-enhanced supervision may function differently depending on learner age, classroom dynamics, and pedagogical orientation. Furthermore, the study demonstrates how academic supervision in Islamic early childhood settings integrates instructional leadership with value-based leadership, showing that supervision can simultaneously strengthen pedagogical competence and the moral–spiritual dimensions of teaching. This adds a new theoretical perspective to existing models by highlighting the role of Islamic values such as akhlak, empathy, and character formation in shaping effective supervision practices in early childhood education.

2. Practical Implications

   Practically, the findings emphasize the importance of designing structured supervision systems that incorporate clear planning, focused observation instruments, reflective dialogue, and sustained professional development. Early childhood institutions should consider enhancing teacher collaboration through formalized PLC structures to strengthen peer learning.

   The research also suggests that digital supervision tools can be beneficial, particularly for documentation and reflective review; however, their implementation should be adapted to the characteristics of early childhood classrooms, where developmental interactions may not always be fully captured through digital recordings. In practical terms, schools especially those grounded in Islamic educational principles may adopt similar supervision practices to reinforce akhlak, empathy, and Islamic character-building alongside improvements in instructional quality. The integration of moral–spiritual elements into supervision follow-up, coaching, and teacher reflection can

strengthen both teaching effectiveness and the holistic development of young learners.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine how academic supervision implemented by the principal of TK Nasima Semarang contributes to improving learning quality in early childhood education. The findings demonstrate that the supervision process comprising planning, classroom observation, reflective feedback, and follow-up support functions as a continuous professional development cycle rather than a one-time evaluative procedure. This approach fosters a supportive environment where teachers feel guided rather than judged, enabling them to refine their pedagogical decisions and strengthen their readiness to deliver developmentally appropriate learning experiences.

The study also reveals that reflective dialogue and collaborative discussions play an essential role in shaping teachers' professional growth. Through constructive feedback, mentoring, and shared learning sessions, teachers become more aware of their instructional strengths and challenges, particularly in addressing diverse developmental needs within the classroom. Parents' positive responses further highlight that improvements in teaching practices have a tangible impact on children's enthusiasm, engagement, and overall learning experience. These insights affirm that academic supervision contributes not only to teacher competence but also to the broader quality of school family partnerships.

Based on these findings, this research concludes that structured, reflective, and continuous academic supervision is a key mechanism for enhancing early childhood learning quality. Moreover, the study indicates that structured academic supervision can enhance teachers' ethical and moral competencies, contributing to holistic child development in line with Islamic educational principles. This aligns with Islamic pedagogy perspectives emphasizing tarbiyah (holistic nurturing) and the development of akhlaq as core foundations of learning in early childhood (e.g., Nata, 2016; Al-Attas, 2014). Schools can strengthen their supervisory frameworks by integrating collaborative professional learning and adapting digital tools to complement face-to-face supervision. In Islamic early childhood settings, supervision that integrates pedagogical guidance with value-based leadership helps reinforce teachers' commitment to cultivating empathy, discipline, sincerity, and other essential akhlaq values in daily classroom practice, consistent with the view that early moral education shapes children's long-term character formation.

Future research is encouraged to explore supervision models in different early childhood settings, investigate long-term impacts of supervision on teacher identity formation, and examine how digital supervision platforms can be contextualized to support reflective practice in early learning environments.

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