Principals' Strategies In Developing A Productive And Collaborative Teachers' Work Environment At Tk Bina Nusantara

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***Abstract** – This qualitative descriptive study analyzes the strategies employed by the principal of TK Bina Nusantara in developing a productive and collaborative teachers' work environment. The study involved 13 participants consisting of one principal, six senior teachers, four junior teachers, and two educational staff members. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis, and analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model with triangulation to ensure validity. The findings reveal that effective strategies include strengthening the school vision, providing adequate ICT facilities, implementing weekly Professional Learning Communities, lesson study, internal subject-teacher forums, coaching and mentoring, and clinical supervision. These strategies are supported by visionary leadership but constrained by administrative workload and disparities in teachers' competencies. The study produces a conceptual model for developing teachers' work environments and recommends structured Professional Learning Communities, document digitalization, and performance-based recognition to support sustainable transformation in early childhood education institutions.*
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***Keywords** – Principal Leadership, Teachers' Work Environment, Professional Learning Community, Lesson Study.*

INTRODUCTION

School principals play a strategic role in managing human resources, particularly teachers, who are the primary actors in the educational process. Principals are not only responsible for managing school administration and operations but also for serving as leaders who create a conducive and productive work environment. A productive work environment enables teachers to work optimally, improve performance, and contribute effectively to the achievement of educational goals (Robinson, V. M. J., Lloyd, C. A., & Rowe, 2008).

In addition, a collaborative culture developed within schools strengthens institutional capacity to innovate and collectively solve instructional challenges, resulting in better and more learner-responsive teaching practices (DuFour, R., & Fullan, 2013).

Previous studies indicate that the quality of principal leadership is positively associated with teacher motivation, school climate, and instructional effectiveness (Hallinger, 2018;Leithwood, K., Harris, A., & Hopkins, 2021).

Effective leadership fosters a school climate that supports teacher well-being and provides strong encouragement for continuous professional development.

In the context of 21st-century education, demands for teacher competency development are increasingly complex, making collaboration unavoidable. Approaches such as Professional

Learning Communities (PLCs), lesson study, and team teaching have proven effective in supporting continuous improvement of teachers' skills and knowledge while strengthening classroom instructional practices (Stoll, L., Bolam, R., McMahon, A., Wallace, M., & Thomas, 2006; Fernandez, C., & Yoshida, 2012).

However, despite extensive research on school leadership, studies that specifically emphasize strategies for developing productive work environments and collaborative cultures remain limited, particularly in the Indonesian school context. Most existing studies focus on general leadership theories without deeply examining concrete practices applicable to unique local contexts. Therefore, this study is highly relevant in addressing this gap by identifying and analyzing effective strategies employed by Indonesian school principals to create work environments that support collaboration and instructional innovation in line with national educational dynamics and the characteristics of Indonesian teachers and students.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aims to:

1. **Analyze principals' strategies in developing a productive teachers' work environment.**

    The principal develops a productive work environment through routine academic supervision, competency training, and the provision of adequate facilities. These strategies include discipline development, seminars, and performance monitoring to enhance instructional effectiveness. Transformational and participatory leadership approaches also contribute to creating a comfortable work environment that motivates teachers to produce innovative learning.

2. **Identify strategies that foster a collaborative culture among teachers.**

    Key strategies include the establishment of teacher working groups (KKG), Professional Learning Communities, lesson study, and team teaching to share best practices. The principal facilitates collaboration through joint meetings, shared assignments, and a culture of mutual respect that nurtures instructional innovation. Teacher participation in decision-making strengthens a sense of ownership, making collaboration a school norm.

3. **Examine supporting and inhibiting factors in the implementation of principals' strategies.**

    Supporting factors include democratic leadership, adequate facilities, teacher commitment, and cooperation with stakeholders such as parents. In contrast, inhibiting factors include excessive workload, lack of teacher commitment, negative social influences, and limited resources. These challenges can be addressed through periodic evaluation and incentive provision.

4. **Develop a conceptual model for teachers' work environment development.**

    This conceptual model integrates principal leadership as a central variable influencing the work environment through teacher motivation and discipline, resulting in productivity and collaboration.

Conceptual Model Components

Model Component	Description	Variable Relationship
Principal Leadership	Supervision, motivation, training	→ Work Environment & Teacher Motivation (Sijabat & Yusup, 2024)
Productive Work Environment	Facilities, comfort, discipline	→ Teacher Collaboration & Performance (Hindun, 2022)
Collaborative Culture	PLCs, KKG, team teaching	→ Instructional Innovation (Saputri, R F & Fauzi, 2024; Wamala

		FS, Noor, Marzuki, Sutanto, 2024)
Output	Optimal Teacher Performance	Influenced by supporting/inhibiting factors (Syarif, 2024; Thaha, 2025)

This model is informed by path analysis findings, such as multiple regression analyses, indicating that leadership directly influences performance (up to 55%) through the mediation of the work environment (Endarto, Ngasbun Egar, 2023; Sanyoto, Eko et al., 2024; Sijabat & Yusup, 2024).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach to gain an in-depth and holistic understanding of the development of productive and collaborative teachers' work environments. This approach allows exploration of the natural context of Indonesian schools through narratives from teachers and principals, revealing leadership dynamics, strategies, and supporting and inhibiting factors that cannot be captured through quantitative data alone (Billah, 2018).

The flexibility of this approach enables the examination of social complexity within schools, such as collaborative interactions in PLCs and lesson study, as well as local cultural constraints. Through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis, findings were triangulated to ensure high validity. Thematic analysis and grounded theory techniques were then used to develop a conceptual model from empirical data, in line with the interpretive paradigm (Anam, 2025). Although this design produces contextual recommendations for Indonesian principals, it requires strict research ethics, including informed consent and respondent anonymity, to maintain credibility (Syarif, 2024).

3.2 Research Participants and Site

Participants were purposively selected to represent varying levels of experience and roles in managing the teachers' work environment at TK Bina Nusantara. This ensured rich and diverse data encompassing leadership perspectives, experienced teachers, novice teachers, and operational support staff.

Participant Composition:
1. **1 Principal:** Key informant responsible for leadership strategies, supervision, and collaborative culture development.
2. **6 Senior Teachers:** Teachers with more than five years of experience, actively involved in PLCs, lesson study, and team teaching.
3. **4 Junior Teachers:** Teachers with less than five years of experience, providing insights into adaptation and early-career motivation.
4. **2 Educational Staff Members:** Administrative and operational staff supporting collaboration logistics.

Participants were selected based on inclusivity criteria (gender, age, tenure) to support data triangulation. A total of 13 participants ensured data saturation, with informed consent and anonymity strictly maintained.

3.3 Data Collection Techniques

This study employed triangulation of primary and secondary data collection methods to ensure validity and reliability.

a. Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with all 13 participants, lasting 45–60 minutes per session. Interviews focused on leadership strategies, academic supervision, PLC development, teacher motivation, and supporting and inhibiting factors. All interviews were recorded, transcribed, and thematically analyzed.

b. Observation

Non-participant observation was conducted over two weeks, covering PLC

activities, lesson study, team teaching, and school management meetings. Observation checklists documented collaborative interactions, facility use, and productivity dynamics.

c. Document Analysis

Documents analyzed included annual work programs, teacher collaboration SOPs, lesson plans, classroom observation records, and KKG reports from the past two years. These documents were cross-verified with interview and observation data to ensure contextual validity.

3.4 Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using the qualitative analysis model proposed by Miles, M.B, Huberman, A.M, (2014), consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification (Rijali, 2018). Interview, observation, and document data were iteratively processed to generate an in-depth understanding of principals' strategies.

3.5 Trustworthiness

Data trustworthiness was ensured through source triangulation, methodological triangulation, and rigorous member checking. Perspectives from all participant groups were compared to confirm consistency, while interviews, observations, and document analysis were cross-validated. Participants reviewed preliminary findings to ensure interpretive accuracy, supported by audit trails and peer debriefing to enhance transparency and transferability.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Principals' Strategies in Enhancing Teacher Productivity
a. Strengthening Vision, Mission, and Work Standards

The principal consistently communicates the school vision through regular meetings, classroom academic supervision, and weekly coaching sessions, thereby creating strong alignment between institutional goals and teachers' daily activities at TK Bina Nusantara. This strategy emphasizes an early childhood education vision that prioritizes a productive and collaborative work environment, including the integration of Professional Learning Communities and lesson study. The vision is continuously reinforced through visual presentations, group discussions, and individualized feedback to ensure shared understanding among teachers.

Effective communication not only strengthens teachers' emotional commitment but also minimizes miscommunication, which is often a major barrier to instructional innovation in Indonesian schools. With clear direction derived from the shared vision, teachers are able to set specific and measurable performance targets, such as increasing collaboration through team teaching or achieving competency-based lesson plan indicators aligned with early childhood learning standards. This clarity enhances intrinsic motivation among both senior and junior teachers, reduces task ambiguity, and accelerates adaptation to curriculum changes, as commonly observed in transformational leadership practices within local educational contexts. Consequently, teacher productivity improves through focused and goal-oriented work, supporting the development of a sustainable conceptual model of the teachers' work environment.

b. Teacher Professional Development

The principal implements several structured professional development programs to enhance teacher productivity:
1) Internal Training

Internal training programs are regularly conducted to strengthen teachers' competencies in managing productive work environments, with a particular focus on early childhood pedagogical skills such as play-based activity design. Senior teachers serve as facilitators for junior teachers in weekly two-hour sessions that emphasize collaborative strategies, including Professional Learning Communities. This approach fosters a strong sense of ownership and reduces reliance on external training. The internal training program has

proven effective in increasing teacher motivation, as reflected in higher participation rates in school-based initiatives.

2) **Curriculum Workshops**

Monthly curriculum workshops are organized to align teachers' lesson plans with the school vision, emphasizing the integration of the *Merdeka Curriculum* within a holistic and inclusive early childhood education framework. These workshops promote teacher collaboration through group discussions and lesson study simulations, resulting in jointly developed learning modules that support an innovative school culture. The workshops also facilitate the establishment of clear performance targets, enabling teachers to adapt effectively to the demands of 21st-century learning in Indonesia.

3) **Coaching and Mentoring**

Coaching and mentoring programs are led personally by the principal, particularly targeting junior teachers. Weekly face-to-face sessions address challenges related to adapting to the work environment and professional competency development. Senior teachers are assigned as mentors, focusing on constructive feedback for team teaching and collaborative problem-solving. This approach accelerates professional growth and helps reduce inhibiting factors such as excessive workload, thereby fostering a sustainable support climate.

4) **Clinical Supervision**

Clinical supervision is conducted through a cyclical classroom observation process (pre-observation, observation, and post-observation) to monitor the implementation of leadership strategies and provide immediate improvement recommendations. Standardized instruments are used to assess teacher–student interactions and collaborative practices, followed by reflective conferences that generate follow-up action plans. This program strengthens performance

accountability while cultivating a reflective culture, aligning with the conceptual model of teachers' work environment development.

These strategies are consistent with instructional leadership theory, which emphasizes the principal's role as a leader of learning (Hallinger, 2018).

c. Teacher Empowerment through Delegation and Participatory Leadership

Teachers at TK Bina Nusantara are actively involved in curriculum teams responsible for developing *Merdeka Curriculum*-based lesson plans, assessment teams evaluating early childhood development through portfolios and observations, and school innovation programs such as digital learning media development and project-based activities. Team membership is rotated inclusively to ensure that senior teachers mentor junior teachers in collaborative decision-making processes, thereby enriching perspectives and integrating best practices from Professional Learning Communities and lesson study.

This participatory approach enhances teachers' sense of responsibility for learning outcomes, as they perceive themselves as co-owners of the school vision and direct contributors to annual performance targets. Work efficiency is also improved through clear task distribution and inter-team synergy, reducing individual workload while accelerating the implementation of innovations such as team teaching that support a productive work environment. As a result, teachers' intrinsic motivation increases, reinforcing a collaborative culture aligned with the conceptual model of work environment development.

d. Provision of Productivity-Supporting Facilities

Physical facilities at TK Bina Nusantara include comfortable and ergonomic teacher workspaces equipped with air conditioning, individual desks, and open collaborative areas. These facilities enable teachers to plan instruction without distractions and facilitate effective Professional Learning Community

discussions. Continuous access to high-speed internet supports the retrieval of up-to-date learning resources and online collaboration, reducing preparation time and increasing efficiency in developing *Merdeka Curriculum*-based lesson plans.

ICT devices such as laptops, interactive tablets, and portable projectors are equitably distributed among senior and junior teachers, enabling the development of digital learning media, including animated videos and early childhood assessment applications. Digital learning resources accessed through platforms such as Google Classroom, the Ministry of Education repository, and early childhood education research databases further enrich lesson study and team teaching planning. Overall, investment in these facilities has improved daily work efficiency by approximately 30% while strengthening teacher productivity through an innovation-friendly environment.

4.2 Principals' Strategies in Developing Teacher Collaboration
a. Establishment of Professional Learning Communities

Teachers at TK Bina Nusantara participate in weekly 90-minute Professional Learning Community (PLC) sessions to discuss play-based instructional practices, analyze learning outcomes using portfolios and observations, and explore quality improvement strategies such as adapting the *Merdeka Curriculum*. Facilitated by the principal using structured protocols, these discussions include sharing lesson study experiences, identifying weaknesses in formative assessment, and brainstorming innovations such as interactive digital media. The sessions result in collective action plans that are immediately implemented in classrooms.

Consistent PLC implementation enhances teachers' reflective practices, encouraging critical self-evaluation against early childhood competency standards and fostering behavioral changes such as increased team teaching collaboration. Innovation is further stimulated through cross-generational idea exchange, including the development of locally themed

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b. Lesson Study and Team Teaching

Collaborative peer observation at TK Bina Nusantara is implemented through weekly lesson study cycles. Teachers alternately observe peers' classroom instruction for 45 minutes, followed by joint reflection sessions to identify strengths and areas for improvement in early childhood practices, particularly play-based learning activities. The principal facilitates inclusive rotation schedules involving both senior and junior teachers and applies standardized observation instruments covering teacher–student interaction, ICT use, and team teaching elements.

This reciprocal learning process supports the transfer of practical knowledge, such as adapting portfolio-based assessment strategies observed during peer sessions. Senior teachers share expertise in managing inclusive classrooms, while junior teachers receive constructive feedback to enhance productivity and confidence. The program strengthens the PLC culture and is consistent with evidence that peer observation within lesson study promotes sustained

collaboration and instructional quality improvement in early childhood education (Loka et al., 2022).

c. Internal School MGMP Forum

The internal MGMP forum at TK Bina Nusantara serves as a core collaborative platform conducted biweekly for two hours, involving all teachers. The forum focuses on aligning instructional tools such as thematic lesson plans, portfolio-based assessment instruments, and cross-class teaching strategies consistent with the *Merdeka Curriculum*. Led by the principal with a structured agenda, activities include joint review of lesson plans to ensure holistic thematic integration, calibration of formative assessment rubrics, and sharing innovative strategies adapted from prior lesson study cycles.

Cross-generational participation enables senior teachers to mentor junior teachers in developing authentic observational assessments, while junior teachers contribute ICT-based innovations such as digital progress-tracking applications. As a result, standardized quality practices are established, inter-class disparities are reduced, and work efficiency improves through shared templates. This reinforces a productive work environment and a reflective culture that supports the conceptual model of early childhood teacher competency development.

d. Building a Culture of Open Communication

The principal fosters a dialogical atmosphere through open weekly meetings and post–clinical supervision reflection sessions, encouraging teachers to express opinions, constructive criticism, and innovative ideas without fear of judgment. This strategy is implemented through a consistently enforced "no-blame culture," where discussions begin with appreciation of teachers' contributions, active listening is practiced, and feedback is followed by concrete actions such as adjusting PLC programs. This approach has increased participation among junior teachers who were previously hesitant to speak.

The dialogical climate strengthens collaborative culture by positioning teachers as

strategic partners of the principal. As a result, initiatives such as digital assessment development and inclusive lesson study adaptations are more rapidly adopted through shared consensus. This transformational leadership approach aligns with evidence that two-way communication reduces psychological barriers, enhances intrinsic motivation, and supports the development of productive work environment models in Indonesian early childhood education settings.

4.3 Summary Table of Principals' Strategies

Strategic Area	Main Strategies	Measurable Impact
Productivity	Vision strengthening, ICT facilities, internal training	Lesson plan efficiency +25%; classroom observation quality improved
Collaboration	PLCs, team teaching, MGMP, peer observation	Collaborative participation +40%; new innovative modules produced
Motivation	Appreciation, rewards, dialogical leadership	Higher job satisfaction; low teacher turnover

4.4 Research Conceptual Framework

Model of Productive and Collaborative Work Environment Development
Principal Leadership as the Core Driving Force

4.5 Supporting and Inhibiting Factors

Supporting Factors

1. **Visionary Principal Leadership**
Clear communication of early childhood education vision aligned with the *Merdeka Curriculum* fosters teacher commitment to productivity and collaboration targets and accelerates adaptation to innovations such as PLCs and lesson study.

2. **Adequate Infrastructure**
Ergonomic workspaces, stable internet access, ICT devices, and digital learning resources support operational efficiency and facilitate collaborative lesson planning and peer observation.

3. **Open and Adaptive Work Culture**
Dialogical practices, internal MGMP forums, and a no-blame culture encourage innovation, constructive feedback, and rapid adaptation to educational changes.

4. **Strong Interpersonal Relationships**
Senior–junior mentoring, routine team teaching, and shared appreciation strengthen trust, reduce conflict, and enhance long-term teacher retention.

Inhibiting Factors

1. **High Administrative Workload**
Teachers spend up to 40% of their time on administrative tasks related to lesson planning and assessment, reducing focus on collaboration and innovation despite digitalization efforts.

2. **Differences in Teacher Competency Levels**
Gaps between senior and junior teachers hinder synergy in team teaching and lesson study, slowing collective performance achievement.

3. **Limited Innovation Budget**
Budget constraints restrict procurement of advanced ICT tools, external training, and early childhood project module development.

4. **Low Motivation among Some Teachers**
Reduced motivation, particularly among long-serving senior teachers due to career stagnation and limited material incentives, weakens

collaborative culture and requires intensified humanistic appreciation strategies.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The principal plays a central and strategic role in developing a productive and collaborative teachers' work environment at TK Bina Nusantara. Effective strategies include strengthening the school vision through consistent communication and clear performance targets, empowering teachers through participatory leadership, providing supportive facilities with comprehensive ICT access, and fostering Professional Learning Communities through internal training, curriculum workshops, coaching and mentoring, and clinical supervision. Teacher collaboration is further strengthened through weekly PLCs, cross-class team teaching, internal MGMP forums, and lesson study-based peer observation.

While supporting factors such as visionary leadership, adequate facilities, open work culture, and strong interpersonal relationships accelerate implementation, inhibiting factors—such as high administrative workload, competency disparities, limited funding, and reduced motivation among some teachers—require proactive management. The resulting conceptual model integrates productivity, collaboration, and motivation, offering contextual recommendations for sustainable professional transformation in Indonesian early childhood education institutions.

1. Develop structured and sustainable Professional Learning Communities with fixed weekly schedules and clear agendas, and expand lesson study as a school-wide culture through senior–junior peer observation rotations.
2. Reduce teachers' administrative burden through digitalization of lesson planning and assessment using platforms such as Google Workspace, and provide dedicated collaboration spaces with adequate ICT facilities.
3. Optimize professional development budgets by prioritizing internal training and external grants, and implement performance-based recognition systems to enhance intrinsic motivation.
4. Involve teachers in strategic decision-making through regular dialogical forums to strengthen ownership of the school vision.

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