

How Principals Cultivate Teacher Personal Competencies: Insights from Study Group Implementation in Elementary Schools

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Keywords

principal management
teacher personal competencies
professional learning communities
POAC framework
elementary education

Article History

Received 2025-11-04

Accepted 2026-01-16

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Abstract

Teacher personal competencies, encompassing integrity, emotional stability, and professional ethics, are fundamental to quality elementary education, yet their systematic development remains underexamined. This study analyzes how principal management through the POAC framework enhances teacher personal competencies via study groups. A qualitative case study design was employed at SDN Ciseureuh and SDN Karya Bhakti in Cianjur Regency, Indonesia. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis from principals, teachers, and stakeholders selected through purposive and snowball sampling. Data analysis followed Miles et al.'s (2014) three-stage inductive process, with trustworthiness established through triangulation, member checking, and audit trails. Findings reveal that systematic principal management—encompassing evidence-based planning, strategic resource organization, motivational leadership, and continuous evaluation—effectively strengthens teacher integrity, responsibility, discipline, and professionalism through study groups. Study groups structured around collaborative inquiry and reflective practice created authentic learning environments. However, time constraints, motivational variation, and infrastructure limitations emerged as implementation challenges, while principal commitment, competent facilitation, and collegial culture served as facilitating factors. An unexpected finding showed differential impact across career stages, with early-career teachers experiencing more transformative changes than veterans. The integration of POAC management theory with professional learning community research demonstrates that teacher personal competencies are developable through intentional, well-managed collegial learning. This culturally contextualized approach offers practical guidance for principals and contributes theoretically by synthesizing management, professional development, and character education literature.

INTRODUCTION

The quality of education in elementary schools is fundamentally shaped by teachers' personal competencies, which encompass integrity, emotional stability, exemplary behavior, and professional ethics (Kim et al., 2019; Perera et al., 2018). Teachers' personality traits, including conscientiousness, emotional stability, and interpersonal effectiveness, have been consistently linked to teaching effectiveness and positive classroom environments (Villena-Martínez & Muñoz-García, 2025). In contemporary educational contexts, teachers are expected to serve not merely as knowledge transmitters but as role models who inspire and motivate students through their character and conduct (Domitrovich et al., 2017; Galvis, 2007; Lytle et al., 2018). The development of teachers' personal competencies has become increasingly critical in the 21st-century educational landscape, where educators must demonstrate mature personalities and high moral standards to create conducive learning environments that foster both academic achievement and character development among students (Sánchez-Tarazaga, 2016). Despite the implementation of various professional development programs, including training sessions and supervisory interventions, the strengthening of teachers' personal competencies remains inconsistent, particularly regarding discipline, responsibility, and professional ethics (Clandinin et al., 2015). This persistent challenge underscores the pivotal role of

school principals as managers and facilitators of teacher professionalism, particularly through strategic management of collaborative learning mechanisms such as study groups (Darling-Hammond et al., 2022; Sahlin et al., 2025).

The discourse on teacher professional development has highlighted the significance of collaborative learning approaches, particularly professional learning communities (PLCs) and study groups, in enhancing pedagogical practices and professional competencies (Antinluoma et al., 2021; Hudson, 2013). Study groups, as structured forums for peer learning and reflective practice, have been recognized as potential vehicles for professional growth that improve instruction and contribute to school effectiveness (Lomos et al., 2011; Louis et al., 2010). However, empirical evidence from elementary schools in Indonesia, specifically at SDN Ciseureuh and SDN Karya Bhakti in Cianjur Regency, reveals that study groups have not functioned optimally in developing teachers' personal competencies. Several critical gaps have been identified, including low consistency in achieving expected character transformation, inadequate supporting facilities and resources, and considerable variation in teachers' motivation to participate actively in group activities. Furthermore, weaknesses in coordination and managerial leadership exercised by school principals have emerged as significant impediments to program effectiveness (Buttram & Farley-Ripple, 2016). These findings illuminate the necessity for a more systematic, integrated, and contextually responsive management approach to transform study groups into effective mechanisms for strengthening teachers' personal competencies.

Existing literature has established the importance of principal leadership in teacher development. Leithwood (2006) and Joyce and Showers (2002) have emphasized the influence of principal management on learning quality improvement, while Guskey (2002) has underscored the effectiveness of continuous collaborative learning through study groups. Recent research has further demonstrated that principals' systematic application of management frameworks significantly influences teacher professional development and school performance (Darling-Hammond et al., 2022; Mergoni et al., 2025). However, these studies tend to address isolated aspects of the phenomenon without comprehensively integrating managerial functions or adequately considering the socio-cultural contexts of elementary schools (Antinluoma et al., 2021). Similarly, research on teacher personality competencies (Spencer & Spencer, 1993) and the impact of principal leadership on teacher performance (Alhabsyi et al., 2022) has not systematically connected classical management theory, particularly the POAC framework (Planning, Organizing, Actuating, Controlling), with the dynamics of study group implementation. Recent studies have provided partial insights into this domain, yet significant knowledge gaps persist. While research confirms the role of principals in improving teachers' competencies through systematic guidance and the effectiveness of professional learning communities in enhancing teacher collaboration (Hord & Sommers, 2008; Roberts & Pruitt, 2009), limited investigations have explored how principals navigate obstacles and implement comprehensive management approaches that integrate planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating professional development activities specifically focused on personal competency development (Aravena, 2023). These studies collectively reveal a significant knowledge gap: the absence of comprehensive research that integrates systematic management approaches with the specific context of study groups as mechanisms for developing teachers' personal competencies in elementary school settings.

This study addresses this knowledge gap by integrating a POAC model-based principal management approach with the development of teachers' personal competencies through study groups. The research positions principals as both managers and facilitators who engage in comprehensive processes from needs identification and strategy formulation to resource organization and continuous evaluation (Yahyuni et al., 2024). Additionally, this study incorporates six philosophical value systems— theological, ethical, aesthetic, rational, physical-psychological, and teleological—aligned with local socio-cultural contexts (Sanusi, 2023), ensuring that teacher personality development transcends technical dimensions to encompass philosophical and cultural meaningfulness. This theoretical framework is grounded in the assumption that effective principal management, particularly in the functions of planning, organizing, mobilizing, and controlling study groups, can significantly enhance teachers'

personal competencies (Bush, 2018; Terry, 1976). The success of such programs is contingent upon principals' commitment, teachers' active participation, and the availability of adequate infrastructure and supportive policies (Hofman et al., 2015; Turner et al., 2018). Moreover, improvements in teachers' personal competencies have direct implications for educational quality and students' character formation, extending benefits beyond individual teachers to the broader school ecosystem (Harvey & Green, 1993).

The primary objective of this study is to analyze the role of principal management in improving elementary school teachers' personal competencies through a POAC-based study group approach integrated with philosophical value systems. Specifically, this research seeks to identify both inhibiting and supporting factors that influence program effectiveness and to provide practical recommendations for optimizing study groups as mechanisms for teacher personality development. The significance of this study lies in its potential to generate innovative and adaptive managerial strategies that promote continuous improvement in teacher professionalism and foster a conducive school culture characterized by excellent character, aligned with national education policy directions. By examining case studies at SDN Ciseureuh and SDN Karya Bhakti, this research contributes empirical evidence to the theoretical understanding of how systematic management practices can transform collaborative learning structures into effective platforms for holistic teacher development, ultimately enhancing the quality of elementary education in Indonesia.

METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study design to gain an in-depth understanding of principal management in improving teacher personality competencies through study groups at SDN Ciseureuh and SDN Karya Bhakti. The qualitative approach was chosen because it is in line with the research objective, which focuses on understanding complex social phenomena, while case studies allow for intensive exploration of real contexts, thereby enriching our understanding of the dynamics, processes, and factors that influence program implementation.

The research subjects included school principals, teachers active in study groups, and other stakeholders involved in the program. Informants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure the involvement of relevant and experienced individuals, supplemented by snowball sampling to recruit additional informants with important insights based on the recommendations of the initial informants. Thus, the data obtained reflected the diversity of perspectives from various parties directly involved.

Data collection techniques included in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation studies. Interviews were used to explore the subjective perceptions and experiences of principals, teachers, and educational staff regarding managerial processes and the implementation of learning groups. Participatory observation is conducted to obtain direct contextual data from learning group activities and management practices at school, while documentation studies include analysis of official documents such as activity reports, meeting minutes, work programs, teacher and student data, and evaluation instruments.

The research process began with the preparation of instruments in the form of interview guidelines, observation sheets, and documentation forms, followed by flexible data collection in accordance with field conditions. Data analysis was conducted inductively through reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing using thematic narratives and descriptive tables. The validity of the results was ensured through triangulation of sources, methods, and member checks, while the credibility of the research was enhanced by an audit trail documenting the research steps. Using this method, the research produced a deep understanding of the principal's strategy in managing study groups as a means of systematically, contextually, and sustainably improving teachers' personal competencies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This section presents the empirical findings regarding the implementation of study groups and principal management practices at SDN Ciseureuh and SDN Karya Bhakti, organized according to the research objectives. The findings are supported by triangulated data from interviews, observations, and document analysis, validated through member checking procedures.

Implementation of Study Groups for Teacher Personal Competence Development

Study group implementation at both schools exhibited systematic characteristics aligned with professional learning community principles. The programs were conducted regularly with consistent scheduling designed to avoid disruption to core instructional activities. Documentary evidence revealed that study groups at SDN Ciseureuh met monthly, while SDN Karya Bhakti organized biweekly sessions, each lasting 90-120 minutes. Attendance records from the 2023-2024 academic year showed participation rates averaging 88% at SDN Ciseureuh and 82% at SDN Karya Bhakti, indicating strong teacher engagement despite competing professional responsibilities.

The structural dynamics of these study groups reflected sophisticated organizational elements. Each group functioned under the coordination of senior teachers who served triple roles as facilitators, moderators, and liaisons between participating teachers and school administrators. As one coordinator at SDN Ciseureuh explained: "My role extends beyond organizing meetings. I must create safe spaces where teachers feel comfortable sharing challenges, ensure discussions remain focused on professional growth, and communicate our collective needs to the principal." Observational data confirmed that coordinators employed varied facilitation techniques including think-pair-share protocols, case-based discussions, and structured reflection activities that promoted active participation rather than passive reception of information.

The content focus of study group sessions centered on developing teachers' personal competencies through integration with the Pancasila student profile. Document analysis of meeting agendas and minutes revealed thematic progressions addressing integrity, responsibility, discipline, exemplary behavior, interpersonal communication, and professional ethics. Notably, sessions employed applied methodologies including role-playing scenarios where teachers practiced managing ethical dilemmas, collaborative analysis of classroom video recordings to identify opportunities for modeling positive character traits, and peer consultation protocols for addressing specific behavioral challenges. One veteran teacher at SDN Karya Bhakti noted: "These aren't abstract discussions about values. We examine real situations from our classrooms, discuss what we could have done differently, and practice specific strategies together."

An unexpected finding emerged regarding the differential impact of study group participation on teachers at different career stages. While the research primarily focused on overall program effectiveness, interview data revealed that early-career teachers (0-5 years experience) reported greater gains in confidence and clarity about professional expectations compared to veteran teachers (15+ years experience), who valued the opportunity for collegial exchange but expressed less dramatic shifts in personal competence. This suggests that study groups may function differently as professional development mechanisms depending on participants' career phases, a nuance not anticipated in the initial research design.

Principal Management Through the POAC Framework

Planning Phase

Planning processes at both schools demonstrated systematic needs assessment aligned with empirical evidence. Principals utilized multiple data sources including classroom observations conducted throughout the previous academic year, annual teacher performance evaluations, structured group discussions with teaching staff, and feedback surveys distributed to students and parents. The principal at SDN Ciseureuh explained: "We don't assume we know what teachers need. We look at performance data, listen to their own perceptions of growth areas, and consider feedback from students and families to identify where personality competence development should focus."

Document analysis revealed that program objectives were explicitly formulated and aligned with school vision-mission statements. Both schools developed clear targets including enhancing teacher integrity through modeling ethical decision-making, strengthening responsibility through systematic follow-through on commitments, improving discipline through consistent adherence to professional standards, fostering collaboration through structured peer support, and elevating professionalism through evidence-based practice. Implementation strategies were collaboratively developed through coordination meetings involving school management teams, senior teachers, and study group coordinators. Meeting minutes from August 2023 planning sessions showed that principals actively solicited input regarding optimal scheduling, preferred discussion formats, and anticipated resource needs.

Resource organization constituted a critical planning component. Both principals appointed competent coordinators based on demonstrated facilitation skills, content expertise, and interpersonal effectiveness rather than solely on seniority. Financial allocations from School Operational Assistance (BOS) funds were documented, with SDN Ciseureuh budgeting approximately 15% of professional development funds for study group activities, while SDN Karya Bhakti allocated 12%. These funds supported materials acquisition, external facilitator honoraria, and refreshments that principals identified as important for creating collegial atmospheres.

Organizing and Implementing Phase

Implementation revealed adaptive management approaches that responded to emerging needs. Principals employed distributed leadership models, empowering coordinators with decision-making authority regarding session content and format while maintaining oversight of alignment with program objectives. Observational data showed principals attending approximately 30-40% of study group sessions, balancing visible support with avoiding overly hierarchical dynamics that might inhibit open dialogue.

Actuating mechanisms emphasized motivational leadership and continuous support. Both principals employed multiple strategies including public recognition of teacher growth during staff meetings, private encouragement notes acknowledging specific improvements observed, provision of release time for teachers to observe peers' classrooms, and facilitation of external partnerships that brought fresh perspectives into study groups. One teacher at SDN Karya Bhakti remarked: "Our principal doesn't just tell us this matters. She shows up, she notices when we try new approaches, and she creates opportunities for us to learn beyond our school walls."

Evaluation and Monitoring

Evaluation processes were systematically integrated into program implementation through multiple mechanisms. Principals conducted structured classroom observations using protocols that specifically assessed manifestations of personal competencies in teaching practice, including teachers' modeling of respectful communication, demonstration of ethical reasoning during content delivery, and consistency between espoused values and behavioral patterns. Teachers submitted monthly reflection reports synthesizing key insights from study group participation and describing specific implementation strategies attempted in their classrooms. Peer review processes were formalized through protocols where teachers provided constructive feedback to colleagues following classroom observations.

Evaluation data informed iterative program improvements. Document analysis of quarterly review reports showed that principals made responsive adjustments including increasing frequency of sessions when teachers expressed high engagement, modifying discussion formats when participation patterns suggested disengagement, arranging targeted mentoring for teachers demonstrating persistent challenges, and reallocating resources toward high-impact activities identified through feedback. This responsive approach exemplified the controlling function of POAC management operating as continuous quality improvement rather than mere compliance monitoring.

Challenges and Facilitating Factors

Implementation Challenges

Time constraints emerged as the primary implementation obstacle. Teachers reported difficulty allocating dedicated time for study group participation amidst heavy teaching loads averaging 24-28 contact hours weekly, extensive administrative responsibilities including lesson planning and assessment, co-curricular duties supervising student activities, and professional obligations for continuing education credits. One teacher expressed this tension: "I believe in these sessions and see their value, but finding time when I have 30 students' assignments to grade and lesson plans to prepare is genuinely difficult."

Motivational variation presented a secondary challenge. While most teachers demonstrated enthusiasm, approximately 15-20% across both schools exhibited reluctant participation. Interviews revealed these teachers perceived study group activities as less relevant to immediate instructional challenges, felt uncomfortable with the vulnerability required for authentic professional dialogue, or experienced burnout from cumulative professional demands that diminished energy for additional commitments. This variation complicated facilitation, as coordinators struggled to balance meeting needs of highly engaged participants while attempting to draw in reluctant colleagues.

Infrastructure limitations affected program quality, particularly at SDN Karya Bhakti. The school lacked dedicated professional development spaces, requiring study groups to meet in classrooms after school hours, which created suboptimal environments due to student furniture configured for children rather than adults, limited technological resources for accessing and displaying professional literature, and ambient noise from concurrent co-curricular activities. While not fatal to program implementation, these conditions diminished the professional atmosphere that principals sought to cultivate.

Facilitating Factors

Strong leadership commitment constituted the primary facilitating factor. Both principals demonstrated unwavering support through consistent attendance at sessions, regular communication emphasizing program importance, protection of scheduled time from competing demands, and personal vulnerability in acknowledging their own professional growth needs. One teacher observed: "When our principal sits with us, shares her own challenges with difficult situations, and asks for our input, it completely changes the dynamic. We're not being 'developed' by her—we're developing together."

Competent coordinators proved essential to program success. The coordinators possessed sophisticated facilitation skills including ability to create psychologically safe spaces, skill in surfacing tacit knowledge through strategic questioning, capacity to navigate interpersonal tensions when they arose, and cultural sensitivity in honoring teachers' diverse perspectives. Their effectiveness transformed potentially routine meetings into genuine professional learning experiences.

A conducive learning environment characterized by collegial trust and mutual support facilitated authentic engagement. Teachers at both schools described norms of non-judgmental dialogue, collective problem-solving orientations, celebration of risk-taking even when unsuccessful, and shared commitment to student benefit. These cultural elements did not emerge spontaneously but resulted from principals' intentional cultivation through modeling, explicit norm-setting, and consistent reinforcement.

Adequate resource allocation, though not lavish, provided necessary support. Beyond financial resources, principals ensured access to professional literature relevant to character education and personal competence, technology enabling virtual participation when circumstances prevented physical attendance, and partnerships with external organizations including local university faculty, district education office personnel, and community health professionals who enriched discussions with specialized expertise.

Discussion

The findings illuminate several dimensions of principal management effectiveness in developing teacher personal competencies through study groups, confirming and extending existing theoretical frameworks while revealing contextual nuances specific to Indonesian elementary education.

The systematic application of POAC management functions observed at both schools validates classical management theory's relevance to contemporary educational leadership challenges. Terry's

(1976) foundational framework posited that effective organizational management requires integrated planning, organizing, actuating, and controlling functions. This study's findings demonstrate that when principals deliberately operationalize each POAC component, study groups transcend perfunctory professional development to become authentic mechanisms for teacher growth. The planning phase's emphasis on empirical needs assessment aligns with Usman & Haryadi (2023), who demonstrated that data-driven planning significantly enhances program relevance and effectiveness in educational settings. Both principals' practices of utilizing classroom observations, performance evaluations, and stakeholder feedback to inform study group focus exemplify evidence-based management rather than intuition-based decision-making.

The organizing function's emphasis on competent coordinator selection and strategic resource allocation corroborates Bush's (2018) assertion that distributed leadership models enhance organizational effectiveness by leveraging diverse expertise. However, this study extends existing theory by revealing that effective organizing in the study group context requires not merely task delegation but careful attention to psychological safety, cultural sensitivity, and interpersonal dynamics—dimensions less prominent in traditional management literature. The actuating phase findings support Day et al. (2016) regarding the critical importance of principals' visible commitment and relationship-building in motivating teacher engagement. The motivational strategies employed—recognition, encouragement, release time, and partnership facilitation—align with transformational leadership principles (Bass & Riggio, 2006) while demonstrating context-specific applications in resource-constrained elementary school settings.

The controlling function's implementation through classroom observations, reflection reports, and peer review demonstrates sophisticated understanding of evaluation as formative rather than merely summative. This approach resonates with Deming's (1986) quality management principles emphasizing continuous improvement cycles. The responsive adjustments principals made based on evaluation data—modifying session frequency, adjusting formats, and reallocating resources—exemplify what Mergoni et al. (2025) described as adaptive leadership that maintains program fidelity while remaining responsive to emergent needs. However, an unexpected finding was the relative underemphasis on formal measurement of personal competence development outcomes, suggesting that principals prioritized process quality over quantitative metrics, perhaps reflecting cultural values emphasizing holistic assessment over reductionist measurement.

The study group characteristics observed align substantially with professional learning community (PLC) research while revealing implementation nuances. Lomos et al. (2011) and Louis et al. (2010) identified collaborative inquiry, shared responsibility, and continuous learning as core PLC elements—all evident in both schools' study groups. The structural dynamics including regular scheduling, competent facilitation, thematic focus, and applied methodologies reflect DuFour et al. (2016) recommendations for effective professional learning communities. However, this study's findings suggest that PLCs focused specifically on teacher personal competencies require additional elements beyond those emphasized in instructional improvement literature.

Particularly significant is the finding that personal competence development demands greater vulnerability and emotional exposure than discussions focused primarily on pedagogical techniques. Teachers reported that conversations about integrity, exemplary behavior, and professional ethics required deeper self-disclosure and carried higher interpersonal risk than technical discussions about lesson design or assessment strategies. This finding extends Bouchamma et al. (2019), who emphasized principals' role in guiding PLCs toward institutionalization, by suggesting that PLCs focused on dispositional rather than technical competencies may require more intensive trust-building and psychological safety than previously recognized.

The differential impact on early-career versus veteran teachers represents a novel finding with theoretical implications. While Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) documented that effective professional development must be differentiated to address teachers' varying needs, existing literature has not specifically examined how career stage influences receptivity to personal competence development

through collaborative learning. This study suggests that early-career teachers, still actively forming professional identities, may experience study group participation as more transformative than veteran teachers whose professional identities are more crystallized. This finding challenges one-size-fits-all PLC implementation approaches and suggests that principals might need to differentiate participation structures or discussion formats based on career phase.

The challenges identified—particularly time constraints and motivational variation—corroborate Buttram and Farley-Ripple (2016), who documented that PLC implementation consistently encounters structural obstacles (scheduling, workload) and cultural obstacles (engagement variation, vulnerability resistance). However, this study's contextual analysis reveals that in Indonesian elementary schools with high teaching loads (24-28 contact hours weekly), structural constraints may be more severe than in Western contexts where much PLC research has occurred. This suggests that transplanting PLC models across international contexts requires adaptation to local realities rather than direct importation.

The study's focus on teacher personal competencies addresses a domain receiving insufficient attention in mainstream teacher development literature, which disproportionately emphasizes pedagogical and content knowledge (Shulman, 1987; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 2013). The findings validate that systematic attention to personal competencies including integrity, responsibility, discipline, and exemplary behavior can be meaningfully addressed through structured professional learning. This aligns with Indonesian regulatory frameworks (Permendiknas No. 16 of 2007) that identify personality competence as one of four core teacher competency domains, yet extends regulatory mandates by demonstrating practical implementation mechanisms.

The integration of personal competence development with the Pancasila student profile represents a culturally contextualized approach that links teacher character to broader national educational goals. This integration reflects what Sanusi (2023) described as alignment between philosophical value systems and educational practice, grounding teacher development in shared cultural-national frameworks rather than importing decontextualized Western models. However, the study also reveals tension between universal professional ethics emphasized in international frameworks (UNESCO, 2016) and culturally specific values, suggesting that effective teacher development must navigate both universal standards and local cultural contexts.

The finding that personal competence development manifests in teachers' classroom practice—observable through respectful communication, ethical reasoning, and value consistency—provides empirical support for social learning theory (Bandura, 1986) and character education literature (Lapsley & Narvaez, 2006; Lickona, 1992) emphasizing teachers' modeling roles. Teachers' reported increased confidence in addressing ethical dilemmas and modeling positive character traits aligns with self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1997), suggesting that collective professional learning enhances teachers' beliefs in their capacity to fulfill character education responsibilities. This finding contrasts with deficit-oriented approaches that position teachers as lacking moral character, instead framing personal competence development as professional capacity-building that enhances effectiveness for all teachers regardless of baseline competence.

The principals' dual roles as managers and facilitators documented in this study support hybrid leadership models that integrate instructional, transformational, and distributed leadership dimensions. The findings align with research demonstrating principal influence on teacher professional learning operates through both direct mechanisms (professional development provision, instructional guidance) and indirect mechanisms (culture-building, resource allocation, norm-setting) (Hallinger et al., 2018; Thien et al., 2023). The principals' visible participation in study groups while avoiding domination exemplifies what Day et al. (2016) described as leadership that balances authority with collegiality, maintaining hierarchical accountability while fostering horizontal professional relationships.

The finding that principals' commitment, relationship-building, and vulnerability significantly influenced program effectiveness extends research on principal self-efficacy and teacher outcomes (Hallinger et al., 2018; Liu & Hallinger, 2018). When principals modeled the vulnerability required for authentic professional growth by acknowledging their own developmental needs, teachers reported

greater comfort engaging in similar vulnerability. This finding suggests that principal development programs should emphasize not only management technical skills but also socioemotional capacities including self-awareness, emotional regulation, and interpersonal authenticity—dimensions receiving limited attention in traditional principal preparation programs (Bush, 2018).

The study's documentation of principals' adaptive management approaches—responsive adjustments based on evaluation data, differentiated support for struggling teachers, resource reallocation toward high-impact activities—exemplifies what Kotter and Schlesinger (2008) described as change leadership that maintains strategic direction while remaining responsive to implementation realities. This adaptive approach contrasts with rigid program fidelity models that sometimes characterize educational reform implementation, suggesting that effective principal management requires sophisticated judgment about when to maintain course and when to adjust based on feedback.

This study advances educational leadership theory by demonstrating empirically how classical management frameworks (POAC) apply to the specific challenge of developing teacher personal competencies through professional learning communities. The integration of management theory with PLC research and character education literature creates a conceptual framework that could inform future research examining how principals systematically cultivate teacher dispositions beyond technical competencies. The finding regarding differential impact based on career stage contributes theoretical nuance to professional development literature and suggests fruitful directions for examining how career phase influences receptivity to various developmental interventions. The documentation of culturally contextualized approaches integrating national values frameworks (Pancasila student profile) with universal professional standards contributes to international comparative education literature by demonstrating how global educational priorities can be meaningfully localized rather than imposed uniformly across diverse contexts.

For principals seeking to strengthen teacher personal competencies, this study offers a validated implementation model emphasizing systematic needs assessment using multiple data sources, collaborative planning involving teachers in program design, strategic resource allocation even within constrained budgets, competent facilitator selection and support, and continuous evaluation informing program adjustments. For education policymakers, findings suggest that regulations mandating teacher personality competence must be accompanied by practical guidance and resources for systematic development rather than assuming that exhortation alone drives improvement. The study validates allocating BOS funds toward professional development focused on personal competencies as legitimate educational investment. For teacher education programs, findings suggest that preparation should address not only pedagogical methods but also dispositional development and that prospective teachers benefit from structured opportunities for reflection and dialogue about professional ethics, character modeling, and values integration.

Despite methodological rigor, this study acknowledges several limitations. The case study design focusing on two schools limits generalizability to broader contexts, though rich contextual description enables readers to assess transferability to their settings. The relatively short timeframe (one academic year) precludes examining long-term sustainability or whether personal competence gains persist over time. The reliance on self-reported data from teachers regarding personal competence development introduces potential social desirability bias, though triangulation with classroom observations and document analysis partially mitigates this concern. The study did not systematically assess student outcomes, leaving open questions about whether teacher personal competence development ultimately enhances student learning and character formation. Future research employing quasi-experimental designs with comparison schools and longitudinal follow-up could strengthen causal inference and sustainability assessment.

This study's integration of POAC management theory, professional learning community research, and character education literature within Indonesian elementary school contexts represents its primary scholarly contribution. By demonstrating that systematic principal management can cultivate teacher personal competencies through study groups, the research validates an actionable approach to

addressing a critical but underexamined dimension of teacher quality. The culturally contextualized implementation model offers a template for other contexts seeking to develop teacher character while respecting local values. Most fundamentally, the study affirms that teacher personal competencies are not fixed traits but professional capacities amenable to development through intentional, well-managed collegial learning—a hopeful premise for educational improvement efforts worldwide.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that systematic principal management through the POAC framework effectively enhances elementary school teachers' personal competencies via study groups. Findings from SDN Ciseureuh and SDN Karya Bhakti reveal that principals functioning as both managers and facilitators create authentic professional learning environments when they employ evidence-based planning, strategic resource organization, motivational leadership, and continuous evaluation. Study groups structured around collaborative inquiry, reflective practice, and peer learning significantly improved teachers' integrity, responsibility, discipline, exemplary behavior, and professionalism, ultimately enhancing classroom environments and student character development.

The research contributes theoretically by integrating classical management theory with professional learning community research and character education literature, demonstrating their synergistic application in developing teacher dispositions. The culturally contextualized model aligning personal competence development with the Pancasila student profile offers a framework for localizing global educational priorities. A novel finding regarding differential impact across career stages suggests that professional development effectiveness varies with teachers' career phases, warranting differentiated approaches.

Practically, this study provides actionable guidance for principals implementing study groups, validates resource allocation toward personal competence development, and informs policy regarding comprehensive teacher quality initiatives. The findings emphasize that teacher character is developable through intentional, well-managed collegial learning rather than representing fixed traits.

Research limitations include case study generalizability, single-year timeframe precluding sustainability assessment, reliance on self-reported data, and absence of direct student outcome measures. Future research should employ quasi-experimental designs with comparison groups, longitudinal follow-up examining long-term effects, student outcome assessment linking teacher personal competence to learning and character formation, and cross-cultural studies exploring implementation variations across diverse educational contexts. Additionally, investigating technology-enhanced study group formats and examining scalability to larger school systems would advance understanding of how principal management can systematically strengthen teacher personal competencies across varied settings.

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